Editorial

Welcome to Volume 37.2 (2) of *Atlantis: Critical Studies in Gender, Culture and Social Justice*!

This issue consists of one thematic cluster and an open cluster. The first cluster, edited and introduced by Melissa Autumn White (LGBT and Queer Studies, Hobart and William Smith Colleges) and Jennifer Musial (Women's and Gender Studies, New Jersey City University), focuses on **Belaboured Introductions: Inspired Reflections on the Introductory Course in Gender and Women's Studies**. The five articles featured in the cluster include: Dana M. Olwan, AnaLouise Keating, Catherine M. Orr, and Beverly Guy Sheftall's "Make/shift Pedagogies: Suggestions, Provocations, and Challenges for Teaching Introductory Gender and Women's Studies Courses"; Meg Devlin O'Sullivan, Karl Bryant, and Heather Hewett's "Unlearning Introductions: Problematizing Pedagogies of Inclusion, Diversity, and Experience in the Gender and Women's Studies Introductory Course"; Carrie Hart's "Viewing as Text: Theorizing Visual Literacies in Introduction to Gender and Women's Studies"; Stina Soderling's "Anarchist Pedagogy in the Gender and Women's Studies Classroom"; and Jocelyn Thorpe and Sonja Boon's compilation of short essays by eleven authors entitled "The Intro Course: A Pedagogical Toolkit." The thematic cluster also includes two review essays: Ilya Parkins' "Agenda, Horizons, and the Canadian Introductory Reader: A Review Essay" and Carly Thomsen's "Becoming Radically Undone: Discourses of Identity and Diversity in the Introductory Gender and Women's Studies Classroom."

The second cluster includes a series of open topic articles that cover a broad spectrum of themes and issues. The first two articles focus on questions related to the field of Gender and Women's Studies. In "No Guarantee: Feminism's Academic Affect and Political Fantasy," Robyn Wiegman returns to the question of Gender and Women's Studies' academic institutionalization and engages in a sophisticated and nuanced analysis of both the "new and ongoing challenges to the intellectual and political life of the field." Mark Kessler's "In Search of Law in Women's and Gender Studies: Toward Critical Womanist Legal Studies" also considers the issue of Women's and Gender Studies' institutionalization and suggests that "transdisciplinary critical womanist legal studies may help to address concerns that the successful institutionalization of WGS has narrowed the field's focus, blunted its critical edge, and separated academic work from grassroots communities and political action."

The following two articles focus on the body and embodiment. In "Placenta-Eating and the Epistemology of Ignorance," Cressida Heyes examines "human placentophagy" or the practice of eating one's placenta. She asserts that, rather than viewing this practice through "the epistemology of ignorance"— "distain for female bodies, visceral disgust"—placenta-eating "deserves a more nuanced treatment as a practice that meets the under-served needs of women who fear postpartum depression and as a practice taking place in a context of the biomagnification of environmental pollutants." Heather Tapley, in "Edgy Un/Intelligibilities: Feminist/Monster Theory Meets *Ginger Snaps*," analyzes the werewolf film *Ginger Snaps* (2000) through various feminist lenses and offers a reading of the film's werewolf as "the unbound body of the liminal Other, the subject/self formerly denied" and as "both threatening and politically productive in its liminality."

The following three articles explore issues related to Indigenous nationhoods, Canadian state policies and their effects, and the politics of Indigenous revitalization, resurgence, and decolonization. In "Post-National Foundation of Judith Butler's and Rossi Braidotti's Relational Subjectivity," Adam Burke Carmichael draws on Indigenous conceptions of nationhood to critically analyze "the post-national foundation" of Butler's and Braidotti's "theories of affective subjectivity." The author maintains that "if both Butler's and Braidotti's diagnoses of a post-national world require revision in light of the complexities of Indigenous nationhoods, then so do their affectively constituted subjects." Karen Lawford, in

"Locating Invisible Policies: Health Canada's Evacuation Policy as a Case Study," focuses on the material impacts of Canada's evacuation policy, that exists in "the grey zone between federal and provincial jurisdiction," on pregnant First Nations women living on reserves and analyzes its negative effects on First Nations women's access to maternity health services and on their families and communities. In "All My Relations: Reclaiming the Stories of our Indigenous Grandmothers," Jodi Beniuk documents the conversations she engaged in with her Métis grandmother and the "process of compiling her teachings into a handmade book." For the author, this deeply personal project was not only about honouring her grandmother and her teachings, but it was also about "the process of Indigenous revitalization, resurgence, and decolonization."

The next two articles focus on aspects of transgender embodiment and politics. In "'I Am Not My Bodies': Transgender Embodiment in Nina Arsenault's *The Silicone Diaries*," Zaren Healey White analyzes the work of Canadian transgender performance artist Nina Arsenault and, in particular, "how her pursuit of an exaggerated ideal of beauty simultaneously subverts essentialist notions of what it means to be a woman." Emma McKenna, in "Delayed Critique: On Being Feminist, Time and Time Again," reads the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival "as a cultural archive of gender essentialism" and the politics of trans exclusion in feminism. The author's main purpose is to promote a systematic reevaluation and reimagining of feminist politics and to advocate for "the prioritizing of trans-feminism within all feminisms."

The next four articles engage with various questions related to feminist pedagogy, performativity, and digital production. In "Feminist Accused of Difference from the Self," Mary J. Harrison analyzes Cynthia G. Franklin's (2009) reading of Jane Gallop's *Feminist Accused of Sexual Harassment* (1997) and her own identifications with Gallop and her text. In the latter case, the author not only emphasizes the ways in which her "reading repeats both daughterly violence on Gallop and motherly violence on the graduate students who populate the text," but also considers such themes as "conflict, aggression, loss, permission, and forgiveness." Julie E. Dowsett, in "When Students are Consumers: Reflections on Teaching a First-Year Gender Course (That is Not a Gender Studies Course)," examines her experiences as a contract faculty member teaching a first-year Gender and Law course at York University. Drawing on the course evaluations she received over a five-year period, the author not only explores the "gendered, racial, and other power dynamics involved in the university/corporation and student/consumer nexuses," but also shares the strategies she employed to disrupt "the 'cruising, shopping, disengaged' mindset of students" studying at a large corporatized university. In "Affecting Art and Theory: The Politics of Shame and Creative Academic Performance," Jessica Joy Cameron documents her experience of integrating performance art into an academic conference presentation and analyzes her resultant feelings of both shame and pride. The author argues that there is a need "to foster diversity in the academic form and resist the institutionalization of feminist scholarship through the nurturing of academic relationships with embodiment and affect." Alana Cattapan and Quinn Dupont, in "Moving Forward, Looking Back: Taking Canadian Feminist Histories Online," examine the feminist possibilities of the "networked model" of scholarly production, a model that has emerged from the digital humanities and promotes three "techno-social transformations": "encouraging more collaborative authorship, challenging conventional peer review practices, and broadening readership beyond academia."

The final two articles in the open cluster include Christina Rousseau's "The Dividing Power of the Wage: Housework as Social Subversion," which revisits the Wages for Housework perspectives and movements in Italy and Canada and makes a case for the recovery of Marxist-feminist analyses of social reproduction as a needed response "to new forms of oppression in a re-organized economy." Ina C. Seethaler, in "Feminist Practices in Julie Shigekuni's *Invisible Gardens*: A Japanese American Woman in the Twenty-First Century," offers a Japanese American feminist reading of Shigekuni's novel and explores such themes as "patriarchal familial relationships, the significance of mental spaces of refuge—like a garden and other 'beyond spaces'—and the explicit celebration of the (sexual) body as a site of women's empowerment."

The cover photo, courtesy of the Mount Saint Vincent University Art Gallery, is titled, *Red Flowers III* by Anna Torma. Enjoy the issue!

Annalee Lepp
Editor

Belaboured Introductions: Inspired Reflections on the Introductory Course in Gender and Women's Studies

Inspired Reflections: An Introduction

Cluster Editors

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Jennifer Musial is Assistant Professor of Women's and Gender Studies at New Jersey City University in Jersey City, New Jersey. Her research centers on reproductive justice and racialization; her monograph-in-progress, *Pregnant Pause: Reproduction, Death, and Media Culture*, looks at racialized grievability in cases of fatal violence against pregnant women. Previous work has been published in *Sexualities, Social Identities: Journal for the Study of Race, Nation, and Culture*, and *Journal for the Association for Research on Mothering*. In addition to her research on reproductive justice, Jennifer contributes to the growing scholarship in critical yoga studies with publications in *Feminist Teacher and Yoga, the Body, and Embodied Social Change: An Intersectional Feminist Analysis* (2016). Additionally, she co-organizes the annual Race and Yoga conference at University of California-Berkeley and acts as managing editor for *Race and Yoga*, a new peer-reviewed journal that looks at the intersections of yoga, racialization, colonialism, capitalism, gender, sexuality, and disability studies. Since earning her PhD in Women's Studies from York University in 2010, Jennifer has taught the introductory course at five institutions.

"This course changed my life!" Transformative, beloved, dreaded, neglected, unruly, inspiring: at its best, the introductory course in Gender, Women's and Sexuality Studies is a feminist, antiracist, queer, trans* social laboratory in action. With limited published work on this pivotal course, especially as it relates to field development, we convened this co-edited issue to query the psychic and political aspirations, economies, and pedagogies of the introductory course, or "GWS 101." We asked prospective contributors to consider the following questions: How do those of us who teach—or avoid teaching—the introductory course imagine the performative and affective labour of GWS 101 in relation to broader debates shaping the field? If we consider the introductory course as a vital institutional object or cluster of desires, then how might GWS 101 reflect, influence, and/or reify the stories we tell our students and *ourselves* about the critical interdisciplinary field of Gender, Women's and Sexuality Studies (cf. Wiegman 2012, Hemmings 2011, Orr et al. 2011, Hobbs and Rice 2012)? These questions struck us as particularly germane given our personal and professional stakes in the relationship between teaching and field (trans)formation as feminist scholars who hold Ph.D.s in the field.

In our desire to learn more about how and through what institutional processes content for the course is defined, as well as what pedagogies are deemed most effective for introducing students to the field, we found ourselves continually coming back to the entanglement of embodiment, knowledge production, credentialization and the academic industrial complex. Given the exponential increase of Gender, Women's, and Feminist Studies Ph.D. programs over the last decade,[1] it is not only necessary to explore how the introductory course is envisioned, but also the fraught politics around whom—and with what training—is considered qualified to teach it. If the introductory

course is decisive in the overall health of a GWS undergraduate program, because it serves as the entry point for students who (we hope) will become majors or minors, then why is it often staffed by non-tenure-stream faculty (lecturers, graduate instructors, adjuncts, postdoctoral fellows etc.) who are, at best, precariously positioned in the field? Relatedly, why is the introductory course just as often taught by non-GWS Ph.D. holding tenure-stream or tenured professors who are marginally or eclectically trained in the field? How might the intensifying workload expectations of tenure-stream and tenured faculty as well as rising class enrollments effect such staffing decisions? Beyond these questions, we felt called to engage in a meta-reflection on the place of the introductory course in relation to field formation and social justice more generally. What do we imagine we are doing when we usher students, and colleagues, into the (inter)discipline of Gender, Women's and Sexuality Studies?

In making the familiar strange—or at least remarkable—GWS 101 can lead, for faculty and students alike, to the intense pleasures of coming alive to new attachments and approaches to politicized knowledge at the same time that it insists upon difficult discussions of power, identity, subjectivity, and agency that can be experienced as anxiety-producing, destabilizing, and even, for the more or less privileged, world shattering. The unrepeatable affective ecologies set in motion in each class assemble against the backdrop of the neoliberal corporate university, which increasingly relies on precarious and/or "entrepreneurial" sessional, adjunct, graduate student, or postdoctoral faculty to teach ballooning introductory courses that, nevertheless, promise to deliver on the branded "social value" mandates of the institution. In the context of the academic industrial complex, wherein the university is involved in providing "knowledge transfer" to students imagined as future "global citizens" who are prepared for "civic life," what are some of our best visions—optimistic or otherwise—for the work that the introductory course might do in the world and in the lives of our students? What role do political and psychic desires play in the introductory course as it circulates in and re-creates the field of Gender, Women's and Sexuality Studies more broadly?

In reflecting on the questions that led us to craft the call for this special cluster of papers we noticed an

[1] Between 2008 and 2016, the number of Gender, Women's and Feminist Studies (GWFS) Ph.D. programs nearly doubled. At the time of this writing, there are 23 GWFS Ph.D. programs in Canada and the United States alone. A polarizing discussion on this fact began in Milwaukee at NWSA 2015 on a panel convened by the GWFS Ph.D. Interest Group called "Precarious Value? Critical Reflections on the Ph.D. in Gender, Women's and Feminist Studies,." Participants, all of whom hold a Ph.D. in the field, included Carrie N. Baker, Maria Bevacqua, Laura Briggs, Patti L. Duncan, Lisa Diedrich, Vivian M. May, Allison Kimmich, Melissa Autumn White, and Kimberley A. Williams.

emerging set of distinct but inter-related key thematics that, based on ephemeral and sometimes more formalized conversations with our colleagues in Gender, Women's and Sexuality Studies, seemed particularly urgent to consider. As we synthesized our curiosities, six main themes, inflected by recent work on the field and its pedagogies of "minoritarian," "identitarian," and "intersectional" difference, crystallized (Ferguson 2012, Wiegman 2012). First, we asked prospective contributors to consider the ways that the introductory course is mobilized through *affective ecologies* that animate, and sometime debilitate, the learning environment. We invited a consideration of how political and psychic investments and imaginaries take shape in the sensate atmospheres of the introductory course, and we explicitly asked about the role that pleasure, anger, anxiety, suspicion, joy, sadness, depression, melancholy, and so on play in the work of critical introductory pedagogy. Second, we invited contributors to think about *storytelling* in relation to the introductory course. Drawing on Claire Hemming's brilliant book (2012), we wondered how and which stories come to matter in GWS 101. We asked prospective authors to critically reflect on the stories we tell ourselves, our curriculum committees, our university administration, and our students about the role of the introductory course in and beyond the program or department. Storytelling is an epistemological strategy, to be sure, but how are other ways of knowing also present in the introductory course, and to what effect? More specifically, then, we invited contributors to explore how queer, trans*, decolonizing, transnationalizing, and indigenizing feminist *epistemologies* open space not only for new analytic "objects" but also new *archives* of knowledge creation and citational practice in the field.

These questions and themes required us to be explicit about situating the introductory course in the context of the neoliberal corporate university. Since 2008, the discourse of *austerity* has been nearly ubiquitous in public and private institutions alike. We wanted to learn about the impact of austerity discourses on the introductory course as a particular mode of social and intellectual labour. How do faculty members, programs, departments, and administrators (more or less strategically) ascribe "value" to GWS 101 by positioning it as meeting social justice, sustainability, global citizenship, civic engagement, and/or diversity learning outcomes,

and with what implications for the field? In the present context, GWS faculty and administrators are implicitly if not explicitly expected to become "brand managers" charged with carrying the weight of institutional strategic plans, staffing student recruitment tables, and crafting marketable visions of what students can "do" with their degrees. Lacking the institutional (i.e. administrative and financial) resources to fulfill "brand management" duties in any meaningful or politicized way, GWS chairs and faculty teaching the introductory course are arguably pressured to engage in a dance of *seduction*, promising prospective majors and minors a pleasurable experience in "life altering" courses that provide "a place to call home." Thinking with the inimitable Kathryn Bond Stockton (2011), we asked contributors to consider the role of seduction, luxury, and pleasure in critical pedagogy, especially in programs whose survival depends on cultivating majors and minors. How do critical programs such as GWS risk competing with and/or working against other "identity fields" in the academy (Wiegman 2012, see also Ferguson 2012, Butler 1994) as they are institutionally situated (e.g. Ethnic Studies, Africana Studies, Asian American Studies, Indigenous Studies, Disability Studies, Latin@ Studies, Chicanx Studies, Cultural Studies, LGBT and Queer Studies, American Studies, etc.)?

Finally, in thinking about the connections between epistemologies, austerity, and seduction, we encouraged contributors to engage with questions of *labour and embodiment*. While some universities have proactively decided that only tenure-track or tenured faculty members should teach the introductory course (the University of Toronto has made such a move, for example), often the job of teaching GWS 101 falls to the New Majority of precarious, contingent, adjunct and sessional faculty, advanced graduate students, and otherwise marginalized professors who cannot count on adequate teaching resources such as markers/graders, teaching assistants, technological support, pedagogical training, or mentoring. The introductory course, then, is embedded in broader questions about embodiment and labour, and the racialized, sexualized, gendered, material and affective labour politics experienced in and by the socially (un)marked body.

Ours was, undoubtedly, an ambitious call, one that stemmed from our shared investments in feminist pedagogy and teaching, as well as the relationship

between the introductory course and field (re)formation. Our approach to these questions was shaped by our differential locations as feminist scholars who both hold Ph.D.s in GWFS, and who have simultaneously been participating in and observing the brutalities of an academic job market in which the majority of open positions in Gender, Women's, Feminist, and Sexuality Studies continue to go to scholars who are not trained directly in the field. While we knew in advance that the questions our CFP raised could never be exhaustively addressed, we trust that the essays gathered here will open space for our readers to reflect upon the introductory course and its *affective ecologies*; the *storytelling, archives and epistemologies* it rests upon and/or unsettles; the discourses and practices of *seduction* and *austerity* that uniquely situate it in relation to the neoliberal university; and the *embodied labour* it relies upon and too often obscures.

The Essays

The essays curated here bring together the established and emerging voices of feminist scholars working in the field of Gender, Women's, and Sexuality Studies in both Canada and the United States.

The collection opens with a reflection stemming from the NWSA Curriculum Institute held in Cincinnati in the summer of 2014. Drawing on over four decades of collective teaching experience, authors Dana M. Olwan, AnaLouise Keating, Catherine Orr, and Beverly Guy Sheftall take stock of the politics and praxis of teaching GWS 101 in the United States. "Make/Shift Pedagogies: Suggestions, Provocations, and Challenges for Teaching Introductory Women's and Gender Studies Courses" offers a broad and multi-vocal critical reflection on the investments that inform syllabi design, course planning, and pedagogical strategies as the introductory course charts current trends and signals new developments in the field.

Moving from field analysis to the institutionally particular, SUNY New Paltz professors Meg Devlin O'Sullivan, Karl Bryant, and Heather Hewett critically reflect on their program's primary textbook, *Women: Images and Realities, An Anthology*, in "Unlearning Introductions: Problematizing Pedagogies of Inclusion, Diversity, and Experience in the Gender and Women's Studies Introductory Course." Devlin O'Sullivan, Bryant, and Hewett trace how discourses of "inclusion,"

"diversity," and "experience" became central to the introductory course at SUNY New Paltz; as critiques of the textbook emerged, these professors responded by revising their introductory syllabus to feature transgender and Native American feminisms.

Next, the special cluster highlights two emerging scholars who experiment with feminist pedagogy in their introductory classrooms. In "Viewing as Text: Theorizing Visual Literacies in Introduction to Gender and Women's Studies," Carrie Hart explores the un(der) theorized role that visual literacies play in the introductory course. Reflecting on her own experiences as a student and now new Instructor in GWS 101, Hart argues that epistemologies of the visual need to take a more explicit place in the introductory course so that students become actively involved in interpreting how meaning is made. Stina Soderling also considers issues of pedagogy from the vantage of a new Instructor in GWS in her essay "Anarchist Pedagogy in the Gender and Women's Studies Classroom." In this piece, Soderling specifically reflects upon the (dis)connections between feminist and anarchist classroom structures, grading practices, and syllabus design. Soderling argues that feminist and anarchist pedagogies have much to learn from each other, and that both are examples of insurgent knowledges in the context of the neoliberal university classroom.

From these new voices in the field, the collection then turns to a multi-authored reflection on "best practices" by more seasoned scholars teaching in Gender, Women's and Sexuality Studies. In "The Intro Course: A Pedagogical Toolkit," Jocelyn Thorpe and Sonja Boon assemble a wide range of ideas and strategies for teaching the introductory course authored by feminist scholars from across this part of Turtle Island dominantly known as Canada. Through a series of short vignettes, Lisa Bednar, Glenda Tibe Bonifacio, Marg Hobbs, Rachel Alpha Johnston Hurst, Krista Johnston, Heather Latimer, Helen Hok-Sze Leung, Marie Lovrod, Carla Rice, Trish Salah, and Alissa Trotz offer readers a "toolkit" of inspiring approaches to teaching and learning in the GWS 101 classroom.

Finally, our collection concludes with two extended review essays. In "Agendas, Horizons and the Canadian introductory Reader," Ilya Parkins reviews three Canadian introductory readers and critically examines what their structure and content might reveal about the investments and imaginaries of the field. Rec-

ognizing the impossibilities of a "perfect" introductory text, Parkins provides compelling insights into the disjuncture between the cutting-edge theoretical and methodological questions shaping the field of GWS and the topographies of the introductory course as reflected in the readers she analyzes. Echoing Parkins' generative interventions, Carly Thomsen's "Becoming Radically Undone" provides a thought-provoking closing essay in which she argues that GWS 101 must find ways to both teach students the narrative framings of the field whilst cultivating students' capacities to see the historical, geographical, and (re)productive particularities of the narratives themselves.

We started this inquiry wondering why GWS 101 is so important departmentally and institutionally, yet too often neglected intellectually. Ideally, our cluster contributes to what we see as a significant gap in the academic literature on the feminist scholarship of teaching and learning while provoking new questions about the role of the introductory course in relation to field development and (re)constitution. We hope the cluster will be read by curriculum committees, department chairs, graduate students in GWFS, new professors tasked with teaching GWS 101, seasoned scholars who have played a pivotal role in the formation of GWFS as a field that has transformed over the past 25 years with the advent of the Ph.D., and perhaps even students in the introductory course themselves. Ultimately, this cluster is "an intellectual project that has turned its gaze back on the field itself" (Orr et al. 2011), a project we believe is worthwhile at this critical juncture.

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Acknowledgements

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Make/shift Pedagogies: Suggestions, Provocations, and Challenges for Teaching Introductory Gender and Women's Studies Courses

Dana M. Olwan is Assistant Professor of Gender and Women's Studies at Syracuse University. A recipient of a Future Minority Studies postdoctoral fellowship, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council Art/ Research Grant, and a Palestinian American Research Council grant, Dana's research is located at the nexus of feminist theorizations of gendered and sexual violence and solidarities across geopolitical and racial differences. Her work has appeared or is forthcoming in the *Journal of Settler Colonial Studies*, the *Canadian Journal of Sociology*, *Atlantis: Critical Studies in Gender, Culture and Social Justice*, *Feminist Formations*, *American Quarterly*, and *The Feminist Wire*. She is currently working on her first book manuscript, *Traveling Discourses: Gendered Violence and the Transnational Politics of the 'Honor Crime.'*

AnaLouise Keating is Professor of Women's Studies at Texas Woman's University. She has taught composition, U.S. American literature, English, and Women's Studies. She is the author or editor of several books, including *Women Reading, Women Writing: Self-Invention in Paula Gunn Allen, Gloria Anzaldúa, and Audre Lorde*; *EntreMundos/AmongWorlds: New Perspectives on Gloria Anzaldúa*; *this bridge we call home: radical visions for transformation* (co-edited with Anzaldúa); *The Gloria Anzaldúa Reader*, and Anzaldúa's *Interviews/Entrevistas*. She has published articles on Chicana/Latina authors, African-American literature, queer studies, multiculturalism, eighteenth- and nineteenth-century U.S. writers, feminist theory, and pedagogy. Her most recent books are *Teaching Transformation: Transcultural Dialogues in the Classroom* and *Transformation Now! Toward a Post-Oppositional Politics of Change.*

Catherine M. Orr is Professor and Chair of Critical Identity Studies at Beloit College. She is co-editor of *Rethinking Women's and Gender Studies* (Routledge 2012) and co-author of *Concepts for Everyday Use: An Introduction to Gender and Women's Studies* (Routledge forthcoming). Her work has appeared in *Feminist Studies, Women's Studies Quarterly, Hypatia,* and *NWSA Journal*. She has been involved in the leadership of NWSA for many years and recently authored "Women's Studies as Civic Engagement: Research and Recommendations" (2011), a white paper for the Teagle Foundation grant administered by NWSA. She lives in Madison, Wisconsin.

Beverly Guy Sheftall is the founding director of the Women's Research and Resource Center and the Anna Julia Cooper Professor of Women's Studies. She is also adjunct professor at Emory University's Institute for Women's Studies where she teaches graduate courses. She has published a number of texts in African-American and Women's Studies, which have been noted as seminal works by other scholars, including the first anthology on Black women's literature, *Sturdy Black Bridges: Visions of Black Women in Literature* (Doubleday 1980), which she co-edited with Roseann P. Bell and Bettye Parker Smith; her dissertation, *Daughters of Sorrow: Attitudes Toward Black Women, 1880-1920* (Carlson 1991); *Words of Fire: An Anthology of African American Feminist Thought* (New Press 1995); and an anthology she co-edited with Rudolph Byrd titled *Traps: African American Men on Gender and Sexuality* (Indiana University Press 2001). Her recent publications include two books co-authored with Johnnetta Betsch Cole: *Gender Talk: The Struggle for Women's Equality in African American Communities* (Random House 2003) and *Who Should Be First?: Feminists Speak Out on the 2008 Presidential Campaign* (SUNY Press 2010).

Abstract

Drawing on over four decades of diverse teaching experiences as well as our recent work facilitating the NWSA Curriculum Institute, this article discusses some of the politics and praxis of teaching the introductory Gender and Women's Studies course in the U.S. academic class-

room. While mapping different pedagogical strategies, it offers some suggestions, recommendations, and provocations that inform our commitment to design syllabi, plan courses, and teach materials that introduce students to formative works and concepts in Gender and Women's Studies, chart current trends, and signal new developments in the field.

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Résumé

En s'appuyant sur plus de quatre décennies d'expériences d'enseignement diverses ainsi que sur nos travaux récents pour organiser l'institut des programmes d'études de la NWSA, cet article discute certains aspects de la politique et de la pratique de l'enseignement du cours d'introduction Études sur le genre et les femmes dans les classes d'université aux É.-U. Tout en exposant différentes stratégies pédagogiques, il propose des suggestions, des recommandations, et des idées provocantes qui contribuent à notre engagement à concevoir un programme d'études, à planifier des cours et à enseigner un contenu qui initient les étudiants aux travaux et aux concepts formateurs des études sur le genre et les femmes, rendent compte des tendances actuelles et signalent les nouveaux développements dans le domaine.

In June 2014, the National Women's Studies Association (NWSA) hosted a Curriculum Institute in Cincinnati, Ohio. Focusing on the undergraduate curriculum in Gender and Women's Studies (GWS), the two-day institute was designed to explore a variety of curriculum-related issues, focusing especially on the four key concepts viewed as central to the field: the politics of knowledge production, social justice, intersectionality, and transnational analysis. Our goal was to explore ways in which we could more effectively apply and connect these concepts in the undergraduate curricula. As noted in the NWSA call for participants:

Frequently, the Gender and Women's Studies curriculum relies on a 'deferral' model wherein transnational, intersectional and decolonial lenses are taught later on, to complicate earlier frames and lenses which can tend to remain more gender universal or US-centered, presenting concepts—such as feminist 'waves' or whiteness—that upper division courses go on to 'correct.' This institute will examine what it means to introduce women's studies from the start in transnational and intersectional ways. What's more, this institute will ask participants to explore how the field's curriculum can be better aligned with its social justice mandate.

The response to this call for participation in the Curriculum Institute was enormous. NWSA received almost three times more applications than it could accommodate. While we were surprised by the interest in the institute, we believe that this attention signifies a shared commitment to developing just, effective, and transformational Gender and Women's Studies pedagogies and curricula. This commitment, as we witnessed over the course of the two-day workshop, also indexes growing anxieties and deepening concerns over the changing meanings of the field of Gender and Women's Studies and its multiple and varied curricular mandates across a variety of institutional sites and states.

As teachers employed variously in freestanding GWS programs and departments at both public and private universities and colleges in the United States, each of us navigates Gender and Women's Studies curriculum in our own way. Our interventions at the NWSA Curriculum Institute reflected our varied raced, sexed, and classed positionalities as well as our disciplinary backgrounds and our own specific institutional locations. Three of us are senior professors in Gender and Women's Studies and one of us is an emergent colleague. While we are currently located in the U.S., some of us negotiate multiple homes and belongings and often cross literal and metaphorical national borders in our lives and in our work in the classroom. We come from several disciplinary trainings that have shaped our entries into the field of Gender and Women's Studies and our multiple and varying approaches to its histories, meanings, and mandates. We have taught a wide range of students—from first-generation and/or non-traditional to elite and highly privileged students. All of us have taught or are currently teaching the introductory course to Gender and Women's Studies, and we have collectively and individually invested considerable time, energy, and labour in designing syllabi, planning courses, and teaching materials that both introduce students to formative works in Gender and Women's Studies and chart current trends and signal new developments in our fields. We have also, over time, revised our courses in ways that demonstrate our own shifting investments in feminism and that map the disciplinary changes in Gender and Women's Studies. As facilitators of the institute, we shared our experiences in GWS classrooms and we reflected on our different approaches to where, who, what, and how we teach. Our experiences, which span four decades in the U.S. academy, demonstrate the opportunities and challenges of academic feminism and feminist/womanist pedagogies. In the following exploration, we focus on the intro course, a course that has become ubiquitous in the Gender and Women's Studies curriculum.

Considered a building block for a degree in Women's Studies, the introductory course typically serves as a requirement or a core elective, often satisfying a writing intensive, humanities, social sciences, and/or liberal arts curricular emphasis and, in some cases, a "diversity" requirement for general education. It is also often viewed as an entry into interdisciplinary academic areas of study that explicitly emphasize social justice as a curricular mandate and an area of engagement and inquiry. In the introductory course, students are often taught to distinguish between concepts like sex and gender and think about the intersection of gender with categories like race, class, and ability. This conceptual and intersectional work makes apparent to our students the anti-oppressive mandates and histories of feminism

we endeavor to teach. It is also in the Introduction to Gender and Women's Studies that we draw connections between local and global feminisms to articulate their histories as collective struggles for civil rights and liberties, women's, trans, and queer resistances, and anti-war movements. Because making these links often demands personal reflection and serious commitment from our students, teachers often must address considerable resistance against concepts considered imperative to the Gender and Women's Studies classroom. From our experiences, we know that the introductory course in Gender and Women's Studies provides an important space where difficult questions are often asked and where contentious, but crucial, debates can and do take place. Although most Gender and Women's Studies departments and programs offer the introductory course on a regular basis, we acknowledge that there are great variations in both philosophical and practical approaches to reading materials and teaching strategies used in the course.

Our essay maps some of these tensions and variations. None of us teaches the introductory course in the same way, and our approaches to the field of Gender and Women's Studies itself are multiple, various, and sometimes even conflicting. This multiplicity is an important part of the field. While we share some similar goals for the introductory course, such as conveying the importance of intersectional thinking about identities and the ways they are constituted through structures of inequality, we also have different concerns about the institutional, curricular, and pedagogical functions the introductory course currently serves. Together, we are committed to thinking about the politics and praxis of this course, and we use the space of this essay to reflect on the labour involved in teaching the introductory GWS course. In the following sections, we offer some suggestions, recommendations, and/or provocations based on our experiences facilitating the NWSA Curriculum Institute and our experiences teaching intro courses. Catherine Orr explores the stories we tell about GWS in introductory courses; Dana M. Olwan questions conventional understandings of transnationalism in the introductory course; Beverly Guy Sheftall explores the value in adopting a comparative approach in the introductory course; and AnaLouise Keating offers suggestions for pedagogies of invitation and transformation. While Orr and Olwan

focus on content (*what* we teach—or don't teach—in our introductory courses), Guy Sheftall and Keating focus on tactics (*how* we teach). Together, we seek to illuminate the curricular projects that we are invested in, continuing a longer trajectory of feminist critique and womanist investigations of institutional, curricular, and pedagogical entanglements, participations, and imbrications in the project of academic feminism and its core building block: the Introduction to Gender and Women's Studies.

Curriculum as Narrative: What Story Are We Telling?
Catherine Orr

My intention for the NWSA Curriculum Institute—what I thought I could offer given my research interests and current writing project—was to outline a meta-perspective on Gender and Women's Studies as a disciplinary-based knowledge project. The introductory course is, after all, a primary site for disciplinary training, not just for the students who take the course, but also for the faculty who teach it. I wanted to provoke some fresh thinking about the course we might assume (rightly or, I suspect, wrongly) to be our easiest prep: intro courses are just about passing along "the basics," right? The fact that the overwhelming majority of the participants at the NWSA Institute showed up with their intro course syllabus in hand, ready to rethink it, seems to indicate otherwise.

This is where the "story" metaphor comes in. For this, my thanks goes, in large part, to Clare Hemmings' (2011) work on GWS narratives. Her book, *Why Stories Matter,* has helped me think about disciplines as narrative constructions that, like all narratives, are highly selective and deeply invested in particular outcomes. To do the work of enticing institute participants to reframe their thinking about the role of the introductory course, I started my talk with a series of questions about the investments we have in our own GWS curriculum, the role the intro course plays in its developmental arc, and the outcomes we seek to produce in our students and our programs/departments.

What is the story we are asking our various GWS stakeholders—faculty, students, administrators—to be a part of? What narrative of the discipline, in other words, are we asking them to see themselves within? An even more difficult question might be: Does the story our curriculum tells about the discipline serve those we

seek to reach with it? Who, in other words, is not in the room when we seek to tell the story of why GWS matters? Given that introductory Gender and Women's Studies courses are typically the curricular places where we have the most people we'll ever have in the room, what compels us to say what we say? Perhaps another way to ask this is: Where did we get this story?

One response to that last question is that we've been disciplined, although not in the same way, of course. We've had our own unique training, most of us in another discipline (even as our Ph.D. programs produce more and more graduates each year). Another response is that our stories are likely influenced by the disciplinary artifacts we've worked with and, for some of us, helped produce. Textbooks, for example, are designed to pass on particular stories about disciplines. And often those textbooks play an outsized role—because we're busy, because we were handed this class at the last minute, because we never had the opportunity to really think about what we really want our intro course to introduce—in the stories we tell.

The problem, however, is that in telling one story, it usually means that we're not telling another—or we are only able to tell that other story in an additive kind of way. So I'm always interested in hearing from other GWS practitioners: What stories do we think *must* be told and to what extent is this couched in our disciplinary training? What stories cannot be told? What is the sacred: that which cannot be questioned? What is the profane—that which threatens to undo everything? Can we can begin to "loosen up" the various assumptions we hold about what must be "passed on" in the introductory course? After all, is the dominant narrative the "right" narrative? Put differently, is there just one story to tell? And can one story ever be enough? In other words, is "coverage" a goal we should even contemplate? Clearly, curricula tell stories about what and who is important, and what and who is not. So if we think about the introductory GWS course as Part One of the undergraduate curriculum's narrative arc, what and who exactly is the introductory course introducing as important? What stories do we think are enticing or provocative for our particular students at our particular institution and why? On the other hand, what stories are we duty-bound to pass on to do the work of the discipline regardless of who our students might be? If these are not the same stories, what do we risk by "letting go"

of the dutiful passing on? What other stories could be told?

For example, do we have to tell a story of something called "The Women's Movement" in our intro course? I ask since Becky Thompson (2002), Sherna Berger Gluck (1997), and Rosalyn Baxendall (2001)—to name just some authors I have assigned in more advanced GWS courses—have pointed out some serious problems of race and class exclusions in this story. So, if we don't find their claims about this particular "origin myth" of the discipline compelling, why pass it on? Likewise, do we need "waves?" Astrid Henry's (2012) work has done a good job of calling this metaphor into question for constructing generational divides that sometimes do, but mostly don't, exist. And do we have to make feminism the foundational—and singular—paradigm of the field when a significant number of practitioners in Gender and Women's Studies might prefer a different intellectual tradition (think: womanist or xicanista or queer or trans) or have pointed out the obvious: there are multiple versions of feminism that can fundamentally contradict each other. Obviously, I'm messing with the sacred artifacts of GWS, and evoking some rather profane lines of thinking. And maybe for the students at your institution, these disciplinary artifacts are strategically necessary to pass on. In evoking the profane, I am attempting to draw attention to the fact that we don't always allow ourselves to question whether our intro classes are actually introducing what we think is most worthy of passing on.

Ultimately, I'm asking that we reflect on relationship between what the discipline of Gender and Women's Studies has introduced to us and what we feel compelled to introduce to our students. I wonder what it would take—and what we must let go of—to tell different stories, to imagine different genealogies of the discipline that draw on different social movements grounded in different perspectives to emphasize different outcomes? What stories could we tell our students if anti-lynching campaigns or Idle No More or the Arab Revolutions shifted "The Women's Movement" and feminism to the periphery? Who might show up in our classrooms to hear those stories? (And who might find themselves "decentered" from the expected narrative?) Instead of passing on requisite content—stories that don't allow other stories to be told—my approach seeks to create the space to ask: Which audiences am I trying

to reach? Which stories is that desired audience more likely to see themselves within? Which histories, movements, and identities do my students need to hear, and what is the relationship between those stories and the ones I feel obligated to tell? Obviously, I am suggesting that our versions of the introductory GWS course can, and perhaps should, be driven in more contentious ways by "the local"—our institutional locations and student constituencies (both current and aspirational).

What this discipline has offered me is a place to ask difficult questions about my own investments in what has been passed on to me. I'd like my intro course to be that for my students as well.

Thoughts on "the Transnational" in the Introduction to Gender and Women's Studies Curriculum
Dana M. Olwan

In the field of Gender and Women's Studies, certain concepts have become so salient that they are embraced seemingly unequivocally. Echoing Catherine Orr, Ann Braithwaite, and Diane Lichtenstein's (2012) call that GWS practitioners and teachers in the academy "think more carefully and clearly about the terms we use to do the work we do" (4), I want to use this space to engage both the possibilities and the limitations of terms assumed central to the Gender and Women's Studies curriculum. Rather than normalize and thus obfuscate the meaning of such terms, it is crucial that we constantly challenge the assumptions and foundations undergirding their proliferation across academic spaces.

In designing our Gender and Women's Studies courses and, in particular, the courses that introduce students to our field, then, it is important to ask: What has the wholesale embrace of certain concepts and ideas done for feminist studies in the academy? What are the assumptions being made about their critical capacities and how has their overuse blunted their radical potentials? To address these questions, it is important to note that concepts assumed crucial to GWS curriculum in the United States and Canada may not be as easily or readily applicable in other national or transnational contexts. In other words, certain concepts, assumed key to the field of Gender and Women's Studies and its pedagogic goals in both spaces, might not be able to travel to the "elsewheres" they seek to traverse. As GWS educators, approaching these concepts critically allows us

to assess the pedagogical work they do, or are capable of doing, in short and long-term ways.

In this brief piece, I want to reflect specifically on "the transnational" and its proliferation in academic feminism. As is well known by now, studying the transnational is an aim of many GWS curricular offerings at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. In the academic field of Gender and Women's Studies, the embrace of the transnational has generated a bevy of curricular mandates, syllabi, and content signifying the importance of knowing "the global." From courses about gender in a global perspective, international women and human rights, to introduction to transnational women's studies, the field is now saturated with courses charged with illuminating the realities and struggles of those who our students imagine but (may) never encounter.

As a body of knowledge that strives for global solidarity in a way that "transcends class, race, sexuality, and national boundaries" (Mendoza 2002, 296), the transnational holds much promise and sway in the Gender and Women's Studies curriculum in general and the Introduction to Gender and Women's Studies in particular. And yet the turn to the transnational, as many have noted, is not without dangers. Transnational feminist theory, as Jacqui M. Alexander and Chandra Talpade Mohanty (2005) explain, is a "radical praxis," a vision that is articulated through a "commitment to work systematically and overtly against racialized, heterosexist, imperial, corporatist projects that characterize North American global adventures" (25). While radical and revolutionary, the transnational does have, as both authors concede, a "normativizing" potential (24).

In pointing out the dangers of the transnational as a pedagogical goal, I do not seek to reduce the diverse ways in which it is understood or pedagogically practiced. While there are abundant models for the take up of the transnational, many fail to interrogate its location: Where and by whom does the transnational get theorized and authorized? And how does the embrace of this concept frame our students' understanding of their place within the national space of a global super power such as the United States? What and who does the transnational stand for? Who does it make visible and at what expense? How does it sometimes further, rather than subvert, the exclusionary and gendered logics of the nation-state it seeks to transcend?

While the transnational remains indispensable

to the Introduction to Gender and Women's Studies, these questions help us think through the work that the transnational can do in our classrooms. They can also help illuminate what work the transnational cannot—or will not—do in the courses we teach. I ask these questions because the transnational has often figured centrally in introductory courses to Gender and Women's Studies curriculum. In particular, I am interested in investigating how the transnational as a category of analysis and a modality of study in the introductory course becomes synonymous with "difference" as it is articulated, practiced, and understood at a global scale. Rather than simply focus on the possibilities it creates and knowledge it enables, I am committed to thinking about how the transnational as a pedagogic end goal can become a totalizing discourse, uncritically and too readily incorporated into our curriculum. Drawing on Inderpal Grewal's (2005) critique of human rights regimes, I want to ask about the *regimes* of the transnational. What does the transnational render legible, visible, and intelligible? And what does it render *illegible, invisible, and unintelligible?* Through what processes and to what ends does the transnational become central to the introductory course?

As a person called upon to teach the transnational in a Gender and Women's Studies program, I often reflect on the reasons why I can claim this area of knowledge and expertise in the Gender and Women's Studies curriculum and classroom. While it is due, in part, to the scope of my own research on the travels of discourses about honor crimes between local and global contexts, it is also true that I teach the transnational because of my own location: I teach the transnational because I am assumed to embody it. This point is important to acknowledge as we reflect on how our own racial, social, and national experiences become mobilized in the service of a transnationalized feminist curriculum that, for some students, often provides the first encounter with the global, the international, and the other.

In what ways has this encounter provided students with opportunities to evade interrogating our own (and our students') complicities in histories of violence in our homes? Here I speak specifically of the founding violence of the U.S. as a nation-state built on colonialism and slavery. In our introductory GWS courses, how do we teach our students to be accountable to these histories—both past and ongoing? How might we move

beyond the transnational as a fetishized and othered elsewhere that remains disconnected from the places we inhabit? I am committed to thinking through these questions by engaging with what GWS educators can do for social justice movements unfolding on the very grounds we live on.

Take, for example, two recent and ongoing movements for justice taking place across the borders of the two settler colonial states of U.S. and Canada: the Indigenous Idle No More movement which originated in Canada against targeted legislative attacks on Indigenous bodies, governance, lands, and sovereignty, and immigrant youth in the Undocumented and Unafraid movement and ongoing struggles against deportation and for educational equality in the U.S. These examples, which originate from different but interrelated local contexts, have much to teach us about decolonization in a time of war and empire. As movements encompassing a series of acts, they are designed to contest conditions of colonialism, occupation, racism, and injustice. They both bring our attention to the situated contexts in which oppression becomes articulated and resisted by racialized men, women, and children living in settler colonial states. When incorporated into the Gender and Women's Studies curriculum in serious and sustained ways that help our students understand the inextricable relationships between feminism and social justice activism, both movements also provide students with tools to better recognize and disrupt injustices and oppressions here and elsewhere. They teach students about the importance of understanding the nation-state as a site of routinized threat, violence, and terror in the lives of racialized men, women, and children. They also teach students about the significance of intersectional and cross-border analyses of colonial state power in separate but interconnected sites of control, domination, and resistance.

In short, these movements teach students about the intersectional and systemic nature of oppression. As interconnected movements, they help demonstrate that oppression is not isolated or historic and that equality is not always a radical end goal. More importantly still, these movements teach us to ground ourselves in the "over here" to understand both our collusions with and contestations of hegemonic power where we live and on the lands we occupy. As place-based movements located in Canada and the U.S., activists from Idle No More

and the Undocumented and Unafraid movement help us situate ourselves in the "here and now" of settler colonialism and settler nation-state formations and thus provide concrete visions and strategies for decolonized and violence-free futures. They are movements that challenge assumptions about the transnational as an externalized territory, an othered body, or an essentialized praxis.

These two examples are not offered as an alternative to the study of the transnational, but as a way in which we can understand the transnational in localized terms and contexts. In other words, I invoke them because they challenge our constitution of the transnational as always taking place in *other* geographic contexts. Through anchoring our introductory courses in such contemporary and ongoing examples that are situated in local contexts, GWS instructors can also place themselves in relation to movements for justice and liberation unfolding on the very grounds they live on. In this way, these movements offer GWS educators opportunities to practice pedagogies of accountability and reciprocity; that is, they provide us with ways of teaching inside and outside of the classroom that ask of our students what we ask of ourselves when we focus our attentions on actively challenging transnational contexts of injustice.

In seeking such curricular inclusions, I am aware of the dangers of employing social justice activism in the service of advancing academic feminism. I also realize the problematic ways in which academic feminism renders activism as object of–-*rather than subject of*–-study and inquiry. Here it is important to heed Robyn Wiegman's (2002) caution against a form of activism that is "instrumentalized to the domain of academic professional culture" (24). I bring up those examples, however, as a way through which we can render the transnational local in our Gender and Women's Studies curriculum. Such an approach provides students with more complex understandings of geographies of power and justice, ones that do not presume the transnational as an always already violent elsewhere.

As someone who has regularly taught the Introduction to the Gender and Women's Studies course in a number of academic institutions, I engage the transnational in critical ways that help illuminate the links between the local and the global and which, in turn, can complicate my understanding of feminist commitment to justice. For me, the Gender and Women's Studies curriculum is a crucial site in which limited notions of the transnational that privilege our students and provide them with a false notion of superiority and comfort can be explicitly encountered and willfully challenged.

In spite of the dangers of curricular and pedagogical strategies that do not reproduce or consolidate relationships of power and dominance over those whom we study, the Gender and Women's Studies classroom remains a space in which difficult conversations can and do take place. Our roles as feminist academics, who are implicated in the Gender and Women's Studies academic project, are not simply the replacement of knowledge or its suturing in the service of a curriculum comfortably aligned with the corporate academy and its global ambitions. To this end, it is crucial that we develop critical pedagogical approaches to the transnational that can reshape the Introduction to the Gender and Women's Studies course in the U.S. American and Canadian academy today and reorient its commitment to justice in "the here" and in the here's "elsewheres."

Teaching Introduction to Comparative Women's Studies
Beverly Guy Sheftall

I have been teaching "Introduction to Comparative Women's Studies" (what we call our program at Spelman College) since 1981, the year we established the Women's Research and Resource Center, exactly a century after the founding of the oldest and one of only two historically Black colleges for women in the U.S. The course satisfies one of the college's core requirements, is a requirement for Women's Studies majors and minors, and is open to sophomores, juniors, and seniors. We remain the only historically Black college and university (HBCU) with an undergraduate Women's Studies major. Further, our program emerged within a particular national context and at a particular moment in the evolution of the field. As Gloria T. Hull, Patricia Bell Scott, and Barbara Smith (1982) underscored in the first anthology on Black Women's Studies:

> Women's studies courses focused almost exclusively upon the lives of white women. Black studies, which was much too often male-dominated, also ignored Black women… Because of white women's racism and Black men's sexism, there was no room in either area for a serious consider-

ation of the lives of Black women. And even when they have considered Black women, white women usually have not had the capacity to analyze racial politics and Black culture, and Black men have remained blind or resistant to the implications of sexual politics in Black women's lives. (xx-xxi)

As is frequently the case, my particular institutional location is different from most of my Women's Studies colleagues, at the NWSA Curriculum Institute, and in other scholarly gatherings. Nearly all of the students who enroll in our introductory courses at Spelman, for which we share a common syllabus, are women of African descent, most of whom are from the U.S., though we occasionally have a few students from Morehouse College, the only HBCU for men. On the first day of the introductory course, I introduce myself to the class and have the students introduce themselves so that they will know that who they are as particular human beings is significant in terms of what transpires in the classroom. On the first day of the class, I invite my students to recognize that the majority in the room are Black women, that what they have experienced already is more representative of the lived experience of the world's population (people of colour and women) than what students throughout the U.S. academy read about in most of their classes—that is, the experiences of a small group of Western white men. A significant component of my "oppositional" pedagogy is to decenter Eurocentric male models and experience, and to critique the processes by which we come to believe that whiteness and maleness are the most valuable commodities that humans can possess. Where one begins is very important, so I begin not with the experiences of middle-class, Euro-American women, but with the experiences of Indigenous women, especially Native American women, and women of colour in the U.S. and around the world, especially women of the African Diaspora. During this process, our students are sometimes shocked to learn that the cultural and intellectual heritage of the West is traceable to ancient African civilizations and that "feminism" is not an invention of nineteenth- century Western privileged white women.

Our mostly Black students are also surprised about our approach to the introductory class since they sometimes assume that "all the women are white" and so is feminism. A major focus of the course is an ex-

ploration of the ways in which gender is linked to other asymmetric systems of power and privilege such that systems of oppression are simultaneous and interlocking. In other words, race, class, ethnicity, sexuality, ability, and so on impact how one experiences gender, including gender oppression. Although gender asymmetry is widespread, there is no undifferentiated experience of womanhood. Middle-class, Western, white Christian, heterosexual, able-bodied women are not the norm for an understanding of sex/gender systems globally.

Another challenge involves exploring the ways in which world religions, including Christianity, impact notions of gender. Since the majority of our students at Spelman are practicing Christians, feminist critiques of organized religion are often experienced as unsettling. A provocative question for my students is: What were concepts of the divine during the long course of human history? Scholars have argued that early on humans worshipped many forms of the Great Mother and that agricultural, goddess-oriented worldviews were replaced by patriarchal notions and a concept of divinity as male. These questions help unsettle students' assumptions and thus encourage them to engage with organized religion in ways that may be previously unimaginable or not possible.

I am convinced that what happens in our introductory courses is suitable, even critical, for students everywhere, irrespective of their race, ethnicity, or gender. Students leave this "mandatory" class knowing more about themselves and the world in which they live or don't live, but also feeling connected to the people whom they study and among whom they work. In a compelling essay describing her own revolutionary pedagogy, feminist theorist bell hooks (1989) invokes Miss Annie Mae Moore, her favorite high school teacher, who embodies the idea of the teacher as subversive and who hooks reverentially calls her "pedagogical guardian." As hooks recounts, Miss Moore was:

Passionate in her teaching, confident that her work in life was a pedagogy of liberation, one that would address and confront our realities as black children growing up within a white supremacist culture. Miss Moore knew that if we were to be fully self-realized, then her work, and the work of all progressive teachers, was not to teach us solely the knowledge in books, but to teach us an oppositional world

view—different from that of our exploiters and oppressors, a world view that would enable us to see ourselves not through the lens of racism or racist stereotypes, but one that would enable us to focus clearly and succinctly, to look at ourselves, at the world around us, critically, analytically. (49)

As we strategize about ways to improve our introductory course among the four faculty members who regularly teach it at Spelman and debate about "best practices" in the field, we continue to heed the words of bell hooks. As her reflection on Ms. Moore makes clear, hooks compellingly argues for the need to continuously transform ourselves into better professors, armed with "radical and subversive" feminist strategies which are capable of forging a new world desperately in need of emerging:

> We must learn from one another, sharing ideas and pedagogical strategies…We must be willing to…challenge, change, and create new approaches. We must be willing to restore the spirit of risk—to be fast, wild, to be able to take hold, turn around, transform. (54)

Pedagogies of Invitation and Transformation
AnaLouise Keating

> An invitation establishes the tentative conditions wherein something might happen; it is an anticipatory gesture, always antecedent to something else. It gives permission; it makes an opening. An invitation requests a response; it contains an implicit instruction—répondez, s'il vous plaît.
>
> Emma Cocker, "R.S.V.P." (2010)

I teach at Texas Woman's University (TWU), an almost-open-admissions public university located in north Texas. Our undergraduate students are primarily women, they are generally the first members of their family to attend college, they often have children, and many are single. Although the majority have spent their lives in the state of Texas, they are "diverse" in almost every other way you can imagine—racial/ethnic backgrounds, religious upbringing and practices, economic status, health, sexuality, and so on. Our introductory GWS course, currently titled "Gender & Social Change: Introduction to Multicultural Women's Studies," meets various general education requirements, especially the university-wide mandate for three credit hours in "Multicultural Women's Studies," a mandate that represents the university's attempt to underscore our history as a women's college. Perhaps not surprisingly, given its compulsory status, most students who enroll in "Gender & Social Change" are wary and at least somewhat unwilling to take the course, which they view as an obstacle on their way to their desired degrees, high-paying careers, and happy lives. They don't want to learn about social justice; they believe feminism is "old school" because, after all, women are now equal with men, racism is a thing of the past, and economic disparities are caused by an individual's laziness and can be solved through hard work. In short, students of all colour and backgrounds come into our introductory course with "desconocimientos." I borrow this term from Gloria Anzaldúa (2002), and use it to describe epistemological-ethical ignorance—a willful yet unacknowledged desire to look away from troubling, potentially life-altering information about ourselves and/or our worlds (560).

Unfortunately, I wasn't aware of my students' specific desconocimientos when I began teaching at TWU and my first semester was quite challenging. I assumed that the students self-identified as feminists or womanists, recognized the existence of social injustice, and were eager to learn about Women's Studies. I used bell hooks' (2002) *Feminism Is for Everybody,* excerpts from *This Bridge Called My Back: Radical Writings by Women of Color* (Moraga and Anzaldúa 1983), and other similar texts, naively expecting the authors' provocative words to resonate with students. I could not have been more mistaken. Many reacted almost in knee-jerk fashion to the authors' claims. They rejected bell hooks, replying to her title's bold assertion with their own equally bold assertions: "Nope. Feminism is *not* for me." Because they disagreed so strongly with her opening claim, they were suspicious of (and stubbornly close-minded about) the entire book. Their reactions to discussions of racism, imperialism, and structural inequalities were even more immersed in desconocimientos. I was startled by their limited knowledge of U.S. and global history and their extreme individualism—that is, their belief in each person's complete autonomy, unhampered agency, and full responsibility for their lives—which led them to attribute all social inequities to individual personal failures and laziness.

These reactions compelled me to rethink my oppositional pedagogy and radically revise my introductory course, developing what I now call "pedagogies of invitation." As I use the term, pedagogies of invitation represent a flexible approach to teaching that invites, but does not impose, progressive change on students. Employing invitational pedagogies, I do not judge, condemn, or mock students' perspectives (regardless of how shocking/appalling these perspectives might seem). Nor do I impose my views *on* them. Instead, I remain open to students' views, while establishing a framework for the course that requires them to analyze their views in dialogue with the required readings. By so doing, I model an attitude of respectful open-mindedness and encourage students to adopt a similar approach.

Pedagogies of invitation are based on a framework of interconnectivity. We (defined broadly to include both human and other-than-human beings) are radically interconnected and interdependent in every way we can possibly imagine as well as in ways we have not yet conceived—economically, socially, ecologically, linguistically, physically, and so on. I frame my introductory course around this concept and use it to structure the syllabus and introduce issues of identity formation, social justice, economics, language, and more (Keating 2007). I introduce students to a wide range of overlapping (and sometimes contradicting) perspectives, practices, and worldviews. While I do not advocate an anything-goes relativism—which would tacitly accept racism, sexism, and other systemic oppressions, thus making social change irrelevant, I invite students to put these multiple perspectives and worldviews into conversation. Such difficult dialogues proceed not only through oppositional critique, but also through connectionist thinking: comparing/contrasting, drawing similarities, forging commonalities (which I define not as sameness but as points of similarity which include differences), and so on. I model and invite students to explore relational forms of thinking that value ambiguity, contradiction, and interconnectivity.

Relational thinking can be used to investigate a wide array of issues. Consider, for instance, Catherine Orr's suggestion that we revisit the stories we tell about GWS. In an introductory course, we could present students with a variety of foundational GWS stories (each with its own strengths, weaknesses, and biases) and invite them to employ connectionist thinking to analyze

the stories' implications. We could also put these stories into dialogue with the foundational stories from other academic disciplines. Or, consider Dana M. Olwan's invitation to challenge students' understanding of difference at the global level by locating transnationalism not only "elsewhere," but here – in North America. Relational thinking can facilitate this work. To name only three possibilities: we could teach Idle No More in dialogue with the Arab Revolutions; use Gloria Anzaldúa's critique of the U.S./Mexico border as a lens to examine immigration issues in the U.S., France, and Turkey; or discuss the assumptions made about who can (and cannot) teach transnational issues and perspectives. Or, consider Beverly Guy Sheftall's comparative classroom explorations of the gendered implications of world religions. We could use relational thinking to bring together a variety of perspectives on organized religion, feminist and womanist spiritualities, Christian privilege, the unspoken secularity of GWS, and academic spirit phobia (Keating 2008). The possibilities are almost endless. In order to be effective, however, it's crucial to present these competing, intersecting, overlapping perspectives to students in ways that do not automatically prioritize, subordinate, or rank them, but instead invite genuine reflection and flexible assessments.

Pedagogies of invitation facilitate but do not impose transformation. As I define the term, "transformation" does not represent instantaneous conversion but rather a long-term, ongoing process – a type of healing that moves us towards balance and relationality by facilitating the recognition of our radical interconnectedness (Keating 2013). This definition helps me to moderate my expectations. While I hope that students will be radically transformed by my course, I understand that change takes time, often happens outside the classroom and after the semester concludes, and exceeds conscious control. Transformation is more likely to occur when I remain flexible, open-minded, and willing to be changed by what and who I teach. Transformation involves reciprocity. My experience teaching the GWS introductory course illustrates one form this reciprocity can take: the students' resistance transformed my pedagogical approach and taught me the limitations of oppositional discourse.

Like critical pedagogy, pedagogies of invitation work in the service of social justice. However, whereas critical pedagogy generally focuses on critique and

often proceeds through various modes of oppositional thought (overt critiques of social injustice and explorations of *anti*-sexism, *anti*-racism, and so on), pedagogies of invitation employ relational, connectionist thinking. Thus, for example, in my revised course, I did not start with discussions of feminism or systemic inequalities but instead adopted a historical framework designed to subtly challenge my students' specific desconocimientos (their willed ignorance about U.S. settler colonialism, imperialism, and individualism's limitations). I invite students to consider our imbrication with the past: we are all the products of history and history itself has been reshaped and retold multiple times. Until we examine and more fully comprehend our histories as well as the limited versions of history we've previously encountered, we cannot transform the present or future. In a recent iteration of the introductory course, I began with Sally Roesch Wagner's (2001) *Sisters in Spirit: Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) Influence on Early American Feminists* and Octavia Butler's (1988) *Kindred* for several reasons. These texts invite students to rethink their limited (mainstream) definitions of feminism and introduce them to settler colonialism, gendered complexities of slavery, and other historical dimensions that many had never considered. They also provide concrete examples of our inter-relatedness and demonstrate the limitations in students' belief in each individual's complete autonomy and independence. Including these texts at the outset of the course fundamentally restructured the introductory course and enabled students to develop more nuanced understandings of the course material. It also enabled me to lay the groundwork for the types of dialogic explorations of transnationalism that Dana M. Olwan describes above.

Pedagogies of invitation are *multiple* in terms of tactics, techniques, perspectives, approaches, worldviews, etc.; *context-specific,* defining context broadly, to include audience, occasion, topic, etc.; and *visionary*, but not naïve—aspiring for individual and collective transformation, while acknowledging that transformation is painful, unexpected, and cannot be fully controlled. These characteristics make invitational pedagogies extremely flexible and diverse, ready to be reshaped by your specific contexts and students.

Differing Realities, Interconnected Pedagogical Visions (or, no easy answers)

In her introduction to *Pedagogies of Crossing: Mediations on Feminism, Sexual Politics, Memory and the Sacred*, Jacqui M. Alexander (2005) questions inherited knowledge formations and disrupts geographic and disciplinary boundaries that "distort vision" and prohibit the central pedagogical imperative of making "reciprocal investments" in both teaching and learning (6). For Alexander, this imperative can be best understood as the desire to "[make] the world in which we live intelligible to ourselves and to each other—in other words, teaching ourselves" (6). A seasoned teacher in the field of Gender and Women's Studies, Alexander reminds us about the importance of attending to the multiple and intersecting "makeshift classrooms" that we inhabit, encouraging us to consider what we teach, how we teach, and the various "challenges that arise in the task of demystifying domination" (8). Alexander's insistence on attending to questions of pedagogy in addressing sites of violence, oppression, and resistance animates the dispersed but interconnected academic and intellectual sites that each author of this article occupies and maps out individually and collectively. Like Alexander, we question inherited knowledge formations, especially as these formations have shaped the field of GWS. As GWS educators and intellectual workers, committed to the promises of resistance and social justice which GWS holds for many, how do we teach ourselves and the students who enter our classrooms about the worlds they occupy in ethical, non-hierarchical, and even revolutionary ways? How do we teach to transform and what are the possibilities and limits inherent in both the institutionalization of our field and the introductory course curriculum we develop and enact?

Our experiences at the NWSA Curriculum Institute remind us of the urgency of these pedagogical issues to many GWS practitioners. In our various ways, we have each tried to address our own questions without offering definitive answers. Indeed, there *are* no definitive answers, no easy recommendations for teaching GWS or for organizing the introductory course. There is no standard approach, no perfect canonical text, no singular history that should always be included. During the Curriculum Institute and again in this article, we have tried to underscore this lack of certainty as well as the need for intellectual humility and careful atten-

tion to the specificity of each educator's pedagogical location—and thus their limitations. Rather than offer specific guidelines for how to develop and teach the perfect introductory course, we have shifted the focus to consider broader, underlying angles of vision such as the questions expressed in the above paragraph. Each contributor explored these and related questions from a variety of embodied perspectives informed by our varied locations, investments, and imbrications in the academic field of feminism. As feminist and/or womanist scholars, we each teach in ways that explicitly and willfully refuse to replicate relationships of power and dominance and in order to actively challenge social, classed, gendered, and sexual hierarchies and oppressions. Our pedagogical commitments across the many makeshift and real classrooms in which we teach center around our ability to make the GWS curriculum a site where difficult conversations occur. These conversations, however differently we may approach them, always seek to enable students to recognize and confront systematic and interconnected oppressions that inform their lives and the lives of others. To us, this goal—above all others—remains central to the work that we each do in the feminist classrooms and to our commitments to teaching the introductory course in the GWS curriculum.

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Unlearning Introductions: Problematizing Pedagogies of Inclusion, Diversity, and Experience in the Gender and Women's Studies Introductory Course

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Abstract

This article interrogates the ways in which the ideas of diversity, experience, and inclusion became central to the introductory Gender and Women's Studies (GWS) course at one institution and the way that various stakeholders define and interpret these terms. After providing a short local history and analyzing current and former instructors' understandings of these concepts as they function in the GWS introductory classroom, the authors further explore these themes with two case studies: transgender inclusion and Native American feminisms.

Résumé

Cet article s'interroge sur la manière dont les idées sur la diversité, l'expérience, et l'inclusion sont devenues centrales au cours d'introduction Études sur le genre et les femmes (EGF) dans un établissement d'enseignement et sur la manière dont les divers intervenants définissent et interprètent ces termes. Après avoir fourni un bref historique local et analysé la compréhension de ces concepts par les professeurs actuels et anciens lorsqu'ils exercent dans le cours d'introduction EGF, les auteurs explorent ces thèmes plus avant dans le cadre de deux études de cas : l'inclusion transgenre et les féminismes autochtones.

In Spring 2013, a small group of senior Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies (WGSS) majors began talking with faculty about the introductory course at the State University of New York at New Paltz (SUNY New Paltz), a public comprehensive college in the U.S. Northeast.[1] While this course has long been popular on campus with students often talking about its eye-opening and life-changing power, these students experienced a disconnect between what they learned in our introductory course, "Women: Images and Realities," and subsequent upper-division courses. Some worried that important theoretical frameworks were left untouched with students who continued in the major experiencing a certain degree of "unlearning" of material or concepts from that early semester. Our program, which has a long history of working closely with students, took these concerns seriously and so we invited anyone who wished to further this conversation to do so in formal meetings as well as in other WGSS classes.

The timing was fortuitous. That same semester, WGSS faculty met to discuss a journal article authored by Toby Beauchamp and Benjamin D'Harlingue (2012) that critiqued our course text, a home-grown anthology edited by three colleagues. Not surprisingly, faculty expressed a range of reactions to, and counter-critiques of, this article. The three of us (one newly tenured, one up for tenure, and one recently hired) experienced these conversations as an opening; in sharing our own reflections and dissatisfactions with each other, we found that we held similar perspectives. As we began to talk more openly about the course, which all of us had taught, we realized we had more questions than answers.

At first, our inquiry centered on why it seemed so difficult to change the intro course. We were familiar with the challenges shared by many institutions, especially the fact that the class served two primary student populations. It functioned as our majors' gateway course at the same time that it reached a wider range of non-majors, mainly because it fulfilled our institution's general education requirement in "Diversity" (hereafter, GE-DIVR). We were also familiar with the course's unique characteristics: as a team-taught class that includes one shared lecture and multiple discussion sections with a roster of full-time and part-time instructors, any change was a team effort. The course's storied history as a collaborative endeavor stretched back to its inception, in 1974, with distinct advantages (with a

teaching team numbering between five and six instructors, we had the ability to draw on interdisciplinary expertise to keep the course going, despite changes in personnel) as well as disadvantages (despite everyone's best efforts to work together, each instructor was differently situated in the institution and, at the end of the day, the course "belonged" to no one person). From a logistical standpoint, it was far easier to make tweaks from semester to semester rather than substantial overhauls. This, plus the assumed collective commitment to our text, posed unique constraints that we didn't face in other classes.

Our initial thoughts about the whys of the course hinged mainly on our sense of the larger field and its growing pains; but as we embarked on more systematic research into the course's history, we discovered a more complicated story. This was not primarily about the move from women to gender, though it was partly that. This was also a story about structures, resources, and externally imposed constraints; about the effects of growing inequities in contemporary university settings; about the challenges and opportunities of team teaching; and most salient for this essay, about the centrality of "diversity," "inclusion," and "experience" in the field of GWS. As we conducted oral histories with former and current instructors, researched the history of GE-DIVR at our institution, reflected on comments written by students, and scoured syllabi and teaching materials since the course's inception, we realized that the different stakeholders in our course all held varying ideas about what these terms meant and why and how they should be taught.

Perhaps this should come as no surprise. The text and the course were founded on the concept of "diversity" as a project of inclusion and, ultimately, both personal and institutional transformation. In this, the course mirrored the founding moment of Women's Studies more broadly, which sought to open up new sources of knowledge and challenge the heteropatriarchal foundations of existing disciplines and academic institutions by centering the lived experiences and intellectual ideas of those who had been marginalized and excluded. The Women's Studies Program at SUNY New Paltz, established in 1972, was one of the earlier curricula created in the U.S. and carried the distinction of being the "flagship" Women's Studies major in the SUNY system. At our institution, as at many others,

the effort to center women emerged alongside the understanding that the category "woman" included many different kinds of women. The focus on race, class, and sexuality (particularly lesbian identities) was modeled in our text, first published in 1994, which from its inception was a "multicultural" anthology. Likewise, the introductory course's team-taught structure was often explained as a model of diversity with differences between instructors (especially concerning disciplinary training) enabling the class to model a range of approaches and perspectives.

This focus on diversity, experience, and inclusion resided within a feminist commitment to changing institutions through the work of building Women's Studies and transforming larger structures and policies. Forty years later, the context has shifted. Our own questioning of the very assumptions and structures of the introductory course—with each other as well as with our students—mirrored the self-reflexive turn in GWS more broadly, as articulated by theorists such as Claire Hemmings (2011), Robyn Wiegman (2012), and the contributors to collections such as *Rethinking Women's and Gender Studies* (2012). Had diversity, experience, and inclusion come to mean something different in the context of the neoliberal university, which had coopted discourses of "multiculturalism" and "diversity" and was increasingly becoming a place that exacerbated social inequalities, rather than remedying them? What did these terms mean when the success of GWS posed new questions: what was possible within the context of an interdiscipline still besieged, in some contexts, while it was also part of the academic establishment and colonial project (Arvin, Tuck, and Morrill 2013)? Indeed, how was our introductory course an institution with its own momentum and logic?

Finally, we were led back to reflect on our own positions as scholars with privileged positions in the larger university, yet who were also relative newcomers to the introductory course. Our teaching team includes power differentials present in the subject positions of our instructors (a mix of tenured, tenure-track, and contingent faculty across a range of seniorities) as well as in individual orientations to the introductory course and the field (as a result of different kinds and levels of academic training, disciplinary identification, and generational cohort). How, then, could we "do" the intro course in ways that were feminist and collaborative,

while also acknowledging sometimes difficult to reconcile differences when it came to conceptualizing the larger field of GWS?

In this essay, we identify and interrogate the ways in which the ideas of diversity, experience, and inclusion became central to "Women: Images and Realities" and particularly the way that various stakeholders define and interpret these terms. The article understands championing diversity (of identity and perspectives) as an early and defining goal of the field that existed alongside and eventually eclipsed initial articulations of the universality of (white, heterosexual) women's experiences. A possible pathway to "good" feminist pedagogy emerged: incorporate as many distinct perspectives as possible in any given text or course. Concurrently, however, post-structuralism asked scholars to question the validity of these categories, problematizing simple notions of "experience" and the stable humanist subject. In many ways, tensions between these approaches still haunt feminism and the field of GWS, perhaps nowhere more so than the intro course.

Precisely because we have had so many people collaboratively involved in "Women: Images and Realities" over the last forty years, our introductory course provides a particularly rich case study in thinking through varied approaches within GWS to these concepts. In the sections that follow, we provide a short local history of our course and then analyze current and former instructors' understandings of diversity, inclusion, and experience as they function in the GWS intro classroom. We then further explore these themes with two particular case studies, trans inclusion and Native American feminisms, to shed light on the actual and the possible.

The Introductory Course: A Local History

From its inception, our introductory course has been a team-taught large lecture with smaller discussion sections that each instructor leads. It typically enrolls between 100-150 students with each discussion section capped at 25 students. Given its organization, our course is somewhat of an oddity at our institution, more closely approximating some survey introductory courses taught at larger research institutions, except that our discussion sections are taught by the same faculty who team-teach the lecture portion instead of by graduate students. The course is a requirement for both

majors and minors in WGSS, but also enrolls other students from across the university who always outnumber WGSS majors and minors, primarily because this course satisfies the university's GE-DIVR requirement.

For many students, "Women: Images and Realities" serves as a watershed experience. A significant subset who have some interest in the interdiscipline, feminism, or other activism take the course because it speaks to them. Once enrolled, their experience in the class sometimes results in a declared major or minor in WGSS. As one graduating senior reflected in an intellectual autobiography for senior seminar, the intro course was a "pivotal moment in the shaping of my academic career."

For others, university requirements—not an existing interest—pull them to the course. Another graduate indicated that the requisite GE-DIVR course encouraged her to take "Women: Images and Realities," where she gained a "first glimpse into the world that would become my life." The class thus has the ability to engage and captivate students. It provides them an analytical framework with which to read their past and present, the personal and political, and the scholastic and social.

Without question, the course's GE-DIVR designation bolsters its numbers. Our institution first adopted a GE plan for the academic year 1983-1984 and placed the Women's Studies introductory course in the "Studies in Society and Human Organization" category. Roughly ten years later, a revision of the plan transferred the class to the newly formed category of "GE Cultural Diversity." Program documents indicate that this move was initiated by the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences Faculty Senate with Women's Studies Program support. A longtime faculty member and program coordinator recalled specifically that the impetus for change came from outside of the program: it was the college's faculty senate who believed the introductory course taught diversity. Senators placed the introductory course in the GE-DIVR category not because it focused on race, class, and ethnicity (which it did), but because it was about women. Thus, at the time, the subject "women" seemingly rendered the class culturally diverse. The program neither fought nor championed this decision. Revealing that perceptions of diversity within the program exceeded the university's, the Women's Studies coordinator concurred in a letter to the curriculum committee

that, although the program itself had not lobbied for the diversity designation, it could support it as "the perspectives of different groups of women are presented in this course enabling students to understand the intersection of race, class, ethnicity and gender in women's lives" (Letter from Women's Studies Program to Curriculum Committee, April 14, 1993).

Concurrent with the transition to GE-DIVR, the introductory course underwent a second significant change. After roughly twenty years of assigning course packs, fiction, and other readings, three program faculty members published a Women's Studies intro text, titled after the course, *Women: Images and Realities*. First published in 1994, some of its original editors noted that the impetus for the book was a desire to address what they perceived as a real need in the field: an accessible, comprehensive anthology that addressed multiculturalism and included as many important issues and as many different women's voices as possible. Then, as now, the text included a range of kinds of writing, from creative pieces to analytical essays, both in their entirety as well as excerpts. According to one of the text's original editors, "things have improved, but when it first came out it was definitely the most multicultural text that was out there." Estimates of book sales support that the book filled a needed gap. The first edition of the text sold roughly 40,000 copies. The second edition sold an estimated 30,000 copies with all subsequent editions (third, fourth, and fifth) selling approximately 20,000.[2]

In sum, our intro course is both anomalous and familiar. Some factors differentiate this class from others such as its team-taught structure with discussion sections absent TAs. Yet, many more elements substantiate the course as quite customary; for example, its longevity and diversity designation put it in conversation with other such programs in North America. Moreover, both the course and text are premised on a pedagogy of inclusion and diversity, where exposure to a broad range of experiential knowledge is key. In the next section, we look more closely at what, exactly, this means for the people who teach it.

Pedagogies of Diversity, Inclusion, and Experience

Although our introductory course satisfies the GE-DIVR requirement, no current or former instructors saw the university mandate to "teach diversity" as a fundamental influence in terms of how they ad-

dress diversity-related issues in the course. However, instructors who were at SUNY New Paltz at the time recalled that the switch to the GE-DIVR designation *did* change the course: class sizes increased with more students enrolling to satisfy general education requirements instead of being drawn to the course because of interest in the topic. Instructors at the time welcomed these changes, primarily because the message of the course would reach more students, especially students who might not otherwise self-select into a "feminist course." Over time, however, as more and more courses were included in the GE-DIVR category, some instructors were concerned that the composition of the class had changed because students began selecting GE-DIVR courses that either matched their own identities or made them feel most comfortable. For example, one former instructor worried that white students avoided courses focusing on race and/or communities of color and another commented that the intro classroom became whiter over time.

Despite these shifts, diversity remained a very salient—even a central—category, both in the course itself and for many instructors who have taught it. The *Women: Images and Realities* text is premised largely on a logic of "inclusion," where representing as many different social groups of women as possible is a key driver of the choice of material. Instructors who taught at the time the course received its GE-DIVR designation recalled that changes were not made because the course was already premised on this model of "inclusion." Nothing that our course included the experiences and perspectives of many different groups of women (instead of simply "women" per the GE-DIVR requirement), one longtime adjunct laughingly noted that "diversity is what we do." As another faculty member and *Women: Images and Realities* editor recalled, "we've always been inclusive," referring to the way the course is built around the inclusion of a diverse array of women.

Our conversations with fellow instructors revealed a range of answers to the question of what it means to "teach diversity." Some conceptualized diversity as a project of inclusion, where representing the experiences and perspectives of as many different kinds of women as possible is at the heart of the pedagogical mission of GWS. This understanding—to redress the exclusions of white heteropatriarchal knowledge formation and transmission—is in keeping with the historical mission of GWS. As well, several instructors expressed the need to teach diverse experiences and perspectives so that they reflect students' own experiences and social locations. This was sometimes talked about as a strategy to get students to relate to the material and course as an end goal and sometimes talked about as a tactic to encourage students to develop a feminist political consciousness (whether that be to "identify as feminists" or to "become critical thinkers"). In both of these overlapping modes (making the course "relatable" to students; sparking feminist political consciousness), inclusion and diversity dovetail with another key and often-expressed tactic: a focus on "experience."

Perhaps like other GWS introductory classes, our course meets the goals of inclusion and diversity primarily through first-person experiences. Almost half (47 percent) of the *Women: Images and Realities* anthology is comprised of narrative-based pieces (predominantly first-person stories, plus poetry, fiction, and narrative journalism), while slightly more than half (53 percent) are argument-based (a mix of journalism, academic writing, manifestos, and white papers), though some pieces in the latter category (slightly more than 1/3) include an authorial "I" woven into the argument. The textual focus on first-person narrative is augmented by personal experiences shared by some instructors and students.

In our assessment, students really connect with the first-person narratives, which is not surprising. Indeed, the insight that the "personal is political" was a central strategy of the second-wave feminist movement in the U.S., one that informed consciousness-raising groups and, when GWS was founded, many feminist classrooms as well. In many ways, the third-wave (and beyond) continued to support personal and narrative feminist analyses, while broadening the scope of who might fit under the umbrella of feminist. These can be effective strategies. They create space for the articulation of counter-narratives and counter-knowledges and provide one of the major theoretical underpinnings of our course text ("Images and Realities"): "realities" are aligned with experience and "images" with hegemonic myths and narratives.

Despite the ways in which this framework can be critiqued as potentially simplistic (reducing "realities" to "experiences"; foreclosing discussions about the ways in which "reality" is constructed), our conversations

with instructors highlighted the positive dimensions of this focus: it helps students relate to the course; it allows students to see their own experiences in newly politicized ways; it invites students to understand the experiences of groups that are different from them; it asks students to draw links between themselves and others, including the students in the classroom; and, finally, it pushes students to situate their own and others' experiences within the context of broader systems of inequality, allowing them to interpret experiences in terms of structural-level forms of privilege and oppression. It is thus the inclusion of diverse experiential knowledges that allows students to recognize themselves in course materials, to learn about groups they may not have been exposed to, and, ideally, to interpret individual experiences in structural terms that help them understand, and ultimately challenge, forms of inequality.

An experiential focus also fits for some with a general skepticism about making the course too "theoretical." This was expressed as especially particular to the introductory course, where it's important not to "scare students off." Opinions were divided on this topic with some instructors wary of incorporating difficult theory in an introductory course (and, in some cases, more broadly). One former instructor noted the centrality of the "consciousness-raising model" to the course and another noted the singularity of the intro course: unlike other college classes, it "draws in [students] without having them say this is just like my other classes in terms of being overly theoretical."

By contrast, other instructors were critical of the course's reliance on first-person experience and viewed the "lack of theory" as a "problem." While additional theoretical frameworks are introduced in lectures and discussion sections (which allow instructors to engage students in conversations about how first-person texts theorize), these complaints reveal some differences of opinion about the role of "experience" and "theory" in the classroom.

Rethinking Diversity, Experience, and Inclusion

Several instructors noted additional limitations of basing the course so heavily on diversity, inclusion, and experience. The notion of diversity adopted in the class is premised on identifying existing categories of difference (for example, "different kinds of women" based on race, class, sexuality, etc.) and ensuring that there is broad representation through categorical inclusion. Yet, the impossibility of actually accomplishing such a task was signaled by several members of the teaching team. Others acknowledged this impossibility, while arguing that inclusivity must remain a primary goal of the course. For example, a longtime faculty member noted that the introductory course has a "very special place" in GWS and is thus different from other courses: we have to strive for inclusivity because it is the key to individual and collective empowerment in the intro course. As she noted, "It's impossible and we have to try. The introductory course has a special mission."

We suggest that the phrase "special mission" illuminates a particular understanding of the course and its *sui generis* nature, present at the moment of its founding, but also powerful today. It points to the uneasy relationship between the founders of Women's Studies—at our institution and more broadly—and the narrow confines of individual academic disciplines and academia. Women's Studies was supposed to change the academy and provide students with an opportunity to do what they did not do in other courses: reflect on their own experience, participate as equals in the process of creating knowledge, and learn how to work for social change. The core elements of the intro course (consciousness-raising, team-teaching, interdisciplinarity) were all ways in which the course modeled and signaled its difference, its "special mission" that set it apart from college as usual. Perhaps institutional designations, such as GE-DIVR, never registered for some instructors because there were so many ways in which the course did not "fit" into existing university structures. This narrative about the course's "special" identity made possible a liberatory vision of what education could be. Forty years later, we wonder, has this story contributed to the bifurcation of such categories as "experience" versus "theory"? Has it led to the privileging of certain forms of experience over theory as a way of resisting the professionalized university and maintaining ties to feminist activism? Has it partly obscured the realities of our course's institutional setting and of the field more broadly?

A few instructors shared our concerns and questions, seeing the task of inclusion as not only impossible, but also potentially counter-productive. For example, one faculty member asked, what does the will to "be diverse" and include different voices satisfy? While the

course (along with some iterations of the field) may be premised on including experiences that have been "covered up," this diversifying move can also be exoticizing (akin to "anthropological voyeurism"), encouraging a liberal pluralistic approach that remains individualist in its analysis, actively working against the broadly shared goal of illuminating systems of inequality. Thus, diversity and inclusion have the potential for both illuminating *and* obscuring a system-level focus on inequality.

Along with several instructors, we worry that placing such emphasis on the inclusion of "diverse experiences" unwittingly precludes the difficult work of intellectual critique and engagement. Learning to listen *is* difficult, of course, as is the act of sharing with others. Yet, when we share personal stories in the classroom today, we do so in a changed culture, one that offers to many students (though certainly not all) copious opportunities to share. Neoliberal hyper-individualism and the rise of "empowerment" feminism, without any accompanying structural critique, threaten to co-opt and depoliticize private narratives (Allen 1998; Kabeer 1999; Batliwala 2007; Valenti 2014; Faludi 2014). In a globalized, virtual, and media-saturated world, the classroom provides a space where students can work on moving beyond a superficial social media "like." We want students to move beyond themselves and to evaluate, contextualize, and think in nuanced ways about "experience." Might more sustained attention to the structures, uses, and effects of "personal narrative" and "experience" help students ask more questions and develop more critical tools to interpret and construct meaning?

Inclusion and diversity seen through the prism of social categories and experiential knowledge can create additional tensions or shortcomings in the classroom. Different approaches to the role and prominence of categorical inclusion may mean that instructors evaluate teaching successes differently. One longtime instructor talked about her dissatisfaction with how race is taught and discussed among students in part because of the lack of a racially diverse student body in the classroom. She addressed the limits of having students "represent" their race, but also the ways in which the class was "better" when there were more African American students enrolled (here again noting the whitening of our intro course's student composition as one unforeseen consequence of the proliferation of GE-DIVR course offerings). The focus on sharing of experiential knowledge

linked to categorical inclusion can mean that this version of "lack of inclusion" or "lack of diversity" is seen as a failure.[3] Another instructor noted that the course is particularly strong concerning race because of the inclusion of reading material that provides a theoretical framework beyond simply sharing experiences, pointing students toward an analysis of structural racial inequality instead of simply different individual racialized experiences. These two approaches are not necessarily incommensurate with one another, yet these different ways of assessing the course provide insight into how a focus on particular versions of diversity and inclusion shape understandings of both what we are doing and how well we do it.

Problematic Uses of Categorical Inclusion

Ongoing discussions concerning trans inclusion in our introductory course provide a window into some of the thorny issues associated with a "pedagogy of inclusion" approach. The general focus on categorical inclusion means that the course and its contents (topics, readings, lectures, etc.) are often evaluated based on how they succeed at incorporating excluded groups. Text editors and course instructors have indicated in either formal interviews or other settings that the text and course would benefit from more trans inclusion. But what, exactly, does "more trans inclusion" mean and how might it be accomplished?

At the time of this writing, the teaching team had not yet held focused, in-depth discussions on these questions, yet the seemingly self-evident call for more trans inclusion itself may shed light on taken-for-granted assumptions underlying an "inclusion through diverse experiences" approach. Some instructors have explicitly recommended including more trans voices as a key remedy for these shortcomings, noting that "transgender omission [in the text] has been a real problem" and thus calling for "more transgender experiences." But *how* trans voices (or the voices and analyses of *any* individual or group) are included can shape the messages that those voices convey in productive and/or counter-productive ways. Further, the degree to which "voices," or experiential forms of knowledge, are the best teaching tools is up for analysis and debate.

Beauchamp and D'Harlingue (2012) address these kinds of questions in their analysis of some of the broad ramifications of particular approaches to trans

and related issues adopted in the GWS classroom. They base their analysis in part on a reading of the general conceptual framework of *Women: Images and Realities* alongside its inclusion of transgender-related material. The edition of the text that they review includes just one reading directly addressing trans issues (the current edition includes that same piece with no additional trans-related material).[4] Given that the *Women: Images and Realities* text centers around the inclusion of diverse forms of experiential knowledge, it's not surprising that the chapter in question, "Courage from Necessity" (by Mr. Barb Greve), is a first-person "coming out" story of sorts, where Greve's authentically expressed gender as a trans guy who does not identify within existing sex/gender binaries serves as the narrative pay-off. This chapter is potentially instructive vis-à-vis social constructionist understandings that form a baseline for much contemporary feminist analysis; moreover, it could work to challenge simple and outmoded "sex is biology" and "gender is socially constructed" framings of social constructionist theory.[5] Yet, when analyzed in the context of the overall text, Beauchamp and D'Harlingue conclude that the piece actually works *against* accomplishing such goals.

How, according to Beauchamp and D'Harlingue, does the inclusion of a transgender voice produce effects that undermine the productive challenge and promise contained in some of Transgender Studies' contributions to GWS thinking and teaching? In the most recent version of the *Women: Images and Realities* text (5th Edition), "Courage from Necessity" appears in the "Learning Gender" section; in the previous edition, that same piece appeared in "The Perils of Heterosexism" section. Beauchamp and D'Harlingue (2012) argue that the combination of a quasi-biological essentialist approach framing the entire text, along with the placement of this particular piece among analyses of the effects of heterosexism on lesbians and women, ultimately work together to construct transgender men "as anomalous" and transgender women as "an impossibility" (30). Ultimately, they argue that transgender inclusion here works via what they call an "exceptionalizing framework," where trans people are positioned as exceptions that ultimately render them "more constructed" than non-trans people, leaving non-trans embodiment and identity as natural and unproblematized. Instead of illustrating the ways that the sex/gender system is coer-

cive and constructed for all of us, the use of this piece in this particular way conveys that sex is constructed for some of us (trans "exceptions," for example), whereas for the rest of us (cisgender people, for example), sex simply *is*. Based on Beauchamp and D'Harlingue's interpretation of this textual framing, "inclusions" of this sort end up doing more harm than good.

While some members of our teaching team have called for more inclusion of transgender experiences, others have linked these issues more broadly to questions of how we teach sex and gender in ways that may fit more closely with the intervention Beauchamp and D'Harlingue make. Questions remain, of course, about the scope and form of materials best suited to teach such topics. One instructor noted that dissatisfaction on the part of some students and instructors with the way that sex and gender are taught (in that sex has sometimes been presented or understood as a *given* upon which gender is *built*) have been present since she's taught the course. She went on to say that the "sex/gender thing" only comes up around trans issues. While the constructedness of sex/gender may initially be most apparent to our students in terms of trans issues for a number of reasons (for example, based on the political education concerning sex and gender that students attuned to these issues may have already undergone), the challenge for us in designing pedagogical strategies is to resist reducing this issue to one of categorical inclusion; capitulating to that way of framing these issues recreates the kind of *normative center* versus *exceptional* (yet supposedly pedagogically illustrative) *outsider* that Beauchamp and D'Harlingue (along with many others) caution against reproducing. Here, the way in which we include heretofore marginalized groups may work to increase, not decrease, forms of marginalization.

Discussions of trans-related issues also illuminate tensions within the broader GWS field that may not be fully thematized for students via an "inclusion of diverse experiences" approach. For instance, in the context of discussing the contributions that a trans analysis can bring to GWS, one instructor voiced concerns over the continued political necessity of talking and teaching about "the female body" and felt constrained in her ability to do so when trying to incorporate a trans analysis in the course. Another longtime instructor bemoaned the lack of an "eliminating gender" analysis that she asserted was more apparent as a feminist political goal in the

1960s and 70s and linked this contemporary omission to trans activists' political goals. These forms of analysis—whether we agree with them or not—sit (mostly uncomfortably) in the background of simpler conversations about transgender inclusion. Yet, our students would likely benefit from being introduced to and invited to consider debates such as these that have informed the broader GWS field.

Finally, current and former intro students, too, have voiced concerns over the lack of trans inclusion or concerns over the way in which trans issues and materials have been incorporated. In terms of the text itself, some students have voiced concerns that (a) only one piece focusing on trans experience is included in the course text, and (b) that in a course purportedly centering on the experiences of "women" (which some students also flag as problematic), this lone example of trans experience concerns a trans guy. Some students thus reflect back the deep investment in experiential knowledge that has been communicated to them via the course and evaluate its "success" primarily based on the inclusiveness of the materials that make up the course. This is not surprising, given that the deep focus on diversity, inclusion, and experience means that we aren't just teaching our students about included groups, but also about the value of the very categories of diversity, inclusion, and experience themselves. Students subsequently evaluate their own learning based largely on the degree to which courses are "inclusive" or not, sometimes at the expense of other ways of evaluating "successes" and "failures." In addition, however, some students also signal their dissatisfaction with missed opportunities for more nuanced learning about basic conceptual categories—for example, sex and gender—in the intro course's treatment of trans material, noting that they must "unlearn" or "relearn" the relationship between these conceptual categories later in their education. Thus, student interpretations of the course are not merely a recapitulation of the focus on diversity, inclusion, and experience (although they are that as well). In addition, student responses can be interpreted as a sophisticated critique of the course, where they *both* demand inclusion of a range of diverse, marginalized experiences *combined with* a robust theoretical framework that does *more than* rely on those experiences to provide students with compelling analytic tools.

Misappropriations of Diverse Indigeneity

Similar to the complications that arise when a course or text simply adds trans experience, the mere addition of Native American women's voices in the service of inclusion can do more harm than good. Many Indigenous scholars—largely writing out of Native American Studies—remain cautious about how best to include the perspectives of Native American women under the umbrella of GWS (Grande 2003; Goeman and Nez Denetale 2009; Mihesuah 2003; Smith and Kehaulani Kauanui 2008; and Arvin, Tuck, and Morrill 2013). A central concern argues that GWS may consciously or not accept dominant narratives about economic, political, and physical control over land, while ignoring the realities of many Indigenous people's lives and politics (Arvin, Tuck, and Morrill 2013).

Our own text, for example, offers essays and poems authored by Native American women, but it presents these works as examples of multicultural perspectives or—at best—a type of intersectionality oddly silent on citizenship. That is, the text never distinguishes these contributors as citizens of sovereign Indigenous nations within the greater boundaries of the United States. This misidentification exemplifies perfectly the misguided project of inclusion for diversity in the neoliberal university. In this instance, inclusion ultimately upholds a settler-colonial framework as it renders invisible tribal sovereignty, native citizenship in these nations, and Indigenous rights to land.

Indigenous scholars Maile Arvin, Eve Tuck, and Angie Morrill (2013) argue that challenging heteropatriarchy (an established GWS objective) and decolonizing the field (a newer goal) are interrelated. In sum, they argue that the interdiscipline must "problematize settler colonialism" and move beyond a paradigm of inclusion, while its teachers and scholars must investigate their own participation in erasure and dispossession. Ideally, to include Indigenous feminisms means radically transforming messages the introductory course imparts rather than simply adding more "diverse" perspectives. The latter frequently results in tokenism and feel-good box checking. The former can yield significant reconceptualization as well as productive intellectual and emotional discomfort. The point, then, of incorporating Indigenous feminisms is not the objective of "inclusivity" in and of itself, but to learn from these epistemologies and use them as tools to deconstruct,

challenge, and better understand many things—including white heteropatriarchy.

Of course, to take on such a project requires the "unsettling" of many tacit assumptions on which our course and many others are based such as the unquestioned authority of the United States. While the text and the course itself engage in critiques of the United States—its historic decisions and present actions—neither question U.S. *legitimacy*. Thus, students learn content about Indigenous epistemologies and experiences through the framework of an untroubled U.S. validity. In this paradigm, the United States may have acted poorly or treated Native Americans badly, but its *right* to act upon sovereign nations and its citizens remains unexamined, as does the interpretation of the United States as a settler-colonial society.

Rather than engage with this conceptually unfamiliar and challenging content, our course has included the experience of Native women as exemplars of other things: environmental and reproductive justice activists, lesbians, and poets. It has focused on the experience of the individual rather than on the socio-political and structural realities of the nation and/or the many. While the text fails to put these readings in conversation with tribal sovereignty and settler colonialism, some of the Native American contributors speak directly to these issues. Yet, this presentation permits students to read these contributors and their experiences as part of a diverse United States instead of as people with more complicated and competing political allegiances and identities confronting systemic challenges. Such a reading continues to obscure the realities of settler societies and makes the possibilities and promises of such texts as tools of decolonization unlikely.

When this issue arose in some interviews, former and present instructors readily acknowledged the difference between adding more Native women to the syllabus and employing Indigenous feminisms to inform the course. Yet, in each instance, nothing immediately materialized regarding how to do so. Perhaps this is because many in the field of GWS do not know much about Indigenous peoples and nations generally, let alone Indigenous feminisms specifically. Certainly in the United States, primary, secondary, and even collegiate education remains woefully inadequate in Native American Studies. It is not surprising that intelligent, invested, and otherwise well-trained instructors would find themselves struggling to give their students what was missing from their own schooling. Beyond the challenge of not being able to give away what one does not have, this difficult undertaking—of how better to incorporate Indigenous analytical frameworks—may rest with the *experiential* focus of the introductory course. Instructors and students alike perhaps read these materials as individual narratives with which they are profoundly unfamiliar. With clear respect for the problems inherent in "speaking for" another group, students frequently resist engagement with such authors and texts because they feel inadequately prepared to participate at the level of experience. A move away from the experience of the individual (a flawed conceptual framework from most Indigenous perspectives anyway) permits students to go beyond themselves, connect with ideas, and perhaps effect change. In such a model, the goal is less about comprehending an individual author's experience and more about making sense of that author's ideas and arguments. Such an approach would trouble and complicate the way the course presents (and fails to present) some materials, readings, and writers. But it would also provide a way to better understand the interdiscipline, its objectives, and weak spots—including its participation in a colonial paradigm.

A sizeable sample of students who have studied Native American feminisms in an upper-level course were quick to ascertain the difference between exclusively learning about and absorbing content, while also learning from it. This suggests that students in the introductory course could likewise combine new content about diverse Native nations and people along with more complicated analytical frameworks that provide for the deconstruction of numerous political, social, economic, and gendered realities. They need only texts and instructors prepared to help them do so. Asking students (and instructors) to trouble white heteropatriarchy in alternative ways, and to examine previously unassailable truths, moves the course beyond a model of inclusion and provides a link to postcolonial and transnational feminist perspectives. Rather than erase or deny a United States that contains an estimated 566 federally-recognized Native nations, tribes, and villages, the introductory course could highlight this reality to better understand imperialism and colonialism. Concepts like sovereignty, citizenship, and land—which may be unfamiliar to non-Native students when think-

ing about Native Americans—might emerge more clearly in a transnational context (for example, students might readily recognize the sovereignty of Kenya, but not the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma). In these ways, linking Indigenous feminisms in the U.S. to Indigenous and postcolonial movements in the Global South can help students build a transnational feminist analysis that pays close attention to history, context, and power. Through such a lens students can interpret a transnational feminist issue, such as violence against women, with the understanding that governments should have a vested interest in protecting their citizens—a failed goal complicated by settler colonialism.

Conclusion: Problematizing Pedagogies, Unlearning Introductions

At our institution (and perhaps others), the intro course holds a "special" place for both students and faculty. Indeed, part of what makes the course so important is its reliance on identity, inclusion, diversity, and experience. Students reported feeling empowered by seeing themselves in the course and by learning about the experiences of so many unfamiliar others. Perhaps once a conscious technique to welcome students, our course has likely held too tightly to this model, trusting that our upper-level courses do the work of introducing theory, moving beyond personal experience, and troubling identity. That our interest in this topic began in part with our advanced students telling us they had to "unlearn" things from the intro course suggests as much.

Our purpose in undertaking this reflexive collaboration was not to "solve" any individual dissatisfaction with the introductory course, but rather to identify and interrogate the ideas of diversity, experience, and inclusion and to ask questions about their pedagogical value in GWS classrooms today. While we have not found easy answers, the challenge of writing about our own course has helped to highlight the tensions and differences as well as the shared goals. As we have examined the limitations of the paradigm of inclusion/diversity/experience, we have come to see the possibility of a course that simultaneously challenges categories and investigates diverse perspectives, one that reads experiential texts through theoretical frameworks that complicate them. While we initially perceived multiple barriers to change (campus-wide diversity designations;

the complexities of a team-taught course with an in-house text), we now understand these as less constraining than other factors: a collective attachment to the familiar left intact from semester to semester, buoyed up by assumptions about what our students are capable of understanding and what we can do in an introductory course. Perhaps our own stories about the course, its place in our program, and our individual roles have been in need of revisioning and we, too, can embrace "unlearning" as a tool for rethinking our introductions.[6]

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Endnotes

[1] We use WGSS to refer to our program in the current moment and Women's Studies to refer to it during earlier periods when it went by that name (we officially changed from Women's Studies to Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies in 2013). We use Gender and Women's Studies (GWS) to refer to the broader field not because we think this term is best, but rather to distinguish between when we are talking about our program and when we are talking about the field.

[2] Estimated book sales as provided by an original and present editor.

[3] We note that this particular idea of the course having been "better" can been seen as coming primarily from the perspective of centering white students' needs. It thus overlooks existing anti-racist work on all white spaces as a way of developing anti-racist consciousness and not burdening people of color with the education of whites concerning these issues.

[4] Text editors we spoke with discussed their desires and attempts to include more transgender-related material in the most recent edition of *Women: Images and Realities*. Explanations for the continued paucity of these materials included the pressures of meeting publication deadlines; revision limits set by the publisher, both in terms of overall book length and in terms of the amount of new materials that could be included (one editor recalled that only 11 percent of the material could be "new"); the sense that available materials might be too complicated for students to understand; and the lack of any call from external reviewers for more trans-related materials.

[5] Of course, these are not the only, or the most pressing, issues of concern for trans populations. We look at the potential of this piece to effectively teach on these issues here in order to characterize Beauchamp and D'Harlingue's critique and to explore some of the limitations of "inclusion" and "experience"-based approaches, not to suggest that trans issues be relegated or centered on questions of the construction of sex and gender. In fact, one of the takeaways here is that teaching about the constructedness of sex and gender must implicate *all* subjects, not just normative "outliers."

[6] We thank our students for their contributions to this project. Particular thanks to the handful of 2013 senior seminar students who first raised this issue and to the 2014 senior seminar students who shared their intellectual autobiographies.

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Viewing as Text: Theorizing Visual Literacies in Introduction to Gender and Women's Studies

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Abstract

This paper examines the critical role that visual literacies often play in the introductory course to Gender and Women's Studies. Drawing on transnational feminist scholarship, the author argues that theorizing visual literacies can provide a valuable entry point into considering the material and ideological stakes of feminist knowledge production.

Résumé

Cet article examine le rôle critique que joue souvent les compétences médiatiques dans le cours d'introduction aux Études sur le genre et les femmes. En s'appuyant sur des recherches féministes transnationales, l'auteure soutient que la théorisation des compétences médiatiques peut fournir un point d'entrée précieux pour aborder le contenu et les enjeux idéologiques de la production du savoir féministe.

Introduction

In the first Gender and Women's Studies (GWS) course I took as an undergraduate student, visual texts featured prominently in the curriculum. During the class' exploration of global human rights violations, we watched documentaries about rape culture, female genital surgeries, and the relationship of advertising to body image. Though exposing students to visual culture was not an explicit aim of the course as articulated by the professor or the syllabus, I remember noting that visual texts seemed to be significant to the class. While I entered the course expecting to learn about the histories and experiences of "women" as discrete entities, I realized the field considers and critiques institutions through which ideas about gender circulate. As a student, I did not originally connect the production, dissemination, and interpretation of visual culture to the ways in which it is implicated in the circulation of gendered ideologies as well as the assertion of and resistance to power (Mirzoeff 2011). However, in thinking back to my own introduction to the field, I maintain that processes of interpreting visual texts could themselves have been something to interrogate in relation to the feminist praxis my classmates and I were learning at the time.

Years later, in planning to teach my first Gender and Women's Studies introductory course, I included several contemporary feminist artworks I found compelling as an undergraduate student. I was excited to incorporate visual art into my syllabus because I found it engaging and I thought it would enable discussions of visual complexity that were missing from the course that introduced me to GWS, in which the visual texts on the syllabus were more closely aligned with "truth-telling" genres such as "photojournalism, testimonials, documentary cinema and theatre, editorials, ethnography, and academic scholarship" (Hesford 2011, 19). Whereas the discussion of the aforementioned documentaries centred around their content, I imagined that teaching texts such as Carrie Mae Weems' (1987-1988)

Ain't Jokin' series and Judy Chicago's (1971) *Red Flag* could serve as exciting and evocative entries into discussions about the process through which artists raise a multitude of feminist concerns such as internalized oppression, embodiment, racism, sexism, and power. At the time, I felt that attending to the process of producing visual art might provide students with insight into the ways in which artists have explored feminist praxis, which could, in turn, inspire their own. While I still maintain that feminist visual art can provide a helpful point of entry into discussions of power and difference, I have also come to think that it is not just the texts themselves, but also the ways of looking at them, that can function as critical sites of interpretation within Gender and Women's Studies.

A helpful example of the kind of skill set that an introduction to the discipline might enable is available in Lisa Cacho's (2012) analysis of media coverage of post-Katrina New Orleans wherein she interprets how photojournalistic images of the hurricane's aftermath are bound up in racial discourse. Specifically, Cacho reads journalist descriptions of white survivors as "finding" loaves of bread while black survivors "looted" them as evidencing a broader set of politics that make said interpretations possible. Noting rather than disputing this discrepancy, Cacho's concern is with what ideas and assumptions lend credence to these forms of legibility—that is, what ways of seeing and knowing conflate blackness with criminality and whiteness with lawful survival. To be clear, her line of inquiry hinges not on discerning "correct" from "incorrect" interpretations, but rather on considering the ideologies that render any interpretation possible. Cacho's analysis offers a rich example of the kinds of theoretical work that could take place in Introduction to Gender and Women's Studies. Instead of establishing interpretive frameworks that endow visual texts with inherent meaning, students might consider "visuality" as a constant flux of ideas, stakes, and material effects bound up in processes of interpretation (Mirzoeff 2011).

Because all visual texts require the deployment of some kind of visual literacy, whether explicitly acknowledged or not, pedagogical approaches to visuality need not necessarily revolve around selecting "good" texts over "bad" ones; rather, instructors and students might foreground an interrogation of the relationships between seeing and knowing as central to feminist praxis. In developing this line of inquiry, and as I will demonstrate through the visual texts I selected for this essay, it is important to note that interpreting visual texts depends on being attentive to their genres and learning how to trace patterns in the treatment of visual texts across genres. Human rights documentaries and contemporary feminist artwork, for example, emerge in different contexts that inform the frames available for interpretation. At the same time, the ways in which those in power maintain authority by insisting on and enabling certain kinds of knowledge production may transcend visual genres. Thus, I argue that increasing the capacity for critical approaches to visual literacy involves not only developing nuance around form, but also an attentiveness to the interpretive processes that exceed them.

Further, a critical theorization of visual literacy carries the capacity to unsettle another desire I first noticed as a student—the idea that if I could only become more completely informed about the state of oppression of women around the world, I would be able to present a compelling case for a feminist education. I remember thinking that if, through the texts and discussions I encountered in class, I could assemble a comprehensive picture of the ways in which people's oppressions were connected transnationally, the products of my learning in Gender and Women's Studies could prove to be the most useful. I saw these connections as especially crucial to understanding and confronting suffering, which I understood to inform both the origin and purpose of the field.

Reflecting back, years later, I wonder why this desire to "see all" was one so firmly associated with my fantasized imperative to enact feminist praxis effectively. On the metaphorical level, the impulse toward complete and encyclopedic knowledge bears troubling resemblances to the *modus operandi* of imperialist praxis that maps and taxonomizes land and life to enact oppression (Haraway 1984; Mirzoeff 2011; Willinsky 1998). Considering the role of visuality described here, it seems especially important to interrogate how visual texts help us to understand and address global problems using feminist frameworks. While it is possible to frame documentaries about the experience and victimization of women across the world (such as the ones I watched in my own introduction to the field) as a way of knowing and possibly linking geographically

disparate oppressions, a critical theorization of visuality as a discourse can help to illuminate what is involved in understanding and framing these texts in the first place as well as considering whose interests and systems of power particular interpretations might serve. Through this kind of praxis, Gender and Women's Studies instructors and students might reflexively consider how the practice of viewing as a mode of interpretation actively shapes feminist knowledge production.

Transnational Visualities

To offer an example of where a richer, more complex framework for considering visuality might have been useful, I return to a moment during the introductory course I taught several years ago. I assigned Shirin Neshat's 1996 photograph *Speechless* along with the accompanying caption from the feminist art textbook in which my copy of the photograph appeared (180-181). The photograph is a black and white close-up of a person's face, only half of which is visible in the frame. The subject's expression does not convey tears, a smile, a furrowed brow, or a grimace—to me, it has always appeared to be emotionally ambiguous. To the right of the face is a veil and an object, which can easily be mistaken for an earring, but, upon closer inspection, is revealed to be the silver barrel of a gun. It is unclear who is holding the gun, but it is unmistakably pointed out toward the viewer. As it developed, Neshat overlaid the photograph with Persian script.

On my introduction of this photograph in previous classes, most students expressed concern that they were not able to read the writing, yet they remained confident in their ability to make sense of its content. On their visual reading, the photograph clearly depicted a woman who was "being oppressed"; the evidence, they claimed, was her sad, somber expression. When pushed to elaborate, many of these students cited the presence of the veil as additional evidence of her oppression and speculated that someone else was holding the gun as a way to threaten the woman, even though the barrel is pointed at the photographer/viewer.

Perhaps predictably, these interpretations bear notable similarities to those that Frantz Fanon (1967) critiqued within the context of French concerns about women who wore the veil in colonial Algeria. Fanon explained that French colonists of Algeria framed the veil as problematic because it obscured their ability to gaze directly upon women's bodies rather than the garments covering them. From the vantage of colonial epistemologies, the visibility of women is equated with freedom. Within such a colonizing logic, the qualities of freedom are not only determined by those who do not experience them, but those same qualities are configured according to what is visually available to those looking at bodies that are not their own. In this dynamic, the imperative to see in a particular way stands in for the capacity to see at all and this universalization of a specific visuality functions as an both an expression of power and a means through which seeing subjects constitute themselves *as* selves in relation to the "others" that they see. Because the justifications for this dynamic are tautological, the "dialogic processes of looking and being seen" remains uninterrogated (Hesford and Kozol 2005, 11).

In assigning Neshat's photograph, I was well aware that my students' responses might mirror the dynamics Fanon describes. I expected them to be well-schooled in what Wendy Hesford and Wendy Kozol (2005) describe as "the representational politics of pity" that render veiled women as automatically oppressed and in need of saving (1). Anticipating such visual interpretations as a starting point, I hoped that, through discussion and reflection, students might learn to contextualize their own understandings and enactments of visuality in relation to imperialistic solipsism and also speculate on what it may entail for meaning to be inaccessible to them as people who expect to be able to access all cultural meanings through a dominant and uncritical lens. Through facilitating conversations about the relationship between knowledge production and the interpretation of visual texts, I intended to draw from the work of scholars who interrogate the ways in which both the production and reception of visual texts functions within a broader ideological system in which modes of viewing are historically contingent. For example, Ella Shohat and Robert Stam (1994) provide examples of the role of both documentary and narrative cinema within broader nation-building projects during European imperialism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan (2003) also attend to this historical context by tracing the ways in which visuality operates within traditions of ethnographic cinema that established a Eurocentric perspective as neutral and non-Western bodies and

practices as exotic and "other." Wendy Hesford (2011) shares a set of concerns regarding the ways in which deployments of such visualities can re-entrench problematic power dynamics within human rights discourse, casting the viewer and viewed as savior and victim respectively. With access to texts such as these, I prepared to trouble any conflations of femininity or other-ness with oppression and to encourage students to consider how their understandings of themselves related to the interpretations they made.

On the day that my class discussed this photograph, however, one student raised his hand and clarified that the text covering the woman's face was Persian, not Arabic, as the art textbook asserted. He did not translate the text into English or offer any input otherwise. The moment of his intervention presented an ideal opportunity for reflecting on visual literacies that, in retrospect, I wish I had been more prepared to facilitate. At the time, however, I became stuck in the disjuncture between the visual interpretations I expected my students to make and the intervention of this one particular student. I originally hoped that Neshat's work would enable a discussion on Islamophobic interpretations, particularly why it is important to consider the ways in which access to cultural meaning is always limited given imperialist traditions that presume absolute knowledge. Yet, in the moment, I encountered considerable challenge regarding my own limited ways of seeing and what it might mean for someone who is supposed to perform "expertise" in her field to demonstrate incomplete knowledge as a praxis rather than failure. What meanings could have emerged, for example, from a contextualization of that moment as exemplary of the shifting and incomplete nature of visual literacy? What questions might have emerged if I had been prepared to explicitly frame the moment as representing both ethnography and an effort at its deconstruction? For even within my desire to generate an environment in which interpretations of the visual are always up for debate, my pedagogical stance at the time depended on my students' ability to read (or not read) in ways that were both predictable and coherent to me. In the moment when my student challenged the description of the script in Neshat's photograph, the gap itself—between not only *what* but also *the ways* in which my student could see that I and many of his classmates could not—presented a valuable site for deconstruction of the means through

which subjects arrive at knowledge of themselves and others.

Incompleteness in Critical Visual Praxis

As is evident in my recounting of teaching Neshat's *Speechless*, an important aspect of developing a critical approach toward visual literacy is noting the impossibility of fulfilling the imperialist project of being able to see, and therefore know, all. John Willinsky (1998) describes this imperative as an "encyclopedic urge" that reflects both literal imperial practices of attempting to gather comprehensive knowledge and also the belief that it is possible and beneficial to do so (73). In countering tendencies that frame knowledge production as ever able to "encompass the known world," a commitment to incompleteness can call attention to imperialist solipsism and the ways in which multiple modes of knowing can co-exist (73). To be clear, I am employing incompleteness as a critical concept in several ways: 1) as a descriptor of the *means* with and through which students produce knowledge; 2) in reference to the enactment and theorization of educational praxis; 3) as a way of referencing the construction of subjectivities in relation to and as mediated by visual literacies; and 4) as a way of describing elements of visual literacies and texts themselves. A commitment to incompleteness allows instructors and students to locate gaps in epistemologies that rely on pragmatism and reason whilst serving as complicit extensions of empire. As Trinh T. Minh-ha (1990) puts it, "On one hand, truth is produced, induced, and extended according to the regime in power. On the other, truth lies in between all regimes of truth" (76). Her suggestion that power produces truth at the same time that truth exceeds power not only locates truth as multiple, but also troubles the coherence of any claim to absolute truth.

An example of an introductory text that instructors and students can use to explore incompleteness is Mona Hatoum's (1988) video installation *Measures of Distance*. Within this piece, Hatoum layers an audio recording of an Arabic conversation between herself and her mother in which they are discussing the making of the piece with a voiceover of Hatoum reading her mother's letters, which are translated into English. The letters also appear on the screen as Arabic script along with photographs Hatoum has taken of her mother, including many in the shower. The very form of the piece

suggests that no amount of translation will ever be complete, for even those who are able to understand both Arabic and English find themselves unable to access any component of the text in a way that is not always already intersecting with and interrupted by the others. Hatoum's decision to layer multiple visual and audio texts on top of one another suggests multiple points of access to meaning at the same time that it refuses the possibility of a comprehensive interpretation. In a direct sense, Hatoum offers opportunities to think of visual literacies as always partial, incomplete, and contingent on the viewer's relation to the text at each moment of engagement.

While considering Hatoum's refusal to grant a straightforward message may help students to problematize their desires for complete understandings, it is also possible to explore incomplete visual literacies in relation to texts that may be more closely aligned with realism, evidence, or clarity. An example of one such text is Jean Kilbourne's (2002) *Killing Us Softly*, a film often included in introductory courses in Gender and Women's Studies that purports to provide a clear, universal message about the impact of sexist advertising on women. This film offers several opportunities for considering the dynamics of visual knowledge production for it is a text that actively reflects on other visual texts (i.e. print advertisements) and, in doing so, models a mode of visual literacy that frames sexist advertising as detrimental to women. Though Kilbourne at first frames the advertisements as sexist according to her own lens, she quickly generalizes her interpretations to those that all women should share. While screening a slideshow of women in the advertisements she discusses, Kilbourne (2002) says: "The first thing the advertisers do is surround us with the image of ideal female beauty so we all learn how important it is for women to be beautiful, and exactly what it takes" (*Killing Us Softly*). Here Kilbourne implies that the audience of her lecture will understand her critique even before she makes it because it is part of their known experiences. Her use of "us" and "we" links Kilbourne and her audience together in a way that emphasizes a common oppression at the same time that it underscores the purpose of the film—to provide a specific, critical methodology for engaging with visual texts. For students who are watching the film in a classroom, the invitation to share in Kilbourne's interpretation is clear. And yet, despite the film's didacticism, it is still possible to interpret the images Kilbourne critiques in multiple ways as well as theorize the epistemological processes at play throughout the film. In discussing the film in an introductory class, then, it could prove fruitful to think critically about *how* Kilbourne locates and contextualizes what she sees in advertising as well as how students themselves relate to the critical visual literacy she models. Just as students could benefit from considering what elements render interpretation of some texts difficult, they might do well to think about what makes texts that may seem easier to interpret make sense or require less interpretive effort. In the case of *Killing Us Softly,* this critical approach could involve questioning what assumptions and ideologies make Kilbourne's critique sensible.

If we can think of visual texts along a spectrum of more to less legible and if such intuitive understandings are at work in the very selection of texts we include in our introductory courses, then it is important for instructors to explicitly foster an awareness of visual knowledge production as bearing political importance for feminist struggles for justice. As Mehre Khan (2007) explains, "If racial and ethnic identities are primarily imagined, constructed, theorized, naturalized, and personalized within the realm of the visual, recognizing the slippages and inconclusiveness of visual imagery allows students and instructors to accept the unbridgeable gaps of intercultural understanding" (327). The critical potential of incompleteness Khan references is inseparable from a framing of visuality itself as contested and subject to incomplete interpretations. This epistemological incompleteness operates not as a signal of failure on the part of instructors or students, but rather as a means through which to formulate critiques of systems that produce both "differences" and the means by which they are measured. The "gaps," then, and the ways that they are "unbridgeable" are neither fixed nor the cause for nihilistic claims that knowledge, which cannot be fully attained, is not worth pursuing. Rather, moments in which knowledge seems to be partial are locations for Gender and Women's Studies teachers and students to question knowledge production. As Trinh (2013) posits, "What is 'new' is not so much to be found in new products, concepts, and images but in the possibility of a new seeing…The question is not only 'What do you see?' but 'With what eyes do you see?'" (136). The impulse toward encyclopedic knowledge can register as

both problematic and absurd, for, as Trinh implies, becoming attentive to power involves developing nuanced understandings of that which informs one's own perspective. By developing a more reflexive analysis of the visual literacies employed in the classroom, Gender and Women's Studies students can carefully relate (rather than impose) their processes of understanding to alternative possibilities for seeing and knowing and become more clear about when and why it is difficult to do so.

Theorizing Ambivalences

Developing a critical analysis of visual literacy involves not only becoming attentive to the ways in which people enact dominance through the interpretation of visual texts, but also of the ways in which people have resisted and subverted them. For example, Fatimah Tobing Rony (1996) introduces the idea of "the third eye" as a means of thinking through solipsistic constructions of viewing in which visualities are construed as always in relation to an imperial self (213). As she explains it, the third eye confounds visuality as manifested within a simple subject/object binary, for it "turns on a recognition: the Other perceives the veil, the process of being visualized as an object, but returns the glance" (213). Nicholas Mirzoeff (2011) introduces a similar formulation in the idea of "countervisuality" as "that picturing of the self or collective that exceeds or precedes subjugation to centralized authority" within Western hegemony (23-24). As tools for identifying how imperialist technologies grant or deny subjectivity, these concepts offer a way to consider alternatives to the imperialist gaze that, importantly, are not reifying.

The recuperation of the other's capacity to actively intervene in the interpretive frames that cast her/him as incapable of such a response does not reference a means of resistance that is essentially "other," but rather a reconfiguration of an imperialist apparatus that groups disparate people and experiences as both already similar to one another and also inherently inferior to imperial subjects. In other words, by exercising the third eye or employing counter-visualities, subjects can engage the apparatus of visuality that constructs "otherness" as necessarily inferior and also resist it by returning the gaze in a manner that indicates knowledge of its functions. Notably, such forms of visuality resist the ready assimilation by subjects in positions of dominance, which in and of itself can be a catalyst for

important theorizing around subject-making within the classroom. Additionally, a concept such as Rony's third eye offers a direct way of thinking about epistemological projects as both contingent upon and produced within modes of seeing. If, for example, visual ethnography presumes that the objects of the gaze do not understand the ways they are being portrayed, theorization of the third eye profoundly unsettles the basis upon which such knowledge projects are built.

Hatoum offers another way to consider visual literacies by calling attention to the incoherencies and gaps present in all translation efforts. Midway through her 1998 *Measures of Distance*, Hatoum reads a letter her mother has written to her, reflecting on the way Hatoum's father has reacted to her project. In English translation, Hatoum reads: "I suppose [your father] still can't forgive you for taking those pictures of me in the shower. It's as if you had trespassed on his property and now he feels that there's some weird exchanges going on between us from which he is excluded. He calls it women's nonsense" (*Measures of Distance*). Since Hatoum's audience can see the photographs she took of her mother in addition to reading and hearing the exchanges between them, they become implicated in the intimate trespassing that concerns Hatoum's father. However, because Hatoum's text complicates notions of total interpretation or availability of the exchanges she includes, she also troubles the very idea of attaining ownership by means of trespassing.

In Khan's (2007) analysis of these effects, she suggests that using a text like Hatoum's offers viewers a very direct opportunity to consider both the expectations they have for visual texts to be understood, the means with which they construct and derive knowledge from these texts, and the ways in which those processes are both malleable and contingent. In this respect, Hatoum's piece is particularly valuable because it renders visuality as an inextricable part of knowledge construction–that is, one cannot get past visuality in order to get to the meaning of the text because any potential meaning gets constructed in acts of interpretation and specific literacies inform the modes through which viewers construct knowledge. As Hatoum troubles visual epistemologies that construct narratives regarding Muslim and Arabic cultures, she challenges spectator capacity to see, and therefore know, the ultimate meaning of a text (as if only one, or at least one most important one

took precedence over other possible meanings). In addition to understanding the effect through the lens of incompleteness, then, it may be helpful for feminist practitioners to consider Hatoum's piece in terms of the ambivalence, or flexibility, that viewers can employ in relation to it.

As an example of ambivalence, Kobena Mercer (1997) explains his shifting interpretation of Robert Mapplethorpe's (1980) *Black Males* photographs. While Mercer initially interpreted Mapplethorpe's work as reinforcing racialized sexual fetishization that establishes the white male photographer as the dominant subject capable of objectifying the racial "others" that he is photographing, Mercer later revises his perspective. In reconsidering, he entertains alternative visualities that consider the way that Mapplethorpe's sexuality has the potential to reconfigure his relationship to his subjects. Given Mapplethorpe's subordinate queerness in heteronormative culture, which informs how one reads his relationship to the subjects of his work, Mercer suggests that Mapplethorpe's representations can be interpreted in several ways–for example, as eroticizing a racial "Other" and/or as homoerotic and desirous. Mercer (1997) argues that Mapplethorpe leaves the problem of interpretation open "since his aesthetic strategy makes an unequivocal yes/no response impossible. The question is left open by the author and thus thrown back to the spectator" (246).

Utilizing his own interactions with the photographs in *Black Men* as an example, Mercer describes his emotional identification with the men in Mapplethorpe's photographs–that is, he identifies with their masculinities and their blackness and becomes angry that Mapplethorpe has objectified them as black men. Further into his analysis, however, Mercer (1997) admits that his initial interpretation relies on a "reductive dichotomy between good and bad…and thus fails to recognize the ambivalence of the text" (247). Utilizing his own black queerness as a means of examining multiple positions in relation to the investments that inform his interpretations, Mercer produces multiple questions in his visual engagements: Does he desire to be looked at as the subjects of the photographs are? Does he desire to look at the subjects? Is his subjectivity in a position of rivalry with the object of desire? Does he share a position with Mapplethorpe, the white gay artist? Mercer's conflicting positions reflect the fraught nature of evoc-

ative sites of meaning. Furthermore, Mercer demonstrates the potential to derive multiple meanings from the same text; he calls not only interpretations of representation into question, but also interrogates investments in maintaining certain interpretations as more meaningful, realistic, or "true" than others.

In considering the implications of Mercer's questions for an introductory Gender and Women's Studies classroom, his insistence on engaging Mapplethorpe's work from multiple levels of interpretation is a helpful way of understanding representations as themselves in constant negotiation. When Mercer engages the photographs in *Black Men* with ambivalent openness, he is able to theorize not so much *what* he sees, but how what he *wants* to see is inseparable from what he formulates as his objects of sight. Similarly, in *Measures of Distance,* Hatoum (1988) invites viewers to reflect on their desires to understand the meaning of the multiple texts within the piece. This approach is markedly different from enabling viewers to access each text as somehow separate from their desire to see it. The distinction in each of these pieces between meaning and reality is one that Trinh (1990) draws attention to when she claims:

> Truth and meaning: the two are likely to be equated with one another. Yet, what is put forth as truth is often nothing more than a meaning. And what persists between the meaning of something and its truth is the interval, a break without which meaning would be fixed and truth congealed. This is perhaps why it is so difficult to talk about it, the interval. About the cinema. About (77).

It is within the interval that Trinh locates much of the potential of theorizing visual literacies, particularly within disciplines whose promise it is to produce knowledge around certain subjects (Wiegman 2012, 37). If one is to interpret the "truth" to which Trinh (1990) refers to mean ideas that are regarded as valid knowledge, then the processes through which meaning gets determined are not separable from the structures that grant their recognition and reproduction. Inasmuch, processes of education in Gender and Women's Studies are profoundly implicated in producing knowledge as well as privileging particular knowledges as inherent truths within the field.

For example, a dominant reading of the women in *Killing Us Softly* casts them as both victimized by and potentially resistant to Western advertising within popular women's magazines. Similarly, a Eurocentric

interpretation of *Speechless* enables an uncritical viewer to understand the photograph's subject as victimized, but incapable of liberating herself. When Gender and Women's Studies practitioners privilege these kinds of interpretations as especially instructive for contemporary feminist praxis, they risk reifying engagements with visual media that follow a delimited form of critique (e.g. looking for very specific understandings of sexism). In this model, the privileging of certain kinds of victimization and resistance presupposes particular relationships to sexism and resistance as manifested in viewing, hence presuming that visual literacies themselves will produce consistent responses to what gets constructed as the important points of the text. Trinh's idea of the "interval" can help to keep the construction of meanings and their alignments or misalignments with "truth" open to constant interrogation (Chen, 1992) in Gender and Women's Studies classrooms. This openness also generates a space to ask questions regarding elements of desire that exist within the interval–for example, the wish to render visual texts as recognizable in ways that a viewer might easily assign meaning.

Conclusion

When pursuing critiques of visual culture within Gender and Women's Studies, it is important for instructors to facilitate interrogations of the ways that students are always already involved in constructing meaning from the texts that they see. Without these conversations, critique risks becoming a mode through which to seek, and find, particular kinds of evidence vis-à-vis instruction in feminist vocabularies—the sexism exists to be found and you can see it with your own eyes. According to this praxis, a Gender and Women's Studies education functions as a conduit for revealing problematic images rather than a medium through which knowledge of how and what to see is continuously re-produced. In this elision, between the detection of problems within visual media and the visualities through which Gender and Women's Studies practitioners locate and name said problems, the discipline can continue to draw upon practices implicit in imperialist solipsism.

If, for example, instructors frame texts such as *Measures of Distance* and *Speechless* as those that they anticipate will be difficult for students to "get," they risk structuring their pedagogical stances around the needs of Western feminists to understand "non-Western" subjects and their needs, thus feeding back into disciplinary frameworks that structure their epistemologies unreflexively around the needs of said Western feminists. Not only does the treatment of a text as "difficult" reify expectations for students to be operating from a dominant subjectivity and employing dominant literacies, it also obscures the potential for Gender and Women's Studies classrooms to be acknowledged as locations in which multiple subject formations might co-exist in ways that complicate, yet do not subsume, one another.

Framing some texts by anticipating "direct" interpretations and expecting students to deploy visual literacies that are somehow universally literal anticipates how students make meaning from these texts; furthermore, it depends on pedagogical investments in particular kinds of texts to convey information in an "accessible" way to students who are reading according to similar conventions. For example, if instructors introduce ethnographic documentaries of gendered subjects (e.g. HBO's 2005 *Middle Sexes: Redefining He and She* and PBS's 2012 *Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide*) as a means of providing factual information regarding the lives of people in "other" places, then Gender and Women's Studies becomes closely aligned with imperialist knowledge production. When instructors value visual texts because they seem to offer a coherent way to deliver new knowledge regarding the lives of women in "other" places, this praxis reinforces the idea that mediums of representation do not require contextualizing. When approaches to visual epistemologies presume a singular, unified set of interests, then issues of how and through what lenses texts are assembled is profoundly important to interrogating the imperialisms that Gender and Women's Studies scholars so often claim to dispute. Rather than utilizing ethnographic texts to question the nature of shared experiences (the idea that "their" oppression is somehow like "ours"), students might employ critical visualities to note the investments present in claiming such similarities. If Gender and Women's Studies students are to trouble difference, theorizing how dominant methods of interpreting visual media can both assert and foreclose difference could be helpful to their cultivating critical praxis.

To conclude, I am advocating for the importance of continually questioning knowledge production within Gender and Women's Studies, even at the level of the introductory course. My hope is that such active interrogation might include conversations about how students, in the act of learning, are simultaneously producers of knowledge such that their processes of cultivating understanding are meaningful. I see this framework, which I have approached through the explication of a critical visualities praxis, as ultimately advocating for a different kind of introductory Gender and Women's Studies education than the one in which I was exposed to as a student; namely, one in which students and teachers explicitly explore various visualities because they are exercises of power within feminist praxis. Rather than approaching the work of Gender and Women's Studies through tropes of victimization and identification, I am suggesting a pedagogy that directly theorizes the work that students do when they learn through visual texts and that interrogates their very capacity to do so. In approaching visual literacies as ambivalent, shifting, and always incomplete, students can begin to consider the stakes of knowledge production as well as the roles that they play within it. By exploring a pedagogical praxis wherein achieving a unified "recognition" is not the ultimate objective, students and instructors can constantly question why agency, subjectivity, and "facts" become established as coherent at all.

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Acknowledgements

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Anarchist Pedagogy in the Gender and Women's Studies Classroom

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Abstract

This article argues for the value of employing anarchist pedagogical methods in introductory Gender and Women's Studies courses. The author draws on her experiences using feminist and anarchist pedagogical literature as well as her own experiences using anarchist pedagogy. Topics addressed include classroom structure, syllabus design, grading, and the question of opinions and neutrality.

Résumé

Cet article défend le mérite d'employer des méthodes pédagogiques anarchistes dans les cours d'introduction aux Études sur le genre et les femmes. L'auteure s'appuie sur ses expériences de l'utilisation de matériel pédagogique féministe et anarchiste ainsi que sur ses propres expériences de l'utilisation de la pédagogie anarchiste. Les sujets abordés comprennent la structure de la salle de classe, la conception du programme d'études, la notation et la question des opinions et de la neutralité.

Introducton

It is the first day of the semester in "Women, Culture and Society," the introductory Gender and Women's Studies course at Rutgers University. I have been teaching this course regularly for a couple of years now and this semester I decided to take a new approach. Rather than presenting the students with a fixed curriculum, I want to provide them with the opportunity to help design the course. I have no idea how this will turn out; I am concerned that what the students want to learn will diverge drastically from what I think an Introduction to Gender and Women's Studies should teach them; I dread the possibility that they will suggest studying topics I know nothing about and that I will have to put hours and hours into learning new aspects of feminist studies. In the back of my mind is the dream that the students will come up with a range of interesting and provocative topics and that we'll go on a rollercoaster of learning together. What happens is none of the above. In fact, what happens is nothing at all. Faced with the question of what they want to learn, all forty-five students in the room stare blankly back at me.

Over the past four years, I have researched, and experimented with, how to implement anarchist pedagogy in the college classroom. Over the several semesters that followed my first attempt at feminist anarchist pedagogy, I have come to expect the blank stares when asking my students what they want to learn. The question is so rare to them as to border on absurdity: "You mean you want us to tell you what we want? You're supposed to tell us what we *have to* learn!" These reactions convince me of the importance of these experiments as a way of opening up spaces for students to think about what they *want* to learn in a Gender and Women's Studies (GWS) course and why.

In some ways, the Gender and Women's Studies college classroom is ideally suited for trying out anarchist pedagogy. Women's Studies was formed during the women's liberation movement (Lawson 2011, 108; Boxer 2002, 43-44) as one of several new

fields of study and research, including Black studies, Chicano/a studies, and Ethnic Studies, that sought to question power structures. One of the key concepts invoked in feminist pedagogy is critical thinking. Yet, arguably, as Women's Studies became entrenched within the institutional structure of academia, the room for experimental pedagogy shrunk. While early programs were often collectively operated, today's departments are run with a hierarchical structure. In order to attract students, courses are shaped to fit university-wide learning goals. Accountability in Gender and Women's Studies has increasingly shifted from student and faculty activists to university administrations. Still, I believe that there is room in Gender and Women's Studies for creative pedagogical solutions and that anarchist pedagogy can have a space here. A great many students and instructors seek out GWS because of the political potentials of the (inter-)discipline and we can use this energy and motivation to try out less restrictive and hierarchical modes of learning.

This article focuses on the introductory Women's and Gender Studies course at Rutgers University, "Women, Culture, and Society," though I also draw on my experience teaching other courses. Since "Women, Culture, and Society" functions both as an introductory course for prospective Women's and Gender Studies majors and minors, and as a general education course for students from across the university for whom this is likely their only exposure to GWS, the course has the immense task of introducing the myriad ways that gender plays a role in culture and society as well as the intersections between gender, race, class, and nationality. In contrast to many other institutions, while "Women, Culture, and Society" is a core course in the department curriculum, the department provides almost no guidelines or requirements for the instructors. Though we have access to past syllabi, most instructors design their courses from scratch, reflecting their own values, convictions, priorities, and areas of expertise. This means that "Women, Culture, and Society" can be taught as an introduction to the three waves of feminism, to South Asian women's activism, to U.S. imperialism, or to prison abolition, depending on who the instructor for any given section is. My focus in the course is on a series of key concepts challenged in feminist theory and practice; by the end of the course, I want students to have a grasp of hierarchy, power, and

normative assumptions. To achieve these aims, I utilize an anarchist-feminist pedagogical framework.

Feminist and anarchist approaches to education both start from a position of critically evaluating power in order to work toward social justice and an end to oppression. In the words of Robbin D. Crabtree, David Alan Sapp, and Adela C. Licona (2009), "Feminist pedagogy is marked by the development of non-hierarchical relationships among teachers and students and reflexivity about power relations, not only in society but also in the classroom" (5). The same could be said for anarchist pedagogy. Anarchist and feminist pedagogies both fit within a broader field of critical pedagogies, inspired by education theorists such as Paulo Freire. Both schools of thought oppose what Freire (2008) called the "banking" method of education in which students are passively fed content by the instructor (72). Yet feminist and anarchist pedagogies are not identical and engaging with anarchist pedagogies can, I argue, deepen and complicate feminist pedagogical practices. Farhang Rouhani (2012), drawing on scholar of education William Armaline, outlines three main principles for creating an anarchist pedagogy: "humility in approach to knowledge, concern for creating spaces free from coercion, and a belief in human capabilities" (1729). In explicating what it means to create such coercion-free zones, Armaline (2009) indicates that such a "pedagogical space should reflect a horizontal democracy where students and educators engage in freely associated cooperative learning and activity rather than individual competition and mutual alienation" (139). Armaline's vision of anarchist pedagogy draws directly on the principles of cooperation, freedom, and mutuality that guide anarchist organizing methods outside of the classroom, including anarchist meetings, study groups and direct action projects. A key aspect of what anarchist pedagogy can offer the Gender and Women's Studies classroom is, I argue, a praxis grounded in liberatory activist methods.

In the following sections, I point to some key issues in teaching where the difficulties of implementing anarchist pedagogy in the GWS classroom have become especially evident to me. Working as an anarchist, or otherwise radical, within hierarchical institutions of learning presents a multitude of challenges. Radical scholars writing about the academy have become adept at chronicling the struggles faced in relation to the

administration such as: How do we get around the need to grade (Canally 2012)? Can we afford to cancel class on May Day? How do we use university resources for subversive ends? Much less discussion goes into our relationship with students and their resistance (if that is the right term) to what we might consider liberatory educational practices. A central question that has come up through my own practice and that guides this article concerns the extent to which we can create a liberatory classroom space within an educational system that is designed to teach people to conform and to create hierarchies and punitive systems for both students and instructors.

To explore this question, I first provide a brief introduction to anarchist pedagogical theory to ground the discussion of classroom practices. Then I look at what I consider crucial components in developing anarchist practices for the GWS classroom: course and classroom structure; rigor and freedom; values and neutrality; and grading. I argue that an anarchist approach to pedagogy can address key questions that feminist educators have long grappled with in regard to power, knowledge production, and non-oppressive educational practices.[1]

History and Theory of Anarchist Pedagogy

As might be expected from a praxis that rejects conformity, there are varying opinions about what anarchist education should look like (DeLeon 2012b, 6). While there is a small but extant body of literature on anarchist education for children and in trade schools (Avrich 2006; Suissa 2012), surprisingly close to nothing has been written about anarchist methods in "higher" education (the work of Jamie Heckert is a notable exception).[2] Much of the work on anarchist pedagogy dates back to the Modern School[3] movement of the early twentieth century. While a 2012 issue of *Educational Studies* (DeLeon 2012a) and a relatively new anthology by Robert Haworth (2012) entitled *Anarchist Pedagogies*, are devoted to the topic, there is still a dearth of scholarship about how anarchist theorists and educators approach implementing pedagogical practice. This might be due to the skepticism many anarchists have of institutions, including those of higher learning (Shukaitis 2009, 166). Rouhani (2012) proposes that the lack of attention to anarchism in education also "partly stems from

misconceptions of anarchism itself as violent at worst and as impractically naïve and utopian at best" (1729). A closer look at anarchist educational practices shows that they are neither violent nor impractical, though often unabashedly utopian.

Anarchist pedagogy can teach people to think critically and to put this critical thinking to work in everyday practices. This is exactly what is lacking in much higher education today. As Richard Arum and Josipa Roksa (2011) suggest in a summary of their book *Academically Adrift*, "many students show little if any growth over the first 2 years of college in their ability to perform tasks requiring critical thinking, complex reasoning, and written communication as measured by the Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA)" (203). They go on to say that, "While higher education is expected to accomplish many tasks, existing organizational cultures and practices too often do not prioritize undergraduate learning. Given these institutional climates, it is perhaps not surprising that large numbers of college students report that they *experience only limited academic demands and invest only limited effort in their academic endeavors*" (203; italics in original). This analysis is in line with the situation I have observed at Rutgers University and it is worrisome.

While I share Arum and Roksa's worry, there are problems with their approach to learning. Measuring learning and wanting students to learn at a certain rate can be critiqued as a capitalist, market-oriented model. For example, the authors lament that students do too much of their "studying with peers in social settings that are generally not conducive to learning" (204). One must ask what counts as learning here. Do students not learn from each other? The moments when students look up from their individual homework and discuss what they are reading with each other is a rich learning moment because knowledge becomes collective and horizontal. Market ideology aside, the statistics Arum and Joksa present are troubling. How is it that millions of people can spend, on average, four to six years supposedly learning how to think, yet for the most part show no improvement in critical thinking? Whose interests does this serve? The current structure of higher education enables the production of a docile workforce, of people who labour for the pursuit of grades or wages, but not much else. It is an education

that breeds individualism ("How can *I* get a good grade in this course?") as well as conformity ("How do I do what the instructor/university/administration wants me to?"). This is a mentality that is in stark opposition to the mutual aid and challenging of power structures that are central components of anarchism. Yet, higher education generally—and, for the purpose of this article, the undergraduate classroom in particular—presents rare, if not unique, opportunities for implementing anarchist modes of being. Though not all students are excited about any given course, enrollment is technically voluntary and classrooms could be considered a temporary association of people with a common objective (as typically outlined in a syllabus), exactly the form of organizing advocated by anarchists. Compared to primary and secondary education, university and college instructors have relative freedom in what they teach, opening up space for experimenting with content and methods.

Anarchist education is more about methods of and approaches to teaching than about teaching certain subject matter. Even though the settings are quite different, one can draw on the philosophy of anarchist elementary school education to inform college teaching practice. As Francisco Ferrer, legendary anarchist educator and founder of *La Escuela Moderna* in Barcelona, has put it, "I will teach them not what to think but how to think" (quoted in Avrich 2006, 19). Teaching students how to think and how to approach knowledge is a keystone of my pedagogical approach. But perhaps "teach" is the wrong word: often asking probing questions and encouraging students to not take what they read for granted is enough to incite a critical consciousness.

Yet, as Judith Suissa (2012) has compellingly argued, Ferrer's pedagogy paradoxically "involves a normative, substantive and ongoing commitment to a set of values and principles" (81). On this point, anarchists agree with other critical pedagogues; for instance, Donaldo Macedo, in his introduction to the 30th anniversary edition of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed,* suggests that Freire's view of liberatory education is not about getting rid of all values in education, but rather to center the perspectives of the oppressed and marginalized and to illuminate oppressive structures (Freire 2008, 20). This raises an important concern: is it anarchist to impose anarchist values? Can anarchist educators maintain a commitment to a set of values without imposing them on students? Surely, it is important for educators to be constantly vigilant that we do not try to enforce liberation, as if such a contradictory project was even possible. In practice, this issue is often not as monumental as it can seem in theory. I have found that anarchist values and principles rarely have to be imposed, as students embrace them and often suggest them themselves (albeit not using the label "anarchist"). At the beginning of every semester, I spend time setting up classroom ground rules together with the students. The rules that students suggest are always remarkably similar to the ones I would like: mutual respect, space for disagreement, listening, and speaking from one's own point of view. The main expression of student resistance to liberatory methods emerges during grading, which I will come back to after a discussion of the problem of structure.

Structure

One of the main interventions of anarchist educators at the primary and secondary education level has been to question and dispense with what they considered excessive structure. For example, many anarchist-influenced schools do not require students to adhere to a prescribed schedule; instead, students attend classes when, and if, they want to.[4] College courses present an interesting conundrum: ought students be forced to attend class? In theory, college is voluntary and, even once students are enrolled, they are, with the exception of core requirements—which usually do not include GWS courses—not mandated to take specific courses. Yet, when I ask my students at the beginning of the semester why they are taking the course, in most cases, students respond that they need to—it fulfills a distribution requirement, it was the only course they could fit into a certain time slot, or it serves to complete their minor. Thus, while one could argue that students have voluntarily agreed to take a course, and therefore have chosen to abide by a certain syllabus, this "choice" is often made in a constricted situation where students do not at all feel like liberated persons deciding on their own educational path. Further, after twelve or thirteen years of mandatory schooling, students frequently arrive at college with the impression that they need to obey the instructor whose word is not to be questioned, at least not out loud in the classroom. Considering this, any

structure we as instructors create ought to be viewed as an imposition on our students rather than as something willingly agreed to by them.

Following traditional anarchist pedagogy, I have experimented with a less structured classroom environment than is the norm for university courses, namely by involving students in determining the classroom structure. At the beginning of the semester, we set ground rules and these govern classroom interactions. Students usually decide on rules that require respect when listening to others and they generally agree to use computers and cellphones sparingly. Rarely, however, do they set rules for not coming late to class, knowing that the intricate course schedule and extensive campus bus system makes it hard to always be on time. Keeping the priorities that students have identified in mind, I monitor laptop use when I consider it beneficial, but do not penalize latecomers. Most students appreciate these responsive rules, given their role in designing them. They describe the classroom environment as respectful and considerate and, while the students are not always "orderly"—sometimes showing up late and not completing assignments on time—they are universally considerate of one another as well as of me as an instructor.

And yet, for the same reasons that I suggest it is beneficial to minimize structure in the anarchist classroom, doing so nevertheless comes with risks. After all, students have been trained for their whole schooling to learn within rigid structures and they often feel lost when such structures are removed. For example, when a written assignment is optional, many students have expressed having a hard time deciding for themselves whether completing it would be to their benefit or not. One possible path through the structure conundrum is to implement non-hierarchical structures such as rotating facilitators and implementing the progressive stack[5] technique for discussions. These modes take time to learn, however, and students can either find this learning process exciting or consider it as taking time away from the course content. In a feminist context, form and content are ideally interwoven and students can learn about the history of feminist organizing by practicing non-hierarchical group structures. Still, the amount of time and energy that goes into learning horizontal group structures is significant and would obviously work best if they were used across several courses so that students could continue to develop such modes of collaborative engagement throughout their time in college.

While every course necessarily has some level of structure, whether explicit (e.g., showing up on a certain day and time every week) or implicit (e.g., sitting down, not yelling while others are speaking), I have come to the conclusion that, when utilizing anarchist pedagogy in the college classroom, less structure is better than more. Not necessarily because less structure is the "right answer," but because most (or all) of the other courses that students take are overly rigid; my offering a less structured course provides students with a crucial opportunity to critically question which structures are generative and which are detrimental or unnecessarily constrictive. This is no easy practice. As Freire (2008) points out, within a hierarchical society, there is often "fear of freedom" (35). Students are worried about chaos and about not being able to take responsibility for their own learning. Creating a classroom space with minimal formal structure allows students (and instructors!) to face this fear of freedom and to think critically about how they want to learn.

Rigor with Freedom?

Gender and Women's Studies courses are, at least at Rutgers University, often considered "easy A's." The introductory course also fulfills a core university requirement, so many students take it as a way to get their "diversity requirement" out of the way in what they anticipate will be a relatively painless manner. Several of those of us who teach in the department struggle with how to emphasize that GWS is not "fluff," especially in the context of the introductory course, while at the same time not resorting to punitive and overly harsh teaching methods. The view of GWS courses as easy or somehow not rigorous is, of course, highly problematic and should be countered in our teaching, but how do we do this without resorting to arguably patriarchal modes of dominance?

In applying liberatory educational methods by way of giving students a say in how courses are designed, for example, there is always the possibility that they will opt for less labour-intensive courses than what we, as instructors, might have intended. While my experience is that students usually suggest less work than I would have (though far from always and usually not

dramatically so), I propose that we should look at students' preference for "less work" as far more complex than merely a sign of undesirable laziness. We need to question whether "more work" is necessarily better. If students write more, read more, or take more tests, do they automatically learn "more"? I have found that students are often more likely to grapple with ideas in class if they do not have to worry about writing a paper or pass a test. They usually come up with more provocative—though less polished—ideas and theories in discussions and short ungraded written assignments than in formal essays. The learning process becomes its own goal, its own enjoyment even. This is not to say that there cannot be great value in learning through frequent writing, but rather that learning also benefits from time and spaciousness. In a society obsessed with production, I would argue that creating a space where students do not feel like compulsive producers has its own value.

Flexible syllabi, where students have a say in what work to perform, sometimes means that they do less or give their work so little attention that the result suffers (this dilemma has also been discussed by Rouhani 2012, 1737). But is the issue really that students do not *want* to work? In some cases, I am sure it is. Some people are lazy; others are not interested in intellectual labour. Like elsewhere, at Rutgers, a large state university, many students are juggling multiple commitments outside of class such as jobs, often full time, and family. Because of the rising cost of tuition, many are also trying to finish their degrees in the shortest timespan possible by taking heavy course loads. In such a context, students often have to decide which assignments to prioritize, such that the ones with the most clearly productive results are focused on. This means prioritizing work for courses where there is a clear relation between cramming and grades. While none of these tendencies—laziness, other interests, and prioritizing—are inherently bad, they end up affecting students' work as well as the classroom experience of others, both students and instructor.[6] And what about the students who really want to learn and have time to devote to the course as well as those who want to engage with the material in a more rigorous fashion? In a discussion-based classroom, everyone is affected by what others bring to the table. If some have not prepared adequately for class, everyone suffers. This is why further research about anarchist pedagogy in the feminist classroom is called for. If students can each individually decide what to put into the course, how do we make the collective class experience beneficial for everyone?

All this said, the opportunity to have a say in the content of the course, and especially being able to reevaluate it as the semester progresses, leads some students to put in much more work than I would have asked on a standard syllabus. As they learn about new topics, they have questions they want to explore or an argument they want to make. For example, a group of students in a recent class researched toxic waste from a nearby cosmetics plant, writing a report and contacting the owner of the plant (who did not respond). This project was only possible because they were able to redesign their work for the last month of the course, spending more time on this special project instead of other pre-formulated assignments. This leads me to the question of values and neutrality.

Values and Neutrality

As discussed in the introduction, theorists of anarchist education have been firm in their stance that liberatory pedagogy does not equal "anything-goes" when it comes to values and opinions and that an anarchist education is not value-neutral. Indeed, it could be argued that the maintenance of a "neutral" standpoint and absence of position on the course material functions to secure the instructor as "above" students, reinforcing a hierarchy where students are expected to develop a point of view, but the instructor is above this. Presenting one's analysis or position on a matter can make one vulnerable and expecting students to do this without reciprocating puts the instructor in a position of power. It also leaves the students second-guessing their comments, wondering what the instructor is "really" thinking.

At the same time, presenting one's own standpoint comes with risks, especially for instructors from groups who are seen as automatically "biased," given their minoritized positionality in a racist and heterosexist society. Many GWS instructors have written about such accusations of "bias" (read: "incompetence") as being thrown at those who students see as part of a "special-interest group" such as women of colour and queer people. Beyond this, I find that presenting a point of view as an instructor can have a detrimental effect on classroom discussion and hence on students' abilities to

form their own analyses. The U.S. educational system, especially in an age of high-stakes testing, is based on the notion that there are "right" answers and that these are precisely what students can expect to come out of a proper education with. Further, given that their work will be graded—a topic I will address below—students have a fear of saying something the instructor will deem "wrong."

To complicate matters further, feminist-anarchist pedagogy, based in two movements that have stood up against authority, opens up space to question the concept of truth (Armaline 2009, 139). But questioning the notion of a capital-T Truth should not mean that anything goes. It does not mean that, for example, we can "believe" that racism is over and not need to provide evidence for this claim. I find that students very often equate a discussion-based classroom where the instructor listens to them and does not pretend to hold the whole truth with thinking that all statements are equally valid. We need to teach students to question where their positions come from. Can they back them up? Are their arguments persuasive and logical? In the example mentioned above, the idea that "racism is over"—something that, all too often, students seem to think is merely a matter of personal opinion—it is of course crucial that the instructor respond by describing how structural racism works. As Armaline (2009) points out, anarchist pedagogical praxis sees the instructor as an active member of the learning process (139). We can ask complex questions and bring in persuasive arguments that function to broaden, and challenge, students' perspectives. The key is that this does not force students to take on a certain point of view, but actively engages them in a learning process where they develop skills to think critically about knowledge production.

As I mentioned briefly in the introduction to this section, students frequently worry about bringing their own values and analyses into the classroom, especially when their positions may not be shared by a majority of class participants. They are worried that they will be judged by the instructor or by other students. The affective dimensions of the learning environment is clearly a critical point for future research on anarchist education. Being able to stand up for an uncomfortable analysis is central to anarchist practice, as it is about challenging the hegemonic worldview of current power structures. How do we create classrooms where feeling safe and feeling challenged are not in opposition? This fear of judgement brings me to my next and final section: the problem of grading. Worrying about saying the wrong thing is often related to a worry about receiving a bad grade; pleasing the instructor is seen as pivotal to success.

Grading

Grading is one of the key places where feminist and anarchist pedagogical practices diverge. Many feminists have critiqued the current model of grading and presented alternative grading structures (see, for example, Felman 2001, 172-173; Fisher 2001, 107). Some feminist approaches to grading include allowing students to rewrite assignments, so as to encourage an approach to learning as a process rather than a static end goal, and changing criteria to acknowledge subjective perspectives. Anarchists, however, tend to reject grading altogether.

Grading is at its foundation about creating hierarchies and valuing people based on their productivity or potential for productivity and thus is not compatible with anarchist models of learning. However, while anarchist education should ideally not involve grades, in most university, settings grading is mandatory. Thus, as instructors, we have to find ways to relate to the grading system, whether we approve of it or not. In the spring of 2014, following the example of Luis Fernandez who teaches in the Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice at Northern Arizona University, I told my students that they would all receive A's in the course. It had been several years since I heard Fernandez speak about anarchist teaching and his practice of announcing to his students on the first day of class that everyone will get an A, which is coupled with an invitation to students to come to class if they wanted to learn and participate. Not quite as brave as Fernandez and worried that students would stop showing up altogether, I did not reveal my grading policy until the middle of the semester.

To my surprise, the knowledge that they would get an A did not mean that students stopped doing the work; in fact, there was no change in attendance or submission of written assignments. What did change was the content of students' participation: they were more open in what they said and wrote, more willing to

try new tacks, knowing that they would not be judged, at least not through grades. In a later, upper-level course, I decided to tell students on the first day of class that they would all receive A's, as long as they attended class and handed in assignments. Again, this had no notable negative result on the quality of their work. This raises the question of whether grades are really as much of a motivating factor as they are often made out to be. This is certainly a topic deserving of more research, including into the consequences of not grading for instructors. While Fernandez and many others, including members of the Delaware-based Open Syllabus Education project, have not faced repercussions for giving all students A's, Denis Rancourt, a tenured professor of Physics at the University of Ottawa, was fired in 2008 after assigning everyone an A+, which shows that the practice is not safe for everyone, even those with the protection of tenure.

What if assigning a collective A is not a possibility? One option suggested by educators with a liberatory perspective is to let students assign their own grades. This addresses the issue of grades being imposed from the outside, sometimes in a seemingly arbitrary fashion. I am not convinced this is a better alternative; in fact, it might even create a worse situation, as it internalizes the grading process. In grading themselves, students have to decide where they fit within a hierarchy and how much their work is worth. Feminists continuously point out the detrimental effects of girls and women internalizing societal standards and constant self-judgment. Asking our students to grade themselves, and thereby adding another self-evaluating burden on our students, does not strike me as particularly feminist.

An option that holds more potential is contract grading. In this system, which has been used by professors of varying pedagogical persuasions, each student writes up a contract together with the instructor, outlining what work will be completed for the course and how it will be graded (Harter 2012). Yet even with contract grading, we are telling students that what they get in exchange for their labour is a grade. This still keeps learning within a system of trade—you produce, I give you a grade—rather than learning for the sake of learning or in order to gain skills that can be applied outside the classroom.

Based on a comment from a student's end-of-semester self-evaluation, I conclude this discussion of grading with a set of questions for further work. In response to this closing assignment, which asks students to reflect on the semester and their work as individuals and as members of the class collective, the student wrote: "I think the format took away the hierarchy of teacher/student and made it more like colleagues talking about issues in the queer community. It was just a very easy conversation without the feeling like you were judging/grading us on what we said." What does "easy" mean in this context? Does it mean "not difficult or challenging" or does it mean "free of stress"? This same student, in a conversation about grading criteria for the course, said that he appreciated that I had a "lax" attitude toward grading, as it allowed him to focus on learning, not on getting a good grade. We have been taught to see descriptors, such as "lax," as negative, showing that our teaching is not rigorous or challenging enough. I want to pose a challenge in return: what if we saw creating a learning environment that is, in some senses, easy and lax—that is, an environment that is not stressful—as something to strive for? Is it possible that our students' learning process would improve if they were not constantly stressed and worried? Would they learn more if they actually found participating in class enjoyable? Incorporating an anarchist lens when considering feminist pedagogical practices opens up space for not simply creating a feminist work environment in our courses, but for questioning the productivity imperative that underlies so much of education. It opens up space for thinking about whether pleasure and community might not be more important than how much work we manage to get done over the course of the semester.

Conclusion

In any college course, the designated instructor is always in a position of power. While university education is not mandatory, students do not always have a realistic option of not taking a course. Can we ever force anarchist learning on someone or does this undermine the goals of a liberatory education? Within the current structure of academia, any anarchist pedagogical processes will by default be flawed, stuck in a system that is inherently opposed to equality and liberation. Yet there is value to these pedagogical practices that create spaces for liberatory learning. Since its inception, Women's Studies has foregrounded the importance of collective and individual education in liberation from

oppressive structures. Consciousness-raising groups and early Women's Studies courses encouraged a learning process that decentered authority and instead centered participants' own learning processes and experiences. As Women's (and now Gender) Studies has become increasingly institutionalized, I argue that anarchist pedagogies can help feminist classrooms continue to question authority and thus strengthen students' critical thinking and practice.

For anarchist educational practices to be successful, educators as well as students have to give up the idea that we have to be right or do things right. In fact, we have to deeply question the very concept of "success." In this article, I have pointed to some of the issues that I have struggled with in implementing anarchist pedagogy. Perhaps some of these moments would be considered failures, but they are generative failures, moments that open space for students to discover that learning is messy and complicated. Anarchist political and pedagogical praxis consistently emphasizes that we should not strive for perfection, but rather pay attention to moments, however fleeting, in which we can challenge the current structure and build alternatives. Thus, while I have argued throughout this article that feminist-anarchist pedagogy would function better if applied on a larger scale than just a single course, we can also use whatever moments we find to implement liberatory pedagogical practices.

Over the past few years, there has been an increase in scholarship on anarchism, including a growing body of work from feminist and queer perspectives (Daring et al. 2012; Dark Star Collective 2012; Amster et al. 2009). As anarchism gains more traction in academic research, I am hopeful for richer conversations among feminists around how to implement anarchist pedagogies in Gender and Women's Studies, including in the introductory course. As I've suggested, anarchist approaches to pedagogy can lend themselves to the creation of classroom environments that are temporary free zones for experimental learning, even if they are not perfect. And anarchist educators work to embrace imperfection not as failure, but as part of a generative practice.

Endnotes

[1] While anarchism and feminism meet in the ideology and practice of anarcha-feminism, I do not use that term in this article. Anarcha-feminism can be described as the notion that anarchism and feminism are mutually dependent on each other to reach their goal: liberation for people oppressed because of gender cannot be achieved within current state structures and society as a whole will not be liberated as long as gender oppression persists. It is a political movement as well as a philosophy. To acknowledge that the practices discussed in this article do not grow directly out of this movement, I use the term anarchist-feminism rather than anarcha-feminism.

[2] Jamie Heckert combines anarchist theory and praxis with queer feminism and Buddhist thinking to theorize how educational spaces can be centered on freedom and compassion rather than mandates and punishment.

[3] Escuela Moderna ("the Modern School") was a progressive/radical school in Barcelona in operation between 1901 and 1906. It became the model for the anarchist Modern School movement in the United States.

[4] Two of the most prominent examples of this model is the Albany Free School in Albany, NY, and Summerhill School in Suffolk, UK.

[5] Rather than everyone speaking in the order they raised their hand, "progressive stack" means paying attention to who has already spoken and giving preference to those who have not yet spoken as well as to participants from underrepresented groups.

[6] Indeed, I wonder if it really is a problem if our students have moments (or whole semesters) of "being lazy." Why is it so important that they are always "working hard"? What if we encouraged laziness in the classroom, and elsewhere, as an antidote to the culture of incessant productivity? Is it possible to learn and be lazy at the same time? While this is a bigger issue than I can discuss here, it is one that is deserving of further attention.

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The Intro Course: A Pedagogical Toolkit

Jocelyn Thorpe is Associate Professor of Women's and Gender Studies at the University of Manitoba. She has taught different versions of the introductory course, including Introduction to Women's and Gender Studies in the Humanities, since 2010. Her research examines the history and social and environmental legacies of colonialism in the Canadian context. She is the author of*Temagami's Tangled Wild: Race, Gender, and the Making of Canadian Nature* (UBC Press 2012), and co-editor with Stephanie Rutherford and L. Anders Sandberg of *Methodological Challenges in Nature-Culture and Environmental History Research* (Routledge 2017).

Sonja Boon is Associate Professor of Gender Studies at Memorial University. She has research interests in feminist theory (particularly corporeal feminisms), life writing, and autoethnography. Her work appears or is forthcoming in such journals as *Life Writing*, *SubStance*, *Journal of the Motherhood Initiative*, *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, and the *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*. She teaches the introductory course regularly and enjoys engaging in pedagogical conversations and sharing ideas with colleagues at MUN and beyond.

Lisa Bednar has been teaching Introduction to Women's and Gender Studies in the Social Sciences, both in the classroom and online, at the University of Manitoba since 2004.

Glenda Tibe Bonifacio is Associate Professor in the Department of Women and Gender Studies, University of Lethbridge. She has been teaching WGST 1000 since 2005. She is the author of *Pinay on the Prairies: Filipino Women and Transnational Identities* (UBC Press 2013); editor of *Gender and Rural Migration: Realities, Conflict and Change* (Routledge 2014) and *Feminism and Migration: Cross-cultural Engagements* (Springer 2012); and co-editor of *Gender, Religion and Migration: Pathways of Integration* (Lexington 2010).

Marg Hobbs has been a faculty member in Gender and Women's Studies at Trent University since 1990 and is department chair. Her research examines the history of women in relation to feminism, work, poverty, social policy, and welfare state development in Canada. She has taught the Introduction to Gender and Women's Studies course for many years, including several with her friend and colleague Carla Rice, with whom she recently collaborated on the introductory reader *Gender and Women's Studies in Canada: Critical Terrain* (Women's Press 2013).

Rachel Hurst is Associate Professor of Women's and Gender Studies at St. Francis Xavier University. Her research focuses on embodiment, (visual) culture, and power from the perspectives of psychoanalysis and decolonial thought. She also teaches the introductory course in Women's and Gender Studies.

Krista Johnston has taught online and in-person versions of Introduction to Women's and Gender Studies at the University of Winnipeg and the University of Manitoba. She has designed and taught a number of courses in Women's and Gender Studies for universities in Ontario and Manitoba and recently completed her dissertation on anticolonial political action and responsibilities for decolonization.

Heather Latimer is a Lecturer at the University of British Columbia's Institute for Gender, Race, Sexuality, and Social Justice, and the Coordinated Arts Program. Her research and teaching focus on the links among representational politics, social identities, and cultural practices. She has published articles in a number of international journals, including *Feminist Theory*, *Social Text,* and *Modern Fiction Studies.* In 2013, she published her first book, *Reproductive Acts: Sexual Politics in North American Fiction and Film* (McGill-Queen's). Since she began teaching full-time in 2009, she has always taught

first-year and introductory classes in gender and social justice.

Helen Hok-Sze Leung is Associate Professor of Gender, Sexuality and Women's Studies at Simon Fraser University. She is the author of *Undercurrents: Queer Culture and Postcolonial Hong Kong* (UBC Press 2008) and *Farewell My Concubine: A Queer Film Classic* (Arsenal Pulp Press 2010) and co-edits the *Queer Asia* book series (Hong Kong University Press). She teaches a large introductory course for the department every year.

Marie Lovrod is Coordinator of Women's and Gender Studies and Assistant Professor of English at the University of Saskatchewan. She has facilitated her own and student learning through the Introduction to Women's Studies for two decades. Her research addresses intersecting constructions of childhood, youth, and aging in the context of traumas and resiliencies produced as localized effects of global capitalization. She values communities of practice that respect research, learning, and social environments as inclusive spaces.

Carla Rice is Canada Research Chair in Care, Gender, and Relationships in the College of Social and Applied Human Sciences at University of Guelph, a position she assumed after serving as Associate Professor in Gender and Women's Studies at Trent University. Her research in the fields of critical psychology, equity education, gender and sexual development, and women's health spans three major areas of focus: diverse women's narratives of embodiment in the passage to womanhood; arts-based inquiry into the experiences of people with disabilities and bodily differences in social and professional encounters; and qualitative research into the body as an equity issue in school settings. For several years, she co-taught Introduction to Gender and Women's Studies with Marg Hobbs, and the two recently collaborated on the introductory reader *Gender and Women's Studies in Canada: Critical Terrain* (Women's Press 2013).

Trish Salah is Assistant Professor of Gender Studies at Queen's University. Her research interests include postcolonial, feminist, and sexual minority literatures, transnational sexualities and cultural production, decolonial and decolonizing psychoanalysis, sex work, trans* studies, and the enduring appeal of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. She is the author of *Wanting in Arabic* (TSAR 2002, 2nd Edition 2013) and *Lyric Sexology, Vol. 1* (Roof 2014), and is a member of the editorial board for *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly*. She recently taught Introduction to Women's and Gender Studies at the University of Winnipeg.

Alissa Trotz is Associate Professor of Women and Gender Studies, and Caribbean Studies, at New College, University of Toronto. She took the lead in the transformation of the flagship introductory Women and Gender Studies course to reflect a transnational focus and has taught it for over a decade. (For the last three years, the course has been team taught by June Larkin and Alissa Trotz.) She is also Associate Faculty at the Dame Nita Barrow Institute of Gender and Development Studies at the Cave Hill Campus (Barbados) of the University of the West Indies. For the past seven years, Alissa has edited a weekly newspaper column, "In the Diaspora," in the *Stabroek News*, a Guyanese independent newspaper, and she is a member of Red Thread Women's Organization in Guyana.

Abstract

This article offers ideas and strategies for teaching introductory-level courses in Gender and Women's Studies by providing the responses of eleven experienced educators who were asked two questions: What main theme or idea do you hope students will learn in the introductory class you teach? And what practical strategies do you use in the classroom to achieve that learning objective?

Résumé

Cet article propose des idées et des stratégies pour enseigner les cours d'introduction aux Études sur le genre et les femmes en fournissant les réponses d'onze éducatrices chevronnées à qui l'on a posé deux questions : Quel thème ou quelle idée principale espérez-vous que les étudiants apprennent dans la classe d'introduction que vous enseignez? Et quelles stratégies pratiques utilisez-vous en classe pour atteindre cet objectif d'apprentissage?

The two of us, Jocelyn Thorpe and Sonja Boon, once shared an office wall at Memorial University. The wall may have separated our offices, but we frequently met on either side of it to eat lunch, laugh, and talk about teaching, writing, and pretty much everything else. Now, since Jocelyn moved from St. John's to Winnipeg, we work at institutions five thousand kilometres apart and we feel the distance, though we continue to share a passion for teaching and a love of discussing our experiences in the classroom.

This collaborative paper represents an attempt to expand our ongoing conversations about teaching, particularly at the introductory level. To that end, we invited a number of dedicated, experienced, and enthusiastic educators from across the part of Turtle Island now called Canada to join our dialogue by sharing their ideas about and strategies for teaching Introduction to Gender and Women's Studies. We asked eleven educators to contribute: Alissa Trotz (University of Toronto), Rachel Hurst (St. Francis Xavier University), Glenda Tibe Bonifacio (University of Lethbridge), Marg Hobbs (Trent University), Carla Rice (University of Guelph), Helen Hok-Sze Leung (Simon Fraser University), Heather Latimer (University of British Columbia), Marie Lovrod (University of Saskatchewan), Krista Johnston (University of Winnipeg), Lisa Bednar (University of Manitoba), and Trish Salah (Queen's University). Our contributors are diverse in their scholarly interests, geographic location, background, and professional positions. They teach in programs and departments with different foci, student demographics, and histories; they live in large cities and in small communities alike; and they teach by distance and on campus. But they share a commitment to making the first-year Gender and Women's Studies course work.

We asked each contributor to explore two questions: What main theme or idea do you hope students will learn in the introductory class you teach, and what practical strategies do you use in the classroom to achieve that learning objective? Below, we present contributors' responses to the questions we posed. Two of the pieces are co-authored, but otherwise contributors did not write their pieces in conversation with one another. Each piece is unique, reflecting the specific conditions shaping contributors' teaching environments as well as the wide range of concerns addressed in Gender and Women's Studies.

Even so, common themes emerge across each response that demonstrate a shared dedication to anti-oppressive pedagogy, critical skills-building, and student engagement with the world around them. In what follows, each contribution stands on its own so that readers may benefit from the insights of individual educators, but we have ordered the pieces to allow for a flow across the texts. The first four essays sketch out overarching lenses through which contributors view the introductory course: from encouraging students to understand connections between the words they read and the lives they lead to demonstrating the potential of an in-between perspective, and from inviting students to comprehend the implication of the past in the present and the global in the local to encouraging them to cultivate practices of unlearning and critical hope. The remaining five pieces explicate specific classroom situations and challenges that nevertheless remain more broadly relevant. Together, they address varying approaches to the introductory course at different institutions, the role of dialogue in both distance and on-campus courses, and how to maintain student engagement with feminism, while remaining aware of feminism's implication in unjust relationships of power. Contributors' insights, in the pages that follow, reveal a thoughtful, critical, and impassioned engagement with the possibilities of feminist pedagogy at the first-year level. "We"—Sonja and Jocelyn—return in the conclusion to highlight further common themes in the pieces and to describe how the ideas raised by the contributors might be useful for all of us who teach the introductory GWS course.

The Worlds in our Texts
D. Alissa Trotz
Women and Gender Studies, University of Toronto

In the first chapter of Jamaica Kincaid's (1998) *A Small Place*, the narrator, reflecting on the transnational asymmetries that structure the tourist industry, wryly notes, "There is a world of something in this, but I can't go into it right now" (14). As a co-instructor (with June Larkin) of the introductory Women and Gender Studies course at the University of Toronto, I find the classroom to be precisely that space that must open itself up to what lies beneath the surface of our lives, to the uneven worlds that Kincaid fleetingly references,

initiating a community of learners with the critical capacities to connect not just to the materials that we share, but to the worlds and histories in the texts and the communities they reference.

Each year, I am excited anew by the promise of students engaging collectively with the idea that where we stand is neither static nor self-contained, that connections matter to how we organize our complexly gendered lives and to who we understand ourselves to be. In the first-year classroom, we explore the invisible proximities that structure our everyday experiences: from family life to the kinship work of nationhood, from work to leisure, from commodity culture to representation, from politics to militarization. We approach tourism as an embodied travel practice with material and ideological dimensions and reflect on how we create ideas about places and people before we have even travelled: upon what and whom does our pleasure depend? What does it mean that, in escaping winter on a flight bound for the Caribbean warmth, the passenger sitting next to us is a temporary farmworker returning home at the end of a seven- day workweek season at a farm in Southern Ontario that has kept us fed? We approach the subject of the labour market with a classroom census through which students discover that most of them work in the service sector, deepening their discussion of the shift from manufacturing to service industries and providing a visual map of gendered differences at work. We think aloud about whose sweat is sewn into the label of the clothes we wore to lecture and about how such conversations populate the classroom with other lives, and other stories, that we are also a part of. We ask ourselves what Idle No More might teach us about the limits of feminist demands for inclusion into a settler-colonial nation-state and how such social movements push us to understand politics as "[a] contest about what matters and ought to be subject to (public) consideration and debate" (Iton 2010, 9).

Nurturing critical literacies that render these connections visible is not a comfortable task, but it can be deeply rewarding and inspirational, enriched by the varied backgrounds that students bring to bear on our engagement with the material. Moving from being a tourist or spectator to an active learner requires inculcating habits of feminist curiosity (Enloe 2004), of listening, and of humility. How might we be marked by these journeys, transforming and finding ourselves, each other, and our related worlds in the process?

Inter-
Rachel Alpha Johnston Hurst
Women's and Gender Studies, St. Francis Xavier University

> 1. between, among (*intercontinental*). 2. mutually, reciprocally (*interbreed*).
> (*Oxford Dictionary of Current English*, 3rd ed., s.v. "inter-.")

While I do not define it as the central theme of my course, the prefix *inter-* is implicitly vital to the way I teach the introductory GWS course. Describing not only the approach taken in relation to course content (inter-sectional, inter-disciplinary), *inter-* also gestures toward my affective and social experiences of the field of Gender and Women's Studies (inter-subjective, inter-lope, inter-pret, inter-rupt, inter-vene). One of the most challenging ideas that the class introduces to students is that of being in-between: neither wholly inside nor outside one signifier (a discipline, an identity marker, an occupation), but instead becoming situated within the space *between* a constellation of positions. If we apply this formulation to the concept of inter-disciplinarity, this space in-between is the point from which a researcher approaches a problem (for example, disparate power relations), resulting in a more complex process, but also a transformation of the disciplines. Being *inter-* is challenging. It is an ontology that embraces contingency and unknowing, requires a subject to give up the fantasy of mastery, and demands listening. The second meaning of *inter-* planted within the introductory course—mutuality, reciprocity—is, in my experience, even more challenging for students than the first. To practice mutuality is to imagine a different world, one without the hierarchies that structure it now and, in the inter-im, to suggest to students that it is possible to work in coalition or solidarity with others whose ultimate objectives may be quite different from one's own.

Readers may note that the choice of *inter-* as a theme enables me to have it many ways by refusing to reside within one concept or idea. Indeed, as a former student and now professor of Gender and Women's Studies, this is precisely what drew me to

this field in the first place. I want students to leave the class with an appreciation for paradox, contradiction, and disagreement, having felt and/or intellectually encountered the spaces in between as well as the possibilities for mutuality. I use a number of activities to support this learning objective. For example, I facilitate an in-class "inter-view" activity (interview being a word whose origins come from the notion of "regarding one another"), where students imagine two authors interviewing each other or students imagine interviewing an author about the day's topic (migrant labour, for instance, or sexual violence on university campuses). I have found Margaret Hobbs and Carla Rice's (2013) *Gender and Women's Studies in Canada: Critical Terrain* to be an excellent textbook for this activity because it includes the insights of multi- and inter-disciplinary scholars as well as non-governmental organizations, popular feminist writers, and activists. After students have presented some material from their imagined interviews, we engage in a larger class discussion about what kinds of theories or activisms might emerge if we further imagined the authors working in coalition with each other. How would their perspectives be transformed? What disagreements would emerge? This activity guides students toward a deeper understanding of disciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches, as well as of the concept of intersectionality, when they notice, for example, that some questions may be unanswerable by one author. My goal for this discussion is for students to work together to understand tensions and gaps (in scholarship, in organizations) as productive rather than as simply oversights or as inherently negative.

Global-Local Paradigm
Glenda Tibe Bonifacio
Women and Gender Studies, University of Lethbridge

Teaching Women and Gender Studies 1000 at the University of Lethbridge, in the heart of the Bible belt in Southern Alberta, is a challenging task for a non-white immigrant faculty member like me. How can I relate to a predominantly white, conservative population and help them to make sense of the course? I know well that many students take the course to comply with program requirements, yet this might be the course that motivates them to go on in Gender and Women's Studies

as a field of critical inquiry. Through nine years of teaching at Lethbridge, I have developed a global-local paradigm using intersectional feminist perspectives and scholarship from Western and non-Western scholars. I want to show students that the women's and/or feminist movement is not an enterprise solely of the West. A global-local perspective seems an appropriate approach for me, given that I represent the "global" under "local" eyes. The key issue is the locationality and intersectionality of human lives around the world so that students at Lethbridge are able to establish, from a gendered perspective, shared experiences and challenges with people from across the globe. The interconnectivity of socioeconomic factors, including the environment, across cultural and geographic scales demonstrates the idea of global feminist accountability. Feminism is not simply a concept rammed through the course and graded accordingly; rather it is understood in the context of the everyday lived realities of women around the world. Only when students recognize a shared responsibility for the past (e.g., colonization) and the present (e.g., globalization) can we aspire to a socially just feminist future.

To engage students in a collective journey of learning, I integrate open-class sessions with diverse activities. Small group workshops flow from assigned readings after which the discussion is shared with a wider audience. For example, in Spring 2015, I divided students into small groups to develop a "gender profile" of selected geographical regions: Africa, the Caribbean, East Asia, Eastern Europe, the Middle East, North America, the Pacific Islands, South America, South Asia, Southeast Asia, and Western Europe. Students disseminated their research publicly—beyond the constraints of the classroom—in a wide array of mediums, including, but not limited to, posters, brochures, and digital links.

Sharing is a feminist praxis of collaborative learning that encourages students to speak out in smaller groups of three or four in class. In envisioning a world of harmony and cooperation, group projects are conducted under a system of peer evaluation. From a Western practice of individuality, collective projects are often experienced by students as a daunting task yet, in this course, students are tasked with resolving issues together, preparing them for the need for cooperation in today's world. The opportunity to showcase group work

in a public forum provides a unique form of recognition of students' performance, but it also showcases Gender and Women's Studies as well. Students in the introductory course are, at times, combined with students in my upper-level course to work on similar themes, but with different outcomes. In discussing contemporary issues, I design an open-class session where non-enrolled students and the general public are invited to engage with the class. This community-university nexus enables students to appreciate and recognize the diversity and complexity of issues and approaches in resolving them. Hence, concepts become situated and contextualized, in large part, based on their contemporaneity and significance in people's lives. In this way, students at the introductory level get a sense of their own contribution to creating a better world for themselves and the next generation.

The global-local approach works well for me as a non-white instructor. I am able to connect with a predominantly white student population and community in Lethbridge. When reflexively positioned in a broader context that aims to appreciate the role that each individual plays in making change, the borders that seemingly divide us based on race, class, sexuality, and other markers of difference disappear, albeit momentarily. And, more importantly, when one of these students says at the end of the course that she or he has registered for another Women and Gender Studies course, or declared a major or minor, the future looks that much brighter.

Teaching Through Hope and Struggle
Marg Hobbs
Gender and Women's Studies, Trent University
Carla Rice
College of Social and Applied Human Sciences, University of Guelph

Two well-known quotations come to mind as we contemplate our teaching goals and practices in Gender and Women's Studies:

Another world is not only possible, she is on her way. Maybe many of us won't be here to greet her, but on a quiet day, if I listen very carefully, I can hear her breathing (Roy 2003, 175).

The first problem for all of us, men and women, is not to learn, but to unlearn (Steinem 1970, 192).

Arundhati Roy orients us to the possibilities for transformative social change by igniting our imaginations and fixing our gaze on alternative visions for a just future. Through Gloria Steinem we are reminded that the road ahead requires struggle to challenge taken-for-granted beliefs in a continual process of unlearning as well as learning.

We approach the introductory course with an eye to the breadth and depth of a field undergoing critical self-reflection and revision amidst challenges shaped by multiple forces, not least of which is a neoliberal political climate marked by pessimism, uncertainty, and austerity agendas. What is the place of Gender and Women's Studies in a mechanistic and utilitarian education system narrowly conceived through discourses of scarcity and marketplace values?

In the classroom, we aim to affect, engage, and move students into critical awareness of and responsiveness to local and global systems of inequality and the diverse ways in which they are experienced. The initial task for us, as instructors, is to confront and unsettle common stereotypes and assumptions about feminism and Gender and Women's Studies. Further, we explore historical and contemporary constructions of difference and unpack normative understandings of terms, such as "sex," "gender," "race," "class," and "disability." As we examine colonialism, globalization, racism, ableism, sexism, and transphobia, we critique practices of othering, examine relations of power in institutions and everyday life, and highlight multiple pathways and forms of resistance and solidarity. We use this approach to make space for new versions and visions of social realities.

On "transformative pedagogy," bell hooks (2003) writes: "My hope emerges from those places of struggle where I witness individuals positively transforming their lives and the world around them. Educating is always a vocation rooted in hopefulness" (xiv). Counter to the atomistic individualism of the prevailing socioeconomic system, hooks imagines learning as engaging individuals in communities, which she calls "keepers of hope" (105). We work to build community within the classroom, while also fostering interaction and dialogue with members of diverse academic, activist, and artistic communities. The introductory course has

always been, for us, a collaborative initiative, featuring many guests, and now culminates in an energetic in-class "Feminist Cabaret," which celebrates inspiring local people involved in projects of social and cultural change. Contributors have included members of the Rock Camp for Girls, The Raging Grannies, and The RebELLES as well as Anishinaabe Elder and Professor Emeritus Shirley Williams, spoken word artist Ziysah Markson, and Métis filmmaker Cara Mumford, among others. Students love the Cabaret for a variety of reasons, including these recorded on last year's course evaluations: "it was awesome to hear about the unique ways women are speaking out"; "it was fun to see local women taking a stance and promoting feminism"; and "great way to inspire hope and see feminism in action in the local area." Through such engagements, students gain theoretical insights, practical tools, and concrete examples of how change is possible through hope and struggle.

Talking About Sex
Helen Hok-Sze Leung
Gender, Sexuality and Women's Studies, Simon Fraser
University

After our department changed its name from Women's Studies to Gender, Sexuality and Women's Studies, we reorganized our first-year introductory courses along three themes: (1) gender issues in Canadian contexts; (2) introduction to Sexuality Studies; and (3) history of international feminist activism. I am responsible for teaching the Sexuality Studies course, "Sex Talk." The course introduces first-year students to contemporary theories of sexuality with a focus on discourse and media. It uses concrete examples to demonstrate Foucault: how we *talk* about sex matters to our experience and practice of sexuality. We study sexual representations in a range of traditional and new media and examine how changes in media technology, cultural policy, and community standards affect the way we determine what qualifies as pornography, what distinguishes public from private, and what constitutes sexual ethics. Course readings are informed by feminist, queer, and transgender theories, but I encourage students to approach theories as frameworks for understanding rather than examples of a "correct" stance. It is important to me that students

retain a capacity for independent thinking and even an irreverence for theoretical authority!

I assiduously avoid either-or debates and focus our study on discursive processes. For example, when I teach the section on pornography, I steer students away from dwelling on irreconcilable feminist debates. Instead, they develop skills to analyze the complex array of factors that influence *how* we recognize an image as pornographic in the first place. My primary goal is to develop their ability to examine particular discourses of sexuality. Through case studies, students analyze how filmmakers create images of sex on screen, how politicians manage a public sex scandal, and how journalists report on sexual trauma. Having acquired a capacity for critical analysis, they can make up their own minds about the ideological impact and material consequences of these discourses.

One of the challenges of a media-focused class is how rapidly students' familiarity with popular culture shifts. Academic case studies are inevitably outdated and so it is crucial to update them and continually reexamine the contemporary relevance of their arguments. Is the interpretation of *Sex and the City* still relevant to *Girls*? Do arguments about the Clinton sex scandal apply to the Anthony Weiner case? I also try to stay attentive to the incredibly diverse (and always changing) student demographics at Simon Fraser University. While it is not possible to cover a global range of media examples, it is important to invite students to test arguments against examples that are most familiar to them and to leave room for modifications when appropriate.

I find introductory courses to be both the most difficult and the most rewarding to teach. We all complain about students taking these courses only for requirements, students who do not care about feminist issues, and students who think they will get an easy credit. It is often these very same students, however, who, at the end of the semester, tell me how grateful they are to have been transformed by feminist, queer, and trans critiques as they go on to pursue careers in marketing, education, criminology, journalism, and so on. Introductory courses provide us with a tremendous opportunity to reach a broad range of students and for Gender, Sexuality and Women's Studies to have the most direct and lasting effect beyond the university.

The Politics of Representation: Reading, Writing, Affect

Heather Latimer
Coordinated Arts Program and Institute for Gender, Race, Sexuality, and Social Justice
University of British Columbia

The main thing I want students to take away from an introductory Gender and Women's Studies course is an understanding of the gendered politics of representation: how gendered, sexualized, and racialized cultural representations facilitate their sense of connection to and alienation from each other. I want them to learn to question whose stories are being told to them, by whom, and for whom. Here I follow Gayatri Spivak (1990) in defining representation as both "proxy and portrait" (108) or as both a process of speaking for and of portraying, and as a place where identities are learned and constructed. Put otherwise, representations are in need of "persistent critique" to guard against "constructing the Other simply as an object of knowledge" (63); they not only shape how individuals are portrayed and perceived, but also hierarchical relations of thinking, knowing, feeling, and being. As Henry Giroux (2000) argues, cultural representations are "where we imagine our relationship to the world," in that culture "produces the narratives, metaphors, and images for constructing and exercising a powerful pedagogical force over how people think of themselves and their relationship to others" (133). I want to help students see cultural representations as sexed, classed, gendered, and racialized and as inherently pedagogical.

One of the approaches I take to get students to think about representations as pedagogical is to ask them to write about what they see, hear, and read both inside and outside of the classroom. Blogging is an activity that allows students to gain a better understanding of how representational politics are structured and function. There are several things that blogging accomplishes. First, blogging allows students to work through ideas on their own time, which means they can revise their thoughts, step back to reflect, and practice various styles of writing. Second, the process of reflecting allows them to see all manner of representations and texts, not just essays or articles, as socially-situated attempts to communicate. This prompts them to reflect on their own writing in a similar manner: as an attempt to communicate with their classmates and to reach out publicly. Finally, blogging brings a diversity of voices, authors, and representations into the first-year course. In a recent class, especially rich given that 30 percent of the students were international, students created an archive of representations, authors, and voices from various locations and identities. Blogging allowed them to step outside the genres of traditional academic scholarship and include popular works by activists or activist organizations in their entries. This, in turn, allowed them to seek out alternative voices and realities as places of inspiration for challenging sexist and racist stereotypes, a critical skill for dealing with the emotional weight of confronting socially created inequalities and of realizing that power relations are not only rooted in social institutions, but also in everyday relations and practices. Overall, blogging allowed students to practice using feminist tools, which is what they need to take feminism beyond the classroom. In the end, blogging allowed my students in the introductory course to see their writing as more than simply personal expression, but also as a key aspect of the skills they are developing to produce and shape knowledge.

Tensions and Intentions

Marie Lovrod
Women's and Gender Studies, University of Saskatchewan

Three out of seven sections of our Introduction to Women's and Gender Studies course serve specific audiences. In one of these classes, international students who are transitioning from language acquisition to academic programs form in-class learning groups with students who enter the university from the Canadian context. In another, Aboriginal students self-select the introductory course as an institution-wide retention program where they take a number of courses as a cohort. In the third, students whose grades fall shy of admissions requirements undertake transitional entry via the introductory course. All specialized introductory classes include sustained, self-selected, intentional learning groups as part of the pedagogical strategy and provide opportunities for students to consider how feminist knowledge building practices serve the needs of each community. Course enrollments are limited to

facilitate ease of communication, relationship building and risk-taking, while content provides substantive representation of participant groups. This way of organizing the introductory course has resulted in measurable improvements in student retention and success at the undergraduate level. It also reveals the currency and adaptability of the introductory course. In what follows, I describe a few strategies for supporting as well as interrogating these models.

At my institution, barriers to cross-cultural learning are (re)negotiated through a "bridging" model that informs the introductory class for international and local students. Because our English-language training program operates on an independent timetable in a building adjacent to campus, it is necessary to synchronize course schedules to pair an advanced language-training course with Introduction to Women's and Gender Studies. International students work with an English language instructor on note-taking and library research skills, vocabulary development, and assignment drafts. This preparation enables them to use their life experiences as a resource in small group discussions with others who self-select for cross-cultural learning around specific topics germane to the introductory class. Students who opt into the bridging program demonstrate that controversial content, a rigorous discussion-based classroom, and willingness to "play" with curriculum can yield positive outcomes. Language proficiency soars among such international students, while the boundaries between "enclaves" soften among both groups. Students from Canada and elsewhere unpack learning protocols from several national contexts, de-familiarizing normative discourses that shape the worldviews they exchange in class.

In addition to international programming, Women's and Gender Studies at the University of Saskatchewan has been invited to contribute introductory classes to the university's Aboriginal Student Achievement and University Transition programs. Each carries the traces of institutional assumptions as well as "common-sense" expectations among participants with which students are encouraged to engage critically. One assumption is the idea that adjustment to academic life can be facilitated by creating cohorts of similar students and another assumption is that "gender studies" is readily accessible to diverse groups of learners. Inevitably, this approach to cohort development raises controversies and challenges. Class members simultaneously appreciate and question the spotlighting of under-represented student groups (McLoughlin 2005). Developing a critical vocabulary with which to name the knowledge politics involved in each intentional learning community becomes one way to keep the classroom lively.

One activity that students have endorsed involves a self/classroom community evaluation included on the midterm exam. The take-home exam, designed to promote integration of new vocabulary through a series of brief arguments that draw on class materials, invites students to include a question for peers arising from the course. During grading, these questions are compiled for a subsequent class, in which students form face-to-face lines or circles and exchange responses in timed intervals of a couple of minutes each, before moving to a new partner and question. Typical questions include, but are not limited to: How has your thinking changed since starting this class? How are you applying what you have learned in everyday life? If we all understand the harmful effects of gender stereotyping, why do we continue to follow gender norms? How has this class helped you to express yourself and/or contribute to controversial discussions?

During this exercise, students engage with each of their classmates directly; the instructor keeps time and poses student questions without comment. Participants build belonging through this lively, plural conversation and experience a greater sense of shared authority in the classroom. During debriefing, when students share ideas developed through the exercise, critical issues surface that influence ongoing discussions. Students in the Aboriginal Student Achievement program, for example, clarified how competing norms shape their interactions with peers and course materials. Reflecting on initial quiet in the classroom, course members identified contributing factors that include both deep listening and anticipated judgments from peers: "not traditional enough"; "too traditional"; "too contemporary/assimilated"; "too Christian"; "not queer-positive enough"; and so on. While peer reception is a common concern in all classes, this cohort pinpointed diverse perspectives arising from intergenerational engagements with and resistances to colonizing influences. Comfort with productive in-class tensions

increased as a result. Across the various sections we teach, it is evident that students value the opportunity to have frank discussions on topics arising from the class that they themselves choose to reflect on. In the process, we discover together how learning flourishes in contexts that strive, however imperfectly, to build mindful, non-coercive solidarities.

Keeping the Conversation Going
Krista Johnston
Women's and Gender Studies, University of Winnipeg
Lisa Bednar
Women's and Gender Studies, University of Manitoba

In our conversation about teaching Introduction to Women's and Gender Studies, Lisa and I talked about the importance of conversation and dialogue to working through the course materials and fostering the development of critical analysis. Whether in class or online, nurturing collaboration among participants provides the opportunity to practice feminist principles of self-reflection and cooperation as well as the skills to work with and through difference.

Lisa's Reflections

In the online course I have taught for several years, there are three one-week discussions wherein groups of twelve to fifteen students discuss topics in message boards. The first discussion often involves questions about what I mean by "meaningful participation." In my handout, I ask students to go beyond "I agree"; they must aim for rich discussion though regular and frequent posting throughout the week. Some topics generate more discussion than others and students' comments give me ideas about future topics. For example, students define *equality* and *liberation* in their own words early in the course, which enables me to gauge their awareness of the complexities of these terms. During the week, they learn from, challenge, and validate each other's ideas.

Students enter a course such as this experienced with online forums that too often focus on opinion-as-fact, superficiality, and false equivalencies. To foster critical and reflexive thinking, I encourage students to reflect on the extent to which their post is based on facts/research, opinion/perception, personal experience, or observation. Students generally rise to the occasion,

often reflecting on the source of their information and analyzing how parents, schools, and others have provided teachings that they want to unpack.

By the end of the course, students regularly tell me that the discussions played a key role in their learning over the semester. Two common phrases are variations on: "I never thought about it that way" and "I thought I was the only one who [thought that, did that, had that happen to me]." These comments show me that taking the course encourages them to develop a "feminist curiosity" (Enloe 2004), a phrase that continuously inspires me as an instructor in Gender and Women's Studies.

Krista's Reflections

Whether teaching online or in-person versions of the Introduction to Gender and Women's Studies, practices of feminist pedagogy that lay the groundwork for respectful and meaningful dialogue are crucial to my praxis. I begin by referring to our class as a collaborative learning community, drawing on principles of active learning to ensure that students understand their responsibility for the work undertaken in our course. Hands-on activities emphasize self-location and reflexivity, while also fostering a sense of collective responsibility to one another and to the work of learning. These early activities and conversations are often challenging and difficult, but they provide an important foundation on which to build our relationships with one another and to engage with course materials.

One of the activities that students often remember and comment on at the end of the course is the "Intersectionality String Game," adapted from CRIAW's *Everyone Belongs* by Joanna Simpson (2009, 31). If the group is large (and it usually is), we begin by organizing ourselves into three or four circles, each with one person holding a ball of yarn. This person begins to introduce themselves to the group and when another group member notices that they have something in common with the speaker, they step forward and take the ball of yarn, leaving the end of the yarn with the first speaker, while, in turn, beginning to introduce themselves to the group. As the activity unfolds, each member of the circle has at least one opportunity to speak, holding on to part of the yarn before passing the ball to the next speaker and creating a unique web of

interconnections. The first time we do this activity it functions as an ice-breaker, but, as the term progresses, we refer back to it to deepen our engagements with concepts, such as self-location, privilege, oppression, and systemic oppression, as we work with both the CRIAW intersectionality wheel diagram (Simpson 2009, 5; Hobbs and Rice 2013, 44) and Sherene Razack's (1998) conceptualization of interlocking oppressions (12–14). Sometimes, we repeat the activity in smaller groups of students as a way of mapping the interlocking oppressions examined in a specific reading or issue discussed in class. In the process, we move from a relatively simplistic understanding of interconnections to deeper analyses of inequality and oppression. This provides a foundation for thinking and working with concepts, such as alliance and solidarity.

In addition to this, we take our learning community online, transforming our discussion board into a course glossary where we work together to clarify understandings of course concepts as they unfold and deepen throughout the term. Glossary entries may include a definition (from a course author or in students' own words) or an example from everyday life and must make direct connections to course readings and materials. The glossary contributions also provide an opportunity to practice important scholarly skills, such as proper citation practices, critical reading, and critical analysis. By the end of the term, the glossary serves not only as a tool for course review and reflection, but also as a digital record of the critical, productive, and sometimes challenging conversations that have unfolded during our time together.

Dealing with Difficult Knowledge
Trish Salah
Gender Studies, Queen's University

"They cannot represent themselves, they must be represented." This famous passage from Karl Marx's (1963) *Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* has been deployed in many contexts: it introduces both Edward Said's (1979) *Orientalism* and Viviane Namaste's (2011) essay "'Tragic Misreadings:' Queer Theory's Erasure of Transgender Subjectivity" and is a central problematic of Gayatri Spivak's (1988) "Can the Subaltern Speak?" and its sequels. As I write, the phrase resonates with the negation of sex workers' political voice by abolitionist

feminists and federal conservatives during debates over Bill C–36, which will retrench and extend the criminalization of sex work in Canada (van der Meulen et al. 2014).

One of the challenges of introducing students to Women's and Gender Studies is to give an account of feminism as "a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression" (hooks 2000, 1) within an intersectional frame, while simultaneously teaching about feminisms' implication in systems of governance (Halley 2008). Political struggles against male violence and for legal equality have produced a situation in which some of the most privileged "representatives" of feminisms' heterogeneous constituency secure their speakers' privilege by speaking for (in the place of) and over the voices of other others. The question is how to provide positive incentives for student identification with feminist movements and epistemologies, while at the same time critiquing the oppressive praxis of the feminisms which, on the face of things, have been most successful (state feminisms, UN feminisms, and NGO-based feminisms, for example). And while intersectional analysis provides a resource for locating feminisms that participate in oppressive structures within a broader matrix of privilege and oppression, it does not deal with the affective and dis/identificatory stakes of the situation (Muñoz 1999). What's more, when presenting feminist auto- and internal critique, there is always a risk that it may be assimilated to anti-feminist and post-feminist common sense and actually intensify some students' disidentification with feminism. How, then, to teach feminisms as mobilizing both liberatory and subalterning movements?

When dealing with the "difficult knowledge" (Britzman 1998) of feminisms' incomplete project and compromised—and compromising—successes, I try to create opportunities for students to experience and examine—which is to say to encounter—their own desires for salvational iterations of feminism (e.g., the consolations and satisfaction of rescue narratives, the affirmations and pleasure of critique). While the wish for feminisms' "better stories" is affectively and politically important, so too is a capacity to engage what they obscure (Georgis 2013). To allow for such difficult (to sustain) engagements, I employ a multi-stage process, inviting repeated encounters with challenging texts. On first reading or viewing, I ask students to parse

such texts' argument in a brief précis; on the second, I ask them to read its rhetoric, ideology, discourse; on the third, I ask them not only to read for the affects it engenders and the desires it mobilizes or frustrates, but also to examine their own responses critically. In tandem with this process of reading self-reflectively their affective and ideologically-lodged responses, we also engage texts which are not easily assimilated to dominant feminist narratives and analytics, but which are neither amenable to anti-feminist or patriarchal logics. In this way, I hope to cultivate with my students a practice of unsettling knowledge and contrapuntal (auto) critique (Kumashiro 2000).

Concluding Thoughts on the Introductory Course

Designing and teaching an introductory GWS course, especially for the first time, can be daunting and time consuming. When we considered putting this article together, we wanted it to be a toolkit: something that teachers of the introductory course could draw on in their own thinking and course planning, something useful that could make a challenging (if also rewarding) task easier. Contributors, through describing both the philosophical and practical tools they use in their teaching, have provided such a toolkit. The article as a whole also offers a window through which to view some of the exciting things taking place in introductory classrooms on Turtle Island. Reading the contributions has given us much to reflect on as we prepare our own courses.

Alissa Trotz's approach brings seemingly disparate worlds together in order to reveal "invisible proximities" that our current global order simultaneously produces and obfuscates, allowing many of us situated in the Global North to ignore our implication in the oppression of other peoples and places. A useful way to examine and challenge these kinds of proximities, as Rachel Hurst argues, is through the spaces between, sites of encounter that are productive of "paradox, contradiction, and disagreement," on the one hand, but that are also ripe with "possibilities for mutuality." Glenda Bonifacio also stresses material existences and lived realities, using her own position as a "non-white immigrant faculty member" in a rural, conservative setting to open spaces for collaborative learning about the intersections between the local and the global and the

ways that contemporary experiences are shaped by unjust pasts and presents.

This world-making process, our contributors observe, involves a journey not only of learning, but also of unlearning or what Marg Hobbs and Carla Rice refer to as "unpacking," "unsettling," and "unknowing." Central to the process of learning and unlearning is an engagement with representation, a key concern for both Helen Hok-Sze Leung and Heather Latimer. Indeed, as Leung argues, "How we *talk* about sex matters to our experience and practice of sexuality," a point echoed by Latimer. "Representations," she observes, "not only shape how individuals are portrayed and perceived, but also hierarchical relations of thinking, knowing, feeling, and being." Learning to analyze such forms of representation is one way that we can encourage students to engage actively in our shared world.

Our task as scholar-teachers in Gender and Women's Studies is not an easy one; we have to consider carefully the histories that our students bring into the classroom and the histories that we also bring. Marie Lovrod discusses the complexities and contestations in the creation of specific cohorts of students. Trish Salah, meanwhile, cautions against reductive or celebratory understandings of feminism and feminist praxis, encouraging us—as teachers and students—to reflect on "difficult knowledge" and "feminism's incomplete project and compromised and compromising successes." "How then," she asks, "to teach feminisms as mobilizing both liberatory and subalterning movements?" Her piece reminds us that the work of teaching, like the work of feminism, is something that requires constant openness and willingness to change.

The need to develop critical thinking skills about the world in which we live and the texts we study in class, as well as an understanding of intersecting identities, interlocking systems of oppression, and the role of the past in the present, are threads that run through each piece. The other common thread is hope. "The academy is not paradise," bell hooks (1994) has observed. "But learning is a place where paradise can be created. The classroom, with all its limitations, remains a location of possibility" (207). As Krista Johnson and Lisa Bednar argue, the Introduction to Gender and Women's Studies course can provide "the opportunity to practice feminist principles of self-reflection and cooperation as well as the skills to work with and through difference."

The introductory classroom is an excellent place to practice and to help make true the words of Arundhati Roy (2003) quoted above: "Another world is not only possible, she is on her way."

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Agendas, Horizons, and the Canadian Introductory Reader: A Review Essay

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Abstract

This essay reviews three Canadian Introduction to Gender and Women's Studies readers, asking what they might reveal about the investments and values that animate teaching in Gender and Women's Studies. It argues that the texts are incommensurable with current theoretical and methodological trends in Gender and Women's Studies and considers what each offers to the field.

Résumé

Cet essai examine trois recueils de textes canadiens pour le cours d'introduction aux Études sur le genre et les femmes, en se demandant ce qu'ils pourraient révéler au sujet des investissements et des valeurs qui animent l'enseignement dans le domaine des Études sur le genre et les femmes. Il soutient que les textes sont en contraste flagrant avec les tendances théoriques et méthodologiques actuelles des Études sur le genre et les femmes et examine ce que chacun offre à ce domaine.

Books Under Review

Biggs, C. Lesley, Susan Gingell, and Pamela J. Downe, eds. 2011. *Gendered Intersections: An Introduction to Women's and Gender Studies*. Second Edition. Halifax, NS: Fernwood.

Crow, Barbara, and Lise Gotell, eds. 2009. *Open Boundaries: A Canadian Women's Studies Reader*. Third Edition. Toronto, ON: Pearson Prentice Hall.

Hobbs, Margaret, and Carla Rice, eds. 2013. *Gender and Women's Studies in Canada: Critical Terrain*. Toronto, ON: Women's Press.

For Gender and Women's Studies (GWS) instructors, there is perhaps no more fraught and contested teaching-related document than the introductory textbook or reader. We expect so much of these books—they are the means by which we hope to hail, engage, seduce, and forge an ongoing relationship with our students. The books also, crucially, map a set of expectations for the discipline while scaffolding the content. They thus bear a heavy weight and the task of editing them becomes a monumental one. This paper examines three current GWS introductory readers—*Open Boundaries: A Canadian Women's Studies Reader* (2009), *Gendered Intersections: An Introduction to Women's and Gender Studies* (2011), and *Gender and Women's Studies in Canada: Critical Terrain* (2013)—to consider how they relate to the wider field and what they might reveal about the field's investments, its positioning in relation to the university, and its future.

The first section of *Open Boundaries* intriguingly asks: "Who is the Woman of Canadian Women's Studies?" Beginning from what is now several decades of debate over the apparently homogeneous character at the centre of the dominant feminist imaginary, editors Barbara Crow and Lise Gotell (2009) stress "diversity and boundary-crossing" (7) as the thrust of this

most recent edition of their reader. *Open Boundaries* is not alone in beginning from this point; each of the other readers open with a section that points readers to the internally conflicted recent history of feminism. In *Open Boundaries*, the selection of essays by essential Canadian feminist theorists, such as Himani Bannerji, Cressida Heyes, and Enakshi Dua, comes together as a deeply questioning, mobile, and productively unresolved or incoherent whole. In Lesley Biggs, Susan Gingell and Pamela Downe's (2011) *Gendered Intersections*, the first section is called "Setting the Stage: What Does it Mean to be a Woman or a Man?" and it includes a subsection on "Gender and Difference" that also aims to disrupt monolithic conceptions of the subject of Gender and Women's Studies, this time not relying as much on Canadian scholars but instead on familiar, oft-anthologized introductory pieces by Peggy McIntosh, Allan G. Johnson, and R.W. Connell. And in the most comprehensive and weighty of the three readers, Margaret Hobbs and Carla Rice's (2013) *Gender and Women's Studies in Canada: Critical Terrain*, Part I is called "Why Gender and Women's Studies? Why Feminism?" and includes sub-sections "This is What a Feminist Looks Like" and "Diversity and Intersectionality," which strike a very accessible note with contributions from public advocacy organizations and popular feminist voices, such as Jessica Valenti and bell hooks. Notably, though each of these sections nod to Gender and Women's Studies as an academic discipline, only *Open Boundaries* includes a piece, Ann Braithwaite's (2009) "Origin Stories and Magical Signs in Women's Studies," that explicitly reflects on the work of Gender and Women's Studies as an (inter-)discipline.

In other words, each of the readers reflect on *feminism*'s subject but generally not on the subject —or even the structure—of GWS itself (beyond the introductions, which seem to be aimed at instructors rather than students). As Braithwaite (2009) stresses in her essay, "[t]o harness Women's Studies to 'the women's movement' (or to any version of feminist social action)…is to elide the differences between these two endeavours…" (54). Given the rarely acknowledged tensions between what happens in GWS as an academic field and feminist activism more broadly, it is interesting to reflect on how feminism's assumed subject governs the structuring logic of introductory texts in the field whose links to feminist activism have been so naturalized as to make

it indistinguishable from feminism. That is, how is the introductory text marked by the history of GWS' ostensible entwinement with feminist activism? And, how is the shape of the introductory text produced as acutely different from current knowledge in upper-level courses and the research at the so-called "leading edge" of the field? What "technologies of the presumed" (Hemmings 2011, 19) operate in the selection and ordering of texts for students beginning a program in GWS and how do these both shape and chafe against the degree program as it unfolds through subsequent study?

Considering the definitions, configurations, issues, and approaches that are foregrounded in introductory texts is also about what gets left out of them and so it raises the question of absences and gaps in Canada's introductory curriculum. Of course, it was absences and gaps from the curriculum—of women's histories, knowledges, and experiences—that first spurred the creation of GWS as a discipline in the early 1970s. Several decades later, in the wake of GWS's institutionalization, it seems crucial to reflect on how and whether those gaps have closed, persisted, or taken new forms— or some combination of all three. Introductory texts provide an accessible form for such reflection. That is, because the introductory text, perhaps more than any other kind of artifact related to the construction of GWS, reveals something about our affective investments in particular kinds of narratives of what matters to the field. Such texts are conceived as a foundational primer—which tells us something in itself—but they are also marked, in very particular ways, with the language of social transformation that initially animated what we imagine we do in GWS. They are thus intangibly but indelibly structured by a vision of the future and, as such, they offer a unique window on a set of priorities, a kind of loose agenda into which we seek to interpellate students. The texts are thus, in a sense, utopian and the language in each editor's introduction is unabashedly hopeful and forward-reaching. This is not a criticism, not at all. Rather, it recognizes the unique, affectively charged quality of these texts as collaborative documents that reveal something about the yearnings of GWS practitioners.

This future orientation explains the relative paucity of historical writing in this group of introductory readers. Notably, Hobbs and Rice's (2013) textbook includes several pieces that historicize the *Indian Act*.

Arguably, this is one of the text's greatest strengths, in that it provides a crucial genealogy for ongoing colonialism and its effects on Indigenous women. Disparate pieces of historical content by Estelle Freedman, Leila J. Rupp, Stephen Gould, and Afua Cooper are also included, along with one piece historicizing Sojourner Truth's much-anthologized speech. But in a textbook of over seven hundred pages, historical work makes up less than fifty pages. In *Open Boundaries*, Braithwaite's (2009) piece and Kim Sawchuk's (2009) "Making Waves: The Narrativization of Feminist History and Intellectual Matricide" are the only chapters that treat questions of history and these are more about narrations of the past in the present than examinations of the past "in itself." *Gendered Intersections* (2011) includes a more substantive historical dimension by grouping together six historical writings, a quiz, and a poem under the theme "History." That these materials are included so near the beginning of the text neatly sets up historical inquiry as an intrinsic element of the field and orients students toward its importance. But the relative lack of historical materials overall—and their confinement to certain sections of the readers—is surprising, since, as Wendy Kolmar (2012) notes, "many of the central questions that shaped the field in its early days were inherently historical. 'Where are the women?,' the founding question that propelled scholarship in many disciplines…is an archaeological question demanding that we excavate the pasts of disciplines, cultures and societies…" (230). This absence is all the more notable since, in Canada, feminist historians have been so central to the formation of GWS programs as core faculty in half or often full appointments and/or by running them as Directors or Chairs. And, although the presentist and future orientation of GWS and especially the introductory course is understandable, the lack of historical literacy among students may contribute to an impoverished sense of how to engage in the world-making that is so central to GWS's vision. After all, "[h]ow can we learn how change happens—how feminists rethink flawed positions or concepts—when we either never see the past or see so little or so simplified a version…that we are at a loss to make connections?" (Kolmar 2012, 237). Indeed, if we want the students we meet in introductory courses to be able to effectively understand difference—arguably the most important broad concept in GWS—then learning about both the historical construction of differences

and how feminists have historically engaged with those differences should be a central task in the Introduction to Gender and Women's Studies.

Alongside historical writing, another striking absence in these readers is any substantive work about cultural texts or the work of cultural interpretation beyond a small handful of selections in *Gender and Women's Studies in Canada* (2013) and *Gendered Intersections* (2011), which both feature chapters on the media in recent history and the contemporary moment. Given the importance of art history, film, and literary criticism in the development of feminist theory, this absence is troubling. *Gendered Intersections* includes a number of poems and images of several artworks by women artists, accompanied by a short paragraph or two of the artist's statement about that work; however, for this reason, it seems particularly odd that there is no work that introduces students to ideas about how gender shapes the creation and reception of the arts. Such questions certainly do not stand apart from the concerns with social construction, differential access to resources, and intersectional or interlocking approaches to social difference that are so central to the visions behind these texts. And if these readers are concerned with providing specifically Canadian perspectives on GWS, there is surely no shortage of feminist literary criticism that might contribute to such a project; Indigenous literary studies and translation studies are two areas from which editors could draw excellent, Canadian-specific pieces that focus on intersections between gender and other axes of difference.

Why, then, is there a complete lack of work that thinks through cultural production apart from the mass media in introductory readers that are meant to provide the most comprehensive possible introduction to GWS as a field? Perceptions of what work is "urgent" and of what counts as a "real" issue surely shape this silence, and the persistence of these tensions indicates that far from having moved past debates about materiality in the poststructuralist 1990s and early 2000s, GWS at the introductory level feels it must cleave to "reality" and let go of "discourse." The reasons for this are understandable: literary and cultural criticism are often perceived to be opaque, not relatable, and to have a less direct and obvious relationship to the futuristic, social change orientation that animates GWS. Surely questions of relatability and the fear of turning students "off" are partic-

ularly acute in an academic governance climate that is increasingly ruled by the bottom line; courses, and thus programs, that do not fill their seats are often in the line of fire. Yet, by following received wisdom about the inaccessibility of contemporary approaches to the arts—their apparent irrelevance to urgent agendas for political change—it seems like introductory pedagogies are sacrificing one of their most powerful tools: interpretation. Setting aside concerns over the difficulty or inaccessibility of literary and art historical approaches, cultural criticism's greatest strength is an invaluable modeling of close reading, a skill that students can bring to a range of other social phenomena. And in avoiding this material in the hope of mediating complexity, instructors risk entrenching an unproductive split between the humanities and the social sciences, between "discourse" and "reality," a split that ultimately undermines our very attempts to introduce our students to critical means for analyzing "reality."[1]

The occlusion of literary and art historical analysis in our introductory readers points to another surprising gap between what GWS researchers do in our introductory teaching and in our research. The state of the field in Canada today reflects significant trends in feminist research: towards affect theory, new materialisms, posthumanism, broadly conceived, and deeply theoretical transnationalisms. Yet, for the most part, this "leading edge" is absent from the content of these introductory readers. Even the most theoretically engaged of the three—*Open Boundaries* (2009)—contains no hint of any of these. *Gendered Intersections* (2011) contains a couple of pieces that problematize global or transnational systems, and *Gender and Women's Studies in Canada* (2013) has a short final section on transnationalism, containing just two substantive readings along with several policy and definitional documents. And in these two, affect theory and new materialisms are again completely absent. The failure to include such cutting-edge theoretical debates makes a kind of pragmatic sense—this kind of work requires a notional familiarity with some challenging conceptual frameworks. Yet, it seems to me that, by the end of an introductory course in GWS, especially one that is a year long, we might usefully provide students with some scaffolding on which to make sense of basic interventions from these emergent and powerful fields. Not to do so seems misleading and fails to adequately prepare students for the kinds

of questions that might emerge later in their degrees, when courses are more specialized and often directly informed by faculty members' strengths in these areas of specialization. It is admittedly difficult work to translate some of these questions into frames that make sense for students with no background but Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan's (2006) *An Introduction to Women's Studies: Gender in a Transnational World* demonstrates how translating theoretically dense concepts into legible, digestible form might be done: by choosing short passages from a wide variety of texts and reading them together, by making innovative, transhistorical groupings, and by focusing on the genealogies of concepts and cultural formations.

Having considered the variety of questions and subfields that are *not* well-represented in these readers, I suspect that, alongside an orientation toward futurity and hope, these gaps are indicative of a certain opaque but undeniable change in expectations about learning in GWS. The materials that are privileged in these works suggest a tendency toward action over contemplation, as befits a GWS mandate that has a close but conflicted entwinement with activism. To be sure, this derives, in part, from the perceived distractibility of students as well as a general shift in thinking about effective learning that seems to dominate most universities; the new emphasis on everything from community service to experiential learning to "global citizenship" privileges activity followed by reflection as the preferred mode of learning. Challenging theoretical work is not as compatible with this framework as it is with more traditional and contemplative engagement with texts and concepts. But there is a way, of course, in which such a texture can be easily accommodated and adapted to the aims of the GWS introductory course, since GWS instructors are so often concerned not only with relevance to and buy-in among students, but also with pedagogical approaches that de-center the learning process and push at the boundaries between town and gown, learning and political engagement. This is especially true at the introductory level, when such an orientation so neatly intersects with the need to recruit students in order to ensure programmatic security. Little wonder, then, that it is policy-relevance, "data," and social scientific topics and approaches that tend to be privileged in the introductory text: these are the domains that lend themselves most obviously and smoothly to action, en-

gagement, and service, to use the buzzwords that, oddly, converge in the mandates of GWS and of the university in the present day.

But the cynical view that these readers unintentionally mesh with the agenda of the corporate university is offset by the counter-discourses these texts contain. For all of their gaps, each of these texts are, in themselves, rich and illuminating collections of readings that have much to offer the undergraduate student, especially as they introduce concepts that challenge dominant ideologies not only of gender, but of race and sexuality as well. If these texts set an agenda for introductory courses, it is an agenda that is deeply attentive to difference and intersectionality. These introductory texts have each been thoroughly conditioned by a critique of feminism's assumed homogeneity and each usefully foregrounds questions of racism and heterosexism alongside gender. In *Open Boundaries* (2009), the prominence of work by critical race theorists, such as Sherene Razack, Sunera Thobani, and Yasmin Jiwani, is particularly notable. *Gender and Women's Studies in Canada* (2013) opens with a redrawn map of the part of Turtle Island, now known dominantly as "Canada," that insists on mapping First Nations rather than colonial political boundaries. The text's effort to foreground Indigenous women's experiences results in excellent, comprehensive sections on colonialism and indigeneity. For its part, *Gendered Intersections* (2011) does an impressive job of integrating marginalized voices throughout the text; this is especially significant with regard to disability, as excellent pieces on ableism are threaded throughout the various sections of the reader and not confined to a separate section of the text.

Apart from this shared commitment to an interlocking analysis, each reader has its own profile and strengths. *Open Boundaries* (2009) is somewhat distinct from the other two; it is not as comprehensive and it is more unwaveringly focused on the Canadian context. The editors note in the introduction that they have "selected five topics that have been central areas of analytic inquiry and debate within contemporary Canadian feminism: 'Who is the Woman of Canadian Women's Studies: Theoretical Interventions'; 'The Changing Context of Activisms'; 'Engendering Violence'; 'The Body: Reproduction and Femininity'; and 'Sexuality.' These five areas are ones that frame the organization of many introductory courses" (x). The selections in this book

paint a specific picture of feminism as it interacts with the Canadian state. Interestingly, even though transnational agendas have structured policy-making and economic developments in Canada for over twenty-five years—at least since the introduction of the U.S.-Canada Free Trade Agreement—and even though Canadian scholars are deeply engaged in transnational feminist scholarship and activism, transnational analysis is virtually absent from the reader. Though the book is bereft of strong transnational analysis, the editors draw together focused articles that provide a critical national snapshot in some areas. Still, this absence makes for a reader that is oddly out of step with current conversations and critical directions in the field and may end up reinforcing the primacy of national boundaries as determinants of what counts as a feminist issue. And, though the selection of writings is undeniably excellent and can do the important work of introducing students to some of the most influential names in Canadian feminist and queer theory, focusing on these five themes is unnecessarily limiting. Though the editors claim that they have chosen these themes because they are often the same themes that structure introductory courses, it does seem as if this reader imagines an introductory course that misses some crucial initial steps: nowhere does it introduce or problematize the construction of gender, race, or sexuality, for instance, nor give an historical account, as I note above, of how feminism or gender-based activism and scholarship came to exist on this national stage or any other. I cannot imagine teaching an introductory course—surely the scaffolding on which all subsequent study is built—without offering some sense of these questions; students would be unable to navigate more complex work without having had an introduction to the concepts of gender. In fact, this reader strikes me as well-suited for an upper-level course about "Feminist Theory in Canada" that would rely on, critically apply, and develop the foundational concepts introduced in an introductory offering. The fairly sophisticated theoretical engagement that characterizes many of these works—certainly a strength in itself—means it is better suited to students with some prior experience in GWS.

While *Gendered Intersections* (2011) is more squarely aimed at an introductory GWS course and more comprehensive in its coverage and reach, it also has a curious lack of engagement with these founda-

tional questions of definition. Its opening sub-section, "Setting the Stage—Pedagogy," is pitched rather high for the beginning of an introduction. Though the questions obliquely raised in this section, such as how to operationalize concepts of gender equality in learning, are excellent—they emblematize the kinds of meta-reflexive work that should be foregrounded in GWS—such questions nevertheless seem better suited to the end of an introductory course than the beginning. Another early section, "Gender and Difference," introduces white privilege, masculinity studies, and systemic oppression as important concepts but their inclusion means that the failure to offer a discussion of the social construction of race, gender, and sexuality stands out as particularly puzzling. Apart from this oversight, the work is strong and comprehensive: sections on waged work, gendered caring labour, law and public policy, activism, violence, health, religion and spirituality, and sexuality offer a very solid structure on which to build a fairly wide-ranging introductory course. The inclusion of poetry and some visual art contextualized with artists' statements is compelling (despite the lamentable lack of corresponding interpretive methodologies that I discuss above) and such inclusions offer instructors a means to diversify approaches and discussion in their classrooms. Two sections of *Gendered Intersections* are particularly fine. The one titled "Sexualizing Women and Men" is distinguished by its sheer diversity: a fascinating article by Russ Westhaver theorizing pleasure through gay circuit parties sits alongside, among other pieces, work by Alison Lee and editor Pamela J. Downe on porn and sex work, Angus McLaren's work on medicalization of sexuality, some poetry, and Shawna Dempsey and Lorri Millan's short discussion of their performance piece, *We're Talking Vulva!* The result is a wonderfully diverse and celebratory selection that will be truly eye-opening for most students, with the potential to significantly broaden and enrich their understandings of sexuality. The other notable section is the one on religion, spirituality, and identity, a subject that has been largely absent from curriculum in GWS for the past twenty-five years. Simplistic alignments of feminism with secularism have tended, as scholars have increasingly noted, to prevent a truly intersectional recognition of the multiple ways that faith figures in gendered and racialized lives. As Niamh Reilly (2011) points out, "both the 'religious' versus 'secular' binary and the underlying assumptions

of 'secular feminism' are being challenged in key ways" (7). The selection of texts in this section—which offers everything from an overview of "Feminists' Pathways in the Study of (Religious) Beliefs and Practices" by Darlene M. Juschka to several poems and meditations about the intersections of various religions with gendered and racialized identities—thus finds itself at the cutting edge of a shifting field and can help to move students away from unhelpful stereotypes about the oppositional relationship between feminism and religion. In this sense, *Gendered Intersections* models a deconstructive approach that instructors will find most helpful in preparing students for the complexity of much of the material that characterizes upper-level offerings in GWS.

As a result of its sheer comprehensiveness—and its relentlessly intersectional approach—*Gender and Women's Studies in Canada* (2013) also provides an excellent foundation for further study. The text is particularly suitable for a year-long introductory GWS course or could usefully be adopted across two companion one-semester courses, as we have done at my institution. The first several hundred pages provides the structure that I, as a GWS instructor, have been looking for. After introducing feminism and intersectional approaches in multiple voices, the editors move onto several substantive sections that offer the introduction to constructions of sex, gender, sexuality, and race that seems so necessary for our new students. These are followed by sections on difference and identity, legacies of colonialism, and Indigenous women. Together, these sections allow for an accessible introduction to the conceptual and theoretical work that is done in GWS. Following this are a number of sections that apply these concepts to analyses of contemporary social organization, touching on issues like reproductive rights, violence, globalization, poverty, and health. Throughout, the editors combine carefully abridged longer pieces of writing with a variety of documents—policy briefs, lists, blog posts, stories—allowing for a truly varied reading experience that will appeal to the random diversity of students that ends up in introductory GWS courses. The editors note in their introduction that they have attempted to shape the reader according to current trends in Gender and Women's Studies, including "the concept and practice of intersectionality," "gendering and queering women's studies," "indigenizing and decolonizing women's studies," and "globalizing, internationalizing, and transna-

tionalizing women's studies" (xix). Though, as I note above, the transnational approaches that are represented do not really capture the current dynamism of this field, in general, the selection of works does represent these key trends very well. The volume's commitment to decolonization and indigeneity are particularly welcome; works by Kim Anderson, Bonita Lawrence, Sylvia Maracle, and Chrystos, among others, offer both a stark picture of the gendered dimensions of racism and cultural genocide for Indigenous women and a sense of the amplitude and creativity of women's resistance. That the dedicated section is called "Aboriginal *Women*: Agency, Creativity, and Strength" (italics mine) is significant in itself and indicates a sort of contradiction in this text. Though the editors are influenced by the gendering and queering of GWS, this remains, essentially, a text about women's experiences and incorporates very, very little work on masculinity, trans, or genderqueer identities, and what is there remains confined to the sections on the construction of sex and gender. To return to the question posed in *Open Boundaries* (2009), "Who is the Woman of Canadian Women's Studies?," this generally excellent reader effectively implies that the subject of the field is a cisgender woman, which seems oddly out of step with developments in the field, particularly given the general trend in most Canadian GWS programs to prioritize "gender" alongside "women."

In a sense, this tension in *Gender and Women's Studies in Canada* (2013) is emblematic of change. A survey of three readers reveals that we are in a period of transition—and probably a very long one, given the time it seems to take to robustly integrate new perspectives into our practice at all levels. Critiques of racism and white supremacy within feminist politics, for instance, though well-established and widely circulating by the mid-1980s, took at least twenty years to transform the structure of most introductory readers to allow for the interlocking analysis that characterizes the three texts under consideration here. It is not surprising, then, that our introductory readers have not fully assimilated the last decade's developments. In a sense, the existence of these gaps is productive from a pedagogical perspective. Assessing the readers with students, after some time in an introductory course, is an excellent way to introduce students to the reflexivity of the work that is done is GWS. Indeed, such reflexivity may be the discipline's greatest methodological contribution. And so, absences may exist but even these are productive if an instructor is willing to consider the selection and ordering of texts as an examinable text in itself. This will require, then, expecting less of the introductory GWS text, even while incorporating it as an invaluable aid in the work that we do.

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Endnotes

[1] Such an opposition is astonishingly persistent. It can be traced back to tensions among feminists over the merits of poststructuralism beginning in the 1980s. This conceptual split is ably traced in Hemmings 2011.

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Becoming Radically Undone: Discourses of Identity and Diversity in the Introductory Gender and Women's Studies Classroom

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Abstract

I suggest here that introductory Gender and Women's Studies courses must teach students the narratives that feminism tells about itself and of related activist movements and that we also must engage students in critiquing these very narratives. Drawing from Robyn Wiegman's (2012) *Object Lessons* and Sara Ahmed's (2012a) *On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life*, I argue that feminist teachers must critically interrogate our utilization of discourses of identity and diversity in the feminist classroom.

Résumé

Je suggère ici que les cours d'introduction aux Études sur le genre et les femmes doivent enseigner aux étudiantes les discours que le féminisme fait sur lui-même et les mouvements activistes associés et que nous devons également inciter les étudiantes à critiquer ces discours. En m'appuyant sur les articles *Object Lessons* (2012) de Robyn Wiegman et *On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life* (2012)de Sara Ahmed, j'affirme que les enseignantes féministes doivent s'interroger d'un œil critique sur leur utilisation des discours de l'identité et de la diversité dans la salle de classe féministe.

Books Under Review

Ahmed, Sara. 2012a. *On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Wiegman, Robyn. 2012. *Object Lessons*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

The call for proposals for this special issue asked: "As a vital institutional object, how might the introductory course influence the stories we tell *ourselves* about the interdisciplinary and critical field of Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies?" Here, I respond with a related set of questions: How do the stories of the field make their way into the introductory Gender and Women's Studies (GWS) course? How might a critical interrogation of feminist narratives about feminism be useful for pedagogues who teach introductory courses in GWS? How might re-thinking the stories we tell about feminism—about our history, our academic institutionalization, our relation to activist movements—create new pedagogical possibilities?

In what follows, I sketch out some preliminary thoughts in response to these questions by reflecting on two texts: Robyn Wiegman's (2012) *Object Lessons* and Sara Ahmed's (2012a) *On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life*. Reviewing these particular texts for a special issue on teaching the introductory course in Gender and Women's Studies may, I realize, appear strange. Indeed, introductory Gender and Women's Studies students are certainly not the intended audience of these texts. Further, both books were published three years ago (2012) and have been reviewed several times already. Yet, despite being "profoundly pedagogic book[s]," a description Sara Ahmed (2012b) gives of Wiegman's text (345), the books' reviewers as well as those who have drawn from these texts in other published work have not yet explicitly

discussed them in terms of the pedagogical lessons they might offer.

By "profoundly pedagogic," Ahmed (2012b) means that *Object Lessons* is "a book that teaches *us* how *we* are taught" (345; emphases added). That it does. Ahmed's own work, incidentally, does much the same. But beyond this, *Object Lessons* and *On Being Included* offer insights for those of us who teach *others* (i.e. our students). In other words, both texts offer potentially crucial lessons for GWS instructors as we examine the pleasures and pitfalls of teaching introductory Gender and Women's Studies courses. What I offer here, then, is not a conventional book review. Rather than summarize each text in depth, I provide overviews of the texts by way of supporting the argument I seek to make: Gender and Women's Studies must teach students the narratives of the field and of related activist movements and we also must engage students in critiquing these very narratives—even at the introductory level. In other words, how might we draw from them to conceptualize how and what to teach in introductory Gender and Women's Studies courses.

Diversity and its Discontents

Sara Ahmed's (2012a) *On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life* is an exploration of the institutionalization of diversity discourses, policies, and practices in higher education. She asks what diversity discourses and documents *do*, rather than what they *say*. In so doing, Ahmed expresses both her interest in questioning what is lost when diversity is so readily incorporated into academic institutions as well as her commitment to understanding the (im)possibilities of this diversity work.

As Ahmed points out throughout the text, paradoxes are central to diversity work. She utilizes the metaphor of the brick wall, which surfaced repeatedly in her interviews with diversity workers in universities in the United Kingdom and Australia, to examine some of these paradoxes. Of the brick wall, Ahmed states, "The feeling of doing diversity work is the feeling of coming up against something that does not move, something solid and tangible. The institution becomes that which you come up against" (26). One of the paradoxes of diversity work, then, is that those hired to make change are actively prevented from doing so. And, worse, those who point out institutional problems come to be seen as

the problem. Rather than being able to fight the racism that undergirds the problems that the university supposedly sought to address in their hiring of diversity workers, these workers often feel as if they are embattled with the universities that employ them.

Is this the kind of battle that makes diversity work? Or does it put diversity to work? And to what end? Diversity work, for Ahmed, is valuable to the extent that it causes trouble. Once diversity, and particularly "institutional diversity," is understood as routine and is that which no longer surprises us, diversity has lost its critical edge and potential to disrupt; indeed, at times, "having a [diversity] policy becomes a substitute for action" (11). Ahmed's analysis of diversity is, as the book's title suggests, an analysis of being included—what being included means, what it relies upon, and the issues it both makes evident and obscures. She writes that "inclusion could be read as a technology of governance: not only as a way of bringing those who have been recognized as strangers into the nation, but also of making strangers into subjects, those who in being included are also willing to consent to the terms of inclusion" (163). The problems cannot be located, of course, in those individuals who appear willing to consent to the terms of inclusion. Rather, as Ahmed suggests, the problems lie in the operation of the terms of inclusion themselves; being recognizable as one who is included compels particular labours rarely recognized as labour and, further, inclusion itself reifies social exclusions. That is, all inclusions (including for those who previously have been excluded) rely on, make possible, and further other exclusions.

Ahmed describes this process of being included as a "folding in" that is rooted in fantasy, a violent post-racial fantasy that roots the problem of racism in those who acknowledge its existence and ignores that most people of colour still do not have access to the fruits of being folded in. This folding in is also deeply laboured—for those scholars of colour who do additional unpaid diversity work less often compelled from their white colleagues as well as (under)paid work for diversity professionals who work both to be included themselves and to increase the numbers of and improve the experiences of racially minoritized subjects. Part of this labour is the insistence that one belongs to "the categories that give residence to others" (177). By categories, Ahmed seems to mean those dominant groupings

that keep marginalized people from being recognized by and included in powerful institutions. In a footnote attached to her sentence above, Ahmed describes the labour done by trans*, gender queer, and lesbian and gay people when we articulate our sexual or gender identity or experiences to those to whom one is illegible.

This sentence and related footnote crystallizes a limit to Ahmed's book. She focuses on the labour required to be considered by dominant institutions a proper racialized subject (one, that is, who belongs), rarely addressing the labour that is compelled of those people who see themselves as belonging to a particular marginalized or minoritized category but are not recognized as such by others inhabiting this category. What I mean to say is that diversity workers are as heterogeneous as the institutional spaces they inhabit—and yet in Ahmed's account both are represented as somewhat homogenous. This, it seems to me, is an unfortunate—but quite possibly unavoidable—result of working to protect the anonymity of the diversity workers Ahmed interviewed and of thinking about linkages across institutional spaces. Just as convincing dominant institutions and people who occupy non-minoritized categories that one belongs can be violent and laboured, there too is labour and violence in working to convince the diversity police that one belongs.

Let me explicate by example. I was recently at a meeting in which participants were discussing the content of a department's job call for a queer theorist. Some participants expressed that they wanted the person hired to be a person of colour and, thus, the position should be advertised as a position for a queer of colour theorist. In making this argument, one woman of colour at the meeting gestured toward another woman of colour in the room, stating that their presence as the only two people of colour in the room spoke to the need for greater departmental diversity. In this gesture, the woman of colour who made this claim framed anyone who she did not *see* as a person of colour as someone who is not a person of colour. My multi-racial friend and colleague, having been produced as white, expressed her aggravation, anger, and sadness after the meeting. But she did not publicly resist her erasure. Ahmed's analysis of belonging is particularly useful here: "If you have to become insistent to receive what is automatically given to others, your insistence confirms the improper nature of your residence" (177). To be

clear, Ahmed is not speaking of the laboured insistence of fitting into subcultural categories but rather of being included in dominant academic institutions that speak diversity languages (and gain value for doing so) but do not shift their institutional practices to actualize that of which they speak.

Nonetheless, such examples gesture toward the need for greater attention to diversity workers' precise institutional locations, which might help us to understand the ways in which value comes to be associated with diversity discourses differently *within* (not just across various and multiple) academic institutions. Pairing Robyn Wiegman's (2012) *Object Lessons* with Sara Ahmed's *On Being Included* offers possibilities for examining the ways in which discourses, theories, and ideologies—including those related to diversity—become dominant within those identity fields, as Wiegman terms them, typically considered institutionally marginal.

Identity Fields and their Discontents

Robyn Wiegman's (2012) *Object Lessons* examines what is at stake, and the discourses utilized to express these stakes, in the work of identity fields (Black Studies, Chicana Studies, Feminist Studies, LGBTQ Studies, and so on). *Object Lessons*, nothing less than a *tour de force*, strikes at the heart of the logics of Women's, Ethnic, Queer, Whiteness, and American Studies, fields with which Wiegman has long engaged. Due to the focus of this *Atlantis* special issue on the introductory Gender and Women's Studies course as well as my desire to think through what two particular texts can offer feminist pedagogues, I focus here on Wiegman's reflections on the attachments, logics, aspirations, affects, narratives, and politics of Gender and Women's Studies in particular.

Wiegman questions why it is that scholars connected to identity fields locate in the objects of our analyses the potential for social justice. Our objects of study come to stand in for our own politics and desires for social transformation, something Wiegman suggests marks identity fields as different from other disciplines; that is, we name our analyses as "world-building engagements aimed at social change" (4). In Ethnic Studies and Gender and Women's Studies, in particular, this "transformation is figured by claiming for minoritized subjects the right to study themselves and to

make themselves the objects of their study" (4). One of Wiegman's most crucial questions with which feminist scholars must grapple is: how have scholars come to insist that studying identity can lead to justice (or, perhaps even worse, that it already has)?

It is precisely this ostensible connection between knowledge, justice, and identity that Wiegman works to unravel. She suggests that institutionalization itself has transformed identity knowledges and studies, in part through expecting (and praising!) coherency and intelligibility; indeed, an ability to represent and to be represented has become the root of our political value. She writes: "how strange it is that in closing the distance, itself conceived of as epistemic violence, between the subject and object of knowledge, identity studies are now sworn to an increasingly unsettling convergence: that to legitimately speak for an identity object of study one must be able to speak *as* it, even as such speaking threatens to strip subjects of epistemological authority over everything they are not" (7; emphasis added). Wiegman makes clear, too, that institutionalization and threats from outside one's field are not fully responsible for this linking of identity, knowledge, authority, and value. Indeed, Wiegman is primarily concerned with the implications of such linkages when they become ubiquitous and taken for granted *within* identity fields.

To explicate the depths of this strangeness, if you will, Wiegman considers the increasingly common move to shift departmental names from "Women's Studies" to something ostensibly more capacious such as "Gender Studies." Wiegman suggests that this shift represents the field's desire for its objects to be representative and, further, for the field to be understood as inclusive. The transition from "women's" to "gender" comes to stand in for the "progress" of the field, of which its inclusiveness is evidence.

Later in the book, Wiegman takes on the theory of intersectionality, another discourse—in addition to being a theory or, for some, a method—deployed as evidence for identity fields' inclusiveness. That I call intersectionality a discourse, particularly in regards to GWS, is in line with feminist reflections on the hegemonic position "intersectionality" has come to occupy within what Wiegman calls the "field imaginary." Intersectionality has, as Wiegman insists, "been given a life of its own, becoming an imperative to attend evenly and adequately to identity's composite whole" (30), an impera-

tive that is, for Wiegman and others, not only impossible to fulfill but also epistemologically dangerous. That is, framing identity's multiplicity as that which we could possibly offer a "cogent and full account" of reproduces the idea Wiegman argues against: that if we locate the right object of study, our analyses will be "adequate to the political commitments that inspire" them (3). Intersectionality, by contrast, locates the "key impediment to identity-oriented justice [in] the problem of partial attention" (240). The irony, of course, is that Gender and Women's Studies has long pushed to recognize that all knowledges (certainly a form of attention) are partial, situated, and subjective. And yet, in other moments, as Wiegman shows, the field's logics turn in on themselves in paradoxical ways that scholars in identity fields too rarely consider.

One of the paradoxes of both Gender and Women's Studies' logics and diversity discourses that neither Wiegman nor Ahmed makes central to their analyses is the role that visibility and visible identities play in the suturing of knowledge to authority and notions of social justice. Wiegman (2012) discusses the relationships among racialized embodiment, invisibility, and hypervisibility in a footnote (23), and Ahmed (2012a), in her discussion of visibility and "passing," focuses on a type of political passing in which diversity practitioners work to not be visible so as to occupy a non-threatening position within the institution (157). For many diversity workers, including my multi-racial colleague referenced above, being recognized as one who belongs within a space of marginalization (Gender and Women's Studies, for example) is at least as important—and, arguably, in many cases, more important—than being viewed as one who belongs in the broader institution. This is because, as Wiegman points out, one's authority within identity fields is tethered to one's identity. And, I would add, not just to an expressed identity but to those identities that are visible (or made visible by laboured speech acts) to others.

Some recent Gender and Women's Studies job calls, for example, express their support for hiring those who are "visible minorities." It is difficult to ascertain from the calls themselves to what precisely "visible" refers. We might guess that it refers to those with a particular racialized embodiment, as does Wiegman's (2012) footnote on invisibility and hypervisibility (23). But one can certainly be visibly genderqueer, poor, disabled,

LGBTQ, or associated with a marginalized religion. Whether these various (potentially non-racially minoritized) identities and embodiments (do or should) count as examples of a visible minoritized status is certainly debatable.[1] I suspect that both Wiegman and Ahmed might suggest that this is the wrong question—a question that may appear to root the problems with identity knowledges in their lack of capaciousness (if only we account for identity differently!) or that may function to ignore the ongoing racism of the academy. Neither is my intention. But these are questions with which diversity workers in/and Gender and Women's Studies as a field must engage. As Roderick Ferguson (2012) explicates in his book on minority difference and the academy, sexuality as diversity represents institutions' "latest affair with minority culture and difference" (209). In a moment in which identity politics and diversity discourses reign, as Wiegman and Ahmed so beautifully illustrate, the question of *what counts as identity and diversity* is, in fact, crucial for all of us located in academic institutions and identity fields.

While we feminist academics still have too little understanding of the political and intellectual costs of conflating subject position and knowledge production —a conflation that occurs in activist and academic circles alike—we have grappled even less with what visibility means and how it figures in discussions of the relationship between subjectivity and the creation of knowledge. Such problematics are evident in Gender and Women's Studies job calls that advertise for a scholar of X, when what the department actually desires is a person who *is* (visibly!) X. (X might refer to any number of social exclusions, including being visibly gender non-conforming, racialized, LGBTQ, disabled, and so on.) We see this conflation, too, in recent discussions of the racial and ethnic identifications and backgrounds of Rachel Dolezal and Andrea Smith. In both cases, a questioning of these scholars' intellectual, activist, and pedagogical work has occurred alongside challenges to their identity. Indeed, they are one and the same.

What, then, would considering the logics, narratives, and discourses of Gender and Women's Studies offer to feminist pedagogues? What pedagogical lessons might we draw from Ahmed and Wiegman?

Pedagogical Potentialities

In this final section, I briefly gesture toward some pedagogical possibilities feminist scholars might actualize through critically engaging introductory Gender and Women's Studies students in the narratives and discourses feminists tell about feminism. Teaching the narratives of the field alongside how we might challenge or question these narratives will allow us, I suggest, to teach important feminist concepts as well as how to conduct social critique in generative and reparative ways.

A quick review of introductory Gender and Women's Studies textbooks makes clear that feminist pedagogues often cover a great deal of ground in introductory courses. We often address reproduction, violence against women, domestic labour, differences among women, globalization, the family, the workplace, and sexuality, among a host of other topics. Beyond (and through) teaching this content, we also seek to teach students how to ask questions and analyze information in feminist ways. To reach this goal, we may introduce students to feminist debates regarding the body (say, for example, through focusing on sex work and pornography); identity politics and related discussions regarding the benefits and limits to centralizing experience and positionality in our analyses; essentialism and social constructionism; and the relation of feminist theory to social movements. In so doing, we deploy discourses of intersectionality, diversity, and justice.

Drawing from Ahmed and Wiegman, we might begin to think about how these very discourses—which undoubtedly saturate the introductory Gender and Women's Studies classroom—participate in the construction of those progress narratives that we feminists critically deconstruct elsewhere. "Diversity," as Ahmed explicates, is a term that has come to stand in for social justice (work) within academic institutions. "Intersectionality," as Wiegman points out, is a term that has come to represent progress within GWS. We need for diversity discourses to not supplant justice. And we need Gender and Women's Studies to be a site of contestation, not refuge or progress. Despite our teaching about the problems of progress narratives, students still manage to hold onto the belief that Gender and Women's Studies represents social progress itself; that we are having *these conversations* becomes evidence of both our own and broader social progress. If we are to teach students the problems endemic to progress narratives, we cannot let Gender and Women's Studies as a field

occupy a position understood as in and of itself indicative of social progress.

One way to counter this tendency that my colleagues and I have discussed in our pedagogical strategy sessions is to teach students how to deconstruct narratives of the field. We can teach students what a progress narrative is, for example, through sharing mainstream feminist blog posts that assume women are better off today than we were, say, thirty years ago. We can pair such blog posts with an academic reading that engages with similar framings of feminist scholarship or movements. These are, in effect, narratives that feminism tells about itself. We can help students to see how certain discourses come to be synonymous with progress and become themselves indicative of our field's and society's progress. We can draw from Wiegman and Ahmed to help students see that even when positive affects stick to terms—such as identity, intersectionality, diversity, and justice—we must critically interrogate their ramifications.

I recently asked my students in an upper division Gender and Women's Studies Feminist Engaged Research course—in which all students are Gender and Women's Studies majors or minors—a question about that day's reading we were discussing in class. A student responded with: "It's all about intersectionality." My initial question is not particularly relevant, as I have found that students will attempt to answer nearly any question by referencing (the need for and value of) "intersectionality." I followed up to ask: "What is intersectionality?" My students looked at me blankly. All of my students had been exposed to what they would describe as "intersectionality." Yet, not one had read the original theory of intersectionality. Not one could accurately describe the theory. Not one had a sense of the genealogy of the term. Not one could think of limits to intersectionality. Some thought that the term refers to moments in which activism and scholarship "intersect," while others insisted that it refers to the moment when *any* two or more marginalized identities meet within one person's life. Not one knew its roots in black feminist theory or critical race theory. I raise this point not because these moments gesture toward some type of feminist pedagogical failure—if only the students learned the material *properly!*—but because these moments point to the hegemony of discourses of "intersectionality" within Gender and Women's Studies. In these moments, we can see

that, as Ahmed (2012a) suggests, "intersectionality can be used as a method of deflection," as a way of re-directing attention away from race and racism (195)—and, by extension, from whichever form of marginalization one is working to address—by bringing up other forms of social exclusion. The failure here lies with neither an individual instructor nor student but with a field that has produced so little critical reflection on the limits of "intersectionality" that it figures as that which is largely beyond contest.

Despite knowing relatively little about the actual theory of intersectionality, in answering my question "What is intersectionality?," each of these students deployed narratives about feminist scholarship and activism that suggested that feminism was once a middle-class white women's movement but has progressed to celebrate diversity. Intersectionality became, for my students, evidence for such claims. I share this story because it speaks to moments in which the field's narratives quietly reproduce themselves. We need to teach students not only feminist content but also how to deconstruct the narratives we ourselves deploy. We must teach students how to ask questions and how to be critically engaged in ways that are ethical and generative. And what better site *from which* and *to which* to direct our critical engagements than our own narratives and logics? Doing so would allow us to show students that all narratives—including our own —are politically motivated. As Clare Hemmings (2011) suggests, the ways in which feminists talk about Gender and Women's Studies says more about the politics of the speaker and our desires for how we are read in the present than they do about the histories or realities of the field.

The editors of this special issue on the introductory Gender and Women's Studies course ask: "What are some of our best visions for the work the introductory course might do in the world and in the lives of our students?" One of my visions for the introductory course includes teaching students how to critically examine assumptions, positionalities, and politics. We can do this by showing students how to deconstruct the narratives and discourses that underlie belief systems—from hegemonic ideologies to feminist and queer counter positions to their own beliefs. Critique is not something to be directed outward, at those "others" with whom we believe we fundamentally disagree. We must teach students that Gender and Women's Studies is a site of

contestation and critical examination; critique, in this sense, is something politically generative in which we engage with those who we value and respect. Wiegman (2012) suggests that identity fields have come to "mimic radicality instead of teaching us how to become radically undone" (12). I have suggested here that feminist pedagogues can help students become radically undone through teaching feminist narratives of Gender and Women's Studies and feminist movements—through which students can learn how to ask questions, deconstruct, and reconstruct narratives and engage critically with the worlds around us. Doing so requires that those of teaching in Gender and Women's Studies remain willing to critically engage with the discourses we use—including those of diversity, intersectionality, identity, and justice—so that we can work to undo the narratives of feminism that feminists have long accepted and perpetuated. Luckily, as Ahmed's and Wiegman's texts suggest, there are rich models available to us for doing so.

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Endnotes

[1] I do not have the space here to reproduce feminist and queer debates over visibility. For discussions of visibility politics that I have engaged with elsewhere, please see Thomsen 2015 and Thomsen forthcoming.

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No Guarantee: Feminism's Academic Affect and Political Fantasy

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Abstract

Both an assessment of the political present and a deliberation on feminist desires for a transformed future, this essay draws on nearly three decades of the author's engagement with Women's Studies and its academic institutionalization in order to identify both new and ongoing challenges to the intellectual and political life of the field.

Résumé

Constituant à la fois une évaluation du présent politique et une réflexion sur les souhaits féministes pour un avenir transformé, cet essai s'appuie sur près de trois décennies d'engagement de l'auteure dans les Études sur le genre et les femmes et leur institutionnalisation universitaire afin de cerner les défis à la fois nouveaux et persistants de la vie intellectuelle et politique dans ce domaine.

"So when are you going to stop talking about institutionalization," a colleague of mine recently asked in a tone that was both curious and disdainful at once. "When people stop asking me to," I retorted defensively, trying as hard as I could to finish our lunch without it slipping into *our last lunch*. To my ears, the provoking question was a flippant dismissal of issues I have taken to be of genuine scholarly value, not the fodder for anyone's suggestion that talking about institutionalization was like droning on about your ex. And yet, I knew instantly that the question felt sharp because it cut into something true: that U.S. academic feminist talk about institutionalization was a genre of its own and very little of it was new.[1] For my part, I have always played the role that sided against the discourse of complicity, wondering not only how the university became such an exceptional scene of collective regret, but why the very performance of regret had so much cachet in advancing one's professional career. In all of my work, I have defended institutionalization as both a political project and critical object of study, not because I love to embrace complicity, but because the alternative claim, of being *in* the university but not *of* it, has always seemed self-serving, especially if you had tenure. As I saw it, there was no way to critique the university without tacitly affirming it, which made it important to retreat from the romance of non-complicity long enough to consider what aspects of the university we might want to cultivate and defend. In the framework of our political present, where twentieth-century projects of social justice have been thwarted by strategies of incorporation as much as expulsion, this is hardly a winning position. From recent debates about academic complicity with Israeli colonialism to new scholarship that considers the neoliberal university in the context of mass incarceration, white supremacy, and U.S. empire, it is tempting to say that the academic left's distrust of the university and its capacity for political transformation has never been greater.[2]

At the same time, the university that many of us have known seems to be disintegrating.[3] Every aspect

of its once normative description as a state-based mechanism for the citizen grooming of an expansive middle class has come under assault, along with the very concept of a public education.[4] With mainstream news outlets declaring a war on student debt and devoting prime time to issues of inequity in the academy, often cast as tenure-coddled professors on the lam from classrooms run by barely employed adjuncts or indentured graduate assistants, scholars have struggled to effectively contest the new corporate vocabulary and its reduction of the changing global relations of state and capital to matters of accountability and assessment. But if, as Bill Readings (1996) argued in the years following the end of the Cold War, "the university in ruins" is by definition adept at mobilizing its vacuous "idea of excellence" to absorb contenders, it is hardly a shock to learn that, in our current context, it is not always easy to differentiate, at the level of institutional practices, between attention to adjunct labor aimed at a living wage and arguments that address the problem by giving a moral charge to even deeper program cuts (21). To be sure, the situation is as hauntingly lethal as it is complex because the political positions that converge here share so little beyond a potent set of words: adjunct, labor, wage. In some instances, the academic employment crisis is the alibi for enhanced schemes to safeguard capitalism while, in others, it promotes a more thorough condemnation of the eviscerations of the corporate university and the crushing limit a capitulation to capitalism places on any political imagination that obliges the pragmatic. What all of this will ultimately mean for the university of the future is surely beyond the grasp of our critical powers to interpret in advance. But this fact, experience tells me, will have little bearing on the shape of the contestations except perhaps to fortify the academic left's preference for casting itself as an oppositional force facing down the enemy that pays us.

  In the academic domains I know best—feminist studies, queer studies, cultural studies, U.S. studies—power is routinely theorized in complex terms, but the work of challenging it has yet to significantly pivot away from vertical conceptions that rely on self conscious subjects and forms of agency we have long critiqued as patently humanist. Hence power, theoretically speaking, may no longer be embodied in the king, but the *we* that we craft is incredibly alive as an agent of refusal and resistance, albeit one whose counter hegemonic traction has been laminated most recently to the reinvigorated category of the collective. With scholars turning to love and hope as bulwarks against despondency, freedom has been declared a project of *thinking the impossible*, from the end of capitalism to revolution without leaders to futures that will fulfill our investments in them. In all this, the affective has emerged as both a diagnostic and a cure, giving the academic left a way to embrace the utopianism of the future while insisting that its rejection of modernity's most cherished temporal promise remains secure. Side with the anti-social theorists if you must, but the left's critical lesson of recent years adamantly refutes Lee Edelman's (2004) famous dissection of "the regulatory fantasy of reproductive futurism" in which "politics, however radical…remains, at its core, conservative insofar as it works to *affirm* a structure, to *authenticate* social order" (117, 2-3). Taking the lead instead is a conception of politics as knowingly fantastical, staked to the everyday management and long-term psychic repair of life lived in zones of peril and precarity, the ordinary effects of which are exhaustion, alienation, numbness, and despair. While it would be an overstatement to say that the affective turn has so thoroughly revised the academic sensorium so as to grant, as fact, Lisa Duggan's (2009) contention "that the opposite of hope is *complacency*," it is surely the case that, in negotiating the antihumanist inflections of poststructuralist criticism, a new kind of authorial voice has emerged, one that uses critical practice as an affective environment for self-consciously promoting the political fantasies we want most to believe in (280).

  The wide angle I am deploying here to characterize the situation in which contemporary criticism proceeds is hardly legible as a response to my colleague's impatience with my ongoing interest in institutionalization. But I offer it to demonstrate that, in turning to the topic once again, I am aware that my object obsessions are out of synch with the critical rhetoric and political imaginary of contemporary cultural theory, especially the work that resides at the intersection of feminist and queer thought where an emphasis on "the alternative" has long served as the source and substance of the political. My interest collates instead around the *political imaginary of the alternative* and the distinctly modern fantasy it fuels in its appetite for rupture, novelty, and emergence over continuity, the familiar, and the routinely known. While many left critics take their investment

in the alternative as a resolutely antinormative force for counter knowledges and institutional interventions, often claiming that criticality puts us outside and against disciplinary protocols altogether, I have argued the reverse: that the cultivation of the political imaginary of the alternative has been institutionalized in left oriented disciplines as a pervasive disciplinary rule. In the process, the very power we wield in the domains of everyday university life we can call our own—curricular programs, publishing venues, editorial boards, admittance committees, conferences, professional organizations, grading practices, doctoral supervision, etc.—has been obscured, if not actively ignored. Reading *that* power as a point of departure has changed the way I understand not only the performative force of the critical act, but the simple fact that *being political* is itself a critical convention, no matter how affectively genuine. For those of us with academic positions in gender, sexuality, ethnic, or postcolonial studies, in fact, being political is a necessary credential for tenure, best rewarded if your performance conforms to the prevailing conditions. Championing collectivity? Muffle the sounds "crowd" and "clique." Holding on to radical hope? Control the urge to say "no more affective labor." Finding love in political places? Ignore the fact that love also names the desire to destroy the object that consumes you.[5]

I am, of course, traveling a long way from my colleague's quip about my inability to leave the scene of institutionalization when what she most likely meant was not that the topic was exhausted, but that it was bizarre that I was not yet exhausted by it. After all, the sustained engagement of scholars with issues of field formation and the politics of the university, especially in Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies, has been remarkable.[6] The title of my essay, "No Guarantee," offers one perspective on this expenditure by referencing the simple, but consequential, fact that the outcome of our efforts to transform the university can never be known in advance.[7] Strategies that promise radical intervention in one moment have become the source of lament later, as institutionalizing efforts prove amenable to forces well beyond our control. Contrary to first appearances, however, the repetition enabled by the discourse of institutionalization is far more generative than disabling. It allows scholars to nurture the goal of remaking the university in the face of innumerable failures, giving us the opportunity to rehabilitate belief in our political

agency by revising the narratives that shape our practices and expectations. At the same time, the endless task of differentiating feminist political aspirations from the compromises that accompany their institutional materialization feeds the anxiety that political indeterminacy generates, setting the stage for continued suspicion that the academic feminist project can never be made resistant to institutional complicity. How the inhabitation of this suspicion has become both an institutional role for the critic and an animating feature of the political imaginary of Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies has been at the core of my concerns, generating my long standing interest in the stories told about institutionalization and the narrative conventions on which these stories turn.

In her widely read study, *Why Stories Matter*, Clare Hemmings (2011) shares my interest in academic feminist practices of self-narration. Her focus is on the predominant tropes of progress, loss, and return that constitute the "political grammar" of the stories western feminists tell about the development not of academic feminism *per se*, but of the body of knowledge it has defined as most centrally its own: feminist *theory*. In the introduction, Hemmings describes her hope to make "the stories we tell both more ethically accountable and potentially more politically transformative," especially because of the way that feminist rhetorics have been absorbed into contemporary state and corporate agendas, making *feminist complicity* with the western formation of capitalism, patriarchy, imperialism, and global white supremacy part of the political threat that feminists must address (2). By registering "the *amenability* of our own stories…to discursive uses of gender and feminism we might otherwise wish to" contest, Hemmings offers her intervention into feminist practices of self-narration as a temporal pedagogy for resisting repetition, a vital necessity "if history is not simply to repeat itself" (2). "This book," she writes, "is a claim for the continued radical potential of feminist theory and for the importance of telling stories differently" (2). While Hemmings links repetition here to failure, I am pretty sure she would agree that it is never possible to know when or whether repetition is an activity of immobilization or a form of intimacy with a present that always eludes us. In the situation that I am tracking here—in which the anxiety of political indeterminacy is both allayed and heightened by engaging with institutionalization—rep-

etition is mesmerizing, stoking the wish to reinvent the story for an outcome that does not betray us while confirming the suspicion that any investment in the university is bound to be politically fatal. To call anyone's persistent return to this scene of ambivalent investment *the repetition of repetition* is perhaps apt, but as an answer to my colleague's haunting question far too dramatic for the alibi that I am going to unravel, which is simply this: that for academic feminism, such attachments are always worth repeating.

In what follows, I return to considerations of the affective shape of feminist institutional attachments not as a form of interruption or political redemption, but to consider what the return yields from the vantage point of *this* present. I begin by reviewing my analysis of the 1990s when the question of changing the field's name emerged in the context of that decade's twin worries: first, that feminism's public political decline was a consequence of academic feminism's success; and second, that the expansion of the field's objects of study represented a loss of its founding feminist ideals. Given how quickly these debates flamed out in the new century, it is tempting to cast the decade as millennial hysteria, but as I read it, the central antagonisms—over men and masculinity, poststructuralist theory, queer studies, and the hegemony of both whiteness and the global north in Women's Studies research and administration—dissipated because the concerns about exclusion they largely represented were far more congruent with the founding political impulses of the field than it first seemed. This does not mean that the ensuring rancor over the field's name was misplaced. An enormous reconfiguration did, in fact, happen as the field renewed its political charge by reversing the inaugural relationship between feminism as a social movement and the academic field that represented it. No longer self-identified as an extension of the movement (that fabled "academic arm"), the emergent entity, Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies, has constituted itself as feminism's mentor, charged now with tracking historical complicities in order to keep pace with its political errors. At the essay's end, I consider how the discourse of the university is being reworked in our current moment, rehabilitating rhetorics about transgression and noncomplicity as neoliberalism becomes the name for a set of sweeping changes to the organization, status, and role of the U.S. university as a whole. Across these three decades—the apocalyptic

1990s, the revised (and revived) 2000s, and what I want to the call, following Lauren Berlant (2011), the "cruel optimism" of this decade—"No Guarantee" stages its own repetition to consider the ambivalent attachments that continue to write academic feminism's relation to itself.[8] In its rhetorical practice, this essay does not offer a new "thesis" about institutionalization nor does it revise contemporary histories of feminism's own academic becoming. Its mode, as readers can already tell, is meditative and its object of study is the ephemeral yet potent affect that accompanies our ongoing investment in the university as the specific site for our collective insistence on social change.

Apocalypse, Redux

As the story of my lunch with a colleague demonstrates, the topic of institutionalization puts me on the defensive. Like many affective states, this one has a history that I have plotted before. I began writing about institutionalization in the midst of the widespread condemnation of my generation, a group that had been introduced to feminist knowledges in their earliest institutional forms: as certificate programs, minors, independent study majors, and a spattering of graduate offerings. We would inherit almost established but ruefully underfunded programs with volunteer faculty, little to no staff support, and no seat at any of the important decision making tables in our universities. As we moved through the professional ranks and into administrative positions, many of us fought for institutional resources and intellectual credibility while acknowledging the increasing worry that our institutionalizing efforts would destroy some of what people drawn to Women's Studies valued the most. In my own tenure as director of two Women's Studies programs from 1996 to 2007, I spent enormous time trying to find a way to make the institutions that employed me answer to the provocations offered by feminism, which simultaneously entailed grappling with the ways in which *feminism* was not a uniform referent even for those of us who regularly deployed it to name the politics of our intellectual investments. I fought with deans, provosts, and presidents—some of whom were closely identified with feminist concerns—about the shape and meaning of Women's Studies as an academic entity. Sometimes this meant disagreeing with those who wanted Women's Studies to be a refuge for women from the ugly departmental

cultures that reigned in the disciplines, more a "home" for nurturing abjection than an intellectual entity that could stand "on its own" (Wiegman 2002), as the title of my edited collection asserted. At other times, I found myself arguing for the relevance of Women's Studies to every domain of institutional life, especially those that seemed most untouched by it (such as math or oceanography or, alternatively, alumnae development). In one situation, Women's Studies was autonomous, its raison d'être no longer contingent on playing handmaiden to student services or the disciplines. In another, Women's Studies was relevant to, indeed imbricated in, every facet of university life, not because it represented women, but because the university's mission—to educate—was its own.

While feminist political commitments had brought me to the university, it was both fascinating and frustrating to discover that they provided no definitive map for negotiating either the multiplicity or the complexity of the institutional relationships that would engage me. In no situation was it unambiguously clear what it meant to take a feminist position. Do I celebrate a women-only living and learning program as the outcome of the campus-wide Women's Initiative that finds my university especially toxic for female co-eds, or do I push for what the Initiative rejected, a core curricular requirement that makes gender a central feature of liberal arts education for every student? Do I resist a feminist dean's insistence that we go back to the drawing board when the short list for a senior position includes no African American scholar, but is comprised of one woman of color, a transgender butch, and a white woman from a discipline that is notoriously dominated by white men, thereby pushing back at the institution's singular understanding of "diversity" even as I concur with every insistence to make black faculty hiring a priority? Do I encourage my faculty to concede to hiring another spouse to ingratiate the program with a new dean who is suspicious of the field, or continue our insistence that growth must come from national searches, faculty-defined research priorities, and long term institutional planning no matter the consequences? When a student in a Women's Studies class is assaulted by her roommate who is enrolled in the same course, do I help the confessed assailant finish the term on an independent study basis, as the academic dean requests, or refuse to accommodate the institution's failure to suspend him,

even though doing so will put the assailant back in the same classroom with his victim?[9]

Most of my work on institutionalization was written in the context of these kinds of deliberations, which helped expose the powerful, but largely obscured, distinction between the labor of institutional politics and the rhetorics of radical intervention that characterized much academic feminist prose, including my own. I emphasize the word "radical" here to mark the political charge it has and continues to carry in conversations about institutionalization where it does more than describe histories of political contestation over institutional practices of exclusion; it *organizes* the political imaginary of the field by differentiating the incursion *into* the university and its elite culture of knowledge and subject production *from* much of what has come later, including the worry that complicity is the prevailing characteristic of what it means to live and work in the university today. In the 1990s, this formulation was especially pointed, as feminist scholars tried to comprehend what Susan Faludi (1991) had diagnosed as the "backlash" against feminism in the U.S. public sphere from our increasingly secure positions in the university. The discourse that ensued—what I named "apocalyptic narration" (2000)—blamed academic feminists for diverting their attention, if not abandoning the radical project of feminism altogether, often by privileging theory, commodity culture, or the insular world of tenure and its political provincialisms. By attending to the anxieties of discipline that generated this self-condemning discourse, I agreed that academic feminism and contemporary feminism, both popular and activist, had diverged, but I was resolutely against the idea that the future required their happy reunion. Unconvinced that "feminism without women," as Tania Modleski (1991) so memorably called it, was an urgent problem, I maintained that contemporary feminism was inadequate as either a guide or measure for the field built in its name, not because it had failed to live up to the many different political investments made in it—which, of course, it had—but because the knowledge project of Women's Studies needed to be more capacious, by which I meant: less presentist, less tied to nationalist and nativist self-definitions, less moralistic, less ambivalent about its relation to power, and much less prescriptive about what the content and shape of the political might mean. As I saw it, the problem with relying on contem-

porary feminism as the impulse and aim of Women's Studies was the assumption that responding to the political present was all that the future would need.

I was not alone in being uncharmed by the accusations of apocalyptic narration. Many academic feminists fought against its discourse of blame, pointing out that the agency to stop the well-funded right wing attack on feminism in the U.S. public sphere was certainly something we would have chosen to use if we had actually possessed it. But this fantasy of a political agency that had died or, worse, been abandoned was part of the nostalgic character of apocalyptic narration, crafted in temporal terms as a worry that the future was lost because academic feminists were no longer committed to bringing the promise of the radical past into being. These anxieties dovetailed with others, as practitioners sought to grapple with pressures internal to the field's own object orientations. These pressures included: 1- the limits of the category of woman in its universalist, western, and white feminist deployments; 2- the rise of masculinity studies and subsequent explosion of transgender as a maximalist expansion of the meaning of gender; 3- the challenge of poststructuralism to feminist understandings of language, subjectivity, and experience; and 4- the thorough revamping of the study of sexuality offered by the anti-homophobic and anti-identitarian itineraries of queer inquiry. In retrospect, it is easy to see how these pressures, combined with the widespread backlash against feminism in U.S. life, served as further evidence for apocalyptic narrators, who often cast that decade's heated debate over the field's name as another instance of academic feminism's political betrayal. In many of the conversations about the potential move to Gender Studies—or Gender and Sexuality Studies—the standoff was clear: the agents of feminism's undoing regularly cited by apocalyptic narrators were almost always those foregrounded by proponents of the name change as the animating energy for restoring political optimism and critical currency to the field: poststructuralism, women of color feminism, masculinity studies, and queer theory.

I took what is now the losing position in the name change debate by arguing for the preservation of Women's Studies, but on grounds vastly different from apocalyptic narration. My point was never that "women" was the privileged sign of feminism or that academic feminism had a primary obligation to those who identified with it. In fact, I had a special interest in understanding feminism and its intellectual traditions as constituted by women's *dis*identification with the category, so much so that one could read feminist discourses that insisted on identification as a deep political wish, one always undermined by identity's ongoing antagonisms. Gayle Rubin (1975) famously depicted this dynamic when she wrote in "The Traffic in Women" that "we are not only oppressed *as* women, we are oppressed by having to *be* women" (204). But when it came to the name change, my argument sought to break away from identificatory conundrums and, with them, the politics of representation altogether, as I found the anti-apocalyptic argument that *women* enforced a conceptual and identitarian *limit* on the field to be a paradoxical reduplication of an old and pernicious referentiality, one that condemned the category of *women* to its dominant configuration under the tutelage of the generic figure of "man." In this, my aim was not only to disorganize the ongoing assumption across identity knowledges that field name and objects of study were the same, but to wonder over anyone's insistence that the political project of the field would be enhanced by consigning *women* to dimorphic gender's most narrow and constraining empirical rule. My position was thus doubly, emphatically negative: I said no to the apocalyptic insistence on continuity with a singular narrative of feminist social movement and no to the reduction of the referential scope and signifying potential of *women* offered by proponents of the name change. In the end, these interventions did less to interrupt the charged atmosphere of the period than to reiterate the anxieties that prompted millennial suspicion. After all, I too read the debates over feminism's academic institutionalization as if what we most risked was making a political mistake.

Pedagogies of Correction

Today, every Women's Studies program I have worked in has been renamed, including the program at Duke University, which contemplated it once the dean who insisted that it become "Gender Studies" in order to "attract more men" has moved on. This localizing of the matter indicates how profoundly issues of institutionalization are embedded in the politics of particular institutions, making it important to say that my analysis of discourses about field formation has never been

a critique of the ways in which scholars have negotiated the political terrain of the universities in which they worked. Nonetheless, as its own kind of movement, the name change has had significant internal effects on the field, making it clear that the apocalyptic worry that feminism was being left behind was not simply a paranoid reading, but an enabling disavowal of the disciplinary apparatus that has and continues to govern the field. By disciplinary apparatus, I mean the assumptions, values, methodological priorities, and critical frameworks that are not only oriented toward, but also *organized by* the field's claim to political agency. In these terms, the central charge against institutionalization—that it domesticates or, worse, abandons politics—has been the field's most productive disciplinary fiction, advancing the institutionalizing process in which radicality and political transgression become the prize of academic feminism's disciplinary signature. As I understand it, discipline is neither a contraction of the political nor its subordination. On the contrary, it is the force that extends, proliferates, excites, and renews. It underlies every claim that politics have been abandoned, domesticated, insufficiently theorized, or misconstrued by reviving, consolidating, and advancing the value of the political as the key referent of the field. When apocalyptic narrators sought to defend feminist politics against the complicities of institutionalization, they were answering the field's disciplinary demand by claiming that their political commitment put them outside and against the institution and its disciplining of knowledge altogether. If their outcry was muted in the new century by scholars and students who would embrace the field's reconfiguration as an urgent political necessity, it was not belief in the future that died, but the founding generation's power to narrate it.

Once we read the claim against institutionalization as a distinct disciplinary rule, it is easier to understand how the contentions of the 1990s could dissolve under the auspices of what is now understood as the field's move toward theoretical expansion and analytic inclusion as Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies (or some version thereof). For once the dust had settled, with no small help from the political crisis we call the son of George Bush presidency, it was clear that at the heart of the field's disciplinary apparatus was a powerful and sustaining commitment not to the abandonment of feminism, but to the pedagogical correction of its appropriations and complicities. It is this commitment that must be read as the affective disposition of the current conjuncture, where Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies now attends to feminism's complicities in ways that produce and perform the field as a political agency. This performance becomes especially clear when we look at the central disciplinary axioms that govern the field. The first and most obvious axiom is that the category of <u>women</u> is exclusionary, if not also normalizing and imperialist, especially when analyzed on its own. This axiom is the consequence of a number of criticisms of feminism's historical complicity. In Transgender Studies, for instance, the category of women can be seen as a violent imposition of a normative gender order while Postcolonial Studies demonstrates its geopolitical collusion with colonialism and imperial war. Other critical itineraries emphasize the category's racial exclusions or the way it has circulated in North American feminism in distinctly bourgeois terms. Rather than undermining the political pursuit of the field, however, these demonstrations of the category's exclusion work to enhance it, making it possible to say that one powerful effect of the transformation of the field's name is the transference of political agency from feminism to Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies itself.[10] In this transference, the inaugural relation between feminism and Women's Studies is rewritten. Whereas the field's initial conception of itself as a political actor was contingent on its extension of feminism into dominant orders of knowledge, largely signified by the insistence on centering women, scholarly activism is today centered on defining, directing, and in many cases correcting what the name, feminism, has and will come to mean.

If the apocalyptic narrators were most worried that *we* had failed feminism, the political rationale of the field now stages its critical intervention in reverse: it is feminism that needs the academic's activist-oriented attentions. This is largely what is at stake in the now codified declaration that the field's potent political intervention arises from its intersectional, transnational, and interdisciplinary commitments. Under each of these terms, the history in which Women's Studies was taken to reproduce feminism's own complicities—with race and class privilege, U.S. empire, and the normative orders of the discipline—is brought into critical relief by an analytic investment aimed at out-thinking as much as outliving such errors. Consider as well how the

field's axiomatic belief in social construction serves as a field-defining rule that has so upended the authority of essentializing arguments that it is only in the context of a push to rethink human exceptionalism that a return to the body and the biological has begun to be forged. The point is not that any of these positions are wrong or that their political aspirations are wrong-headed; indeed, I have endorsed them all not only as important critical maneuvers in the contemporary minefield of distinctly politicized theoretical debate, but as vital political agendas. But because the pursuit of the political is a disciplinary imperative, overdetermined by the institutionalizing force of a field that is always ambivalent about its own institutionalizing efforts, these axioms function as more than politically persuasive aspirations; they are pedagogies of correction that renew the possibility of a transformed future by locating the field's value in detecting the scenes in which feminism's political compass has failed.

To be sure, transference is always a complicated enterprise, as much an identification with the fantasy that helps to bring it into being as a practice of substitution, misrecognition, and idealization. For the field that now constitutes itself as feminism's mentor, the figure that most confounds its political judgment is *race*, that key term of intersectional commitment that never appears in any of the various configurations that now name the field. By "confound," I do not mean that race has been ignored or subordinated; as I have argued before, much more is at stake in analyzing racialized exclusions than assigning it or women of color feminism to a permanently marginalized position (Wiegman 2012). And yet, it is paradoxically the preservation of this marginality in the new configuration of the field that helps ensure both the ongoing power of *race* as a critique of exclusion and the disciplinary commitment to the political that such critiques evince. More than a decade ago, Rachel Lee (2002) offered a cogent account of marginality's allure by tracing the way that "women of color"—as embodied identity, signifier of critical knowledge, and primary referent for *race*—were situated in both temporal and spatial terms in the political imaginary of Women's Studies. As a temporal figure, "women of color" were the belated and the not-yet—suspended between the exclusions of the past and the transformed future their inclusion would come to mean. As Lee put it, "women of color remain eminently useful to the progress narra-

tive Women's Studies wishes to create for itself, where the fullness of women of color's arrival within Women's Studies is always 'about to be'" (89). In spatial terms, "women of color" signaled mobility and non-territoriality, not just in the writing of white women, but as the definitional centerpiece of women of color scholarship where the language of non-location—of intersections, borderlands, and interstices—had long reigned. For Lee, the signification of "women of color" as every place and no place, belated but "about to be" was a seduction that offered something for everyone, sustaining a disciplinary no less than psychic topography in which women of color and the critical discourses they represented were taken to be external to the institution of Women's Studies and its reinscription of feminist complicities, but internal to its political pursuits. Marginality as the sign of non-complicity; deferred inclusion but political agency in the now.

Lee's (2002) diagnosis is no less accurate today and her agenda for reconfiguration—to turn women of color scholarship toward the disparate histories and analytic capacities of the bodies of knowledge that comprise *it* in order, in her terms, "to begin enunciating 'women of color'…within and through privilege"—no less unmet (100). But the challenge of undoing marginality is greater than ever and the reasons for this do not belong to Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies alone. Under the auspices of contemporary post-racial politics, where inclusion has become the reigning sign of multicultural co-optation and political theft, it is the simultaneous articulation of inclusion and exclusion that confounds both the demand and the promise of moving race, in bell hooks's (1984) famous words, "from margin to center." As Sara Ahmed (2012) and Roderick Ferguson (2012) have each recently argued, the university in ruins does not simply exclude what has come to contest it. It manages dissent and incorporates difference: between populations, now rendered a matter of "diversity," and between knowledges, now cast as a range of differentiating identity "markets." In this context, the continued marginality of "women of color" in the field can be understood as both an instance of the ongoing effects of institutional racism and a deferral of racist forms of institutionalized inclusion—a temporal formation that not only straddles, in Lee's terms, the past and the future, but one that resists toxic fantasies of multicultural progress today. For the field that now

defines its pedagogical task as countering feminism's errors, the continued marginality of women of color bears contradictory political value. On the one hand, it offers a persistent reminder of the field's own institutional limits, interrupting conceptions of the field as an extension of feminism's political progress. On the other hand, it institutionalizes women of color, both as bodies and bodies of knowledge, as the field's most productive de-institutionalizing force, thereby sustaining the field's disciplinary reliance on institutionalization as a master signifier of political and critical threat. As paradoxical as it may seem, the marginality of "women of color" is a necessary political complicity, upending narrative fantasies of progress by performing the anti-institutional ethos that Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies aims to claim not for feminism, but for itself.

Optimistically Cruel

If conversations about institutionalization are magnetic scenes for rehearsing attachment and detachment alike, they obviously play a crucial role in redefining the political imaginary that governs the field. It might even be true to say that these conversations constitute the political imaginary as much as they perform it, which is why the repetition they enact can be so engaging, at least for those of us who find ourselves continually enthralled. Certainly, the contradictions we encounter in the university are overwhelming—and especially so when both our models and discourses about politics are so out of synch with the temporalities and political struggles endemic to institutional change. This situation, in which an attachment to an "object/scene of desire is itself an obstacle" to fulfillment, is what Lauren Berlant (2011) calls "cruel optimism" (227). According to Berlant, "[a]ll attachment is optimistic," in part because optimism is "the force that moves you…into the world in order to bring closer that satisfying *something* that you cannot generate on your own" (1-2). Optimism becomes cruel "only when the object that draws your attachment actively impedes the aim that brought you to it" (1). It is both the value and force of *Cruel Optimism* that it focuses most intently on those optimisms that collate around sovereign fantasies of the good life and of normative political orders where, in the context of vicious neoliberal practices of attrition, people strive for objects that repeatedly fail to satisfy their material and psychic needs because alternatives are so difficult to

invent and achieve. In their cruelly optimistic return to scenes of predictable disappointment, people confirm, Berlant writes, their "attachment to the system and thereby confirm the system and the legitimacy of the affects that make one feel bound to it" (227). This is the case even when the attachment "has the negative force of cynicism or the dark attenuation of political depression" (227). Whether in despair or guarded hope, then, optimism is most cruel when it is bound to those genres of living that conform to the failures we already know.

But how do we understand those instances when the predictable incapacity of the attachment to live up to the fantasy it cultivates is both a psychic and political necessity? This is the question that haunts the contemporary juncture in which our ongoing attachment to an object (the university) is only possible because we know it will not deliver what we most want from it. In this context, the cruelty of our optimism—to be attached to an object that "impedes the aim" that brought us to it— is a potent form of inoculation against the threat of institutional complicity. Or so it can seem in the affective atmosphere of the present when neoliberal rationalities are revising not only the role of the university, but the material structures in which its organization of learning and labor take shape. In her introductory remarks to the 2011 plenary panel on "The Multiple Futures of Gender and Sexuality Studies" held at Barnard College, Lisa Duggan offered a cogent summary of the contemporary situation in which corporate education envisions faculty as contingent labor, students as consumers, and learning as outcome oriented—a university whose entire ecology is being remade in the name of perpetual crisis. In this context, which to many observers is *the* most thoroughgoing revision of the academy in more than a century, Duggan asked panelists to turn their attention away from the struggles of everyday institutional life to speculate on the university they would build if the agency to make such decisions belonged to them. "If you suddenly had the power to remake the university in any way that you wanted," she asked, "how would you institutionalize Gender, Women's, LGBT, Postcolonial and Ethnic Studies?" No one needs to hear the audience's laughter to register the unworldliness of this question and the future it envisions in which the study of race, gender, sexuality, and post/colonialism emerge, in Duggan's words, "as central rather than marginal to the [university's] academic mission."

Duggan's provocation was no laughing matter, of course, as she sought to counter political despondency by evoking an institutional relation for feminist scholars that was no longer optimistically cruel. In the ensuing discussion, panelists took up the charge in different but related ways. Kandice Chuh discussed forms of institutionalization that could resist "institutionality," a term she borrowed from Roderick Ferguson (2012) who uses it to connote practices of inclusion that appropriate and domesticate the epistemological force of minority discourses, largely by marketing difference as uncritical multiculturalism. Ann Pellegrini described the importance of developing perverse pedagogies that would promote, against neoliberalism, a system of value that privileged the non-monetizable knowledges found in the humanities where creativity and alternative forms of collective world building now live. And for Sarita See, the promise of the power to remake the university meant learning how to create "a non-propertied space of decolonial knowledge production," one that could nurture collaborative projects on race and colonialism without the master motive of owning knowledge. In these ways, the panelists engaged Duggan's provocation by emphasizing the political commitments and analytic priorities of the fields in question while working hard to sidestep the various threats that becoming agents of institutionalization might pose. The distinctions that emerged—between appropriation and radicality, domestication and epistemological insurgency, and normalizing and perverse pedagogies—were as familiar as the paradox they engendered, as the leap into a future in which Gender, Women's, LGBT, Postcolonial, and Ethnic Studies were central was figured by distinctly anti-institutional forms of teaching and learning.

In this context, where the future could be optimistically embraced only by resisting institutionalization, we might genuinely ask: is "the power to remake the university" the kind of *power* that scholars in any of the fields under discussion could ever want? I emphasize the word power here to draw attention to the condition of possibility that the organizing question quite significantly concealed. For in the postulation that one might "suddenly" have "the power" to transform the prevailing structure of the institution, the provocation allowed panelists to perform an attachment to institutional transformation without having to grapple with what it would mean not simply to seek institutional

power, but to inhabit and wield it. In this way, the panel's affective disposition conformed to the characteristics of political fantasy as Berlant (2011) describes it, splitting "attachment and expectation" in order to isolate "political optimism from the way things are" (228). For Berlant, of course, this cruelty is part of the impasse of the political present, an impediment to the creativity and risk she finds necessary to any project that aims to generate alternative social relations and the political sensorium necessary to sustain them. If her tracking of cruel optimism has concentrated on the conventionality of attachments in everyday worlds, this is because she has long been concerned with the anesthetizing lure of normative culture, which she reads as a cluster of genres that compel affective attachments to objects that tend to suffocate those who use them to survive.

What has always intrigued me, as I have emphasized throughout this essay, is the conventionality that accompanies the rhetorics and routines of what we conventionally cast in professionalized genres of critical thought as unconventional: radicality, resistance, the alternative. Hence, I am not drawn to Berlant's concept because of its potent utility in explaining the way that people continue to attach to social norms, laws, belief systems, intimacy cultures, majoritarian politics, and the like that repeatedly diminish, if not overtly impede, the satisfaction of their material and affective needs. My interest is in the protection that cruel optimism quite powerfully affords in managing the anxiety of political complicity that animates our relation to institutionalization.

This, then, is what cruel optimism offers as a description of the affective atmosphere of Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies today: a way to repeat the attachment to political transformation that continues to compel us without incurring the risk of the condemnation of a future failure. To be sure, one of the distinct consequences of this affective disposition is an aversion to addressing the kinds of institutional power we already have and work, often aggressively, not to lose. The absence of such a discussion has value in soothing the contradiction between the status of identity knowledges within the university and the power that practitioners within these fields now hold, not only in relation to those professional practices that attend publication, employment, and all aspects of student training, but in the various informal networks that help establish and

sustain a scholar's career. No matter what we can say about ongoing threats to programs and departments in institutions where even the liberal language of diversity has failed to sustain already-reduced budgets, the fact remains that nearly all of the fields in question have a well-established academic infrastructure with journals, conferences, book series, postdoctoral fellowships, national organizations, and research institutes dedicated to their critical agendas. In these spaces, along with the social networks they generate, scholars not only build and protect their own academic careers, but offer access to younger cohorts by determining what—and who among them—counts as worthy and cutting edge. Unlike many other professional cultures, the left-leaning academy eschews one of the most materially significant facts of its own existence: that who you know matters.

The point, let me be clear, is not to indict the tenured class—those of us who populate the hiring committees, sit on the editorial boards, hold the departmental administrative positions, lead the professional organizations, and whose letters of recommendation are taken as the ones that truly count—as hypocritical or self-deluded, or to say that the authority we exert in and over our fields is unethical or duplicitous. These conclusions would merely repeat the narrative conventions that cruel optimism names by re-idealizing the distinction between complicity and the good politics of anti-institutional insurgency that organizes the field's psychic world. As I see it, the issue at stake here is both more broad and more vexing, having to do with the very power that the disavowal of institutional power exerts within our field. For one thing, it actively prohibits conversations that could enhance our *affective capacity* to engage the university as a contradictory but resonant scene of political desire, one whose urgencies are far greater than the issues of self-representation that have so profoundly besieged us. This is especially necessary at the current juncture when very few resources exist in neoliberal cultures for claiming institutional spaces of any kind, a fact that undoubtedly accounts for the poverty of the choices that face us: take the imaginative leap into the impossible as the recourse for sustaining political belief or declare war on political fantasy by making peace with complacency. While there is no guarantee that such conversations will yield anything of lasting value, I remain engaged by the idea that repetition is

exhausting only when we stop paying attention to what it enables us to perform.

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Endnotes

[1] As in all of my work on Women's Studies and matters of institutionalization, my referent point is the field's history in the U.S. university. I make no claim that the issues I highlight are the same across national university systems, though I think it is safe to say that feminist studies in the now-declining first world academy has been shaped by similar structural conditions and stoked by political imaginaries that arise from the shared political history of the nation-state's emergence via colonial modernity. Much of the scholarship on Women's Studies in Canada would confirm this, including the rich archive documented in the pages of *Atlantis*. See as well Braithwaite et al. 2004.

[2] See especially Ahmed (2012); Chatterjee and Maira (2014); Ferguson (2012); and Wilder (2013).

[3] A canny reader has pointed out to me that the discourse of the university in crisis is itself a repetitive one, no less in need of unpacking as the feminist discourse about institutionalization. My use of the ambivalent "seems" in this sentence is an attempt to thread the needle between the felt experience of institutional disintegration and the ongoing command of the university as a powerful institution in U.S. cultural life.

[4] Newfield (2008) is the exemplary text on these matters.

[5] This is especially the case in the work of Melanie Klein (1975), whose citational presence has grown significantly since Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (1997) paired her with Silvan Tompkins to make what is now considered the queer theoretical affective turn. See also Sedgwick (2007) and Wiegman (2014).

[6] The archive that comprises feminist deliberation on institutional transformation is too lengthy to list in its entirety. Frequently cited texts include: Messer-Davidow (2002); Wiegman (2002); Beins and Kennedy (2005); Scott (2008); and Orr, Braithwaite, and Lichtenstein (2012).

[7] The title echoes the posthumous volume, *Without Guarantees: In Honour of Stuart Hall*, edited by Paul Gilroy, Lawrence Grossberg, and Angela McRobbie (2000). In its first chapter, Ien Ang (2000) describes Hall's work as forwarding "an idealistic, if not utopian" understanding of cultural identities as more than "'who we are'" or "'where we come from'" by emphasizing "what we might become" (1). But as Ang shows, this orientation toward the future was always, in Hall's words, a negotiation of "both the necessity and the 'impossibility' of identities" (Hall 1996, 16). My shift from "without" to "no" reflects my interest in reading a deeper ambivalence at stake in the rhetorical practices and analytic modes of contemporary cultural theory as it grapples not only with its own sparse political agency, but with the transformed conditions of social life under neoliberal attrition where many of the objects of left critique in the past—institutions, identities, citizenship forms, state practices of social management, even the nation as an ideological bulwark against global capitalism—are differently positioned.

[8] Portions of each section were originally drafted for my participation in two different institutional celebrations. One, at North-

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western, took the framework "Radical Pasts, Unknown Futures" to mark its name change to Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. The other was in response to a session on "The Multiple Futures of Gender and Sexuality Studies" at the 40th anniversary celebration of the Barnard Center for Research on Women.

[9] Answers: 1. I push for what the Initiative rejected, a core curricular requirement that makes the study of gender and sexuality a central feature of undergraduate education for every student, critiquing the "boutique" approach that sought to answer the problem of institutional sexism with a special program designed for sixteen female students each year. 2. I resist the dean's insistence that we jettison our short list and reiterate the program's own agenda to hire in African Diaspora Studies—a search request previously denied by the same dean. 3. I encourage my faculty to concede to the institution's request by formalizing the appointment process, which establishes the appointee's scholarly credentials while seeking assurance that future growth will come from national searches. 4. I refuse to do an independent study with the confessed assailant, prompting the university to change its rules for withdrawing from a course to enable the student in question to complete the term.

[10] Other central axioms include: that intersectionality is women's resolution; that marginality is opposed to power; that "critical thinking" is inherently progressive; that essentialism is always bad; that interdisciplinarity frees us from being disciplinary; and that a curriculum is a political agenda.

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In Search of Law in Women's and Gender Studies: Toward Critical Womanist Legal Studies

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Abstract

In the context of recent critiques of Women's and Gender Studies' (WGS) institutionalization within the academy, this article foregrounds the role that a transdisciplinary and critical womanist legal studies may play in addressing some of the most significant concerns. It discusses the contours of a research approach, building on previous work in WGS as it intersects with critical legal scholarship from other locations in the academy with similar goals, purposes, and commitments to social justice. It also assesses the extent to which legal studies are evidenced in current published works in WGS journals and emphasizes how an increased emphasis on such scholarship permits researchers to usefully explore significant concerns in the field, including the operation of power and privilege, possible interventions in dominant cultural discourses, and legal constructions of intersecting roles of race, gender, class, and sexuality. Further, the article suggests that transdisciplinary critical womanist legal studies may help to address concerns that the successful institutionalization of WGS has narrowed the field's focus, blunted its critical edge, and separated academic work from grassroots communities and political action.

Résumé

Dans le contexte des récentes critiques de l'institutionnalisation des Études sur le genre et les femmes (EGF) au sein du milieu universitaire, cet article met en avant le rôle que peuvent jouer les études juridiques transdisciplinaires et critiques du « womanism » pour aborder certaines des préoccupations les plus importantes. Il discute des contours d'une approche de recherche, s'appuyant sur des travaux antérieurs en EGF et de leurs recoupements avec des connaissances juridiques critiques d'autres domaines du milieu universitaire ayant des buts, des objectifs et des engagements semblables envers la justice sociale. Il évalue également dans quelle mesure les études juridiques sont représentées dans les travaux actuels publiés dans les revues EGF et souligne comment une insistance accrue sur ce savoir permet aux chercheurs d'explorer utilement des préoccupations importantes dans ce domaine, y compris le fonctionnement du pouvoir et des privilèges, les interventions possibles dans les discours culturels dominants et les constructions juridiques des rôles entrecroisés liés à la race, au sexe, à la classe et à la sexualité. En outre, cet article suggère que des études juridiques transdisciplinaires et critiques du « womanism » peuvent aider à aborder les préoccupations que l'institutionnalisation réussie des EGF a rétréci la portée du domaine, émoussé son énergie critique et isolé les travaux universitaires des communautés de base et de l'action politique.

Introduction

In a recent assessment of doctoral dissertations produced in Women's Studies, Sally Kitch and Mary Margaret Fonow (2012) raise important questions about the role of doctoral research in knowledge production, given its role in shaping Women's Studies as a field. Acknowledging that "the field is still in transition from its multidisciplinary origins in programs composed of discipline-trained scholars to one composed of scholars who hold women's studies PhDs or certificates," they suggest that "it may be time for women's studies faculty and administrators to begin defining what constitutes research that is specific to the field." Included in this effort to gain greater clarity is the need to explore, in greater depth, "how to translate the more familiar interdisciplinary teaching mission in women's (gender/sexuality/feminist) studies into research agendas and methodologies" (100).

Kitch and Fonow's study is one of a number of important writings about the field of WGS published in the past fifteen years (e.g., Messer-Davidow 2002; Wiegman 2002a; Kennedy and Beins 2005a; Scott 2008; Orr, Braithwaite, and Lichtenstein 2012). In general, these writings assess, from multiple perspectives, the implications of WGS steadily securing departmental status in the university and adding graduate degrees in the field. Women's Studies, or Women's and Gender Studies as the field has, more recently, come to be known, has been characterized in these works in various and sometimes contradictory ways - as, among other things, being "on the edge" (Scott 2008), "on its own" (Wiegman 2002a), an "impossibility" (Brown 2008), a developing interdisciplinary field with a promising future (Wiegman 2005; Kennedy and Beins 2005b), a "failure" due to its "success" in achieving an established place in the academy (Martin 2008), and as either losing or retaining its connection to political activism as it has transformed from social movement to academic discipline (Messer-Davidow 2002; Wiegman 2002b; Orr 2012).

These self-reflexive assessments raise many significant questions for WGS as a field. It has achieved success in many institutions, growing from loosely organized programs that drew on faculty from disciplines across the university to departments that offer graduate programs staffed by tenure track faculty with full time appointments. The steady institutionalization, departmentalization, and professionalization of WGS are notable achievements, reflecting important and painstaking work by committed faculty and administrators. However, these achievements have also produced challenges to a field that often portrays itself as critical, politically engaged with communities outside the academy, and fundamentally interdisciplinary or, more recently, "transdisciplinary" (Dölling and Hark 2000; Leavy 2011; Lichtenstein 2012).

Diane Lichtenstein (2012) identifies one of the most significant challenges associated with developments in WGS. Many of the field's pioneers viewed themselves as engaged in transgressive work, contesting prevailing academic structures and the departmental divisions of the university. "WGS has sought," Lichtenstein writes, "to challenge not only disciplinary borders and disciplinary rules of conduct but the very idea of boundaries as well as the institutional structures that maintain those boundaries." However, she goes on to argue that "[r]eliance on the narrative that 'the field is interdisciplinary' conceals a deep tension—that an intellectual project can be pursued in institutions whose structures function as obstacles to that project" (35). Lichtenstein draws attention to the lack of meaningful discussion in WGS about the field in relation to disciplines, interdisciplinarity, and how, or if, research topics in the field may be pursued in transgressive ways through established academic structures.

Lichtenstein's discussion highlights some difficulties associated with Kitch and Fonow's (2012) suggestion that WGS research in general and doctoral dissertation research in particular should be clearly defined. Quoting Ann Braithwaite (2012), who explores the concept of "discipline" as used in WGS, Lichtenstein (2012) argues that "the absence of engagement with questions about disciplines (and interdisciplinarity) is also a refusal…to ask what is counting as WGS, and how, in particular contexts." It is a refusal to ask, she suggests, "about the field's subject, about its borders and parameters, and about its relation to other fields of inquiry (or disciplines)." As such, interdisciplinarity as conceptualized in WGS would not seek to "dismantle disciplines," but might rather pose "a challenge to the arbitrariness of disciplinary boundaries" and "call those boundaries into question" (35-36).

This article constitutes a modest engagement with these discussions by positioning law and legal practices in the field of WGS. At a time when what we

once considered fundamental rights to such things as contraception, reproductive freedom, and voting are under assault in countries like the United States, is there scholarly work in Women's and Gender Studies that may help us to understand these trends and how we might respond? Is there research on law and legal practices in the field of WGS and in what ways, if at all, are these topics worthy of scholarly attention?

The article begins by examining the extent to which law and legal practices as research topics appear in major WGS journals and dissertation research. I propose a clearer acknowledgement of law and legal practices as important topics in WGS and outline an approach to legal studies that addresses major questions in the field. This approach is grounded in other critical legal projects located throughout the academy, including feminist, critical race, critical race feminist, queer, and Latcrit legal studies as well as interdisciplinary law and society research. As Mary Hawkesworth (2010) suggests, critical race theories, much like feminist theories in WGS, pose "dramatic challenges to traditional accounts of the world, taking issue with dominant disciplinary approaches to knowledge production…" Critical race and critical race feminist frameworks, she adds, "have contested androcentric, Eurocentric, and colonial 'ways to truth' that universalize the experiences of a fraction of the human population. They have challenged the power dynamics structuring exclusionary academic practices that have enabled unwarranted generalizations to remain unchallenged for centuries or indeed millennia. They have sought to identify and develop alternative research practices that further feminist and antiracist goals of social transformation" (691).[1] Critical legal theories—feminist, critical race, Latcrit, and queer—explore the political nature of law and legal interpretation, while challenging not only particular legal rules and practices, but also larger structures that produce patterns of power and privilege that have historically been of immense interest and concern to WGS.

Based in part on Layli Maparyan's (2012a) analysis of the field of WGS, the emergent project of "critical womanist legal studies" in WGS explicitly challenges the arbitrariness of disciplinary boundaries. In other words, it points toward a transdisciplinary engagement with questions that would potentially (re)connect WGS to communities outside the university's walls and to local and global activism. Rooted in the lived experiences of women of color, womanism, as defined by Maparyan, is "a social change perspective…concerned with humanity as a whole and the elimination of all forms of oppression, whether named or unnamed" (27-28). A project of critical womanist legal studies, informed by Maparyan's view of womanism and WGS as a field, may, in a modest way, help to address some of the issues raised in recent critical analyses of the field as it has secured greater institutional status and legitimacy in the academy.

Law and Legal Practices in Current WGS Research

Kitch and Fonow (2012) concentrated their analysis on completed dissertations in Women's Studies between 2001 and 2008. The coding categories they employed to characterize dissertation topics as well as the descriptions they provided for these categories suggested that law was not a major focus of any of the dissertations completed during this period.[2] They closely read twenty-four dissertations, from which they identified five as being of "exemplary" quality. Based on their discussion, only one of the five, or one of the twenty-four dissertations analyzed in total, appeared to focus on law —namely, a study of the legal status of Indian women in India and the United States. In this study, the author "compared the legal standing of such women with their standing in their home country in order to discover how 'global flows of people, culture, media, and capital test the limits of anti-violence law and what kinds of legal subjects and their advocates are being produced and constrained within these transnational spaces'" (Kitch and Fonow 2012, 120). In general, there is little evidence in Kitch and Fonow's discussion that law and legal practices are subjects centrally and deeply engaged with in the dissertation research they examined.

What about research published in WGS journals? Table 1 depicts the number and percentage of law-related articles published in eight leading Women's Studies journals between 2008 and June 2013.[3] Of the 1138 articles published in these journals in this six year period, 54 or less than five percent focused on law-related topics. Among the journals, the number of law-focused articles published ranged from one in *Frontiers* (or one percent of the total) to thirteen in *Signs* (or five percent of the total). Between 2008 and 2009, eighteen percent of the articles published in the *NWSA Journal* focused on law. In 2010, the journal changed its name to *Feminist Formations*. Of a total of 114 articles pub-

lished in both journals, thirteen or 11.4 percent focused on law-related topics.

Table 1
Law-Related Articles in Eight Leading Journals in Women's Studies: 2008-2013*

Journal Title	#of articles	#law-related articles	percent law-related articles
Feminist Formations (2010-2013)	64	4	6.25
Feminist Studies	141	9	6.38
Frontiers	99	1	1.01
Genders	51	3	5.88
Hypatia	244	4	1.64
Meridians	70	4	5.71
NWSA Journal (2008-2009)	50	9	18.00
Signs	243	13	5.35
Women's Studies Quarterly	176	7	3.98
Total	1138	54	4.75

***Includes all articles published and indexed up until June 2013. The statistical count does not include book reviews, poetry, or introductory editorial statements.**

When examining the law-related articles published in these leading Women's Studies journals be-tween 2008 and 2013, it is evident that they covered a rich array of topics (see Appendix A). For example, scholars disseminated research on law and legal discourses, courts, judges, lawyers, litigants, asylum seekers, prisons, police and policing, sex work and the law, reproductive rights, intersectionality and law, and transgender rights, among other topics. Several of the articles focused on law's role in constituting identities and forms of resistance to such constructions. Others explored the distinctive practices of specific legal actors and the role of intersecting identities in such practices.[4]

At the same time, the modest number and per-centage of articles that focused on law-related topics published in leading Women's Studies journals over this six year period is noteworthy. I argue that law, le-gal discourse, and legal practices could be more ful-ly integrated into WGS. As a field, for example, WGS prides itself on producing scholarship that is explicitly "intersectional" by focusing attention on the complex-ity of personal identities and the multiple systems of interlocking oppressions (Collins 2000) that charac-terize social life. Significantly, and perhaps ironically, the concept of "intersectionality" was coined and de-veloped by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989, 1991), a law-yer, law professor, and important critical race feminist legal scholar. A critical womanist approach to legal studies embedded in the field of WGS could be explic-itly developed; it could build on the important work already done and integrate research and writing from intersecting and overlapping critical legal projects produced by scholars located elsewhere in the univer-sity. In the next section, I discuss some of the reasons for pursuing such a project and begin to outline some of its elements.

Institutionalization and Critical Womanist Legal Studies in WGS

It has become common place in commentaries about the historical development of WGS as a field to note that it has gained greater acceptance in the acad-emy. Assessments of the implications of the field's in-creasing institutionalization, however, vary dramati-cally among commentators. In discussing the future of Women's Studies as a field, Elizabeth Lapovsky Kennedy and Agatha Beins (2005b), for example, emphasize the importance of acknowledging and assessing the success-

ful institutionalization of WGS in the university, while looking hopefully toward the future. Others, however, have expressed what Robyn Wiegman (2005) refers to as "post-exuberant despair," viewing successful institutionalization "as a betrayal of the political urgencies and critical vocabularies that inaugurated the project" (41, 43). Some WGS practitioners, like those in other identity-focused and politically-informed fields, have articulated concerns that the field's connection to its activist origins may have been severed or disturbed by institutional imperatives that encourage its development along more traditional, academic, and disciplinary pathways (see Braithwaite 2012 for a thoughtful treatment of these concerns). Others, however, focus on the promise of the field as an open, multi-vocal, interdisciplinary, or transdisciplinary area of inquiry that continues to explore, using diverse approaches and theoretical formulations, major concerns of the field, including systems of power and oppression, subject formation and resistances to it, the constitution of intersecting identities and its implications, and avenues through which social justice and change may be pursued (Zimmerman 2005). Aimee Carillo Rowe (2012) summarizes many of these diverse and seemingly irreconcilable perspectives, suggesting that responses to WGS' "emerging legitimization and 'professionalization' have ranged from hand-wringing, to nostalgia, to 'breast-beating,' from critical and deconstructive assessments to struggles over essentialism, to the formation of new estrangements and alliances" (293).

In an important recent exploration of WGS as a field of inquiry, Maparyan (2012a) outlines a broad and inclusive vision of the field's potential future, a vision that embraces the benefits of successful institutionalization, while allowing the field to transcend the potential drawbacks and limitations. "WGS at this particular historical moment," she writes, "*appears* as a multivalent, poly-vocal *site of convenience* for multiple overlapping and at times contradictory conversations about social change, social justice, human empowerment, environmental restoration, and, increasingly, spirituality." By 'site of convenience,' Maparyan suggests "that people 'show up' to WGS, as students and as faculty members, because they desire to talk about these things writ large, not simply because they desire to 'study women' or 'are feminist,' and because they sense it is safe or even possible to do so there in ways that it is not in other sites."

She approaches her conceptualization of WGS from "a global or national perch," a view that "is not nearly as visible at the level of individual departments, or within the conferences, journals or textbooks associated with WGS," which define the field more narrowly. This more narrow perspective contained within more stringent boundaries "seems to limit the discipline's own consciousness of and self-realization about its necessarily polyform and dynamic attributes, which could be transformational and liberatory if they were better encompassed" (19-20).

Maparyan (2012a) laments the fact that "it sometimes feels as though like-minded people who ought to be collaborating on the larger project of liberation, at our university or on the planet, are often living out their political aspirations in separate universes" (24). WGS, for her, should and could be a portal of entry for diverse scholars and activists who would contribute diverse perspectives and approaches to further the goals of social transformation and liberation. A more open and inclusive WGS, explicitly informed by womanist perspectives (see, for example, Maparyan 2012b) "could serve as a forum for dialogue, for harmonizing and coordinating diverse perspectives" and could bring multiple theories and approaches to bear on central issues of concern, including "social change, social justice, human empowerment, environmental restoration, spirituality, in a context where sex, gender, and sexuality are among the privileged topics" (Maparyan 2012a, 25).

Systems of power and oppression, subject formation and resistance, the constitution of identities, social change, social justice, human empowerment, environmental restoration, spirituality—these are all issues that critical studies of law and legal practices could usefully address.[5] Law and legal practices inform social, political, and economic policies with significant implications for sex, gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, and other intersecting identities (e.g., Smart 1989; Valdes, McCristal Culp, and Harris 2002; Wing 2003; Lopez 2003, 2006; Pascoe, 2009; Pliley 2014). Law and legal practices are also integral parts of the cultural material that constitute identities and social life generally (e.g., Sarat and Simon 2003; Kessler 2007). WGS scholars have shown great interest in public policy as well as cultural studies. As law is clearly implicated in both of these areas, it seems that it constitutes a potentially

important focus for critical inquiry and research in a WGS that is, in Maparyan's (2012a) terms, a portal of entry for participation in a dialogue on broader questions of social justice and liberatory transformation.

The study of law and legal practices in the field of WGS and its potential impact on social transformation may be enhanced as practitioners find intersecting and overlapping approaches, questions, emphases, and methodologies in spaces seemingly perceived as lying outside of the field. In a useful and compelling discussion of the institutionalization of and transdisciplinarity in WGS, Irene Dölling and Sabine Hark (2000) suggest that "…increasing institutionalization carries with it the threat of a loss of critical potential, especially the capacity to reflect upon its own modes of knowledge production. Moving into the center, however, necessitates a higher level of self-reflexivity. Transdisciplinarity, understood as a critical evaluation of terms, concepts, and methods that transgress disciplinary boundaries, can be a means to this higher level of reflexivity" (1195).

As law and legal practices are centrally related to major concerns, issues, questions, and topics in WGS and are social phenomena studied by scholars from different disciplines who are involved in various critical projects—such as social scientists and humanists in the law and society movement and law professors in critical legal studies, critical race, feminist, critical race feminist, Latcrit, and queer legal studies[6]—they may be evaluated and deployed critically with greater frequency and depth. This process could lead to a greater reflexivity that would guard against the lethargy of a narrowing disciplinarity related to successful institutionalization. Dölling and Hark (2000) suggest that we should look beyond institutionally-created boundaries for intersections and interconnections among disciplines as we develop transdisciplinary research practices. "Transdisciplinarity," they write, "proceeds from the insight that disciplines are conventionally thought of territorially, as independent domains with clear boundaries. In fact, however, disciplines are characterized by multiple interconnections and shot through with cross-disciplinary pathways. Consequently, the boundaries between them must be understood—much like physical territorial boundaries—as arbitrary products, effects of social activity" (1196).

Toward Critical Womanist Legal Studies in a Transdisciplinary WGS

A programmatic commitment to critical womanist legal studies in WGS might begin with recognition of the role of law and legal practices in culture, politics, and policy and in constituting intersecting identities.[7] Although the concept of "culture" may be understood in various ways, much of the most useful writing on it combines a conception of culture as a system of symbols with a view of it as practice.[8] Often drawing explicitly on Pierre Bourdieu's (1977) theory of practice, scholars who employ this conception of culture focus attention on relationships between the action and interaction of "agents," "actors," or "subjects" and the systemic or structural forces that produce and disseminate social and cultural symbols. Seeking to transcend tensions in social theory between structuralist and subjectivist strains, a crucial assumption of this analytical approach is that practices of human agents play important roles in producing, reproducing, and transforming the structural forces that comprise a social system, while simultaneously being shaped by these forces. Lisa Wedeen's (2002) conception of culture as "semiotic practices" concisely captures the view that symbols and practices are mutually constitutive.

William Sewell (1992) developed a nuanced and dynamic variant of this conception of culture. Signs and symbols comprising abstract cultural codes form a "cultural schema," a set of conventions that includes assumptions, categories, metaphors, and narratives that structure practice and, in turn, are shaped by practice. Culture, according to Sewell, "should be understood as a dialectic of system and practice, as a dimension of social life autonomous from other such dimensions both in its logic and in its spatial configuration, and as a system of symbols possessing a real but thin coherence that is continually put at risk in practice and therefore subject to transformation" (52). Furthermore, semiotic practices are embedded in social relations, produced by and helping to constitute unequal relations of power and privilege. The "worlds of meaning," as Sewell called them, which emerge from these complex structures are not always unidirectional, but rather are often "contradictory, loosely integrated, contested, mutable, and highly permeable" (53).

Because culture, in this view, is polyphonic, contested, and often contradictory, dominant interests

and institutions seek to impose a definitive interpretation on these "worlds of meaning." In particular, these forces seek to establish normative interpretations by organizing the meaning of difference. This highly political task is pursued in order "not only to normalize or homogenize but also to hierarchize, encapsulate, exclude, criminalize, hegemonize, or marginalize practices and populations that diverge from the sanctioned ideal" (Sewell 1992, 56). Sewell (1992) focused on "authoritative actors" whose actions "launched from the centers of power, ha[ve] the effect of turning what otherwise might be a babble of cultural voices into a semiotically and politically ordered field of differences" (56). Among other things, public officials, judges, courts, and lawyers employ categories of difference, binary oppositions such as normal/abnormal and legal/illegal to identify the normative as contrasted to a deviating "other."

Law forms one crucial element in the "authoritative action" described by Sewell (1992). As Bourdieu (1987) suggested, law is one of several relatively autonomous "fields" of cultural production that, within the constraints of material relations, constitutes social relations and practices, while simultaneously being shaped and created by social practices. Law is a "discourse," as Michel Foucault (1977) conceptualized the term, a way of depicting actions and relationships that emphasize some meanings and silence others. Law contributes to "worlds of meaning" in various ways, including the use of legal categories and metaphors, which distinguish one thing from another and, thereby, impose hierarchical rankings. Foucault referred to these as "dividing practices," as a process of "binary branding…the constant division between the normal and the abnormal" (199). In a similar way, Bourdieu (1985) noted that "[i]t is no accident that the verb *kategoresthai*, which gives us our 'categories'…means to accuse publicly" (729).

The constitution and contestation of categories of difference and the mutually constitutive relations between structures and practice have been important areas of theoretical inquiry in WGS. Studying law as cultural practice could highlight the contribution of law, legal discourse, and legal practices to, in Sewell's (1992) terms, system and practice. Such work might focus on the way in which categories and classifications embedded in law construct "worlds of meaning" and how agents employ and resist such representations in practice. Law and legal discourse, in other words, can be

read as official theories of social relations or the telling, in AnaLouise Keating's (2009) terms, of "status quo stories…that normalize and naturalize the existing social system, values, and standards so entirely that they deny the possibility of change" (83). Legal advocates committed to social change, who are "rebellious," as conceptualized by critical race theorist Gerald Lopez (1992), may consult with relevant political communities and translate counter-hegemonic views and aspirations in the form of oppositional, transgressive stories in language understood by legal elites, such as judges, other lawyers, and lawmakers occupying various authoritative positions. In this way, the legal practices of politically engaged lawyers are viewed as involving translation and storytelling in a manner understood by those in power.

Scholars also have important roles to play in this important project. Nikol G. Alexander-Floyd (2010), writing in *Signs*, describes the important contributions of critical race feminism produced primarily in law schools to creating what she refers to as a "jurisprudence of resistance" (811). Alexander-Floyd focuses on three distinct areas in which black feminist legal theorists "have transformed the legal academy in particular and the academy more generally." These include "critiquing the racial limitations of critical legal studies (CLS)[9] and exposing subjectivity through the production of narrative, advancing intersectionality as a legal and research paradigm, and expanding our understanding of harassment and discrimination law to account for the experiences of black women" (811).

Alexander-Floyd's article, published in a leading journal in the field, importantly connects WGS scholars to the work of critical race feminist scholars located primarily in law faculties or schools. In doing so, however, critical race feminist scholarship appears to be outside of the field of WGS, treated as theory and research done by experts working from a distant and different location.[10] Indeed, the relative absence of critical legal studies in WGS journals or as dissertation topics may be a function of a belief that students and scholars in the field lack the expertise required to fully explore the development and impact of law and legal doctrines. This fundamentally disciplinary view of intellectual work may also explain why studies produced by legal academics—including critical legal scholars—often do not cite, discuss, or incorporate scholarship on law and legal practices published outside of law journals and

other specialized outlets that are directly connected to law schools.

Such narrow perspectives on what counts as scholarly or intellectual work in specific fields seem shortsighted and politically problematic. Scholars with multiple and diverse intellectual backgrounds who represent multiple and diverse disciplinary and inter-disciplinary fields have much to contribute to theory and action on law's relationship to social change. Legal scholars may have unique insights to offer through their understanding of official judicial shifts in perspective. But other scholars, such as those in WGS, with training in different and often broader theoretical, substantive, and methodological matters, will also have the potential to make significant and unique contributions. WGS scholars, with their focus on individuals in social context and the impact of multiple systems of interlocking oppressions, may deepen, broaden, and complicate our understandings of the effects of formal law and state regulations as well as attempts to transform them in useful and progressive ways. The more that critical legal analyses draw on all of these intellectual strengths, the more systematic the studies, the more trenchant the critique, and the broader the thinking about alternatives as they relate to established legal institutions and beyond.

Critical womanist legal studies has the potential to enrich both fields of inquiry. It can sharpen the work produced by critical legal scholars who explore topics and issues of mutual interest and concern. Its integration into WGS would bring to the forefront laws and regulations that have a significant and differential impact on individuals in a hierarchical and discriminatory social world. This integration would also allow for the promotion of some of the multiple interconnections and cross-disciplinary pathways that Dölling and Hark (2000) suggest are characteristic of a more transdisciplinary field. Of equal importance, critical womanist legal studies in WGS could serve as an important space or forum, in Maparyan's (2012a) terms, for dialogue—a dialogue that could potentially act to harmonize and coordinate multiple theories and critical perspectives that seek social change and transformation.

Maparyan's (2012a) description of a WGS that is a portal of entry for scholars and activists to discuss and work collaboratively on larger liberatory projects intersects with conversations taking place in other academic locations where law, regulation, and legal prac-

tices are the focus of critical engagement. Feminist, critical race, critical race feminist, Latcrit, and queer legal studies share with WGS a commitment to social justice based on what critical race scholar Francisco Valdes (2000) and others call a "post or anti-subordination vision" (e.g., Hernandez-Truyol 2008; Bender and Valdes 2012). This vision, as articulated by Valdes (2000), is of "a society where 'difference' is not only tolerated and accepted but cultivated and celebrated, a society where legal principles and cultural practices accommodate and affirm, rather than burden or disdain, the public performance of difference across multiple axes of social and legal personhood" According to Valdes, "the pressing question is how do we help to theorize and materialize this vision of a multiply diverse and socially just inter/national community?" (842).

The role of law in moving toward a post-subordination society is part of a critical intellectual and social justice project that extends beyond the borders of law schools. While the potential of law and rights and the use of established institutional channels to challenge multiple hierarchies is contestable, it is still worthy of careful examination. If law is a fundamental aspect of a social world riven by racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, xenophobia, and other systems and ideologies that produce and support subordination, can law, rights, and legal practices be reconceived in ways that counteract, reconstruct, and reconstitute a world with an anti-subordination vision? Could this be accomplished through a more inclusive community of participants both within and outside the academy who would collaborate on what feminist scholars call the formation of a "cross-sector infrastructure" (Messer-Davidow 2002), a "radical belonging" across "power lines" (Rowe 2008), a focus on interconnectedness (Keating 2009, 2013), or what critical race scholars, such as Julie A. Su and Eric K. Yamamoto (2002), term "critical coalitions," "alliances based on a thoughtful and reciprocal interest in the goals and purposes of a collaborative and collective project" (Valdes 2000, 832).

Such critical collaborations, coalitions, and alliances would necessarily and productively include community activists who would help to guide the questions asked and the methods used to explore a specific issue. In the same way that previous generations of feminist and critical scholars learned about harassment and discrimination from those directly affected, contemporary

scholars who engage in critical womanist legal studies could learn a great deal about the legally constructed problems of marginalized groups, whose social location is shaped by various intersecting factors, including gender, racial and ethnic background, sexual identity, and citizenship, from relevant populations and front-line community activists. Working together with legal academics, interdisciplinary law and society scholars, and communities outside the walls of the academy, WGS scholars would contribute to fashioning strategies for a reconstructed legal regime that promotes an anti- or post-subordination vision and that challenges current ideologies that claim a postracial, postfeminist present (Crenshaw 2011). In this way, WGS could participate in what Valdes (2012) calls "rebellious knowledge production," the production of knowledge with liberatory potential from the perspective of diverse, historically marginalized populations.

Opening WGS to the development of critical womanist legal studies, in collaboration with other critical scholars in the law and society community and in legal programs as well as with communities and community activists outside the walls of the academy, might begin to address some of the concerns that the success of WGS in finding a secure place in the university has narrowed its focus and produced a less critical endeavor with fewer connections to grassroots communities and political action. A more collaborative transdisciplinary critical womanist legal studies that incorporates work across and outside the academy has the potential to broaden, deepen, and enrich a critique of law as it impacts historically marginalized populations as well as to identify effective paths for social transformation.

Endnotes

[1] Hawkesworth's (2010) analysis of critical race and critical race feminist theories emerges out of a critique of the discipline of Political Science and the sub-field of political theory for not engaging with feminist and critical race theories or viewing them as part of these areas of scholarly and theoretical inquiry. For an analysis of the accomplishments of critical race theory in the context of WGS, see Alexander-Floyd (2010), who suggests that this body of work constitutes a "jurisprudence of resistance" worthy of attention among WGS scholars. Alexander-Floyd's sympathetic assessment, however, seems to portray "critical race black feminism" as theories and research produced elsewhere, outside of WGS as a field.

[2] The coding categories included the following: identity/subjectivity, gender norms, resistance/activism/power, cultural texts, nationalism/citizenship, race, sexuality, and harassment/violence/victimization/trauma. The descriptions provided for each category did not mention law or legal practices as an aspect of the topic category, but many of the categories could have included a study of written laws and legal practices. These categories were based on review of the abstracts of 106 dissertations. Kitch and Fonow (2012) read a sample of 24 (of the 106) dissertations carefully and engaged in a deeper analysis of them.

[3] The specific journals I selected were drawn from Kitch and Fonow's (2012) study. They describe them as "the key interdisciplinary women's studies journals…" (110). Kitch and Fonow examined the extent to which research published in these journals was utilized and cited in the dissertations they read. They found that "only 17 percent of sample dissertations had six or more citations from such journals, 25 percent had two to five, and one-third had none" (110). Based on their findings, they suggested that Women's Studies doctoral courses should include more readings from these journals and that dissertation research should consult work "in the field" more thoroughly.

[4] In a study of the thematic content of articles published in *Signs* over a five year period (to 2011), Hawkesworth (2011) coded the identified topics, from most to least prevalent, as follows: cultural production, political activism/engagement, women's labor, war and terror, gendered migration, sexualities, historical studies, black feminist studies, reproductive and genetic technologies, marriage and families, identities, feminist theory, feminist science studies, and women's health. Significantly, in discussing the approaches to these topics, Hawkesworth suggested that they employed multiple methodologies and approaches, one of which she labelled as "legal studies." The other approaches listed included "cultural studies, deconstruction, discourse analysis, ethnography, film studies, genealogy, historical analysis, ideology critique, intertextual analysis, interviews, literary criticism, philosophical analysis, psychoanalysis, rhetorical analysis, and semiotics" (512).

[5] For an example of critical legal theories that focus on spirituality, although not necessarily from a womanist perspective, see Gabel (2009, 2013).

[6] For a good description of these critical projects in legal studies, see Inniss (2012). For a useful history of the law and society movement, see Trubek (1990).

[7] For an excellent study that is explicitly framed in the field of WGS and that combines and addresses many of these elements and concerns, see Baker (2008).

[8] This discussion is based, in part, on Kessler (2007, 207-213). On culture as symbol, see Geertz (1973, 1983). On culture as practice, see Bourdieu (1977). Other works I have found useful include Sewell (1992, 1999) and Wedeen (2002).

[9] Critical Legal Studies (CLS) was a movement in legal studies that sought, through its theoretical works, to contribute to social change and transformation. It is especially known for its method of "trashing," or deconstruction, of rights and its view that law is indeterminate and, therefore, not a trustworthy ally in struggles for social justice. See, for example, Tushnet (1984), Kelman (1989), and Gabel and Harris (1989). For a useful history, see Tushnet (1991). CLS scholarship and especially its negative view of rights were criticized by scholars of color for not considering the perspectives of people of color. See, for example, Williams (1987), Matsuda (1987), and Delgado (1987).

[10] In a similar way, work in feminist jurisprudence is often distinguished from scholarship associated with Women's and Gender Studies as a field. This includes the important work of the Feminism and Legal Theory Project located in the law school at Emory University.

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APPENDIX A
Law-Related Articles in Eight Leading Women's Studies Journals, 2008-2013

Feminist Formations [2010-2013]

Halva-Neubauer, Glen A., and Sara L. Zeigler. 2010. "Promoting Fetal Personhood: The Rhetorical and Legislative Strategies of the Pro-Life Movement after Planned Parenthood v. Casey." *Feminist Formations* 22 (2): 101-123.

Shehadeh, Lamia Rustum. 2011. "Gender-Relevant Legal Change in Lebanon." *Feminist Formations* 23 (1): 210-228.

Strobl, Staci. 2011. "Progressive or Neo-Traditional? Policewomen in Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Countries." *Feminist Formations* 23 (1): 51-74.

Ahmed, Fauzia Erfan. 2013. "The Compassionate Courtroom: Feminist Governance, Discourse, and Islam in a Bangladeshi Shalish." *Feminist Formations* 25

(1): 157-183.

Feminist Studies

García-López, Gladys, and Denise A. Segura. 2008. "'They Are Testing You All the Time': Negotiating Dual Femininities among Chicana Attorneys." *Feminist Studies* 34 (1/2): 229-258.

Maddali, Anita Ortiz. 2008. "Sophia's Choice: Problems Faced by Female Asylum-Seekers and Their U.S.-Citizen Children." *Feminist Studies* 34 (1/2): 277-290.

Elmore, Cindy. 2010. "On and On, Over and Over: The Gender War in Child Support Enforcement Court." *Feminist Studies* 36 (2): 397-403.

Evans, Jennifer V. 2010. "Decriminalization, Seduction, and 'Unnatural Desire' in East Germany." *Feminist Studies* 36 (3): 553-577.

Myers, Polly Reed. 2010. "Jane Doe v. Boeing Company: Transsexuality and Compulsory Gendering in Corporate Capitalism." *Feminist Studies* 36 (3): 493-517.

Moeller, Robert G. 2010. "The Regulation of Male Homosexuality in Postwar East and West Germany: An Introduction." *Feminist Studies* 36 (3): 521-527.

Moeller, Robert G. 2010. "Private Acts, Public Anxieties, and the Fight to Decriminalize Male Homosexuality in West Germany." *Feminist Studies* 36 (3): 528-552.

Basu, Srimati. 2011. "Sexual Property: Staging Rape and Marriage in Indian Law and Feminist Theory." *Feminist Studies* 37 (1): 185-211.

Ludlow, Jeannie. 2012. "Love and Goodness: Toward a New Abortion Politics." *Feminist Studies* 38 (2): 474-483.

Frontiers

Zeigler, Sara L., and Kendra B. Stewart. 2009. "Positioning Women's Rights within Asylum Policy." *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 30 (2): 115-142.

Genders

Shahani, Nishant. 2009. "Section 377 and the 'Trouble with Statism': Legal Intervention and Queer Performativity in Contemporary India." *Genders* 50: 1-27.

Wlodarczyk, Justyna. 2010. "Manufacturing Hysteria: The Import of U.S. Abortion Rhetorics to Poland." *Genders* 52: 1-40.

Springer, Kimberly. 2011. "Policing Black Women's Sexual Expression." *Genders* 54: 62-73.

Hypatia

Grebowicz, Margret. 2011. "Democracy and Pornography: On Speech, Rights, Privacies, and Pleasures in Conflict." *Hypatia* 26 (1): 150-165.

Gauthier, Jeffrey. 2011. "Prostitution, Sexual Autonomy, and Sex Discrimination." *Hypatia* 26 (1): 166-186.

Monahan, Camille. 2013 "The Failure of the Bona Fide Occupational Qualification in Cross-Gender Prison Guard Cases: A Problem beyond Equal Employment Opportunity." *Hyp*atia 28 (1): 101-121.

Denike, Margaret. 2008. "The Human Rights of Others: Sovereignty, Legitimacy, and 'Just Causes' for the 'War on Terror.'" *Hypatia* 23 (2): 95-121.

Meridians

Sudbury, Julia. 2009. "Maroon Abolitionists: Black Gender-oppressed Activists in the Anti-Prison Movement in the U.S. and Canada." *Meridians: Feminism, Race, Transnationalism* 9 (1): 1-29.

Lodhia, Sharmila. 2009. "Legal Frankensteins and Monstrous Women: Judicial Narratives of the 'Family in Crisis.'" *Meridians: Feminism, Race, Transnationalism* 9 (2): 102-129.

Meiners, Erica R. 2009. "Never Innocent: Feminist Trouble with Sex Offender Registries and Protection in a Prison Nation." *Meridians: Feminism, Race, Transnationalism* 9 (2): 31-62.

Price, Kimala. 2010. "What is Reproductive Justice?: How Women of Color Activists Are Redefining the Pro-Choice Paradigm." *Meridians: Feminism, Race, Transnationalism* 10 (2): 42-65.

NWSA Journal [2008-2009]

Ludlow, Jeannie. 2008. "Sometimes, It's a Child and a Choice: Toward an Embodied Abortion Praxis." *NWSA Journal* 20 (1): 26-50.

Lawston, Jodie Michelle. 2008. "Women, the Criminal Justice System, and Incarceration: Processes of Power, Silence, and Resistance." *NWSA Journal* 20 (2): 1-18.

Schlesinger, Tract. 2008. "Equality at the Price of Justice." *NWSA Journal* 20 (2): 27-47.

Block, Diana, Urszula Wislanka, Cassie Pierson, and Pam Fadem. 2008. "The Fire Inside: Newsletter of the California Coalition for Women Prisoners." *NWSA Journal* 20 (2): 48-70.

Reynolds, Marylee. 2008. "The War on Drugs, Prison Building, and Globalization: Catalysts for the Global Incarceration of Women." *NWSA Journal* 20 (2): 72-95.

Irving, Toni. 2008. "Decoding Black Women: Policing Practices and Rape Prosecution on the Streets of Philadelphia." *NWSA Journal* 20 (2): 100-120.

Deeb-Sossa, Natalie, and Heather Kane. 2009. "Not Avoiding a 'Sensitive Topic': Strategies to Teach about Women's Reproductive Rights." *NWSA Journal* 21 (1): 151-177.

Slagter, Janet Trapp, and Kathryn Forbes. 2009. "Sexual Harassment Policy, Bureaucratic Audit Culture, and Women's Studies." *NWSA Journal* 21 (2): 144-170.

Gardner, Susan K. 2009. "Coming Out of the Sexual Harassment Closet: One Woman's Story of Politics and Change in Higher Education." *NWSA Journal* 21 (2): 171-195.

Signs: Journal of Women in Culture & Society

Berger, Susan A. 2009. "Production and Reproduction

of Gender and Sexuality in Legal Discourses of Asylum in the United States." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture & Society* 34(3): 659-685.

Smith, Anna Marie. 2009. "Reproductive Technology, Family Law, and the Post-Welfare State: The California Same-Sex Parents' Rights "Victories" of 2005." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture & Society.* 34 (4): 827-850.

Alexander-Floyd, Nikol G. 2010. "Critical Race Black Feminism: A 'Jurisprudence of Resistance' and the Transformation of the Academy." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture & Society* 35 (4): 810-820.

Roggeband, Conny. 2010. "The Victim-Agent Dilemma: How Migrant Women's Organizations in the Netherlands Deal with a Contradictory Policy Frame." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture & Society* 35 (4): 943-967.

Bernstein, Elizabeth. 2010. "Militarized Humanitarianism Meets Carceral Feminism: The Politics of Sex, Rights, and Freedom in Contemporary Antitrafficking Campaigns." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture & Society* 36 (1): 45-71.

Haney, Lynne A. 2010. "Working through Mass Incarceration: Gender and the Politics of Prison Labor from East to West." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture & Society* 36 (1): 73-97.

Fadlalla, Amal Hassan. 2011. "State of Vulnerability and Humanitarian Visibility on the Verge of Sudan's Secession: Lubna's Pants and the Transnational Politics of Rights and Dissent." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture & Society* 37 (1): 159-184.

Basu, Srimati. 2012. "Judges of Normality: Mediating Marriage in the Family Courts of Kolkata, India." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture & Society* 37 (2): 469-492.

Koomen, Jonneke. 2013. "'Without These Women, the Tribunal Cannot Do Anything': The Politics of Witness Testimony on Sexual Violence at the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture & Society* 38 (2): 253-277.

Cho, Sumi, Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, and Leslie McCall. 2013. "Toward a Field of Intersectionality Studies: Theory, Applications, and Praxis." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture & Society* 38 (4): 785-810.

Carbado, Devon W. 2013. "Colorblind Intersectionality." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture & Society* 38 (4): 811-845.

MacKinnon, Catharine A. 2013. "Intersectionality as Method: A Note." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture & Society* 38 (4): 1019-1030.

Spade, Dean. 2013. "Intersectional Resistance and Law Reform." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture & Society* 38 (4): 1031-1055.

Women's Studies Quarterly

Jackson, Jessi Lee, and Erica R. Meiners. 2011. "Fear and Loathing: Public Feelings in Antiprison Work." *Women's Studies Quarterly* 39 (1/2): 270-291.

Miller, J. Hillis. 2011. "Resignifying Excitable Speech." *Women's Studies Quarterly* 39 (1/2): 223-227.

Loeb, Elizabeth. 2008. "Cutting It Off: Bodily Integrity, Identity Disorders, and the Sovereign Stakes of Corporeal Desire in U.S. Law." *Women's Studies Quarterly* 36 (3/4): 44-64.

Sears, Clare. 2008. "Electric Brilliancy: Cross-Dressing Law and Freak Show Displays in Nineteenth-Century San Francisco." *Women's Studies Quarterly* 36 (3/4): 170-188.

Currah, Paisley. 2008. "Expecting Bodies: The Pregnant Man and Transgender Exclusion from the Employment Non-Discrimination Act." *Women's Studies Quarterly* 36 (3/4): 330-337.

Ratliff, Clancy. 2009. "Policing Miscarriage: Infertility Blogging, Rhetorical Enclaves, and the Case of House Bill 1677." *Women's Studies Quarterly* 37 (1/2): 125-146.

Culbertson, Tucker. 2008. "Law and the Emotions: A Conference Report." *Women's Studies Quarterly* 36 (1/2): 331-339.

Placenta-Eating and the Epistemology of Ignorance

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Abstract

This article argues that human postpartum placentophagy—eating one's placenta—is an example of an epistemology of ignorance. Placentophagy has been stubbornly resistant to conventional scientific inquiry, but has nonetheless been the subject of considerable epistemic speculation based on very little evidence. To remain ignorant about placentophagy takes epistemic work. Tracing the form the epistemology of ignorance takes—disdain for female bodies, visceral disgust—this article argues that placentophagy deserves a more nuanced treatment as a practice that meets the under-served needs of women who fear postpartum depression and as a practice taking place in a context of the biomagnification of environmental pollutants.

Résumé

Cet article affirme que la placentophagie après l'accouchement humain—manger son placenta—est un exemple d'une épistémologie de l'ignorance. La placentophagie a été obstinément résistante à une enquête scientifique conventionnelle, mais elle a néanmoins fait l'objet de spéculations épistémiques considérables, fondées sur très peu de données probantes. Rester ignorant au sujet de la placentophagie exige du travail épistémique. Retraçant la forme que prend l'épistémologie de l'ignorance—dédain pour le corps des femmes, dégoût viscéral—cet article soutient que la placentophagie mérite un traitement plus nuancé à titre de pratique répondant aux besoins souvent négligés des femmes qui craignent la dépression post-partum et à titre de pratique ayant lieu dans un contexte de bioamplification des polluants environnementaux.

If we know well…we care. That is how responsibility grows.—Donna Haraway (2008)

This essay began life as a very simple short, personal story. More than anything, perhaps, it is a lesson on acting from within an epistemology of ignorance—on the sorts of chances you have to take when the thing you want to know about has been ruled out as a topic of reasonable conversation or systematic inquiry. It is a story about what happens when you come across something that appears to be a rich site of epistemic and ethical entanglement, not to mention an object eminently susceptible to conventional scientific investigation, but which has been deemed an object of opinionated speculation, derision, or unspecified danger. This is the story of eating one's own placenta.

The phrase "epistemology of ignorance" is paradoxical. How can one use an epistemology—a theory of knowledge—to account for what is not known? A by-now significant literature in philosophy inquires after the structures of ignorance, understood not as simple lack of knowledge, but rather as complex and actively cultivated structures of not-knowing: "An important aspect of an epistemology of ignorance is the realization that ignorance should not be theorized as a simple omission or gap but is, in many cases, an active production. Ignorance is frequently constructed and actively preserved, and is linked to issues of cognitive authority, doubt, trust, silencing, and uncertainty" (Tuana 2004, 195). Human birth is an area particularly freighted with complex practices of ignorance—articles in the philosophical literature that centrally address a completely different topic often introduce examples such as the loss or suppression of knowledge about effective labour support, vaginal breech birth, or the relative safety of hospital and home births. The frequency and weight of these examples is related to the history of birth, in ways that feminist scholars have documented: the agents of the knowledge lost or denied are women (birthing women, doulas, midwives) while the agents of the new structures of knowledge that consider them epistemically unreliable are largely men and/or agents of male-dominated systems (obstetricians, for example—at least earlier in the history of the specialty—or hospital administrators) (for example, Brodsky 2008; Dalmiya and Alcoff 1993); women's bodies in western cultures are objectified and hence are frequently denied as sources of knowledge (for

example, Heyes 2012); and the western medical model has increasingly relied on technoscientific observation (not patients' lived experience) to provide knowledge about human bodies (the dissection, the bloodtest, the fetal monitor) as well as to offer solutions to those bodies' problems (surgery, drug therapies, forceps birth) (for example, Leder 1998; Kukla 2005). All of this is well known and also well resisted. In many corners of these systems, knowledge about birth is being reorganized: reliable studies on homebirth get media attention (for example, Janssen et al. 2009), progressive obstetricians lobby to get less invasive labour and delivery protocols in place, or alternative organizations provide forums for women to tell their birth stories.

Placentophagy—eating the placenta—is an interesting practice in this context. There are snippets of reliable information about it: most female mammals eat their placenta postpartum, but cetaceans (whales, porpoises, etc.) and pinnipeds (seals, walruses, and the like) do not; there is no known human culture that has a placentophagic convention (if you discount western homebirthers post-1970). We can tell you some basic things about what is in a placenta, but very little about what eating it might do to you. It is an epistemic black hole. This hole could be filled by laboratory analysis, placebo trials, and anthropological narratives, and perhaps it soon will be. As things stand, however, I contend that attitudes to the human placenta rest on a priori assumptions about the value of conventional biomedical practice, affective responses to female bodies and human birth, or folk views about hygiene and disease. They are a snapshot, in the early twenty-first century, of everything Mary Douglas (1966) famously describes in *Purity and Danger*—those attempts to manage excreta, breast milk, menstrual blood, and other effluvia that tell us so much about how the physical body stands in for the social body. As such, they are also ethically ripe: standing partly outside the domain of reason, yet begging to be brought within it, they invite us to consider what we will refuse to know and why.

My son was born in our bedroom in the middle of a frigid February night in 2009. It was a planned home birth for which we had to procure equipment as per a lengthy list supplied by the midwife. The list included "a metal dish or pan." "We want something to put the placenta in—something that won't break," she had explained at our prenatal class, holding up a bent cake pan

by way of example. When you give birth at home, you get to decide what happens to your body and to your baby's in ways that most hospitals foreclose. (That's really the point.) And you also get to decide what happens to the other extraneous bits—stuff that is neither nor. So your placenta ends up in that pan, and you get to do whatever you like with it. It is surprisingly meaty, woven through with visible blood vessels and partially shrink-wrapped in membranes, and is, for most of us, the most significant body part of which we will ever have to dispose.

I gave birth just before one in the morning so I had a bit of a lie-in after the stitches, followed by a long day of getting used to the idea of motherhood. After the desperate vomiting, the adrenaline high, the bizarre relocation of the contents of my abdominal cavity, and the amazingly abrupt, but terribly welcome, end of the constant heartburn I had had through the last twenty weeks of pregnancy, I was ready for the dinner my partner cooked: whole wheat spaghetti tossed in butter and served with placenta bolognese. It was the best meal I have ever had.

What does placenta taste like? As you would expect, it is halfway between muscle and organ, a bit like mince and a bit like liver. There is nothing remarkable about it, especially cooked in a nice sauce. I could have served you my placenta for your dinner and you would never have known the difference. The rest we dried in strips on the oven's lowest setting until it looked like beef jerky and then we pulverized it in a grinder. Some friends came over to meet the newborn and have a glass of champagne and, to their amusement, we were busily dribbling the powder into gel capsules. Those pills had a nasty aftertaste—that unmistakable tangy iron flavour blood has—and were far more reminiscent of birth than the bolognese. I took three or four of them every day for the first month of our child's life, assured by my midwife that they were prophylactic against post-partum depression. In the years since, I have wondered about my own motivations and about whether there is more to know.

The placenta, as Luce Irigaray (1993) famously points out, is a symbol of reversibility, the chiasmatic organ of our intertwined existence (173, 181). It challenges an ontology of separability in two ways. First, it undermines the boundedness of the embodied individual. The body of the mother/fetus is neither self-evi-

dently one nor two and the placenta is the liminal organ through which that mutual incorporation is most apparent. Second, the placenta exemplifies the interrelatedness of human and world; as I will show, it is a touchstone for ecological vulnerability and immediate evidence of the impossibility of any object being entirely distinct from its larger material and symbolic contexts. Donna Haraway (2008) makes this same point about the placenta in a story in her book *When Species Meet*. Her story, and mine, also illustrate a method for ethics: for Haraway, touch is a basic condition of encountering the Other, and she theorizes our entanglements through everyday, mundane narratives of human-animal relations. The placenta and the pregnant person touch in the most chiasmatic and intimate way, of course, and the project of handling the placenta after birth can also be understood as an ethical engagement.

In what follows, I examine what is currently known across epistemic domains about human placentophagy in the context of its enormous growth in popularity over the past ten years in western countries. Although conventional modes of academic knowledge-seeking are moving in to analyze placentophagy, it is still, in large part, in the domain of folk knowledge, prejudice, and unexamined affect. To show this point, I contrast two contemporaneous representations of human placentophagy that come from the period of its recent resurgence: an allegedly comedic commentary on one of the earliest popular cultural instances of placentophagy (Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall's consumption of placenta paté on British TV); and Donna Haraway's recounting of a conversation about a placental meal from her book *When Species Meet*. I show the epistemic and ethical gap between these two representations to motivate a deeper analysis of the placenta's implication in ecological networks. Reductive treatments of placentophagy that close down examination of this ethical potential do an injustice to this chiasmatic organ and what it can tell us.

Placentophagic Trends

Searching for information on human placentophagy in 2008, I found next to nothing of any real value and a lot of mockery. Placenta-eating in North America and the UK seems to have reached an initial peak of public attention after the second wave of feminism in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The most commonly cit-

ed (very short) essay on eating one's placenta from this period is Elyse April's, "Coffee, tea, or me, the story of how I ate my placenta," originally published in *Mothering* magazine in 1983, followed by some recipes. Both the essay and the recipes are still archived on a variety of websites, most of which are also filled with old, derisive commentary on how "gross" or "ewww" or "crazy" they are. A recent study by J. Selander et al. (2013), however, found a surge in on-line and popular media interest in placentophagy (especially placenta encapsulation [Selander 2014]) in North America, dating from roughly 2007. The demographic profile of Selander et al.'s (2013) 189 placenta-eating mothers (a non-representative sample) found that they were "most likely to be American, white, married, middle class, college-educated, and more likely to give birth at home" (107-108)—a demographic that, nationality aside, included me. What motivates this trend?

One driver of this interest in placentophagy comes from midwives, doulas, and other practitioners in a growing world of alternative birthing. Ten percent of participants in Selander et al.'s (2013) study said they intended to eat their placenta because it was recommended by a midwife or doula (102). Women giving birth attended by this kind of caregiver are also more likely to avoid taking drugs during labour that might accumulate in the placenta and affect the wisdom of eating it and to keep their placenta away from the biohazard bin, especially in the US and Canada where homebirth remains largely outside the mainstream medical system. The resurgence of interest in demedicalizing and deinstitutionalizing birth has shifted the epistemic emphasis back from conventional forms of biomedical knowledge toward a world in which "old wives' tales" hold sway. As Vrinda Dalmiya and Linda Alcoff (1993) argue, a midwife's apprenticeship was historically organized around direct experience (of giving birth to one's own children, attending many births, and sharing birth stories with other midwives and mothers, for example). Often the examples of knowledge that such practice afforded were intuitive, could not be easily abstracted, and appeared casuistic by the emerging standards of evidence-based medicine. They also often took the form of practical abilities, learned by hands-on participation in doing rather than prior participation in theory. In obstetrics, a medical degree with its emphasis on scientific learning provided formal training, which was then enacted

in a medical practice that understood itself as rule-governed. Anecdotal evidence of the benefits of placentophagy has an epistemic place in this system, although drawing the distinction in this way does not explain why biomedicine has elected not to know about it at all.

The popularity of placentophagy also has its own financial engine, embedded in alternative epistemic community: there is a growing economy of placenta services separate from the economy of homebirth. These services centre on placenta encapsulation, the complex process in which I participated of retrieving and dehydrating a fresh placenta, pulverizing it, and creating gelatin capsules filled with placenta powder for easy and extended consumption after birth. While anyone who knows how to cook beef could manage to make a meal of fresh placenta, encapsulation requires more time and skill and hence is ripe for outsourcing. For example, my own local alternative birthing organization in Edmonton, Alberta now includes several ads for local placenta service providers where there were none in 2008.

In addition to midwives and the larger community of birth-related service providers, we can also attribute the growth of popularity of placentophagy to the influence of celebrity culture: Kim Kardashian threatened to (but did not actually) serve placenta to her family on reality TV, although sister Kourtney tweeted a picture of her placenta pills; in 2013, actor January Jones disclosed that she had eaten the placenta following the birth of her son in 2011, saying (in a quiet gesture against existing discourse) that it was "not witch-crafty."

Women are eating their placentas, therefore, because the alternative birthing community recommends it and they see other women (those they know as well as celebrities) doing it. But beyond mimicry, what is the motivation? Existing research on this question is limited, but fear of postpartum mood disorders clearly plays a large role. Selander et al's (2013) study found that by far the most commonly cited reason to eat one's placenta was to "improve mood" (34 percent of respondents), while 40 percent of respondents said that they had actually experienced improved mood after doing so (101, 104). Alternative birthing sites contain many commentaries promoting placenta-eating as a prophylactic against postpartum depression.

Information about placentophagy thus operates at a phenomenological rather than biochemical level. Try to get scientific about what is in placenta and how it

is absorbed if ingested and you will be frustrated: there is no research on this question in humans. Selander et al. (2013) report, with a long list of references to laboratory studies dating between 1976 and 2011, that

> While the exact concentration of many of these hormones and nutrients in the placenta is unknown, researchers have measured some of these substances in unprepared, term human placental tissue, including selenium, iron, the vitamins riboflavin, thiamin, and pyridoxine, the fatty acids arachidonic acid (AA) and docosahexaenoic acid (DHA), oxytocin, progesterone, human placental lactogen, relaxin, inhibin and activin, β-endorphin and β-lipotrophin and calcium, iron, copper, and zinc. (96)

But how all of these things are dealt with by the acidic environment of the stomach, and what they do once they enter the bloodstream in humans, is completely unknown, even today. The most recent meta-study on placenta-eating, by Cynthia W. Coyle (2015) and her colleagues at Northwestern medical school, found "no peer reviewed empirical studies of effects of human placentophagy." The only positive results were some longstanding, but likely nontransferable, studies in rats (for whom placentophagy appears to increase endogenous opioid production and hence reduce pain) (for example, Kristal, DiPirro, and Thompson 2012) and qualitative, non-controlled studies of women who claim experiential benefits from eating their placentas. To be precise, Coyle et al. (2015) conclude that "based on the studies reviewed, it is not possible to draw any conclusions relevant to human health. We conclude that the animal and human data strongly support the need for more precise evaluation of the benefit, if any, of placentophagy practices in human patients" (6). The study got a lot of media attention. "What to Expect When You're Expecting to Eat Your Placenta"—"A new review of the literature finds no evidence that "placentophagy" is good for mothers. It could even be harmful," reads a tagline on *The Atlantic*'s interview about the piece. Most of the media coverage has such slightly misleading headlines, implying that the study showed harms rather than simply pointing toward an epistemic lack expressed through the authors' risk-aversion. Thus available knowledge on placentophagy—whether in the form of the controlled study, anecdote, or experiential reporting—is limited, making it into a rich site for the projection of meaning.

"TV Dinners" to *When Species Meet*

I want to focus, first, on a negative characterization of placentophagy as simultaneously disgusting and irrational that denies its epistemic potential, in particular by denying the forms of commensality that generate new relationships and hence new forms of knowledge. In 1998, celebrity chef Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall's British culinary show "TV Dinners" (in which he "fearlessly invades the kitchens of amateur cooks preparing for the ultimate in dinner parties") featured the making of a placenta paté, which was served to party guests. There were numerous complaints from the public—including Labour MP Kevin McNamara—that this was offensive. Show producer Channel 4 was later reprimanded by the Broadcasting Standards Commission for airing material "disagreeable to many" and failing to provide a viewer advisory. The actual segment is hardly sensationalist by contemporary standards: Fearnley-Whittingstall stands demurely mostly just off-camera as a homely and only slightly alternative English family prepare and cook and serve a placenta to nervous-looking guests in a way that would be positively boring if the meat were an ordinary beefsteak—as indeed it easily could be. The immediate outcry hardly matched the content of the footage.

One might imagine that the twenty-first century would herald a newly thoughtful approach to placentophagy, but, in 2008, the same segment was re-televised on the BBC in a comedoc called "TV's Believe It Or Not"—a sarcastic compendium of allegedly ridiculous and hilarious classic TV moments. On YouTube, you can listen to a three-minute clip from this show, which features the original footage from "TV Dinners" with a sarcastic voiceover by comedian Sean Lock. What interests me about *this* second-order interpretive commentary is its rigid and extended refusal to engage any of the epistemic questions that might be raised by placentophagy. Instead, this clip opens with the voiceover saying, "…I love meat. I've done the big four: pork, beef, chicken, lamb. I need something a bit more…*mental*. I need a woman's placenta." Moments later, the matriarch-cook flambés pieces of meat and Fearnley-Whittingstall says off-camera, "that's elemental, isn't it?" The cook replies gamely, "it's earth and air and wind and fire!" but the voiceover loudly speaks over her: "no it's not, it's madness!" Thus, immediately this engagement with the placenta is established as an incontrovertible sign of irrationality, of insanity. And it is a gendered madness, too,

a madness of women: "I prefer my meat prepared by a butcher, not a midwife" says the interruptive voice. Here is a twofold epistemic gesture: the voiceover is authoritative, but not embodied; it is an aggressively masculine voice (in interesting contrast to Fearnley-Whittingstall's curious, oblique presence, which it overrides), but one that literally refuses to appear and thus erases its own specificity. It is also a voice that denies its partiality—of identity and of ethical position. (A butcher is here a man who surely acts in a way that raises more questions about violence and exploitation than this paté's female creator.) What, in the end, is so "disagreeable" about placenta paté? There is no argument here, just visceral disgust, and in particular disgust with the human female body that there is no imperative to ethically confront: "I'll warn you now, if you don't like watching people eat bits of meat that have come out through their vagina, look away." Having established its own righteousness, as the segment concludes, the voiceover loses its own tenuous grasp on reason in a gesture of dismissal that has a class inflection as well as a gendered one: the original mild-mannered narrator states that "the first dish to be served to the assembled guests is the placenta paté, now united with Fred's bread, and garnished with fresh marjoram" [image of a platter of hors d'oeuvres, a toast]. To which the voiceover retorts (shouting and contemptuous): "'Garnished with fresh marjoram'?! Fuck off!" This commensal placenta thus provoked a negative reaction that is superficially not about anything much: eating placenta is "disagreeable." Dig a little deeper, however, and we find some gender and class politics: "TV Dinners" is disgusting because women's bodies are disgusting; its narrative cannot be explained except as madness and, again, that madness comes from women with unusual ideas (or, in popular parlance, feminists). The family around which the segment centres appears middle class (although not wealthy) and hippyish. They are soft-spoken, a little effête. There is no apparent family patriarch. They have a cluttered, well-equipped kitchen, a big enough house to accommodate many guests, and enough social confidence and open-minded friends that cooking up a placenta and being filmed on national TV doing it seemed possible. Part of Lock's barely concealed contempt has a class flavour: he is a loutish man who loves meat (bought from the butcher) and who has little time for a pretension like hors d'oeuvres garnished with fresh marjoram.

Consider, by contrast, the commensality Haraway (2008) describes in the same year in "Parting Bites: Nourishing Indigestion" included in her book *When Species Meet*. Her story of attending a placental meal showcases a range of likely incommensurable, yet seriously engaged, arguments about the ethical and political consequences of placentophagy. Describing her campus interview at the History of Consciousness Program in Santa Cruz, California, she mentions two graduate students who deliver her from the airport to her hotel:

> They were in a hurry to get to a birth celebration in the Santa Cruz Mountains. A feminist lay midwife had assisted the birth, and there was to be a feast to share a meal of the placenta. Coming from The Johns Hopkins University and its technoscientific and biomedical excesses, I was enthralled, altogether ready to celebrate the bloody materiality of community affirmation in welcoming a baby human. (293)

After her talk, Haraway is taken to a restaurant where she describes a dinner conversation during which the placental meal is a topic of heated debate. This conversation is marked in two ways: it contains ethically substantive engagement with the particular biopolitics of placentophagy; and in its mode, it exemplifies her ethical method.

First, then, the dinner guests make intuitive, visceral, and exploratory suggestions:

> One person insisted that proteins were proteins, and it did not matter what the source was; the placenta was just biochemical food. Someone asked if Catholics before Vatican II could eat the placenta on Friday. The protein reductionist found herself in deep water fast. Those who cited an ancient matriarchy or some indigenous oneness with nature as warrant for eating afterbirth material got repressive looks from those attentive to the primitivizing moves of well-intentioned descendants of white settler colonies… Health-conscious vegetarians…had some trouble with the low-fiber fare of the placenta, but the radical feminist vegan at table…decided that the only people who *must* eat the placenta were fellow vegans, because they sought meals from life and not from death. In that sense, the placenta was not food from killed or exploited animals. (293-294)

This could not be more different from the reception of "TV Dinners." The discussion exemplifies a way of engaging placentophagy that moves away from an epistemology of ignorance toward generative possibilities for ethical knowledge. As Haraway says, "no one agreed; everyone made worlds grow from their figure of the meal. Philosophy, the history of religion, folklore, science, politics, popular dietary doctrines, aesthetics: all were in play" (293). There is a characterization of the stuff of the placenta itself ("just protein" or, as Haraway later mentions and I will discuss, a locus for the bioconcentration of environmental toxins) as well as of its complex positioning in human networks ("the husband—of the placenta? of the mother? kin relations blurred—was to cook the placenta before serving it" [293]). The appeal to human placentophagic cultures has no anthropological basis and is here situated as a possible romanticization of an imagined past or hypothetical connection to nature that has likely never taken this particular form (see footnote 2). Nonetheless, it is an imagining that tells us something about where we are now, in a late capitalist world, where we know ourselves to be alienated from our animality and from giving birth. All the connections that shape how we think about the placenta, and about eating it, come to the fore: what are the ethics of consuming parts of another animal's body, and does it matter whether that animal has died in the process? What are the histories of reproduction and consumption (from the doctrine of transsubstantiation to wet-nursing) that shape our responses to placentophagy?

Second, this conversation has not only a critical, open content, but also an ethical mode. Haraway's larger project is to show the ontological and ethical interdependence of all species, rejecting human exceptionalism without thereby denying human responsibility for nature. She writes: "*When Species Meet* strives to build attachment sites and tie sticky knots to bind intra-acting critters, including people, together in the kinds of response and regard that change the subject— and the object. Encounterings do not produce harmonious wholes, and smoothly preconstituted entities do not ever meet in the first place" (287). Disagreement about a particular consumption event can support a diverse, mutually invested community. The conversation does not focus on the alleged eccentricities of individual women or their loved ones nor rest on unin-

terrogated gross affects like revulsion or inverted class disdain (although there are surely always affects that escape notice). In Haraway's story, as in her theory, everything is on the table for measured, albeit vigorous, discussion. There was no agreement at the dinner and Haraway's project is clearly not to find a feminist party line on placenta-eating. Instead, she shows a network of actors making meaning without reduction, "making worlds grow," and thereby expanding the epistemic potential of placentophagy. If there is an ethical attitude in play here, it is *curiosity* (287) and a desire to understand the placenta as an actor in a network of meanings. Haraway's Derridean ethic of eating requires commitment without "being self-certain" or "relegating those who eat differently to a subclass of vermin, the underprivileged, or the unenlightened" (295). Here, perhaps, is the gap between comedic commentary on placentophagy that takes misogyny as its surety, and an ethical attitude in which our visceral intuitions are included in what we debate.

Knowing and Not-Knowing

> The history of the placenta is also a story about failing to pay attention to the knowledge we already had—by ignoring it outright; by dismissing its relevance; by equating the call for more research with adjournment of action.
> —Sandra Steingraber (2001)

One imagined research direction on placentophagy centres on finding out the relation between the hormones and minerals in a human placenta and how they affect the postpartum body. This information is certainly vital, but what does this line of questioning leave out about the larger environment of which the placenta is a part? It continues an epistemic tradition of keeping objects separate from their contexts and maintaining the ontology of separability that the placenta most aptly challenges. Coyle et al. (2015) remark only briefly that "one function of the placenta is to protect the fetus from harmful exposure to substances. As a consequence, elements including selenium, cadmium, mercury, and lead, as well as bacteria have been identified in post-term placental tissues" (2/8). In her book *Having Faith: An Ecologist's Journey to Motherhood*, Sandra Steingraber (2001) argues that the history of the placenta is also the history of a myth—that the placenta

is impermeable to toxic substances and that whatever the mother ingests or absorbs will be withheld from the developing fetus. This myth was cultivated, while counter-knowledge was actively suppressed, in a number of historical moments that Steingraber charts in her four case studies: coming to know that the rubella virus can damage a developing fetus; the story of how an obstinate FDA physician denied permission to approve thalidomide in the US; the obstructionism of a Japanese plastics company that prevented the recognition of methylmercury poisoning in children in Minimata; and the scandal of diethylstilbestrol (DES)—a hormone prescribed to pregnant women to prevent miscarriage on the basis of no evidence at all that was later found to cause defects in the reproductive organs of their children (33-55). All of these examples provide rich pickings for any epistemology of ignorance. Steingraber's analysis of the placenta's permeability focuses on the environmental politics of transplacental conduction, but along the way, she mentions another important fact: the placenta does not only pass along, but also accumulates toxic chemicals (34). How does the placenta become a key site of this environmental transaction?

In a beautiful essay on the ethics of ecological interconnection, Astrida Neimanis (2011) argues that an ethics of recognition is limited in its ability to undercut human exceptionalism. When we understand kinship with non-human animals as likeness, with humans as the reference point for that affinity, we quickly exhaust our ethical capacities. By contrast, she argues, a Deleuzean account of repetition—the reiteration of the same-but-different without any recourse to an original—can provide a practice that clears a space for novel ethical moments (126-127). To manifest this ethical position, Neimanis provides a sequence of "13 repetitions" focusing on "ascidian life"—the existence of the small slimy creature known as the sea squirt as it repeats through chains of metaphorical and ecological connection. In one of these repetitions, she describes how ascidiacea filter up to a hundred gallons of water a day, accumulating pollutants in their bodies as they do so (130-131). Likewise, human breast milk contains the traces of all those substances in our environment we have consumed, absorbed, breathed in. As journalist Florence Williams (2005) puts it:

DDT…, PCB's, dioxin, trichloroethylene, perchlorate, mercury, lead, benzene, arsenic. When we nurse our babies, we feed them not only the fats, sugars and proteins that fire their immune systems, metabolisms and cerebral synapses. We also feed them, albeit in minuscule amounts, paint thinners, dry-cleaning fluids, wood preservatives, toilet deodorizers, cosmetic additives, gasoline byproducts, rocket fuel, termite poisons, fungicides and flame retardants. (n.p.)

Williams sends her breastmilk to be tested for polybrominated diphenylethers (PBDE's)—a common flame-retardant—found in highest concentrations among women in the US. Her level is 36 parts per billion, which is only slightly above the median, and about a seventh the level of a roughly gauged scientific consensus about what is safe exposure. What does any of that mean, and does it mean something that should influence whether one breastfeeds a child? Could I have sent a sample of my placental tissue to be tested in some laboratory to find out whether it contained dangerous levels of any of these chemicals?

It gets worse: sea squirts accumulate such toxins in their tissues by virtue of the volume of liquid they filter, but human beings accumulate them through *biomagnification*—the process whereby environmental toxins in everything we eat are made more concentrated as they move up the food chain attached to fats and proteins. Because ocean food chains are longer than terrestrial ones, eating a lot of large sea carnivores (like tuna or seal) is the worst indicator for biomagnified environmental toxins, but eating a lot of beef or pork does not help either. Although human beings are often represented as the apex—having no predators—in fact, the very top of the food chain is occupied by those who eat the bodily products of human beings. Breastfeeding, while typically lauded as valuable for an infant's health in contemporary developed countries, actually downloads all sorts of things from mother to baby (Simms 2009; Williams 2005). As Neimanis (2011) says, unnervingly, for the breastfeeding mother, it is the ultimate detox (129).

Placental Connections

Phenomenological psychologist Eva-Maria Simms (2009) defends a "placental ethics" that recognizes the intercorporeality of human existence through the examples of breast milk and the placenta. Simms

does not discuss consumption of the placenta, but she does comment on its toxicity and the fact that the extinction of humanity via environmental destruction is "happening in our bodies" (277). Haraway (2008) makes the same point in the reverse direction: the damage we have done to non-human species is something that can come back around to our own flesh. The placenta mediates "pregnancy's commerce between mother and infant" (294), she says, but it also represents a site where species meet. Eating one's placenta, then, might also be a way of taking in even more toxic chemicals in their highest concentration. This may, in the end, be no worse for anyone's health than a lifetime of eating factory-farmed chicken, fruit drenched in pesticides, or drinking cow's milk laden with hormones and antibiotics. But, as someone who has long avoided those things, too, it gave me pause.

In this essay, I have shown that human placentophagy provides a rich site for exploring an epistemology of ignorance—how *what we do not know* is reiterated and sustained. Scientific knowledge that should be possible to acquire has not only been long neglected, but has also been trumped by disgust for women's bodies and disdain for feminist community. Our avowed and documented ignorance about the consequences of eating a placenta repeatedly turns toward mockery and a kind of epistemic superiority in no way justified, as I have shown, even by the conventional scientific evidence base. Note that the most common negative outcome yet reported among those who have eaten a placenta is "unpleasant belching" while perhaps the worst is "headache" (Selander et al. 2013, 104). No one mentions these results in a press release. While still under-investigated, these are hardly alarming outcomes, especially when one considers the horrific consequences for fetuses of transplacentally conducted agents, like thalidomide, that Steingraber (2001) shows were often tolerated by authorities even in the face of evidence that they were deeply damaging.

On the other hand, because our culture is attuned to ridiculing maternal culture and dismissing any opposition to conventional biomedicine as popularly conceived, it does *not* turn toward examination of how postpartum mothers are failed by mental health services and how the alternative world of the midwife, doula, or "placental service provider" might, in small ways, fill that crucial gap. What if mothers are seeking

nonstigmatizing and DIY methods of addressing postpartum depression? I was certainly doing that, knowing first-hand how limited and poor (or, alternatively, wildly expensive) mental health services can be. In that context, seeking out a placenta encapsulation service is not only a way of obtaining cheap and available "medication," but also a way of connecting with someone likely to be sympathetic and informed about the psychological struggles that often follow birth.

Finally, our attention might be turned toward ecological concern and investigation of the interconnection of not only mother and baby, but also mother and world. As Haraway (2008) shows us, talking about placentas might undercut an epistemology of separation and replace it with an ethics of openness and connection, a way of making a new world of meaning. We might treat the risks of eating a placenta as synecdochal of the risks of consumption in a world of environmental dangers humans have created, which constantly exceed our knowledge or control. In the end, I ate my placenta and I am still here—not depressed, not regretful, not ashamed. But I am also not thrilled, not defiant, not proud. I am curious, and that is perhaps a useful epistemic attitude, as Haraway also suggests. What we eat connects us, symbolically and digestively, to a shared world that is both epistemic and material. To approach this connection ethically means to remain open to its myriad of ways of knowing.

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Endnotes

[1] Some of the personal parts of this essay first appeared as Heyes 2012.

[2] For a survey of placentophagy across mammals, see Kristal, DiPirro, and Thompson 2012. For a survey of anthropological research on placenta disposal rituals, see Jones and Kay 2003. They allude to the ritual of placenta-eating, but only as a "high [spiritual] placental ritual in America"; they also quote another lay midwife "within the context of Taoism" who cautions *against* eating the placenta on the grounds that it contains too much yang energy for the post-partum woman (111). See also Young and Benyshek 2010 who conclude that there are only few, isolated instances of human maternal placentophagy postpartum, which are common to other placental mammals: "We suggest that, in the face of many detailed ethnographic descriptions of cultural beliefs and practices regarding the placenta, including its proper treatment/disposal, the lack of a single unambiguous account of a well documented cultural tradition of maternal placentophagy is good evidence that it is absent (or at most, extremely rare) as a customary or learned practice

in human societies cross-culturally, and that its postpartum consumption by the mother may even constitute something akin to a universal cultural avoidance" (481). Thus, the fairly common belief that non-western human cultures have placentophagic rituals is not supported by the anthropological literature.

[3] For a summary of the existing research and suggestions for future directions, see Coyle et al. 2015; for some anthropology, see Selander et al. 2013. A recently initiated research project by anthropologists at the University of Nevada Las Vegas, for example, promises that their next paper will report on an ongoing placebo trial. See Selander 2014, 15 and http://blog.placentabenefits.info/index.php/2013/11/recruiting-participants-for-placenta-placebo-research-study/.

[4] In most hospital births, the placenta ends up in a biohazard bin and thence a medical waste incinerator. Women who want to take their placenta away from an institutional birth can face a number of hygienic, regulatory, and conflict of interest obstacles that are negotiated differently by different institutions in different jurisdictions. See Arielle Pardas, "Hospital Regulations are Forcing Some Women to Steal Their Own Placentas," Vice.com, September 24, 2014 at https://www.vice.com/read/heres-why-women-are-stealing-their-own-placentas-924. There are also reports that some hospitals backhand human placentas to cosmetics or pharmaceutical companies where they are processed and used as ingredients in skin creams or hair products or, less often, in medical research. See "NHS Hospital Sells Placentas for Cosmetic Use," *Daily Telegraph*, May 17, 2008 at http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/1973229/NHS-hospital-sells-placentas-for-cosmetic-use.html; and "Hospitals Passed on Placental Tissue for Use in Cosmetics," *Irish Times*, March 4, 2000 (describing a practice from the 1980s) at http://www.irishtimes.com/news/hospitals-passed-on-placental-tissue-for-use-in-cosmetics-1.251900. Although investigative journalism proving that hospitals sell placentas for cosmetic use is limited to a few cases, now quite old, that they do appears to be a more widely held folk belief in Europe and North America.

[5] See http://birthissues.org/placenta/

[6] See Julie Beck, "What to Expect When You're Expecting to Eat Your Placenta," *The Atlantic*, June 4, 2015 at http://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2015/06/eating-placenta/394910/. Northwestern University's own press release on June 4, 2015 has the headline "Eating the Placenta: Trendy But No Proven Health Benefits and Unknown Risks." See http://www.northwestern.edu/newscenter/stories/2015/06/eating-the-placenta-trendy-but-no-proven-health-benefits-and-unknown-risks--.html#sthash.4GnRroac.dpuf.

[7] "TV Dinners," Series 2, Episode 5. Channel 4, first aired February 1998. http://www.channel4.com/programmes/tv-dinners/on-demand/23844-005.

[8] See "Channel 4 Rapped for Serving Placenta." BBC News Online, May 28, 1998. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/entertainment/101944.stm.

[9] See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5OXSN3iVWB8

[10] I am indebted to two anonymous *Atlantis* reviewers for suggesting that I develop the analysis of Haraway in this way.

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Edgy Un/Intelligibilities: Feminist/Monster Theory Meets *Ginger Snaps*

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Abstract

This article analyzes the Canadian werewolf film *Ginger Snaps* (2000) through various feminist lenses at the intersection of sex, gender, and sexuality. While academic scholarship on the film at this particular intersection is extremely limited, articles that read Ginger Fitzgerald's transformation into werewolf and menstruating female as empowering dominate the field. The following, however, moves to trouble such structural readings based in identity-politics and offers, in addition, a reading of political possibilities generated from poststructural approaches to monstrosity.

Résumé

Cet article analyse le film de loup-garou canadien Ginger Snaps (2000) par le biais de différentes optiques féministes à l'intersection du sexe, du genre et de la sexualité. Bien que la recherche universitaire sur le film à cette intersection en particulier soit extrêmement limitée, les articles qui dominent le domaine interprètent la transformation de Ginger Fitzgerald en loup-garou et en femme menstruée comme donnant un sentiment de pouvoir. Ce qui suit, toutefois, cherche à déranger ces lectures structurelles ancrées dans la politique identitaire et offre, en outre, une lecture des possibilités judicieuses générée des approches post-structurales à la monstruosité.

Caelum Vatnsdal (2004), in his history of Canadian horror cinema entitled *They Came from Within*, credits *Ginger Snaps* (2000) for giving some "badly needed" relevance to the words "Canadian horror movie" in the twenty-first century. The werewolf film, according to Vatnsdal, is "good, solid, intelligent entertainment" that also "redress[es] the vast gender imbalance in the Canadian horror field" (222). The film focuses on the teenaged Fitzgerald sisters who reside in Bailey Downs—a fictitious Canadian suburb in which neighborhood dogs are being eviscerated by an unknown creature that prowls at night. One evening, after the sisters ignore parental advice to stay inside, a werewolf attacks and bites Ginger, the eldest who has recently begun to menstruate. Her sister Brigitte frightens off the creature with a flash from her Polaroid camera, and the werewolf runs onto a nearby road and is then killed by Sam, a local marijuana dealer who hits the creature while driving his van. The remainder of the film focuses on Ginger's linear transformation into a werewolf, Sam's and Brigitte's attempts at curing Ginger, and the alterations in the sisters' relationship that ultimately ends with Brigitte stabbing and killing Ginger once she has fully transformed.

"With *Ginger Snaps*, which was directed by John Fawcett, a man, but written by Karen Walton, a woman," notes Vatnsdal (2004), "at least a strong female point of view is getting a look in" (222). While Vatnsdal does not elaborate on this apparent female gaze, the film most obviously features two sisters—Ginger and Brigitte Fitzgerald—and focuses predominantly on their intimate relationship after Ginger is bitten by the Beast of Bailey Downs and is infected with a werewolf virus. Humorously, Ginger reads her body's linear alterations, such as the hair that grows from her attack wound followed by her aggressive sexual desire, as effects of menstruation. Indeed, it is Ginger's bleeding female body that enables the comic relief generated out of the parallel between both "curses"—that of the werewolf and that of menstruation. *Ginger Snaps*, then, represents a necessary

feminist intervention into what Vatnsdal refers to as a genre dominated by "adolescent-boy miasma" (222). Ginger's menstruating body accentuates female rather than male adolescence, and, in the process, her female anatomical maturation acts, at least superficially, as the foundational axis of the werewolf film.

Modern feminist readings of *Ginger Snaps* that expose and emphasize the gendered and sexed gap in the predominantly male-centered werewolf film, however, tend also to repeat the practice of exclusion so inherent in any identity-based reading. Like any sign, an identity, regardless of its representative marginalized status, gains its meaning through difference, or through what it is *not*. Signification, then, intrinsically excludes and tends to sustain individuation and a divide-and-conquer logic. Scholarship that focuses specifically on representations and readings of "woman" in *Ginger Snaps*, while recovering a sexed/gendered presence formerly neglected in the werewolf genre, also tends to sidestep such problematic dimensions of identity formation. This article, then, first maps feminist scholarship on *Ginger Snaps* that shares a specific focus on woman/female embodiment at the site of the werewolf. Such identity-based readings are significant in that they reveal the erasure of women as central, agential characters in a genre dominated historically by hyper-masculinity (Oswald 2013). The article then moves to consider the complications that result from reading the film with such a specific, exclusionary focus.

While feminist identity-based readings work to recover female presence and empowerment, they also tend to stabilize identity as the core of subject-being. Feminist poststructural theory, however, has deconstructed the identity "woman" since the 1990s, arguing its instability as an identity sign as opposed to its recovery at the center of feminist politics. Significantly, this feminist theoretical approach to meaning production parallels the werewolf itself; with its emphasis on slippery signification, feminist poststructuralism like any monster is "dangerous" in that both threaten "to smash distinctions" and reject "any classification built on hierarchy or a merely binary opposition" (Cohen 1996, 6-7). Moving away from identity-based readings of *Ginger Snaps* that rely on systemic binary logic, the following argument delves into a survey of distinct historical shifts in feminist theory that enable readings of the film that emphasize not only variability, but necessary

mutability at the site of the monstrous body, an emphasis generated at the intersection of feminist poststructuralism and monster theory. *Ginger Snaps*, after all, is not simply a film with discernable girl/woman characters at its center; it is a werewolf film—a genre with an expectation of instability and transformation at the site of the body. It seems strange, then, to focus on the recovery of any static identity (or even identities) as the essence of such a monstrous ontological liminality. By far the most cited scholar of monster theory, Jeffrey Cohen (1996), argues that, historically, discursively-produced monstrous bodies including the werewolf's actually "resist attempts to include them in any systematic structuration" (6). Judith Halberstam (2006) contends as well in her analysis of the Gothic that "monsters are meaning machines" that have been reduced to and subsumed by identities of sexuality and gender only since the early twentieth century (21). As all identity signs of marginalization gain meaning through difference and lose value through the binary logic so foundational to Western thought, the following argument moves away from recovering a litany of static identities of Other, including that of "woman," at the site of the werewolf in *Ginger Snaps*. After all, according to Cohen (1996), monstrous bodies represent "harbingers of category crisis" (6). Offered up in the following pages, then, is an edgy reading of the werewolf in *Ginger Snaps*, a mapping of the un/intelligible as both threatening and politically productive in its liminality, its focus not on the Other but on the modern subject-viewer.

Identity Lost and Recovered

With regard to identity-focused readings of the film, there is little doubt that one of the primary reasons *Ginger Snaps* generates scholarship based in the identity of woman is its hard-to-miss focus on female adolescence, specifically Ginger's menstruation. While the horror genre tends to include blood as a staple, this particular bleeding body, of course, is not the everyday-body that bleeds in horror films. Rather, through a feminist lens, Ginger's body can be read as an example of Julia Kristeva's (1982) concept of the abject in werewolf form. The abject, for Kristeva, consists not of the Other, but of that which consistently haunts the modern subject's apparent stability and autonomy, both of which are dependent on the negation of the maternal (bleeding) body in psychoanalysis. Kristeva's feminist

theory mapped in *Powers of Horror* (1982) represents a critical commentary on the mother-child relationship discursively produced as necessarily nullified in the pursuit of subjectivity, particularly according to the theories of Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan.

Probably the most influential feminist intervention into the horror genre, Barbara Creed's (1993) theoretical concept of the "monstrous-feminine," of which Kristeva's abject is foundational, refers to the collapse of the cinematic monster and the bleeding female body as a visual embodiment that threatens the stability of the male subject/viewer. In exposing the fragility of the male subject and, in the process, locating the power to do such in the monstrous female body, Creed's monstrous-feminine generates a specific focus on female empowerment—not merely castrated, but castrator. Critical analyzes of *Ginger Snaps* at the intersection of sex, gender and sexuality, while extremely limited in number, also tend to read Ginger as a version of the female empowerment Creed recovers in her theory of the monstrous-feminine. This identity-based scholarship locates, positively, women marginalized by the parameters of proper female embodiment in a genre Vatnsdal (2004) refers to as lacking "where feminism and gender politics are concerned" (222).

April Miller (2005), for instance, argues that Ginger's simultaneous transformation into "menarchal woman and werewolf" in *Ginger Snaps* "contributes to the repressive discourses of sexuality that shackle women to reproduction," but the film also promisingly employs the werewolf as a metaphor "for the limits placed on female sexual subjectivity" (281). Throughout the film, menstruation is depicted as a transformation understood in terms of taboo, betrayal, biological necessity, celebration, medical mechanics, toxic waste, a curse and, predominantly for Ginger and Brigitte, a threat to self-identity. The sisters gain their sense of self through resistance to the middle-class normality of Canadian suburbia; in particular, they identify as different from other high school girls whose gender performance reflects the heteronormative, its primary objective the male gaze. In other words, while menstruation serves to differentiate "men" from "women," the process also "implies homogeneity of experience and implicates all women in the reproductive process" (290).

Ginger and Brigitte prioritize distance from such homogeneity through their perpetual resistance.

Complementary to the sisters' refusal to be contained by maps of normality, according to Miller (2005), is the deluge of discourse regarding menstruation that runs throughout the film, various references that actually expose not only blatant contradictions and inconsistencies regarding menses, but the fact that no single narrative can contain the meaning of such a transformation. Not unlike the lycanthrope that bites Ginger and sends Brigitte and Sam in search of a cure, no single discourse—not werewolf folklore, not biology, nor Hollywood cinema—works to contain Ginger's werewolf virus. Neither, as her psyche alters throughout her physical transformation, is Ginger's sexual subjectivity shackled to the reproductive process. Eventually not only does Ginger reject the "limited subject positions available" to her, but she "derives pleasure from her monstrous identity and the power and sexual satisfaction it affords" (281-282). Miller argues that *Ginger Snaps*, in demystifying both werewolf mythology and menstruation biology, enables "radical forms of female sexual consciousness" in the process (281). What Judith Butler (1990) refers to as the heterosexual matrix—in this specific case the disciplined interdependence between the natural maturation of the female body, proper womanhood, and procreative sexuality—is actually troubled by its connection to the werewolf. Such a parallel, after all, associates the heterosexual matrix *with* the werewolf, or, more specifically, *with* monstrous myth.

Tanis MacDonald (2011) agrees that *Ginger Snaps* magnifies the physical changes associated with menstruation to expose heteronormative femininity as socially constructed. In its connecting "the biological changes of puberty" with "transbiological metamorphosis," *Ginger Snaps* reflects a B-movie tradition, but one that recognizes that "becoming a woman is not the social or sexual equivalent of becoming a man" (66). For MacDonald, the "real horror show" foundational to the film is the "brand of gender normativity that threatens to trap" the sisters (61). In locating disciplined performative gender as heteronormative, MacDonald links Ginger's bleeding body to transgressive gender as well as to transgressive sexual desire and, in the process, enables a recovery of lesbian representation absent from scholarship on the film. MacDonald contends, along with Thomas Waugh (2006), that a "cultural refusal" to read lesbian existence in films, particularly those set outside urbanity, is nothing less than "'our failure of the

imagination'" (123). MacDonald (2011) further argues that locating the adolescent lesbian in *Ginger Snaps* is "urgent," "given the growing concern over crises faced by queer youth" (63). While Miller (2005), referenced above, recognizes, but certainly also underplays, the possible "homoerotic undertones" of the sisters' relationship (287), MacDonald (2011) argues that such an unnamed same-sex desire runs throughout the film, opening up a "choice to read the Fitzgerald sisters as an erotic couple," rather than settle for "the film's feminist examination of the menstrual monster," which she argues is actually "arrested half-way through the film" (62).

MacDonald (2011) maps particular instances in *Ginger Snaps* to uncover a lesbian presence, despite the fact that the sexual identity goes unnamed in the film. The navel-piercing scene, during which Brigitte, attempting to cure her sister, straddles Ginger's body to penetrate her navel with a silver earring—a scene which includes images of Ginger grasping the bedposts and writhing under her sister's body to the "accompanying wail of an electric guitar"—is the most obvious (71). For MacDonald, the scene "confirms the subtext of lesbian desire" (71). Not only are the erotic undertones far more overt in this scene, but, as MacDonald notes, this display of seeming same-sex pleasure also directly follows (and undercuts) Ginger's first heterosexual encounter. Notably a "disappointment," this encounter with Jason McCarty is one in which Ginger eventually submits to the submissive, passive role she must occupy in heteronormativity despite her initial attempt at an aggressive "gender reversal" in the back seat of Jason's Volvo station wagon (71). Additionally, MacDonald recognizes the sisters' "incestuous homoeroticism" in their blood pact—"Out by sixteen or dead in this scene: together forever, united against life as we know it" (59). Read by MacDonald as an "erotic connection" "nearly ignored" by traditional scholarship, the author turns to social media to uncover the sisters' blood oath of intimacy as an "open secret among fans of the film" (59). MacDonald reads the reference to "Out by sixteen" as the variety of ways in which the sisters can "defy containment"; in particular, the oath represents "an encoded speech act that conflates the state of being "out" (of the closet and suburbia)" (64). As well, despite her turning into a werewolf, Ginger does not kill "indiscriminately," according to MacDonald, but rather "according to the fractured logic of jealousy" (71). Ginger eviscerates only men whom she understands to be interested sexually in Brigitte, men she perceives as "barriers to her desire to be 'together forever'" with her sister (72). Stated quite simply by MacDonald, "Brigitte is the love object here" (72).

These identity-based readings of *Ginger Snaps* produced by Miller (2005) and MacDonald (2011) represent scholarship crucial in locating marginalized female subjects of transgressive genders and sexual desires in more empowering roles. In such analytical approaches, Ginger and Brigitte Fitzgerald expose the disciplinary mechanisms inherent in what Butler (1993) refers to as the heterosexual imperative by destabilizing any single truth regarding a gender and sexuality for all girls and women, and they certainly represent a version of feminist empowerment through resistance. In recovering an embodied resistance at the identity sites of "girl," "woman," "lesbian," and monster, these readings reflect what Simone de Beauvoir (1989) requested of women in the mid-twentieth century—that is, the refusal to be the devalued Other of sex/gender difference. Exposing sex/gender difference between men and women as far from symmetrical, Beauvoir argues such an apparently natural distinction acts as an illusion generated out of masculinist discourse historically. While "man" occupies the position of the Subject, the Absolute, in such a discursive binary scheme, "woman" is allocated the position of the object, or Other, which ensures her inferior definition in relation to man. Woman's position of devalued Other is fixed, states Beauvoir, by the prevailing discourse of the Eternal Feminine that defines woman by her body alone, in particular by her reproductive capacity or her womb. In such a scheme, masculinist discourse of the Eternal Feminine (also referenced as the Myth of Woman) represents the female body as lack and is used to deny woman any authentic subject position, thereby ensuring her position as fixed Other. Both Miller (2005) and MacDonald (2011) recognize the association between Ginger's bleeding body and monstrosity that frames the film. And, much like Creed's (1993) theory of the monstrous-feminine, both scholars also locate various forms of empowerment in this bleeding female body. Perhaps, then, an answer to Beauvoir's mid-twentieth-century request, readings that emphasize Ginger's monstrous ability to embrace the sign of "woman" in anti-heteronormative ways re-

jects the discourse of the Eternal Feminine. This resistance and rereading dislodge the bleeding female body from its fixed position of object, enabling a far less stable signification of "woman" and, in turn, a far more complicated subject position.

The Body Destabilized

Such identity-based readings, as mentioned above, are limited in their scope of representation. Since the 1990s, feminist theory has included more contemporary understandings of identity politics as limited and exclusionary and has had to consider more poststructural approaches to identity that emphasize its provisionality rather than its essence. Building on Michel Foucault's (1979) assertion that identity-subjects are discursively produced within juridical systems of power, Butler's (1990) *Gender Trouble* notoriously challenges the term "woman" as a stable identity on which feminist theory and politics could be based. Her feminist scholarship insists that "woman," the subject of feminism, is an effect of discourse, or "discursively constituted by the very political system that is supposed to facilitate its emancipation" (354). Indeed, both "woman" and "lesbian" represent identity formations that are not only institutionally (and even communally) pre-determined, but are also inherently exclusive as both require significations historically dependent on what they are *not*. Butler (1996), then, calls not for the total erasure of political identity, but for a different foundation for feminist politics and the provisionality of the identity sign—an acknowledgement of "woman" as inclusive of its exclusions that have been determined by juridical regulatory regimes. As demonstrated above by Vatnsdal (2004) who credits *Karen Walton, a woman* with the female perspective and feminist content of *Ginger Snaps*, the stabilization of gender identity is dependent upon an assumed shared, authentic experience of "woman" (222). Not only does Vatnsdal's argument stabilize what "woman" means in some apparently universalizing way, his statement also completely denies *John Fawcett, the man* any feminist savvy despite his having directed the film. As identity most often reflects a primary marker of difference, identity-based readings of any text often result in such exclusions due to their reliance on stable signifiers of difference more often than not generated out of binary (either/or) logic.

Feminist theory has, of course, complicated such a static logic of exclusionary difference by exposing the interdependency of absolute distinctions in signification processes. Hence, the apparent universal difference in the meaning of "woman" in Vatnsdal's (2004) statement relies both on binary logic and on his assumed signification of "man." This interdependence complicates any absolute difference between the two; "woman" and "man" are discursively relational, not entirely distinct. Inherent in the identity-based analyses of *Ginger Snaps* by both Miller (2005) and MacDonald (2011), then, is also a core reliance on absolute sex/gender difference that enables such readings. Stressed in this scholarship, first and foremost, is the female body that is *not* the male body of typical B-movie werewolf films. Granted, these scholars do recover a resistance to the Eternal Feminine in the menstruating body of Ginger who defies maps of normative gender and sexuality and, in the process, refuses her role of Other, or fixed sexed object, despite her bleeding body. Read together, the scholarship produced by Miller and MacDonald works to rupture any singular, static meaning of "woman." MacDonald's (2011) work more specifically maps a variety of "female relationships in all their queer(ed) intensity" (76), but both scholars locate and accentuate the denial to be contained that is foundational to the characterization of the Fitzgerald sisters. Heteronormative discourse is exposed as not a singular truth, but as a technology designed to secure understandings of menstruation, gender performativity, and sexual desire. And, in doing so, both Miller and MacDonald fracture the apparently fixed signifier of "woman" secured by historical masculinist discourse into a far more complex subject of multiple gender and sexual performances and various identity markers. But, ironically, their recovery of such empowered diversity also excludes as it includes, for such readings rely on the allegedly stable female form.

One of Butler's (1990) most notable sub-arguments in *Gender Trouble* implicates feminists in their own destabilization of the identity "woman" foundational to feminist theory and politics. She locates the feminist distinction between gender and sex—gender understood as a social construction and sex as biological—as an example of how feminist theory has already destabilized the unity of the identity "woman." But Butler then challenges this same binary opposition to further deconstruct the unity of "woman" "often invoked

to construct solidarity of identity" (356). She argues against the naturalization of the binary of sex by locating its production in an either/or logic generated from within the apparatus of gender. "Gender ought not to be conceived merely as the cultural inscription of meaning on a pre-given sex," she argues; rather, "gender must designate the very apparatus of production whereby the sexes themselves are established" (357). In other words, the binary logic inherent in the apparatus of gender—man and woman—also produces the knowledge of any pre-discursive and natural stable sex distinction—male and female. While Miller (2005) and MacDonald (2011) do destabilize the meaning of "woman" by mapping various gender and sexual performances that, in turn, recover positive representations of multiple embodied identity markers, they do so by inscribing these identities onto a stable (and assumed) female body. Ginger's bleeding body is reproduced as a stable signifier, one historically and institutionally assumed pre-discursive and natural, a foundation onto which resistant gender and sexual performances can be read. Rather than a variable in itself, the female body is the foundation on which these readings of resistance rely.

According to Linda Nicholson (1994), the feminist "legacy" to read the female body as pre-discursive and, therefore, naturally stable comes from an historical production of theories designed to counter biological essentialism, or the masculinist discourse that anchors all knowledge about women to the female body (80). Attacking Freudian anatomy-is-destiny assumptions and building on the work of Beauvoir (1989) discussed above, feminists in the late 1960's and early 1970's undermined this discourse that fixed woman in the position of inferior Other by producing gender as a social construction while maintaining sex as a natural binary. Most feminists accepted the truth of biological discourse that differentiated women from men at the site of anatomy (and most still do). Producing gender as variable while maintaining the sex distinction worked to stabilize and yet complicate "woman" as the subject of feminist politics. As Nicholson (1994) states, such a perspective "enabled feminists to assert differences as well as similarities among women"; in maintaining "biological commonality" represented by the body—"that women have vaginas and men have penises"—sex could be considered a "cross-cultural phenomenon" between *all* women (81).

Nicholson (1994), like Butler, however, critiques this feminist reliance on the stability of sex, noting that "thinking of sex as independent of gender is the idea that distinctions of nature, at some basic level, ground or manifest themselves in human identity" (82). She credits feminists of the late 1960's and early 1970's for mapping gender as a social construction, but she also critiques their inability to deconstruct the stability of sex. This limited feminist approach Nicholson labels "biological foundationalism," which differs from biological determinism in that the former does not read the female body as that which fully determines "woman" (82). However, biological foundationalism is limited in its inability to recognize the body as variable. Such an understanding, argues Nicholson, represents a "coat rack view" of subject-identity in that the body represents a stable form upon which differences in culture, personality, and behavior are "thrown or superimposed" (81). Key to Nicholson's argument is her mapping of the discursively-produced and, therefore, unstable body. Referring to Thomas Laquer's (1990) *Making Sex* that historicizes Western medical literature on the body since the Greeks, Nicholson highlights the body not as any singular and stable truth, but as a discursively-produced sign inherently variable. In reference to the reliance on the apparently natural bleeding female body in identity-based analyses of *Ginger Snaps*, Laquer's mapping of the human body as *one sex* prior to the eighteenth century is telling. Rather than an "altogether different creature," medical discourse produced the (soon to be) specifically female body as an inferior variant of the male body. Menstruation did not refer to a distinct female process, but simply to "the tendency of human bodies to bleed, the orifice from which the blood emerged perceived as not very significant" (Nicholson 1994, 87). For Nicholson, then, sex distinction is discursively-produced and, therefore, unable to act as a solid foundation for feminist politics. Any apparently fixed meaning of bodily difference is contingent not on nature, but on discourse produced in specific historical and cultural contexts. Such a feminist politic based in biological foundationalism, then, is, for Nicholson, both limited and exclusionary.

One reason Nicholson destabilizes the female body is to offer another perspective for feminist politics. Reacting to the exclusivity inherent in the sex distinction foundational to much feminist theory and

politics—in particular, the anti-transsexual rhetoric of Janice Raymond's (1979) *Transsexual Empire*—Nicholson (1994) calls for feminism to embrace a "coalition politics" that not only represents a political action feminists "enter into with others," but a political stance of alliance that is also always "internal" to feminism, one inclusive of MTF transsexual subjects (102). So, too, might identity-based readings that employ the natural female form as foundational, such as those of *Ginger Snaps* mapped above, benefit from further analyses of the text that destabilize the bleeding female body, those that recognize the body as discursively-produced and, therefore, always unstable. Such readings, not unlike Nicholson's proposed feminist coalition, could open up connections between marginalized subjects traditionally excluded from feminist politics due to rigid sex distinctions.

Granted, one of the reasons academic scholarship may not challenge the stable sexed body in *Ginger Snaps* is because, quite frankly, read superficially, the film seems to stabilize distinctions associate with the traditional female form. During a scene in which Ginger straddles and seduces Sam, for instance, Ginger removes her clothing and exposes an enlarged rib cage and a chest complete with three sets of teats. Ginger's body, despite its transforming from one species to another, seemingly maintains its female anatomy even on its way to the animal kingdom. Reading this image in conjunction with several other scenes, however, undermines the assumed stability of sex distinction—both male and female—in the film and within the werewolf body. For example, Ginger infects Jason with her werewolf virus after the two have sex without a condom. The following day, Jason begins to bleed from his genitals. Miller (2005) refers to Jason's bleeding body as his transformation into a "spectacle" of "the 'hysterical' menstruating woman" (294). Miller's reading is supported in a scene during which Jason's friends ask if he has his "rag on" (*Ginger Snaps* 2000) after noticing a blood stain on the front of his khakis. Crucial to note here, though, is Miller's conflation of bleeding with gender—menses with "woman." Rather, such a scene represents a discursively-produced and naturalized female sex-specific process imposed upon an apparently male body at its most significant and stabilizing site—that of the genitals. Perhaps, then, Jason represents, not the castrated male/hysterical woman, but the one-sex model Lacquer

(1990) locates as dominant prior to the eighteenth century. Such a reading destabilizes the sexed body distinction by blurring absolute difference and undermining discursive productions of stable sex distinctions.

Additionally, Ginger, complete with the three sets of nipples mentioned earlier, also possesses a phallus in the film. Peeking out from her underwear while she sleeps is an animated tail that grows as Ginger transforms into werewolf. Restabilizing the female form and its conflation with specific gendered elements, MacDonald (2011) reads Ginger's tail as a failure, as reflective of the inability to mesh the "fabulously femme Ginger" with the werewolf body in its masculine form—bestial, muscular, hairy (70). Such a "visual strategy is used to sidestep the issue of the animal body and femininity" (70), states MacDonald. She argues that Ginger's tail actually acts as a "feline codification of femininity"— similar to that used in other horror films—that reflects Ginger not as half woman, half wolf, but a less threatening visual of "half-woman, half-cat" (70). In thinking beyond the static binary of sexed difference and its conflation with scripted gendered performativity, however, what is so intriguing about Ginger's tail is that the phallic appendage is an unnecessary addition to the werewolf formula. Werewolf historian Adam Douglas (1992) argues that, since the twentieth century, werewolf films have employed the distinction between the wolf and the werewolf popular since the sixteenth century; the most common distinctive mark between the two is that the werewolf has *no* tail. *Ginger Snaps*, however, accentuates the tail; it continues to grow in length and width, making it necessary to be bound or else discovered. With black electrical tape in hand, Brigitte tapes down Ginger's tail, attempting to make the bulge it produces invisible before gym class. And later during her transformation, Ginger, in a vulnerable state of self-loathing, attempts an amputation of her symbolic penis. But the werewolf body in transition, despite its residual human desire to adhere to the proper map of absolute sex distinction, refuses to be contained.

Both Jason and Ginger in werewolf transition can be read as monstrous embodiments of opposites able to destabilize the binary inherent in sex difference foundational to Miller's (2005) and MacDonald's (2011) analyses of empowered gender (woman) and sexual variance (lesbian). They are, rather, monstrous bodies that *smash distinctions*, that refuse categorization. Af-

ter all, during transition into werewolf, each embodies sex characteristics typically understood as male and female simultaneously, characteristics designed traditionally to stabilize distinctions *between* the sexes. Their bodies represent not stability, but liminality, a suspended form of both and, therefore, neither. Their monstrous forms challenge the two-sex model discursively-produced in and dominant since the eighteenth century, and, by extension, their bodies have the ability to threaten discourses of bodily integrity overall. In destabilizing the absolute body of sex distinction, the werewolf body threatens not only the binarized identity categories of man/woman, male/female, and human/animal, but also the entire system of identity signs. The body, in other words, has been dislodged from its foundational axis traditionally secured by discourses based in binary logic, inherently invested in not only exclusion through difference, but also in the devaluation of particular bodies (Heyes 2000). Arguably, then, not unlike the poststructural approach initiated by feminists such as Butler (1990, 1993, 1996) and Nicholson (1994), readings of *Ginger Snaps* that deconstruct the static female body can actually open up possibilities and connections between marginalized subjects under the trope of the werewolf. Indeed, what of the intersexed subject? What of the transsexual subject? Or the subject of self-demand amputation? Do these bodies and their subjectivities not surface once the body is no longer secured in stasis? That is, once it is no longer determined by discourses of bodily integrity that inherently exclude and devalue? Can *Ginger Snaps* be read as empowering various identity-subjects at the site of the werewolf body?

The parallels are there, for sure. Reading the body as an unstable variable threatens all institutionally-sanctioned truths that secure the body as knowable in Western discourse. Recovering further marginalized identity subjects at the unstable body, however, also participates in further identity-based analyses that inherently exclude and, unfortunately, those that may also stabilize identity at the site of the monster. Rather than "anchor" the monster, poststructuralism insists on its mobility (Halberstam 2006, 5). Identity-based readings tend to exclude not only Others external to the identity included, but can exclude from within identity formations as well. Poststructural feminist theory argues convincingly that there is simply no singular authentic experience, commonality, body, or voice amongst women, for instance. So, too, there is no singular experience, representation, or reading that can possibly speak to all subjects who identify with any identity category. Even when considering Miller's (2005) and MacDonald's (2011) analyses that recover empowerment in women and lesbians, one must recognize that not all women of female embodiment menstruate, nor do all lesbians desire relationships "together-forever." The recovery of various marginalized subject-identities at the site of the werewolf, in other words, may actually reestablish regulatory regimes of rigid definition inherent in identity formation. As Donna Haraway (1992) argues, identity formation perpetually "invites the illusion of essential, fixed position[s]" (300). She writes, "'Who am I?' is about (always unrealizable) identity, always wobbling, it still pivots on the law of the father" (324). Rather than emphasize the distinctness of identities, Haraway argues for a cyborg subject position generated from "the belly of the monster," a subject that does not make sense of the world through the separation of "technical, organic, mythic, textual, and political threads," but one that recognizes the "absurdity" of such distinctions (300). It is from within the monster, then, that the ability to deconstruct rigid distinctions is generated.

The Subject of Difference Dismantled

As mapped above, the werewolf body in *Ginger Snaps* has the potential to fracture the rigid identity distinctions against which Haraway (1992) writes. For as Butler (1993) argues, sex difference is a normative technology by which one actually *becomes* an identity-subject. And the identities of "girl," "woman," and "lesbian" recovered by Miller (2005) and MacDonald (2011) certainly wobble once the werewolf's body reflects sex distinction as inconsistent and unstable. Deconstructing any singular truth of the body, therefore, reveals identity politics as limited. But is the exposure of identity as dependent on the discursively-produced stable body enough to forward a productive politic? Haraway (2008) builds on her previous cyborgian theory in *When Species Meet*, producing an intervention into posthuman theory that may prove productive here. She engages with the triptych of human-animal-machine (that the Hollywood werewolf embodies) and forwards the practice of "becoming with" as an ethics with an emphasis on the human subject's responsibility for species

historically produced as sub-human and, therefore, inferior (35). At the core of becoming-with, then, is a process of deconstruction that implicates the human subject in not only re/producing hierarchical value systems of species, but also in the responsibility for rethinking the relationship between the subject and Others as one of accountable social connection, as one of companionship. At the intersection of feminist and monster theory, Margrit Shildrick's (2002) approach to deconstructing the monstrous generates a similar ethical stance, but does so by first recognizing what Cohen (1996) refers to as the monster's ability "to destroy…the very cultural apparatus through which individuality is constituted and allowed" (12). Shildrick locates the political power of the monster in its ability to eradicate difference between the subject and Other in order to destabilize the human subject.

Shildrick (2002) locates the ability to deconstruct particular distinctions at the site of the monster. "Unashamedly postmodern" in her approach, her primary objective is the dismantling of the "violent hierarchy" that Jacques Derrida refers to as the binary logic foundational to a Western logic of difference (4-5). While she recognizes feminist identity-based readings like those by Miller (2005) and MacDonald (2011) that locate empowerment in the monstrous female Other in *Ginger Snaps*, Shildrick (2002) argues that "the body that is recovered in its difference, remains highly normative" (2). These feminist approaches, "in their desire to establish an adequate alternative to masculinist standards," tend also to recover female bodies and subjects that "instantiate new norms of sexuality, production or reproduction" (2). Recovering (and celebrating) female empowerment in Ginger's monstrous anti-heteronormative practices, as Foucault (1979) has noted of identity-based narratives, participates in not only a counter discourse in which the female body seemingly gains value formerly denied, but also a process dictated by the regulatory regime of the normal in which liberation is merely illusory. And it is the discourse of normative embodiment, according to Shildrick (2002), that guarantees the modern subject "individual autonomous selfhood" at the expense of producing the body of the Other as abnormal, as monstrous (2).

Significantly, Shildrick (2002) notes that, as long as "the monstrous remains the absolute other in its corporeal difference it poses few problems" to the secure modern subject (2). It is *only* when the monster blurs distinctions, when the monstrous represents an indeterminate location that is *neither Self nor Other* to the stable, valued (non-monstrous) modern subject, that the monster is "deeply disturbing" (3). Identity-based readings that recover and expand the new normal, then, act to re-stabilize, to fix, the difference between the modern subject and Other, generating such a distance between them that such a power dynamic is far from threatened. While Shildrick certainly recognizes identities of difference located at the site of the Other, her objective is not to recover each in its difference, but to deconstruct the systemics foundational to all monstrosity, which she locates in the process of exclusion that preserves the modern subject's hierarchical value.

Rather than "revaluing differently embodied others," Shildrick (2002) focuses on "rethinking" embodiment itself (2). She targets the discursively-produced subject as both an effect of the Subject/Other power dynamic as well as its perpetuator. Key to the discursive production of the modern subject since the seventeenth century is the prioritizing of reason and a "masculinist retreat from the body and embodiment" (1). The Cartesian mind/body split that privileges reason over corporality engenders an embodied subject position in which reason, and reason only, controls the inferior and potentially erratic body-object. The body of the valued modern subject is a body bound, its boundaries of definition allegedly secured and stabilized by unwavering reason. This traditional perception of the valued modern subject, according to Shildrick, maintains an understanding of the monstrous Other as always a body external to the self. It is only when the monstrous Other is perceived as *within* that the destabilization of modern subjectivity occurs. And it is only the encounter with the monster that "traverses the *liminal spaces that evade classification*" that has the "potential to confound normative identity" (5; emphasis added). The subject's self-presence, according to Derrida, is actually always-already unstable; it can never be fully secured because such a consciousness of presence is based on exclusions that it "must deny, and on which it relies" (5). The monster's liminal location as neither Self nor Other perpetually haunts the subject as a trace *within*, or as supplement to the subject. This encounter with the liminal monster "opens up" the modern subject to the "risk of indifferentiation" and enables, in the process,

"the hope that oppressive identities might be interrupted" (5).

Regarding *Ginger Snaps*, the werewolf, specifically the human subject in the midst of transitioning into werewolf, occupies such a liminal position, but only temporarily. Granted, the werewolf can be read as an embodiment of human and animal and, in representing this blurring of un/reasonable species serves the negative function to the modern subject of pure reason. There is no denying the most significant staple of any werewolf film is the dismantling of the Cartesian privileging of mind over body. Werewolf films reflect a mind/body split, but one that, in opposition to that of the modern subject, in the end privileges body over mind and, hence, monstrosity and distance are maintained. Working to stabilize the werewolf as Other, too, is the filmic formula in which characters infected with the werewolf virus perceive their uncontrollable alteration into a bestial body as a betrayal of the self. This traditional negative self-reflection included in the genre reestablishes what Susan Stryker and Nikki Sullivan (2009) argue is a somatechnics of bodily perception—a process of seeing and understanding determined by institutionally-sanctioned knowledges that enable certain bodies integrity while foreclosing others. However, specifically *during transition*, during the eye candy of the werewolf film that both attracts and repulses viewers, the monster occupies a physical state *in between* human and animal, *in between* subject and Other. The time and space of becoming-werewolf signify the residue of both subject and Other simultaneously in a singular body and, therefore, can be fixed as *neither*. Not unlike C. Jacob Hale's (1998) theorizing of the borderland dweller, the transitioning body, if understood as having a subject at all in a culture dominated by binary logic, can occupy only the Undead subjectivity of liminality—subjects who do not embody the full status of the subject (Butler 1993). The werewolf's embodied ambiguity during transition challenges divisions between subject and Other, human and animal, necessary to stabilize the modern subject whose body is allegedly self-contained, self-possessed, and, above all, bound by reason. During werewolf transformation, the modern subject/viewer confronts the illusory relationship of mind over body (which can never be sustained) and, in the process, recognizes the trace of the monster within—the failure of reason to control the body, or what Shildrick (2002) refers to as the "vulnerabilities" of embodied being—that undermine any confirmation of secure subjectivity. The subject, in other words, literally loses ground and confronts "disorientation" (Ahmed 2006). In turn, the subject's distance from the Other collapses: the devalued Other is exposed as supplement to the subject, as the monster within.

Unlike Shildrick (2002), Creed (1993) employs Kristeva's theory of the abject—that which haunts the modern subject's autonomy and, therefore, must be discarded—specifically to recover and empower "women" at the site of the made-monstrous maternal (bleeding) female body. Scholarship on *Ginger Snaps* with a focus on the parallel between Ginger's menstruating body and werewolf transformation employs Creed's monstrous-feminine in its emphasis on Ginger's resistance to heteronormative maps and her empowerment in doing so. According to Shildrick, however, identity-based readings that celebrate the empowerment of difference tend also to participate in the regulatory regime of the normal. And Creed's theory of the monstrous-feminine, or any identity-based reading reliant on rigid sex difference, also risks the biological determinism that Nicholson (1994) argues assumes the female body as fixed in normalized sex difference. Such a foundation limits feminism's political scope with its inherent exclusion of other marginalized subjects not located in such an essentialized female form. But even in destabilizing Ginger's (and Jason's) body, the various subjects uncovered are contained by further identity markers that exclude. And, as Shildrick argues, stabilizing these subject-identities produces the Other/s as innocuous by extending the nonthreatening distance between subject and the (fixed) Other.

Perhaps, then, the final transformation scene in *Ginger Snaps*—a mere twenty two seconds dominated by the Undead subject—not quite Ginger, nor quite werewolf—can be read most productively as a scene during which the modern subject/viewer confronts the unbound body of the liminal Other, the subject/self formerly denied. Perhaps this is the political moment of the horror film during which the subject recognizes such an exclusion as illusory, a space in which privileged subjectivity can be interrupted. Shildrick (2002) dismantles hierarchical subject difference at the site of the body, but not to erase difference. Rather embodiment here is resignified as ambiguous, no longer reflective of fixity and

hierarchical value. With such a poststructural approach, *all* bodies and, therefore, *all* subjects, fail the parameters of valued modern subjectivity based in the distinctions of binary logic. Such a failure, though, is what connects morphological diversity with the practice of diffraction, a mapping of "interference, not replication, reflection or reproduction" (Haraway 1992, 300). For, as Haraway (1992) contends, such is the promise of monsters.

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Post-National Foundation of Judith Butler's and Rossi Braidotti's Relational Subjectivity

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Abstract
This article draws on examples of Indigenous conceptualizations of nationhood to question the post-national foundation of Judith Butler's and Rossi Braidotti's theories of affective subjectivity. The article concludes that the responsibility to respect certain political boundaries is necessary in fostering non-oppressive affective relations.

Résumé
Cet article s'appuie sur des exemples de conceptualisations autochtones de la notion de nation pour remettre en question le fondement post-national des théories de la subjectivité affective de Judith Butler et Rossi Braidotti. L'article conclut que la responsabilité de respecter certaines limites politiques est nécessaire pour favoriser des relations affectives non oppressives.

The recent turn to affect in feminist theory and other disciplines has opened up a critical engagement with what constitutes the subject. A critique of the bounded, autonomous, rational liberal individual within feminist theories is not a novel project nor is it confined to feminist theorizing. The turn to affect and emotions, however, provides new ways of imagining subjectivity; it can equally be seen as a productive and as a critical project. There is certainly no unified feminist voice on this ontological issue; where a theorist like Kelly Oliver (2004) draws on Frantz Fanon for a feminist anti/post-colonial interpretation of affect, someone else like Teresa Brennan (2004) crosses disciplinary boundaries and draws on microbiology to understand the borders of the subject. A common theme, however, runs through these thinkers; thinking about affects and emotions has the effect of disturbing the precarious boundaries between self and other that have been rigidly enforced in Western liberal discourse. It seems that the debates over affect have demonstrated the ontological fiction of the atomistic individual. Despite the diversity of approaches to affect, one uniting feature is the theorization of subjectivity as *relational*; interdependence appears to be the flipside of atomism.

The turn to theorizing a relational subject through affect and emotions has not escaped productive critique. In this self-reflexive assessment of feminist theory, several theorists (Cvetkovich 2012; Hemmings 2012; Pedwell 2012; Pedwell and Whitehead 2012) have pointed to the potential pitfalls of dehistoricization and depoliticization in affect theory. For example, Clare Hemmings (2012) warns, "the expectation of reciprocity central to empathy risks universalising the subject's experience as a sound basis for engagement with others; it ignores the historical and political reasons why others may not be able or not wish to reciprocate" (153). Building on this focus on power and affect, Carolyn Pedwell (2012) places postcolonialism and neoliberalism at the centre of her analysis and Ann Cv-

etkovich (2012) theorizes "sadness" through the lens of racism and colonialism in America.

This paper aims to critically assess the danger of depoliticization and dehistoricization in the relational theories of subjectivity presented by Judith Butler and Rosi Braidotti. Specifically, I argue that the post-national impetus for their two projects is complicated by Indigenous theories of relationality that are founded on territorial belonging. Despite clear differences between the two thinkers—Braidotti focuses on affective relationality as an ontological force, whereas Butler focuses on relationality in terms of human emotions—I argue that both thinkers conceptualize relational subjectivity—and the boundaries of this porous subject—in relation to national boundaries. A study of these two thinkers' conceptualizations of the subject is productive because they both justify this rethinking of the subject based on economic and political developments in our present era of globalization (Butler 2004a; Braidotti 2006a). Both thinkers diagnose the present as a time of both post-nationalism as well as xenophobic national resurgence (Butler 2004a, 39; Braidotti 2006a, 72) and this development requires a rethinking of the subject. While Braidotti and Butler have many other reasons for pursuing their respective projects on affect, the question of national belonging, difference, and exclusion is a place of significant convergence in their theories that deserves critical assessment.

This paper begins with an engagement with Indigenous theories of land based collective belonging. Scholars in this field present relational worldviews that are, in many ways, compatible with Braidotti and Butler's theories, yet, unlike Butler and Braidotti, their perspectives are not founded on the rejection of nationhood. After this introduction to Indigenous ways of theorizing relationality and collective belonging, this paper creates a dialogue between Butler and Braidotti's conceptualizations of the subject in light of these insights. The origin of the two theories of relational subjectivity in Euro-American conceptualizations of the nation-state precludes discussion of productive alternative conceptualizations of national communities and fluid boundaries. The issue of continuing colonialism and Indigenous resurgence in Canada sheds light on weaknesses in both thinkers' theories of affect—Braidotti risks depoliticizing affec-

tive limits and Butler risks a humanistic universalism that does not engage with deep difference with respect to non-human materialism—and leads to the conclusion that a productive way forward is to hold elements of both theories in tension. The potentially contradictory twinning of the Arendtian *political* moment in Butler with Braidotti's materialist commitment to the productivity of difference is one way for an emancipatory feminist/anti-colonial theory of the subject to take Indigenous resurgence seriously.

Indigenous Relational Nationhoods: Accountability to Relationships[1]

Métis feminist scholar Zoe Todd (2014) is one of the few scholars who has questioned the relationship between Euro theorizing of relational ontology and Indigenous thought. She criticizes these increasingly popular theorists for ignoring "…Indigenous thinkers [and] their millennia of engagement with sentient environments, with cosmologies that enmesh people into complex relationships between themselves and *all* relations" (n.p.). She draws on thinkers such as Anishinaabe legal scholar John Borrows to argue that these Indigenous worldviews are not simply an interesting theoretical alternative to atomistic subjectivity, but rather are the basis of political struggles. She writes: "…Indigenous epistemologies and ontologies represent *legal orders*, legal orders through which Indigenous peoples throughout the world are fighting for self-determination, sovereignty" (n.p.).

This political fight is visible in recent Indigenous resurgence across "Canada" especially as seen in the Idle No More Movement. A collection of writings from this movement (The Kino-nda-niimi Collective, 2014) demonstrates that there is no unitary Indigenous voice in addressing colonialism, yet the theme of Indigenous resurgence—the rebuilding of Indigenous ways of life through assertion rather than state dominated negotiation—is a recurrent theme. For many, like Tara Williamson (2014), this resurgence is "about nationhood. Not nation-state-hood, but nationhood— the ability to take care of the land, our children, and our families in the way we best know how" (153). Several other contributors argue that the momentum of the Idle No More movement should be directed toward the longstanding struggle to assert national self-determination (The Kino-nda-niimi Collective, 2014).

Indigenous conceptualizations of "nation-hood," as alluded to above, are not the same as Western notions of the nation-state. Indigenous peoples have not simply taken up a European concept of national self-determination and used it politically, but rather this use of nationhood reflects the historical and continuing existence of political communities based on the interrelation of land, people, and spirituality. In contrast to political identity founded on grievances and mobilization, Indigenous scholars Taiaiake Alfred and Jeff Corntassel (2005) provide a concept of Indigenous "peoplehood" based on sacred history, language, land, and interrelationship between people and nature (609). This conceptualization does not rely on a static and essentialist identity nor does it reduce Indigenous peoplehood to a normative identity based solely in resistance.

Relationality is one of the core ideas that connect diverse Indigenous nationhoods. Shawn Wilson (2008) states that "…the shared aspect of an Indigenous ontology and epistemology is relationality (relationships do not merely shape reality, they *are* reality) (7). The importance of relational interconnectedness can be seen as a "theoretical framework" that connects various Plains First Nations (Cardinal and Hildebrand 2000, ix). According to Plains Treaty Elders, their sovereignty as nations is rooted in a lived relationship with the Creator and *iyiniw sawêyihtâkosiwin* (Cree for the peoples' sacred gifts) (10). *Iyiniw sawêyihtâkosiwin* includes not only the material world, but also laws and values that guide relationships (10). The key to maintaining sovereign nationhood in this worldview is the Cree concept of *miyo-wîcêhtowin*, meaning "having or possessing good relations" (39). These good relations extend from the individual, through the family, outward to the nation, and beyond to inter-national relations. Rather than national territorial boundaries being a sharp demarcation of the political outside, the Cree word *wîtaskêwin* means "living together on the land" and applies to pre-colonial territorial sharing with other nations along territorial boundaries (39). It is within this framework that Shawn Wilson (2008) makes the argument that ethical action is based on "relational accountability"—that is, action that respects and builds good relations rather than diminishing them.

While the specific laws and ceremonies of each nation will differ with respect to the ways of building nationhood through relations, it appears that relation-ality is central to Indigenous thought across Turtle Island (D'Arcangelis 2010). Charles Menzies (2013) of the Gitxaala Nation of the North Coast writes about three central concepts in the Gitxaala worldview that are all connected to relationality: "These move from the central idea of social relationships (WulE'isk, relative or not relative) through the principle of interconnections (syt güülm goot, being of one heart) to the idea of continuity (nabelgot, reincarnation) (180). Like the Cree concepts discussed above, the nation based on relationality does not have a fixed outside, but rather attempts to bring outside peoples into relations (Menzies 2013). Historically, white settlers have not been excluded from Indigenous nations because of xenophobic nationalism, but rather because their actions have harmed relations and placed themselves on the outside as *wa'ayn*—"unhealed people" (184). This is an example of settlers acting as if they are unaccountable for their relations.

Nishnaabeg scholar Leanne Simpson (2011) explains the difference between Western conceptualizations of nation and sovereignty and Nishnaabeg concepts through the idea of change and movement as compared to fixity; the attempts to fix the nation in the institution of the state is contrary to Indigenous nationhood that is tied to the fluctuations of nature (89). She further explains that this relational fluidity applies to territorial boundaries:

> …'boundaries', in an Indigenous sense, are about relationships. As someone moves away from the centre of their territory—the place they have the strongest and most familiar bonds and relationships—their knowledge and relationship to the land weakens. This is a boundary, a zone of decreasing Nishnaabeg presence…This is a place where one needs to practice good relations with neighbouring nations. (89)

Importantly for our discussion of Braidotti and Butler, *odaenauh*, according to Elder Basil Johnston, means "nation as an interconnected web of hearts" and this directly connects political relations to emotional relations (94).

Indigenous Nationhoods and Gender

Before proceeding to a discussion of Butler and Braidotti, it is important to note that just as colonialism is a gendered process, so is national resurgence. The appropriation of traditional Indigenous territory

in Canada and the spacial containment of First Nations on reserves has been intimately linked with sexist *Indian Act* membership rules, restrictive mobility rights for Indigenous women, the sexual objectification of Indigenous women, and institutional indifference to sexual violence against Indigenous women (Silman 1987, Lawrence 2004; Smith 2005; Razack 2002; Barman 1997/1998; Maracle 1996). Given the multigenerational imposition of colonial patriarchy, it is not surprising that some Indigenous men—and women—internalized these gendered norms and came to see Indigenous feminism as "untraditional and, by extension, as deleterious to indigenous liberation" (Green quoted in Coulthard 2014, 88). Bonita Lawrence (2004) traces how racist and sexist norms of membership in the *Indian Act* came to be internalized by some Indigenous people in the context of state-imposed scarcity of resources. Glen Coulthard (2014) provides a concise overview of gender discrimination in the struggle for Indigenous self-determination and comes to the conclusion that feminism is not the enemy of Indigenous sovereignty; rather, the imposition of colonial patriarchy is the real threat to Indigenous traditions of egalitarianism (92).

As can be seen in the earlier examples of resurgent Indigenous nationhoods, the "traditional" is based on lived relations and is always in flux; there is no inherent tension between Indigenous nationalisms thus conceived and gender equality. Indeed, the Native Women's Association of Canada (2011)—once maligned by male-dominated organizations as the enemy of self-determination—has adopted the position that drawing on tradition to rebuild nations is key to Indigenous women's well-being. It is widely held in Indigenous scholarship (Sunseri 2011; Monture-Angus 1999; Lawrence 2004) that tradition-informed nation-building projects are key to decolonizing imposed patriarchal relations. Central to these projects is the reclaiming of women's traditional roles as the foundation of Indigenous communities. Though she does not use the language of nation, Jeanette Armstrong (2005) argues that the imposition of a patriarchal family structure on the co-operative family-clan system is central to colonization and cultural genocide. Thus, attempts at decolonization should build community organically from the ground up in a way that respects women's roles in promoting relationality. Armstrong says: "It is woman who holds this power and becomes powerful only when catalyz-

ing co-operation and harmony, and therefore health, at all levels–from the individual, outward to the family, to the community, and to the environment" (76) Likewise, Lina Sunseri (2009) draws on Oneida tradition to put forward her conceptualization of anti-patriarchal "mothering the nation" as part of a decolonizing process. Of central importance is the fact that these conceptualizations of community- and nation-building differ from exclusionary nation-state formations in the sense that they are not founded on a constitutive "othering," but rather on the living process of relationship building. This resurgence of nation-building is not simply a strategic opposition to colonialism, but rather draws on pre-colonial tradition and is productive in fostering the type of relational subjectivity called for by Butler and Braidotti who reject national identity as exclusionary.

A Note on the Settler/Indigenous Binary

In this article, I use the term "settler" to refer to all non-Indigenous people in Canada. This should not be construed as a levelling of difference nor an ignorance of power relations between settler groups. The influential piece "Decolonizing Antiracism" by Bonita Lawrence and Enakshi Dua (2005) provides one entry point into the debate about who and what a settler is. The authors argue that, although facing racist exclusion, people of colour are in fact settlers and are implicated in settler colonialism. They call for scholarly attention to be paid to the complex histories that implicate people of colour in settler colonialism through exclusion of Indigenous peoples in written history and appeals to belonging in the dominant body politic. Soon after its publication, Nandita Sharma and Cynthia Wright (2008/2009) responded to Dua and Lawrence's position with a scathing critique of Indigenous nationalisms as well as what Sharma and Wright read as a conflation, in the original piece, of migration with settlement.

This exchange led to a flurry of writing on the question of the settler/Indigenous binary and how to think of racialized and otherwise marginalized non-Indigenous people in the process of settler colonialism. Many scholars of settler colonialism (Wolfe 2013; Barker 2009; Jafri 2012; Phung 2011; Waziyatawin 2011) have defended the binary and its usefulness in understanding historical and current forms of settler colonialism. Others have called for an intersectional analysis that examines the multiple binaries of settler colonialism,

while paying attention to the unique nature of colonization for Indigenous peoples and the different forms of oppression faced by marginalized non-Indigenous peoples (Saranillio 2013). A recurrent theme, even among those defending the binary, is a call to understand the different ways in which marginalized groups are implicated in settler colonialism; for example, by conflating sexual or racial oppression with colonization (Morgensen 2010; Tuck and Yang 2012). When I use the term settler, it is a shorthand for this last approach that recognizes that, while all non-Indigenous people in Canada are structurally implicated in settler colonialism, they are not implicated in the same way. This means that different histories, different relations to the state, and different relations with Indigenous communities lead to different responsibilities to these relations. Regardless, the Indigenous theories of relationality suggest that a commitment to decolonization requires a responsibility for one's relations and these relations can be understood through attention to the specificity of marginalized settler groups' historical and contemporary relation to settler-colonialism.

The Post-National Impetus for Butler and Braidotti's Relational Subject

To begin this discussion, it is necessary to examine the political motivations behind rethinking the subject in affective terms and how Butler and Braidotti each understand subjectivity. In *Transpositions: On Nomadic Ethics,* Braidotti (2006a) constructs a certain understanding of the subject in her formulation of a materialist post-humanistic ethics. She states that her project is a "radical revision of the subject" who is "not unitary and still capable of ethical and political accountability" (144). It is a political response to the dominance of post-industrial neo-liberalism and the technological mediation of the subject (3). The nomadic subject is also made nomadic by geopolitical actors in the postmodern era that schizophrenically celebrate "free borders," while shoring up security borders and thus enhance the mobility of the privileged at the expense of marginalized bodies (7). The complexity of the postmodern era calls for a conception of the subject that is equally complex based on multiple belongings rather than on fixed identity (10). The very use of the concept "nomadic" points to a detachment from fixed territoriality. The nomadic subject can be understood

primarily as a subject in becoming. Unlike a humanist ontology, onto which one could map essential human conditions like speech or rational thought, the nomadic subject is radically anti-essentialist. Braidotti writes that "Nomadic becomings are rather the affirmation of the unalterably positive structure of difference, meant as a multiple and complex process of transformation, a flux of multiple becomings, the play of complexity, or the principle of not-One" (145).

For Braidotti, the question of difference—central to her project(s)—arises out of the history of European fascism and philosophy that takes difference as dualistic and as inferring inferiority (Braidotti and Butler 1994, 45). Given the influence of this history on Braidotti, national difference is read as the gravest danger facing Europe in an era of complexity that sees both the fragmentation of national identity and its resurgence (45). In this context, Braidotti (2006a) sees the need for a post-nationalist European identity that celebrates multiple belongings and undermines essentialist identity (69). Here, we can see the connection between relational affective subjectivity and the nation-state in her theory; a new theory of subjectivity is needed to account for the complexities of globalization and increasing incoherence of the nation-state, while simultaneously a push for new forms of post-national governance is required to enact this subjectivity.

Butler similarly bases her formulation of the affective subject on the complexities of a post-nationalist world that responds to this uncertainty with reactionary nationalist xenophobia. Butler (2004) argues that, after 9/11, the US had its sense of first worldism shaken in that America lost its monopoly on being "the one who transgresses the sovereign boundaries of other states, but never to be in the position of having one's own boundaries transgressed" (39). She hopes that this shaken foundation, and the related emotion of grief, can allow for critical discussion of vulnerability and the possibility of working toward a shared political community; in contrast, the alternative is violent closure and the shoring up of xenophobic boundaries and borders (30).

For Butler, the problem of the nation-state is similarly located in the exclusionary nature of the nation. In *Precarious Life* (Butler 2004a), the problem is nationalist xenophobia that renders some lives unintelligible, while in *Who Sings the Nation-State?* (Butler

and Spivak 2007), the problem is framed more broadly around Hannah Arendt's critique of the nation-state in the context of post-World War II Europe. Butler's attempt to rehabilitate an open-ended humanism through mutual vulnerability and emotional connections can be read as an attempt to create a post-national subject: a subject with the right to have rights regardless of nationality. Considering the driving force behind her critique of nationalism, it is not surprising that Butler comes to a similar assessment of nationalism as Braidotti. Butler argues forcefully against homogeneous national identity when she writes: "This is, needless to say, not a reason to favour pluralism, but rather, a reason to be suspicious of any and all forms of national homogeneity, however internally qualified they may be…" (Butler and Spivak 2007, 41).

The Unbounded Relational Subject in Braidotti and Butler

For Braidotti, the subject comes into being over time through the body's capacity to interact with others. It is this element of affect—the body's ability to affect and be affected by others—that makes subjectivity possible. As Braidotti (2006a) writes: "Viewed spatially, the post-structuralist subject may appear as fragmented and disunited; on a temporal scale, however, its unity is that of a continuing power to synchronize its recollections. This creates a continuity of disconnected fragments…" (151). Though coming at the question of the human subject from a different angle, one of understanding loss in the context of 9/11, Butler (2004a) describes a subject that shares points of contact with the nomadic subject; that is, relational inter-dependence provides the conditions that allow for the emergence of a subject.

The main thrust of Butler's (2004a) *Precarious Life* is to look at the possibility of a political community based on inter-dependence. Through this collection of essays, she attempts *not* to create an ontological category of the human through a shared universal human condition, but rather to think of a political definition of the human as a work in progress. Loss and grieving are central to this project because when one experiences loss, the attachment to others comes to the fore in a way that exceeds discursive representation. She writes that "One finds oneself fallen. One is exhausted but does not know why. Something is larger than one's own

deliberate plan, one's own project, one's own knowing and choosing" (21). The outside force that thwarts the self-regulating individual is its relationality: the ability to affect and be affected by others. Affectivity is not reducible to signifiable emotions like grief, but grief allows intuitive access to the trans-subjective nature of affectivity.

To be clear, Braidotti (2006a) rejects this focus on loss and death, characterizing it as the "sterility of habit" (40) and argues instead for a reappraisal of the vitality of life that is not so obsessed with loss of the self. Nevertheless, the drive to transform "resentment into affirmation" (208) shares much with Butler's political project of thinking an affectively informed alternative to the violent US reaction to the 9/11 attacks. The goal is the same: to avoid a reactionary response to pain, one should approach pain, and even death, as potentially productive in increasing our knowledge of our inter-dependence. One of the central differences that cuts through this shared focus on the transformation of pain is that Butler aims to resurrect an open-ended humanism, while Braidotti's (2006a) nomadic subject relies on a radical critique of anthropocentrism (97).

Like Braidotti's nomadic subject, Butler's (2004a) inter-subject cannot be characterized as a completely undifferentiated flux. Temporality plays an important role since "Individuation is an accomplishment, not a presupposition, and certainly no guarantee" (27). It is important to note that this somewhat bounded subject is not just the result of developmental individuation, but also an effect of political performativity. Butler argues that the use of bounded identity categories and rights discourse, which privileges the liberal individual, is necessary; however, this discourse does not "do justice" to the complex affective connections that make us and undo us (Butler 24-25). The question, then, is whether this is just a pragmatic, strategic consideration or is this limit to the undone subject reflective of something more essential in the formation of subjects? If it is the case, as Butler says, that "It is important to claim that our bodies are in a sense *our own* and that we are entitled to claim rights of autonomy over our bodies" (25), then perhaps there is value in claiming bounded identity that goes beyond *strategic* politics. Is there a way of thinking about mutual respect of boundaries that, instead of excluding and oppressing, is productive in the sense of creating the conditions of inter-dependence? Butler

(2004b) clarifies her position on norms as they relate to political commitments and identities when she writes: "On the one hand, norms seem to signal the regulatory or normalizing function of power, but from another perspective, norms are precisely what binds individuals together, forming the basis of their ethical and political claims" (219). For Butler, then, it is not simply a matter of rejecting bounded identity—normative identity is the precondition for political action—rather, one must always be aware of the exclusionary nature or these identities. The affectively open subject is bounded, in Butler's account, by normative political boundaries that are necessary for political action as well as by normative boundaries that exclude some from the category "human," severing the potential for affective connection.

Braidotti (2006a) conceptualizes limits to her nomadic subject in a different way through her unique use of the concept "sustainability"; this limit is to be found in the material realm that some critics see as marginal in Butler's thought. Braidotti explains that affectivity can be seen:

> In those moments of floating awareness when rational control releases its hold, 'Life' rushes on towards the sensorial/perceptive apparatus with exceptional vigour. This onrush of data, information, affectivity, is the relational bond that simultaneously propels the self out of the black hole of its atomized isolation and disperses it into a myriad of bits and pieces of data imprinting or impressions. It also, however, *confirms the singularity of that particular entity* which both receives and recomposes itself around the onrush of data and affects. (145; emphasis mine)

The power of this rush of relationality can be destructive; thus "One needs to be able to sustain the impact with the onrushing affectivity, to 'hold' it, without being completely overwhelmed by it" (145).

One of Braidotti's (2006a) most interesting takes on sustainability is the bodily manifestation of limits. She argues that if one reaches a limit of sustainability, the body will make the limit clear through somatic manifestations (159). Another way of thinking about the body's immersion in affective relationality is "the subject's ability to sustain the shifts without cracking" (160). The somatic manifestations of unsustainable affectivity have particular importance for post-colonial and feminist theories that show the connection between asymmetrical power relations and those who live with unsustainable affects. Teresa Brennan (2004), for example, shows the ways in which racialized and/or gendered subjects face affective "dumping" by privileged groups who can maintain their sense of bounded security only through projecting negative affects onto others. According to Brennan, this might account for the somatic manifestation of hysteria as a women's illness (15). Furthermore, Kelly Oliver's (2004) critical engagement with Fanon draws attention to the self-destructive manifestations of negative affects in the colonized, which originate in the colonizer.

Limitations of Braidotti's Ethical Response to Pain and Suffering

An understanding of asymmetrical power relations reveals something that remains under-theorized in Braidotti's work; if the nomadic subject is fluid and contingent, yet maintains borders in order to sustain and manage this fluidity, how is it that some subjects *appear* more sovereign and more autonomous than others? The appearance of boundedness is always relational, and if Brennan (2004) is correct, then white, masculine subjects gain their own sense of autonomy by affectively transgressing the porous borders of feminized and racialized others. Those benefiting from asymmetrical power relations may see this autonomy as a natural aspect of human freedom, whereas the epistemic privilege of the oppressed may allow this autonomy to appear contingent on relations of power.

This question of asymmetrical power in the politics of sustainability has not gone unnoticed by otherwise sympathetic critics. For example, Lisa Baraitser (2010) asks: "What if a body says 'I can't take it anymore', and another body nevertheless continues to hurt it?…Does this not push all the responsibility for knowing when it's enough back onto abused bodies…?" (129). Similarly, Hemmings (2010, 139) asks: "Are only the strong-hearted, the ones who can stand the openness and survive retrospective clarity, the inheritors of an ethical future?" (139). Braidotti (2010) does not adequately address these pressing questions; she simply responds to them by reiterating the need to transform pain and negative affect into ethical—that is, sustainable—relationships (140).

For Braidotti (2006a), the theoretical basis for judging the sustainability, and hence the ethics of an

action, is found in "a fundamental drive to life: a *potential*" (155); it is this fundamental vitalistic drive that is the ultimate good against which to measure oppression. Good government, and ethical behaviour, promote this drive for relational connectivity, while unethical behaviour hinders this positive freedom of *potentia* (150). Though Braidotti wants to focus on the positivity of affect, she does not deny that conflict, even violent oppression, occurs. It is because of the universality of the drive for *potentia* that these conflicts can be judged as oppressive and hence "Because all subjects share in this common nature, there is a common ground on which to negotiate the interests and the eventual conflicts" (157).

In her recent introduction to the second edition of *Nomadic Subjects,* Braidotti (2011) clearly engages with these questions of asymmetrical power by framing her broad theoretical project(s) as being driven by "the fundamental power differential among categories of human and nonhuman travellers or movers" (4). She takes care to note that certain bodies are made marginal through violence and that these bodies are dispossessed of their selves (6). Although Braidotti provides an ethical basis for judging oppressive affective relations as wrong—her nomadic ethics of sustainability provides a convincing framework for this—it seems that she does not live up to her own standard of assessing nomadic subjectivity through "historically grounded, socioeconomic references" (4). While Braidotti's (2006a) discussion of the ethical implications of "sustainability" on the discourse of addiction is productive (224), one might imagine a more in depth discussion of sustainability as it relates to her three axes of alterity: woman/native/nature. Braidotti gives a nod to Indigenous others, but does not deeply engage with Indigenous scholars and activists engaged in national resurgence aimed at creating sustainable relations.

What is compelling in Butler's account of power and national difference is the attempt to take account of affectivity in light of the political construction of national difference. Her handling of borders and boundaries provides a specificity that is lacking in Braidotti's discussion of sustainability. That the US could appear bounded and sovereign as a nation-state relies on a similar process through which members of privileged social groups come to embody (however imperfectly) the liberal ideal of the autonomous individual. This is a primary concern for Butler (2004a) in *Precarious Life* where she engages with how the human has been variably constructed in ways that exclude the vulnerability of some, making them unreal (33).

Butler's theoretical elaboration on the connection between national borders and affective boundaries allows the naming of the political origin of oppressive transgression of these boundaries and thus potentially political solutions. Braidotti, on the other hand, rejects a politics that attempts to avoid pain or seeks redress for these transgressions. One of the consequences of such an ethics is that violence is not objected to because it violates the autonomy of the bounded individual as an end in him or herself, but because "the harm you do to others is immediately reflected in the harm you do to yourself, in terms of loss of *potentia*, positivity, self-awareness and inner freedom" (Braidotti 2006a, 157). This analysis of relational freedom seems compatible with Indigenous conceptualizations of responsibility to relations, yet it downplays the political nature of resurgence against colonial harm by collapsing avoidable political pain with random suffering that flows from the chaos of material reality. In "Affirmation Versus Vulnerability," Braidotti (2006b) argues that nomadic ethics should not seek to avoid pain, but rather avoid the "stultifying effects of passivity" associated with pain (242). For Braidotti (2006a), our responsibility to those we harm "...calls for recognition, acknowledgement and understanding: this is the only ethical freedom we dispose of" (151). Yet, it remains unclear who is doing the recognizing and what conditions are required for recognition. Glen Coulthard (2007) provides a stinging critique of dominant settler politics of recognition that are inherently asymmetrical and that replicate the colonial relationship by placing the power to recognize squarely with the settler-state. In light of this critique, it seems likely that self-assertion of Indigenous national identity is one of these conditions for sustainable affective relations.

Indigenous Nationhoods: Toward a Nuanced Reading of Relational Political Borders

I want to turn now to the question of Indigenous nationhoods in Canada and how it can productively inform the Euro/American theories of affective relationality under discussion. From my location in British Columbia, Canada, one of the most pressing po-

litical issues of the day is the proposed construction of liquefied natural gas and bitumen pipelines across Indigenous territories. Anywhere in the world, these project could become a contentious issue of environmental sustainability, but in British Columbia—where very few treaties between Indigenous nations and Canada have been signed, making the land *unceded Indigenous territories*—the controversy has become a question of land, boundaries, and nationhood. It is a question of who gets to cross and transgress boundaries.

The continuing currency of the concept of Indigenous nationhood provides grounds for questioning the post-national impetus behind Butler and Braidotti's work. Braidotti's theory grows out of a legitimate concern about fascism and nationalism in Europe, but this basis then leads to an ethical theory of relationality that, when applied in Canada, severely limits attempts at decolonization through Indigenous nation building. What might the implications be if Indigenous conceptions of nation are given priority? What might this tell us about the potentially liberatory potential of national identity that is not nomadic, but rather is intimately tied to territory and provides an alternative to clearly demarcated nation-states constituted on othering?

While the conceptions of nation discussed above challenge the exclusions and boundaries of the Western nation-state, this does not mean that they are completely unbounded. In returning to the question of pipeline development, members of the Unist'ot'en Clan of the Wet'suwet'en nation have been actively asserting traditional regulation of territorial boundaries. In August 2010, hereditary leaders Toghestiy and Hagwilakw presented an eagle feather to Enbridge representatives as a "first and final" warning of trespass on Wet'suwet'en territory (Unist'ot'en Camp, "Trespass Notice" 2010). This is in keeping with traditional Wet'suwet'en law that requires guests to fully identity themselves, ask permission to enter Wet'suwet'en territory, and be granted this permission prior to entry (Unist'ot'en Camp, "Consent Protocol"). Because of the incursion of settler industry onto Unist'ot'en territory, several community members have created a camp in the proposed pipeline route that they describe as a "gateway (not a blockade)" (Unist'ot'en Camp, "Northern Gateway"). This example of grassroots assertion of territorial boundaries points to one facet of a boundary of responsibility. Settlers—and non-Wet'suwet'en Indigenous peoples—have a re-

sponsibility to respect the laws of the land so that decolonized relationships can be built across boundaries and "gateways." It is crucial to note that this assertion of boundary is not the same as wall building; if guests are willing to develop good relations, to be responsible, they will be welcomed. It is not a fixed characteristic of outsiders that makes them outsiders, but rather it is their actions as settler developers, their refusal to acknowledge Indigenous title and laws that makes them trespassers.

Colonialism in Canada is a complex and multifaceted process that can be partly understood as unreciprocated transgression of boundaries. Braidotti's nomadic ethics would suggest that, for members of settler society, there is a loss of *potentia* by continuing colonial relations because of a loss of affective connections with Indigenous peoples. The problem is that for most non-Indigenous people in Canada, the status quo is working out fairly well. There is very little incentive to allow the Crown to negotiate a relationship with Indigenous nations that would be truly sustainable and decolonized as this would require not only significant transfer of land wealth, but a complete reconceptualization and questioning of Canadian sovereignty to bring it in line with principles of co-existing relational sovereignty. Braidotti's view that the origin of suffering cannot be adequately determined and that compensation is politically futile takes on a colonialist flavour in British Columbia where settlers are for the most part squatters on Indigenous territory. This is not to say that "we"—that is, Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples alike–should not work toward transforming pain into something productive and figuring out how to live together. However, settlers must open our eyes to Indigenous national resurgence as *political* action and as political action that entails responsibility to building good relations. It seems that sustainable relational affectivity from my location, as a settler, first requires respect of relational boundaries. Political action against settler trespassing—especially state supported development without Indigenous consent—as well as action toward positive settler-Indigenous relation building are two sides of the question of responsibility. Respect of boundaries does not shut down the type of relational affectivity that Braidotti supports, but rather is the precondition for it.

Butler's focus on normative political limits to affectivity has its own shortcomings when it comes to

Indigenous nations. As discussed above, normative identity claims are a necessary precondition for political action in Butler's work, but they are also inherently exclusionary. However, the initial discussion of Indigenous conceptions of nationhood suggests that this political form is not inherently exclusionary in the same way as the nation-state. Butler's claim that, in the face of violent transgression of sovereignty, one can accept vulnerability and interdependence or, alternatively, shore up xenophobic borders is a false dilemma. Perhaps inter-dependence demands a political form like Indigenous nationhood where good relations with other communities are essential to good domestic relations. This conceptualization does not rely on a static and essentialist identity nor does it reduce Indigenous peoplehood to a normative identity based solely in resistance. Indigenous relational belonging offers theories—provided by Indigenous scholars—as well as concrete historical examples of political forms that are ignored in Butler's focus on the dangers of the European tradition of the nation-state.

This brings me directly to the question of both theorists' anti/post-nationalism in light of Indigenous nationhood. In discussing identity claims, Braidotti (2006a) concedes that "feminists, anti-racists and human rights activists, at this point in history are legitimate in pursuing "molar" positions, claiming identity-centred redefinition of their political subjectivity" (154). Given the fact that Braidotti argues for the productivity of difference—that is, the others of modernity including "natives" provide productive alternative subjectivities—it is better to think of Indigenous nationhood not as a "molar" identity, or a strategic norm in Butler's case, but rather as productive difference. For example, Anishinaabek legal scholar John Borrows (2010) argues that the Anishinaabek belief in a living earth and obligations to this earth presents a challenge to the liberal legal tradition in Canada and serves as a productive reason for adopting legal pluralism in Canada (249). Unlike a reactionary xenophobic nationalism, the recognition of Indigenous peoplehood is complementary to projects that aim to disrupt the autonomous liberal subject by highlighting mutual interdependence.

Despite her ambivalence toward Arendt's public/private distinction, it is Butler's focus on *the political* as a site of human action that might allow an adequate assessment of non-Indigenous responsibility in

respecting relational borders. Braidotti's focus on affective sustainability risks eliminating the political agency required to build sustainable decolonized relationships in Canada. That said, Braidotti's refusal of anthropocentrism provides a "European" theory that can respect the deep differences between the European nation-state and Indigenous nationhood by accepting the interdependence of human, animal, and environment. Once again, Indigenous conceptualizations of nationhood demonstrate that choosing between political agency and a holistic anti-anthropocentrism is a false binary. Indigenous nationhood is deeply political, but it does not require the human to define itself against an external nature.

This brief discussion of Indigenous nationhood does not show that either Butler or Braidotti is wrong. It simply reinforces that they are approaching affect from a specific location, which they both acknowledge. Likewise, my location is limited, but suggests that these two theorists are perhaps too hasty in pursuing post-national theories of affect. If one reads Braidotti in light of the political significance of relational national boundaries, the concept of sustainability could be extended to include agency against "negative" affects such as pain. The ethics of a sustainable nomadism would then also require avoidance of pain and an acknowledgement of the source of the pain in order to prevent it. This shift in thinking requires that, though boundaries are always dynamic, ethics involve respecting these boundaries as much as it involves understanding the in-betweenness that makes these boundaries possible.

For Butler, a closer examination of power dynamics in her concept of vulnerability is required to account for the limits of the subject. One might argue that a pre-requisite for acknowledging the shared condition of vulnerability is a level of respect for the boundaries of the corporeal subject, which is intimately linked with respect for national boundaries; otherwise, an appeal to vulnerability will appear as nothing more than an attempt to conceal the colonial relationship with a false universalism. Therefore, the dialogue and coalitional politics that Butler borrows from Chandra Mohanty would be as much about recognizing the fluidity of identity categories as recognizing the territorial crystallization of these identities in Indigenous nations.

The implications of Butler and Braidotti's work provide convincing theoretical grounds for rejecting a

fully discrete, bounded, and autonomous subject, which is usually associated with European liberalism. However, their theories also imply that a fully contingent and open subject is not only a poor description of the contemporary subject, but it is also not a normative ideal. If both Butler's and Braidotti's diagnoses of a post-national world require revision in light of the complexities of Indigenous nationhoods, then so do their affectively constituted subjects. This paper is not the place to begin a full development of what this hybrid subjectivity looks like, but the cited Indigenous scholars provide an entry point into this discussion. Upon initial inspection, it appears possible to balance Butler's focus on the political and cultural realm with Braidotti's privileging of non-human vitalism. It also appears possible to develop a transformative political realm nationally and transnationally, which does not cut off "the human" from its environment. My hope is that this engagement has demonstrated not only the limits of the location from which Butler and Braidotti are theorizing, but also the contribution of Indigenous thought on its own terms.

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Endnotes

[1] I use the plural 'nationhoods' to indicate the varied national traditions of different First Peoples. This paper offers a cursory view of some conceptions of 'nation' and political community that should not be taken as representative of a homogeneous 'Indigenous' worldview. Examples of Oneida and Mohawk national traditions will be unique from Wet'suwet'en traditions, yet these diverse examples all point to alternate understandings of nation and territory in contrast to European traditions.

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Locating Invisible Policies: Health Canada's Evacuation Policy as a Case Study

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Abstract

I describe an initial tool for revealing invisible policies. Invisible policies are made apparent by three criteria: allocation of resources, material impacts, and reactions. Allocation of resources can be economic, human, or otherwise. Material impacts are those that are tangible and can be described as having a physical impact in some manner. Finally, the reactions of those impacted by the policy, like agencies and scholars, provide a third lens through which these policies can be understood and identified. Using the three criteria, I reveal the long-standing "evacuation policy" as a genuine and authentic policy, which is currently applied to those First Nations populations falling under federal jurisdiction. My contribution to policy analysis is to provide another tool to close a gap in the literature with respect to the analysis of invisible policies.

This paper won the Women's and Gender Studies et Recherches Féministes (WGSRF) Graduate Essay Prize in 2014.

Résumé

Je décris un outil initial pour révéler les politiques invisibles. Les politiques invisibles sont mises en évidence par trois critères : allocation des ressources, impacts matériels et réactions. L'allocation des ressources peut concerner les ressources économiques, humaines ou autres. Les impacts matériels sont ceux qui sont tangibles et peuvent être décrits comme ayant un impact physique quelconque. Enfin, les réactions de ceux qui sont touchés par la politique, comme les organismes et les chercheurs, fournissent une troisième perspective selon laquelle ces politiques peuvent être comprises et cernées. À l'aide de ces trois critères, je révèle la « politique d'évacuation » de longue date comme une politique véritable et authentique, qui est actuellement appliquée aux populations des Premières Nations relevant de la compétence fédérale. Ma contribution à l'analyse des politiques est de fournir un autre outil pour combler une lacune dans la littérature en ce qui concerne l'analyse des politiques invisibles.

Cet article a remporté le Prix de l'essai (cycles supérieurs) de l'association Women's and Gender Studies et Recherches Féministes (EGFRF) en 2014.

This paper describes "invisible" policies that lie in the grey zone between federal and provincial jurisdiction. By drawing on Canada's evacuation policy for pregnant First Nations women living on reserves as a case study, I suggest that, as a result of the invisibility of these policies, the delivery of maternity care services for First Nations women living on reserves is negatively impacted by poor communication between the federal and provincial health care systems. This impedes the delivery of maternity care services to the detriment of First Nations women and children. The lack of alignment between federal and provincial governments demonstrates inadequate attention to respective jurisdictions when attempting to facilitate access to provincial health care resources for First Nations living on reserves (Canadian Health Services Research Foundation, 2011). As an added challenge, jurisdictional incongruencies related to health services between federal and provincial governments are not well explored in the literature, particularly with regards to maternity care services. This gap signals a need for those involved in the realm of policy making to consider all populations that reside within the geopolitical boundaries of Canada with particular attention to policies that are invisible due in part to the challenges of inter-jurisdictional health care services.

My paper will use Health Canada's evacuation policy as an example of an "invisible" federal policy that creates a reliance on provincial maternity resources to ensure First Nations women living on reserve have access to intrapartum care. I do not consider the federal/territorial jurisdictions or health policies as they pertain to Métis and Inuit peoples. An examination of this "invisible" federal policy reveals a gap between between federal and provincial health care systems related to maternity care services for First Nations women. The absence of a clearly articulated policy means that provincial policies are not linked to the federal evacuation policy, resulting in dependence on individual practitioners for the success, or failure, of maternity care services for this particular group of women. Jurisdictional incongruencies between federal and provincial health care systems further confound efforts to mitigate the impacts of the evacuation policy, in part, because the policy largely remains invisible. Further, invisible maternity care policies contribute to fragmented health care systems for First Nations women and, as such, deserve attention and analysis.

What is Policy?

Before presenting a policy analysis of the Canadian government's evacuation policy for pregnant First Nations women living on reserves, it is important to articulate how policy is defined and described. Thomas Dye (1978) describes policy as "whatever governments choose to do or not to do" (3). This definition complements Harold D. Lasswell's (1936) definition of politics as "who gets what, when, how" (1) because it introduces the issue of government resource allocation. Daphne A. Dukelow (2006) further describes policy as "a government commitment to the public to follow an action or course of action in pursuit of approved objectives" (360) because policies have "power to influence and change" (Robinson 2008, 244). Governments, therefore, use policy as a way of communicating to its constituents and garnering support for a specific course of action. This is demonstrated by "the passage of a law, the spending of money, an official speech or gesture or some other observable act" (Miljan 2008, 3). It is the federal government's course of action as it pertains to pregnancy and childbirth among First Nations women that will be analyzed here.

Why is Policy Analysis Useful and What are Invisible Policies?

A policy analysis is relevant because it provides an opportunity to assess a government's chosen course of action and permits a constituent to interrogate and influence government direction. Governments construct policies to respond to public concerns (Miljan 2008) based on present or foreseeable issues or problems based on current knowledge. As such, a policy seeks to address an issue that has been problematized. It makes an issue relevant and assigns to it a certain priority, it provides a framework for understanding, and it describes particular solutions that are amenable to the implementation of a policy (Miljan 2008). Government values and priorities are reflected in what issues are problematized and in the policies and courses of action chosen to address these problematized issues. A policy analysis thus reveals government standards, directions, and priorities.

A policy analysis also exposes a government to scrutiny because governments have a "vested interest

in maintaining a problem-free public image, particularly when the problems have the potential to seriously undermine the credibility of their regime or establishment" (Bessant 2008, 298). It is, therefore, to a government's benefit to make invisible "the confusion and malevolence that characterize state policy-making, [while it] ignores the possibility that some policy-makers operate in a delusional state about what is happening" (297). While it could be argued that policy makers are not necessarily delusional, Judith Bessant's (2008) perspective does point to a frustration in the policy world where state-made policies do not align with the lived realities or needs of its citizens. Therefore, a policy analysis is an important, and even responsible, activity that brings to light the decisions and direction of government as well as the processes that lead to those decisions and direction.

One challenge associated with conceptualizing policy, however, is that absent the label policy, government intentions can be difficult to locate, prompting a need to create a set of criteria upon which a policy can be identified. Unlabelled government policies are invisible because they reside outside of distinct policy language, but remain true to the defining parameters of policy, which include the allocation of resources, material impacts, and reactions to it; these are discussed in detail below. Invisible policies are also labelled as "silent" (Murray 2011, 54) or as residing in a "vacuum" (Abele et al. 2011, 87; Brennan and Willis 2008, 300). Additionally, invisible policies might not be "passed by legislatures or formally adopted" (Seiter and Kadela 2003, 368), resulting in little to no public accountability for the impact of the actions that underpin those policies. Suzanne Mettler (2011) highlights this lack of accountability by describing invisible policies as those that "represent a fundamentally undemocratic development" (14). Archival research by Karen Lawford and Audrey R. Giles (2012a) demonstrates that Canada's evacuation policy was not developed in consultation with First Nations, but rather via "the marginalization of First Nations pregnancy and birthing practices and the use of coercive pressures on First Nations to adopt the Euro-Canadian biomedical model" (327). Regardless of their invisibility, these policies do have material impacts because of the guidance and instruction they infer and the resources they impart.

Because they have material impacts (Brennan and Willis 2008; Giri 2011; Seiter and Kadela 2003; Theimer 2012), invisible policies need to be interrogated to ensure policy goals are being met and that government is responsive and accountable to its constituents. This is particularly important, however, when governments use non-engagement as a technique to ensure policies remain outside of critique (Lea et al. 2011). Non-engagement is described as a process that governments use to exclude "key issues from policy consideration while appearing to be inclusive" (Lea et al. 2011, 322); that is, when key issues in government policies are absent, citizens do not engage because their priorities are not addressed in the policy in question. Further, Lea et al. (2011) describe engagement as having "an inarguable moral rationale, [but] at the same time…[is] deeply implicated in the practical maintenance of social inequality" (322). Paradoxically, the rhetoric of engagement can be employed to argue that those affected by a policy had meaningful input into its development, so that any resulting inequalities are the responsibility of those who were engaged and not that of government.

Ram A. Giri (2011) discusses the concept of invisible policies at length. He draws attention to policies in Nepal that are largely unnoticed, yet have real impacts on the Indigenous peoples there. As a strategy to limit critique, for example, national policies are issued in "a language [that] has been given power, recognition and prestige while, as a corollary, the remaining minority languages are impoverished and marginalised" (Yadava 2007, 2). Giri (2011) further explains how ruling politicians manoeuvre and employ dominant language to render national policies invisible:

> Invisible language politics [are] deliberate bureaucratic and political attempts to avoid, delay and ignore language-related issues, or impose hidden agendas disguised as nationalism, to create and promote language hegemony for the elite language, namely Nepali. By hegemony of language, I mean limiting knowledge and learning of other languages except the elite languages. (198)

Giri's policy analysis highlights how Nepal's language policy is employed as a tool to make policies "invisible" to some segments of the population, namely the Indigenous population, so that the dominant class can rule without critique. Invisible policies thus serve to silence those affected by and/or in opposition to those policies.

Sarah Theimer (2012) is another scholar who has drawn attention to "invisible policy" (280) and the substantive impacts this type of policy strategy has on her field of research, which examines the death of languages. To help identify an invisible policy, Theimer offers the following:

> Policy is communicated through official documents, but can be inferred from people's language practices, ideologies, and beliefs. There are implicit and covert ways of regulating a language. This may be as simple as avoiding, delaying, and ignoring certain language issues or deliberately limiting the knowledge and learning of other languages. Such a strategy has been called the 'invisible policy' (Giri, 2011). Visible or invisible, languages plans are often used to maintain current power structure, influence public opinion, and allocate resources for the education and promotion of the chosen language. These policies often lead to benefits for some and loss of privilege status and rights for others. (280)

Another technique to make a policy invisible is to introduce it in obscure locations such as in a meeting or in a publication that is not widely read (Brennan and Willis 2008; Theimer 2012). This policy implementation approach limits critique, while positioning the policy as legitimate and authentic.

Identifying Invisible Policies

Based on the overview of the literature related to policy and invisible policy above, I propose three criteria as a means to identify an invisible policy. The first is through the allocation of resources, economic (Giri 2011, 199) or otherwise (Theimer 2012), as this reveals government intentions (Dye 1978). The second way to find an invisible policy is through the material impacts or consequences that it has on its constituents (Brennan and Willis 2008; Giri 2011; Seiter and Kadela 2003; Theimer 2012). The third way to locate a policy is by showing that practitioners act in such a way that they are responding to something or implementing a process (Robinson 2008). The development of guidelines and/or protocols demonstrates a reaction to policy and thus the presence of a policy whether or not it is explicit or invisible. The combination of three criteria to identify an invisible policy can be graphically represented:
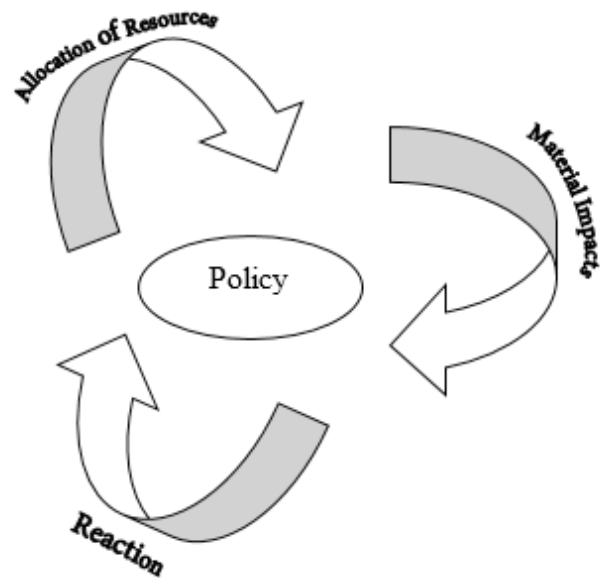

Figure 1: Three criteria used to identify a policy.

Health Care Systems in Canada

Before examining Canada's evacuation policy, certain aspects of its political system need to be explained. Canada's governance systems are based on federalism with a division of powers between federal and provincial levels of government provided for in sections 91 and 92 of the *Constitution Act, 1982* (Lewis et al. 2001). Section 91 provides a list of powers that fall within the jurisdiction of the federal government, while Section 92 provides a list of the powers that fall within the jurisdiction of provincial governments. Canada's Senate and House of Commons, that is, the federal government, has authority over "Indians, and lands reserved for the Indians" based on Section 91(24). Section 92(7) states that provinces have exclusive powers overs the "establishment, maintenance, and management of hospitals, asylums, charities, and eleemosynary institutions in and for the province, other than marine hospitals" (*Constitution Act, 1982*). It is noteworthy that the word health is absent in the first iteration of the *Constitution Act, 1867*. At the time of Canada's formation, health was thought be a personal matter and the responsibility of households and churches. Governments were only exceptionally involved in health care at the time of Confederation in 1867 (Braën 2002; Gibson 1996; Lux 2010). Indeed, court decisions have determined that,

> 'health' is not a matter which is subject to specific constitutional assignment but instead is an amorphous topic which can be addressed by valid federal or provincial legislation, depending in the circumstances of each case

on the nature or scope of the health problem in question. (*Schneider v. The Queen* 1982, 142)

Further drawing attention to the jurisdictional flexibility of health care, the Government of Canada is adamant that the provision of "health programs and services including Non-Insured Health Benefits are provided to First Nations and Inuit on the basis of national policy and not due to any constitutional or other legal obligations" (Canada. Health Canada 2014, 1). Thus, it is federalism and components of the *Constitution Act, 1982*, particularly the incongruencies between Sections 91 and 92, that create jurisdictional gaps in health care for First Nations living on reserves.

With respect to health care, there are three broad health systems in Canada: provincial, territorial, and federal. As mentioned above, Section 92(7) of the *Constitution Act, 1867* bestows on provinces jurisdiction for the health care of its citizens (Canada. Health Canada 2012a). Territorial jurisdiction for health care is not assigned under the *Constitution Act, 1867*; rather, its authority to administer health care is delegated by the federal government (Canada. Privy Council Office 2010). Health care for "First Nations people living on reserves, Inuit, serving members of the Canadian Forces, eligible veterans, inmates in federal penitentiaries, and some groups of refugee claimants" (Canada. Health Canada 2012a, par. 18) is a responsibility accepted by the f*ederal government (Romanow 2002). Roy J. Romanow (2002) draws attention to the growing production of distinct and heterogenous health care systems, which if left unchecked,* "will inevitably produce 13 clearly separate health care systems, each with differing methods of payment, delivery and outcomes, coupled by an ever increasing volatile and debilitating debate surrounding our nation, its values and principles" (xviii). The presence of public and private prescription drug plans, each different in each jurisdiction, further confounds the direction and responsibility of health care systems in Canada.

The provincial, territorial, and federal health care systems in Canada are not flawlessly connected, but rather are complicated by jurisdictional incongruencies that are made apparent when the systems do not interact in a manner that supports those who need health care. A well-known case that demonstrates an appalling outcome of these jurisdictional incongruencies in health care systems occurred when the Manitoba health care system clashed with the federal system during the care of Jordan River Anderson.

Jordan was a member of the Norway House Cree Nation who died at the age of five in a Manitoba hospital in 2005 (Blackstock 2008). Cindy Blackstock (2008), a well-respected national advocate for Aboriginal children's health, explains:

> Jordan was born with complex medical needs, and because the federal and provincial governments provide so few services to support families with special needs children on reserves, Jordan had to be placed in foster care. In a government policy that baffles common sense, the federal government will pay foster parents to look after First Nations children with special needs, but will not provide support for the child's own family to care for them at home, even when there is no abuse or neglect. Jordan spent the first two years of his life in hospital while his medical condition stabilized…Just after Jordan's second birthday doctors said Jordan was well enough to go home, but as Drs Noni MacDonald and Amir Attaran noted in their 2007 editorial, 'bureaucrats ruined it.' Provincial and federal government officials decided that Jordan should stay in hospital while they argued over expenses related to his at-home care. Days turned into weeks, weeks turned into months and months turned into years…Jordan passed away in hospital at five years of age, never having spent a day in a family home. (589)

National attention to the horrendous treatment of Jordan resulted in the formation of Jordan's Principle in December 2007, a policy that seeks to address the "confusing jurisdictional debates" (Clarke 2007, 79) that impact First Nations living on reserves. The First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada (2011) describes Jordan's Principle as follows:

> Where a jurisdictional dispute arises between two government parties (provincial/territorial or federal) or between two departments or ministries of the same government, regarding payment for services for a Status Indian child which are otherwise available to other Canadian children, the government or ministry/department of first contact must pay for the services without delay or disruption. The paying government party can then refer the matter to jurisdictional dispute mechanisms. In this way, the needs of the child get met first while still allowing for the jurisdictional dispute to be resolved. (1)

This Principle recognizes and seeks to address the administrative and financial challenges of providing health care to those who access care cross-jurisdictionally.

Jordan's Principle, however, "remains in limbo" because "federal and provincial governments remain stuck in the same bureaucratic and jurisdictional quagmire that hampers service provision to [First Nations] children" (Lett 2008, 1256). When called to testify under oath regarding the terms of implementing Jordan's Principle, an official from Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development of Canada stated that "the federal government would only provide funds for Jordan's Principle cases involving children with complex medical needs and multiple service providers" (Blackstock 2012, 367). By shifting the intention of Jordan's Principle to only extreme needs situations, the Government of Canada further signalled an unwillingness to address the cross-jurisdictional challenges experienced by all First Nations living on reserves. While Jordan's case demonstrates an appallingly horrific outcome when health systems do not have policies that ensure seamless health care delivery between jurisdictions, it also speaks to the invisibility and lack of accountability of health care systems that provide care to First Nations on reserves.

The events that led to the formation of Jordan's Principle bring to light the overwhelming challenges that First Nations living on reserves face with respect to equitable health care. It is obvious the uncertainty of who pays for health care services negatively and materially affects First Nations lives. As such, it is vital that seemingly invisible policies are made unequivocally visible and that the government responsible for that policy is held accountable. It is with this intention that I seek to make visible a federal health policy that focuses on perinatal care.

I remain hopeful that, like other policies, health policies can be instruments of change and can be used to consolidate resources across jurisdictions to address an issue (Bierman 2009). Whether health policies are broad or specific, they also signal an intention of governments to achieve specific goals and work within or across jurisdictions. As such, health policies are amenable to analysis using the three criteria that I set out above: allocation of resources, material impacts, and reactions.

Origins of the Evacuation Policy in Canada

Archival research conducted by Lawford and Giles (2012a) uncovered the Government of Canada's interference with the labour and birthing practices of First Nations living on reserves. Using the substantive authority granted through the *Indian Act* (1876), the federal government placed physicians on reserves to provide medical services in the 1890s. In 1896, Dr. Mitchell was hired to provide midwifery services to Chippewas and Muncey First Nations in Ontario. The introduction of federal physicians, specifically those that provided labour and birth services, was fuelled by national efforts to civilize and assimilate First Nations. The Government of Canada "enforced the Euro-Canadian biomedical model by resorting to coercion, threats, and fictitious legislation (under the guise of care and protection) to interfere with and make illegitimate First Nations' practices related to pregnancy, birthing, and childcare" (332). Throughout the twentieth century, increasing pressures from federal physicians and nurses resulted in the shift from home and community birthing to nursing stations and then to hospitals.

The Public Health Agency of Canada refers to the evacuation of pregnant women beginning in the 1970s as a matter of fact reality associated with living in northern Canada (Canada. Public Health Agency of Canada, 2009). One obstetrician working in the Northern Medical Unit and Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology at the University of Manitoba, Dr. Thomas F. Baskett (1978), described the evacuation policy as "very simple: all primigravidae, grand multiparae, and any patient with a significant obstetric history or antenatal complication are electively evacuated for delivery in hospital" (1003). It appears that Dr. Baskett practiced the evacuation policy in a manner unlike other care providers in rural and remote communities in that criteria were developed for evacuation. Currently, the evacuation policy is applied to all First Nations women living on reserves in remote and rural Canada, regardless of obstetrical history. The blanket evacuation of all pregnant First Nations women is in accordance with a federal government policy decision as relayed through Health Canada Clinical Practice Guidelines that instruct federally employed nurses to "arrange for transfer to hospital for delivery at 36-38 weeks' gestational age according to regional policy (sooner if a high-risk pregnancy)" (Canada. Health Canada 2012b, 12-16).

Canada's Evacuation Policy for Pregnant First Nations Women Living on Reserves

The First Nations and Inuit Health Branch of Health Canada is responsible for the delivery of primary health care for First Nations who live on reserve (Canada. Health Canada 2012a). Primary health care services are predominantly delivered by nurses who provide prenatal care and only address emergency postpartum care issues, such as postpartum hemorrhage and severe hypertension, when required (Canada. Health Canada 2012b). To assist, Health Canada has developed *Clinical Practice Guidelines* "for use by community health nurses employed by Health Canada providing primary care in isolated, semi-isolated, and remote First Nations communities" (Canada. Health Canada 2013, par. 1). Health Canada's *Guidelines* "contain information to assist in the identification, diagnosis, and treatment of illness and other health issues in a primary care setting and may be used for reference and education purposes" (Canada. Health Canada 2012c). The *Guidelines* are separated into two broad categories: Adult Care; and Pediatric and Adolescent Care. Chapter 12 in the Adult Care category contains Health Canada's *Guidelines* related to obstetrics. Only one sentence in the *Guidelines* makes reference to the evacuation policy, which reads as follows: "arrange for transfer to hospital for delivery at 36–38 weeks' gestational age according to regional policy (sooner if a high-risk pregnancy)" (Canada. Health Canada 2012b, 12-16). Although the *Guidelines* do not explicitly make reference to the evacuation policy, I will use the three criteria of a policy discussed above to argue that this federal direction to nurses is, in fact, a policy.

Identifying the "Invisible" Evacuation Policy

Before examining the evacuation policy using the three criteria that are used to identify an invisible policy, I want to briefly re-introduce the quotation from Theimer (2012). By replacing her reference to language with concepts related to health and maternity care services for First Nations women living on reserves, the quotation reads as follows:

Policy is communicated through official documents, but can be inferred from people's language practices, ideologies, and beliefs. There are implicit and covert ways of regulating [maternity care services for First Nations women]. This may be as simple as avoiding, delaying, and ignoring

certain [maternity care] issues or deliberately limiting the knowledge and learning of other [maternity care systems]. Such a strategy has been called the 'invisible policy' (Giri, 2011). Visible or invisible, [maternity care] plans are often used to maintain current power structure, influence public opinion, and allocate resources for the education and promotion of the chosen [maternity care plan for First Nations women]. These policies often lead to benefits for some and loss of privilege status and rights for [First Nations people]. (280)

With this re-framing of Theimer's quotation, I will now examine the evacuation policy using the perspective of "invisible policies" discussed above.

Allocation of Resources

Resources can be economic (Giri 2011, 199), human, or otherwise (Theimer 2012). Canada's contribution to human health resources to support the evacuation policy is shown by their employment of nurses to deliver primary health care services to First Nations living on reserves, including prenatal care (Canada. Health Canada 2012b, 2012c, 2013). Health Canada's direction to not provide intrapartum care is evidence that the routine evacuation of all pregnant First Nations women living on reserves is a policy as it demonstrates the government's choice (Dye 1978). The federal government chooses not to hire those who could mitigate the impacts of the evacuation policy, such as midwives (Lawford and Giles 2012b), despite having the legislative authority to do so through the *Canada Health Act* (1985).

The absence of midwifery as a job classification is curious because, nationally, midwifery is regulated and publically funded in almost all provinces and territories—or is in the process of being regulated and funded (Canadian Midwifery Regulators Consortium 2010). The federal system, then, is, exceptional (Canada. Treasury Board Canada Secretariat 2006; Lawford and Giles 2012b). The exclusion of midwives as federal employees limits the maternity health services available to First Nations women on reserves. While there is limited research on the degree of interest in having midwifery services accessible on reserves, Stefan Grzybowski and Jude Kornelsen's (2009) study suggests community interest. The National Aboriginal Health Organization (2006) also draws attention to interest in midwifery services and to national research showing that 59 percent of First Nations surveyed were unable to access

such services. The lack of a midwifery job classification is arguably a policy decision, as the Canadian government has yet to expand their employee classification to include midwives nor is there indication that future inclusion is being planned. The absence of midwifery, in turn, ensures that the evacuation policy remains necessary.

Across the country, resources have been allocated to meet the growing maternity care needs of First Nations women who are routinely evacuated in pregnancy. The Meno-Ya-Win Health Centre in Sioux Lookout, Ontario, for example, has seen a doubling of births (CBC News 2012). In Manitoba, provincial and Winnipeg governments have dedicated resources to develop the *Maternal and Child Health Care Services Provincial Perinatal Referral Process*, a process that is intended to mitigate the negative impacts the evacuation policy has on their provincial health system (Government of Manitoba 2011). According to the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority, women that relocate for birthing services "are not receiving adequate services and support related to a healthy pregnancy once they reach urban locations. They often experience loneliness, boredom and isolation" (4). Unfortunately, a search to determine how this referral process is being developed and implemented was unsuccessful. As a result, it is unclear if and how the Manitoba process is affecting the care that women receive.

Manitoba health researchers are drawing attention to the evacuation policy and its effects. In their analysis, Ashley Struthers et al. (2015) refer to it as "traveling for birth" and advocate for changes to "address the injustices created through the enforced practice of having to evacuate their home community to give birth" (n.p.). It is noteworthy that this analysis does not refer to traveling for birth as a policy, but rather describes it as a norm (n.p.). This normalizing of a policy makes it invisible, particularly as the federal government becomes increasingly reliant on other levels of governments, organizations, and individuals to provide services "through a variety of indirect mechanisms" (Mettler 2011, 13).

Material Impacts

Jennifer M. Dawson (1993) and Lawford and Giles (2012a, 2012b) have examined the material impacts of Canada's evacuation policy. Lawford and Giles (2012b) focus on First Nations women living on reserves and seek to understand why "the evacuation policy does not result in good health" (329). They found that the policy has material effects on First Nations women, families, and communities because it physically removes women from their support systems. The isolation of women also obstructs First Nations' social and cultural practices that are specific to pregnancy, labour, childbirth, and the postpartum period (Dawson 1993; Grzybowski and Kornelsen 2009; Kornelsen and Grzybowski 2005; Kornelsen et al. 2010; Paulette 1990). The loss of these practices results in the assimilation of First Nations, a process that is not accidental. Citing the national colonial project, Patricia Jasen (1997) positions the evacuation policy "as part of its 'civilizing mission,' [which] the Canadian government adopted [as] an interventionist policy which led, in recent decades, to the practice of evacuating pregnant women to distant hospitals" (383). As such, the loss of First Nations pregnancy, labour, and birth practices is not an unintended outcome of evacuation, but rather is a purposeful and intentional policy outcome, as it reinforces other Government of Canada policies of assimilation like the Indian Residential School system. Canada's evacuation policy, therefore, impinges upon First Nations self-determination (Dawson 1993; Lawford and Giles 2012b) because it removes choice and autonomy in the area of health, a process that is legislatively grounded in the *Indian Act* (1876).

The removal of women from their families and communities also removes them, and their babies, from their land base. While this may not be viewed as an important aspect of maternity care services within a Euro-Canadian biomedical model of health care, land is "the most important component of identity for First Nations, as well as a critical component of First Nations' health" (Lawford and Giles 2012b, 335). From a First Nations perspective, the evacuation of pregnant women from their community's land thus materially impacts maternal and child health. Although the Euro-Canadian biomedical model of health and wellbeing may not link land with health, and by extension a loss of land with poor health, it must be remembered that First Nations have health practices and epistemologies that are not necessarily congruent with this dominant model of care (Lawford and Giles 2012b; Waldram, Herring, and Young 2006). The evacuation policy seems, therefore,

to be operating in contradiction with Health Canada's commitment to recognize "that cultural practices and traditions are essential to the health and well-being of First Nations" (Canada. Health Canada 2012d).

Reactions

Various agencies and scholars have critiqued Canada's evacuation policy. The Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada (SOGC), for example, has developed two clinical practice guideline documents that seek to provide direction to maternity care providers to mitigate the impacts of broad evacuation policies on Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal women. The most recent document, "SOGC Policy Statement: Returning Birth to Aboriginal, Rural, and Remote Communities," states that "the SOGC strongly supports and promotes the return of birth to rural and remote communities for women at low risk of complications" (2010, 1187). The SOGC (2010) further recognizes the significant impacts that community/home birthing has on sustaining Aboriginal identity among individuals, families, and communities. In another SOGC document, Carol Couchie and Sheila Sanderson (2007) stress that evacuation has "created hardship for many women, and there is growing evidence that it may contribute to postpartum depression and increased maternal and newborn complications" (251). It is noteworthy that Couchie and Sanderson do not specifically make reference to Health Canada's evacuation policy, even though the document they produced was sponsored by the First Nations and Inuit Health Branch of Health Canada. Rather, their analysis and recommendations are framed around the evacuation of all northern Aboriginal women. To support those who are involved in the provision of maternity care services, Couchie and Sanderson offer six recommendations to draw attention to the evacuation policy:

1. Physicians, nurses, hospital administrators, and funding agencies (both government and non-government) should ensure that they are well informed about the health needs of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people and the broader determinants of health.
2. Aboriginal communities and health institutions must work together to change existing maternity programs.
3. Plans for maternal and child health care in Aboriginal communities should include a 'healing map' that outlines the determinants of health.
4. Midwifery care and midwifery training should be an integral part of changes in maternity care for rural and remote Aboriginal communities.
5. Protocols for emergency and non-emergency clinical care in Aboriginal communities should be developed in conjunction with midwifery programs in those communities.
6. Midwives working in rural and remote communities should be seen as primary caregivers for all pregnant women in the community. (251-253)

It is apparent that the evacuation policy significantly sustains the loss of rural and remote birthing services, even though the literature demonstrates that it is harmful to women, families, and communities.

Canada's broad evacuation policy for pregnant First Nations women has resulted in the closure of maternity care services in small rural hospitals (Kornelsen et al. 2010); these unit closures also impact non-First Nations women. Nation-wide, "fewer hospitals provide maternity care, forcing many women to leave their families and travel long distances to give birth" (Women and Health Care Reform 2007, 2). Widespread application of the federal evacuation policy to non-First Nations women has, as a consequence, resulted in the closure of health centres that could lessen the impacts of the blanket evacuation policy for all women, families, and communities.

The Native Women's Association of Canada's (2009) public resource, *Journey for Two: A Guidebook for When You're Away From Your Community to Give Birth*, also constitutes a response to Canada's evacuation policy. It was funded by Health Canada—the very federal department that implements the evacuation policy. By funding the development of a resource to minimize the impacts of the evacuation policy, the federal government thus acknowledges that the policy does exist and that it does have negative effects on First Nations women, families, and communities. The various reactions that this policy elicits points to its existence, even if federal documents do not explicitly label it as such.

Discussion

There is a scarcity of literature on the concept of an invisible policy and specific research on invisible health policies appears to be nonexistent. Whether explicit or invisible, policies warrant attention and critique because they have tangible consequences on a government's constituents. Moreover, the uncovering of an invisible policy through policy analysis serves to

illuminate the many contexts and implications of a government decision, particularly when the decisions are complicated by incongruencies between government systems. This article has sought to fill a gap in the literature on invisible policy, using Canada's evacuation policy as a case study.

Canada's evacuation policy as it pertains to pregnant First Nations women living on reserves is amenable to being classified as a policy, as demonstrated above. Identifying an invisible health policy is important because it directly impacts people's health. First Nations women, families, and communities are negatively affected by this broad health policy, even if the government's policy goals are to improve access to maternity care services and, by extension, to enhance maternal and child health. Assessing the results of the evacuation policy, however, is difficult because the federal government has yet to articulate its policy goals.

Uncovering the workings and impacts of the evacuation policy as a federal health policy also enables those involved in the provision of maternity care services to better plan for present and future needs so as to attend to identified gaps. These gaps may be human, financial, and/or administrative. Through the clear labelling of the evacuation policy as a Government of Canada policy and a well-defined articulation of the parameters of evacuation, all of those impacted can plan accordingly. Making the evacuation policy visible will further facilitate the identification of gaps in health care systems, especially when those under federal jurisdiction enter provincial health care systems.

Unpacking the evacuation policy through the three criteria I discussed above also makes a contribution to policy analysis. These analytical tools can be used in other contexts to draw attention to the extent to which governments leverage invisible policies to exploit and marginalize certain populations largely without critique. When policies are made explicit, policy analysts can register a need to address gaps in practices and their impacts as well as generate attention within the policy community. Further, the identification of an invisible policy can operationalize extensive resources to tackle significant problems caused by policies that have previously been invisible.

Examining a policy in this manner also permits governments to revise their policies to ensure gaps can be closed. Lawford and Giles (2012b) offer a preliminary consideration of various opportunities in this regard as they relate to the evacuation policy. While some of these appear promising—particularly the promotion of maternity care services that "bridge" the gap between federal and provincial jurisdictions—further analysis and reflection are required.

The legal category of First Nations women residing on reserves as derived from the *Indian Act* (1876) provides a focal point from which to examine the evacuation policy. However, this policy continues to reinforce the gendered discrimination faced by Aboriginal women. My analysis has also created important openings to examine notions of self-determination and the inclusion of reproductive justice movements in relation to federal health policy—not just for those First Nations residing on reserves. Several Aboriginal scholars link these two immense topics by employing pan-Aboriginal/Indigenous perspectives to explore, critique, and position Aboriginal/Indigenous identities, particularly those of women, within policy analysis. The very important work being done by Jessica Danforth and the Native Youth Sexual Health Network focuses on pan-Indigenous sexual and reproductive health, rights, and justice. Sarah Hunt (2014) critiques the process that "requires Indigenous people to identify with profoundly asymmetrical forms of recognition granted to them by the colonial state and society" (29). Bonita Lawrence and Kim Anderson (2005) also draw attention to and refute the legal category of Indian woman:

> Our identities are fragmented from the attack on our cultures and communities, and by legal definitions of 'Indianness' that divide us and encourage us to struggle amongst ourselves for greater access to the state financial support that keeps many of our communities alive. (4)

Leanne Simpson's (2004) scholarship also draws on Indigenous/Aboriginal identities and not on the legal categorization rooted in the *Indian Act* (1876), permitting the contextualization of self-determination and the reclaiming of identity.

My motivation to expose the evacuation policy for First Nations on reserves is to activate ongoing discussions across jurisdictions to improve the health systems that First Nations access, rather than leaving the provision of maternity health services to individual practitioners. Certainly, the identification of Health Canada's evacuation policy as a legitimate and genuine

federal policy will draw attention to the ways in which the Government of Canada chooses to direct, or not, resources to health services for First Nations women and children living on reserves. This will no doubt result in critique; however, efforts to improve maternal and child health are worthy of thoughtful and informed decisions.

Conclusion

Given the lack of literature related to invisible polices, this paper has sought to make apparent policies that are shrouded by governments. I presented an analytical tool to identify invisible policies using three criteria—allocation of resources, material impacts, and reactions. Such identification can assist in policy analysis for the purposes of improving government policy. Broadly, the unveiling of invisible policy has the potential to reveal a multitude of gaps and enable systematic approaches to those impacted by such policies. Specifically, the case study of Canada's evacuation policy for pregnant First Nations women living on reserves reveals it as a government policy and, with this identification, I hope to facilitate an evaluation of the resources necessary to improve the health of First Nations women and children.

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All My Relations: Reclaiming the Stories of our Indigenous Grandmothers

Jodi Beniuk graduated with a BA in Women's Studies from the University of Victoria in 2014. She currently resides in rural Alberta on her grandparents' farm where she continues to learn daily the teachings of her ancestors through Grambear.

Abstract

In this paper, I document conversations I engaged in with my Métis grandmother (Grambear) and the process of compiling her teachings into a handmade book. Drawing on theory in the flesh and felt theory, I explore the significance of my grandmother's teachings for me personally and for Métis women more generally. For me, this project was not only about honouring my grandmother and her stories, but it is also about the process of Indigenous revitalization, resurgence, and decolonization.

This paper won the Women's and Gender Studies et Recherches Féministes (WGSRF) Undergraduate Essay Prize in 2014.

Résumé

Dans cet article, je décris en détail les conversations que j'ai eues avec ma grand-mère métisse (Grambear) et le processus de compilation de ses enseignements dans un livre fait à la main. En m'appuyant sur la théorie de la chair et du ressenti, j'explore l'importance des enseignements de ma grand-mère pour moi personnellement et pour les femmes métisses en général. Pour moi, ce projet ne constituait pas seulement un hommage à ma grand-mère et à ses récits, mais il concernait aussi le processus de revitalisation, de résurgence et de décolonisation autochtone.

Cet article a remporté le Prix de l'essai (1er cycle) de l'association Women's and Gender Studies et Recherches Féministes (EGFRF) en 2014.

The fur traders wrote almost nothing about the Indian women who shared their lives. And thus the voices of our grandmothers remain silent, leaving us to wonder about the story they would have told if they had been able to write it down. (Welsh, 1995, 34).

As a Métis woman, I have found that Métis women's experiences are often excluded from historical and contemporary accounts of Métis peoples in Canada.[1] Using theory in the flesh and felt theory (Archuleta 2006; Million 2009), this project aims to challenge the exclusion of Métis women from discussions of Métis peoples and shed light on the importance of Métis revitalization, resurgence, and, ultimately, decolonization. One way in which I have embodied this process is by listening to Grambear's (my grandmother's) stories and honouring her teachings by fashioning them into a book that can be handed down to future generations (see Appendices A-D).[2] This project has also contributed to my own process of revitalization and decolonization as a Métis woman. It has challenged me to identify and seriously question the power relations in Western forms of knowledge production. The research question explored in this project asks how can the stories shared by Indigenous grandmothers influence acts of revitalization, resurgence, and decolonization for Métis women like me.

This paper is comprised of three main sections. The first discusses Métis identity and culture, my own position as a Métis woman, and the significance of theory in the flesh and felt theory (Archuleta 2006; Million 2009). A brief description of the book of Grambear's stories that I compiled is included in the second section. The final section examines three themes that emerged in Grambear's stories with a specific focus on their relevance for the ongoing awakening of Métis peoples: violence against Indigenous women, the importance of community and family, and the value of sharing knowledges.

Like a Sleeping Giant

Adam Gaudry (2009) has examined the history of displacement of Métis peoples and the recent resurgence of Métis collective identity. He writes:

> The Métis nation is like a sleeping giant, slowly waking from a hundred-year slumber. Most Métis went underground for nearly a century following violent military invasions of our territory by the Canadian State in the 1870s and 1880s. The nation kept quiet because the dispersion of the Métis people allowed the State to refuse recognition of the Métis as a collective entity—a claim that wasn't possible when the Métis were politically and militarily asserting this reality in the nineteenth century…Only now are the Métis realizing our collective potential to reclaim the spaces, identities, and political autonomy taken from us over the past 120 years. This empowerment is due in no small part to the growing awareness of being Métis among Métis people as well as the increasing activism of Métis individuals and political organizations. (1).

Gaudry's words provide important context for my own experiences as a Métis woman. My mother's family is of the Red River Métis and my father's family is from the Ukraine. My family lived at White Horse Plains (a community on the Assiniboine River on the Western extremity of the Red River Settlement) beginning in the early nineteenth century. They fled Red River in 1870 in the midst of violent military invasions of Métis homelands and settled in what was called the Laboucane Settlement on Plains Cree and Blackfoot territory. The Laboucane Settlement was named after my ancestors. My family was active in the fur trade, hunted, farmed, and moved freight. Grambear was born in 1937 in Makwa Lake and lived outside of the Makwa Sahgaiehcan Reserve. She married my grandfather in Drayton Valley, Alberta. For most of my childhood, my sister and I lived with or next door to my grandparents. While Grambear did not explicitly discuss her experiences growing up and our Métis ancestry until six years ago, I have come to realize that she taught my sister and me many aspects of Métis ways of being and knowing. These include beading, gardening, farming, hide tanning, and embroidery. Despite the fact that our people were driven into hiding, I still have received these gifts from Grambear.

Why are the stories of my ancestors important today? Indigenous feminist Shirley Green (2007) explains the importance of looking back when reclaiming our heritages (172). Green maintains that we must "remember the injustices done to the women of this country by the colonizers, by society and by our own families, for the parts they played in denying us our birthright and the opportunity to know our own identity" (172). She further suggests that "it is only by reclaiming our heritage that we can gain an understanding of who we are and enable us to achieve our full potential as [Indigenous] women" (172). Drawing on the wisdom of Shirley Green, I have sought to reclaim the stories and experiences of my elders and ancestors in a meaningful way.

Understanding gender relations among Métis peoples has been crucial in my own understanding of my role as a Métis woman within the Métis nation. Christine Welsh (1995) argued two decades ago (as quoted at the outset of this paper) that there has been little written on Métis women even in the period of awakening described by Gaudry (2009). I first showed Grambear Welsh's words six years ago and they initiated many conversations between Grambear and me about the importance of Métis women's stories for the future generations of women who will walk ahead of us. Thus began the formal process of listening to Grambear's stories with the aim to end the silencing of Métis women. The experiences shared during these conversations were not often discussed in my family. For me, the process of listening, compiling, and documenting her stories is part of the larger process of revitalization, resurgence, and decolonization as a Métis woman and feminist.

Jeff Corntassel (2012) discusses resurgence and decolonization by saying that, "being Indigenous today means struggling to reclaim and regenerate one's relational, place-based existence by challenging the ongoing, destructive forces of colonization" (89). In order to disrupt the physical realties of colonialism, he argues that we need to focus on everyday acts of resurgence (88). Indigenous resurgence, he says, means "having the courage and imagination to envision life beyond the state" (89). For Corntassel, decolonization and resurgence are interrelated actions and strategies "that inform our pathways to resistance and freedom" (89). Carrying the stories of our ancestors in our hearts, as Indigenous peoples, is one way to imagine our lives beyond the state

and could also be a form of decolonization. It is a way of looking back, reclaiming our Metis identities and spaces through honouring the Métis women who walked before us (Gaudry 2009; Green 2007).

When working towards decolonization, we must acknowledge that Indigenous women have experienced the brunt of colonialism. As Joyce Green (2007a) argues in *Making Space for Indigenous Feminism,* "Aboriginal feminism brings together two critiques, feminism and anti-colonialism, to show how Aboriginal peoples, in particular Aboriginal women are affected by colonialism and by patriarchy" (23). She maintains that Indigenous feminism takes into account how "both racism and sexism fuse when brought to bear on Aboriginal women" (23). Colonialism, Green (2007b) asserts, is not only an historic event, but an ongoing process. Colonialism refers to the "appropriation of the sovereignty and resources of a nation or nations, to the economic and political benefit of the colonizer" (143). She further explains that the imposition of "European derived and Christianity conditioned" patriarchal ideologies and structures influences and constructs the way Indigenous women experience and are affected by colonialism (143-144). Green (2007a) describes Indigenous feminism as principled, self-reflective, critical, and anti-oppressive (26).

Colonialism functions in academic institutions through knowledge production practices. Métis author Maria Campbell (2012) writes:

> No one has ever researched and documented us from our perspective. Everything has been done by historians and done from a historical perspective until very recently. It is crucial for us to research and document our own stories and to share and discuss them at a community level. To celebrate them is a part of our decolonizing. I believe this must come first. Coming together to tell these stories is a beginning or a start to finding our way home. Home meaning the place where the spirit dwells. (xxv)

As a Métis woman, my academic introduction to issues related to ongoing colonialism and assimilation was through feminist theories and, as such, Indigenous feminism is something that is close to my heart. Two Indigenous feminist theories that I am particularly interested in are theory in the flesh and felt theory. As I read J. M. Bumsted's (1996) book *The Red River Rebellion,* I no-

ticed that Métis women are only present in relation to white men who sought to gain access to Métis communities. They are presented as a tool and nothing more. They are not real living women with bodies, teachings, pain, emotions, and lifelong journeys.

Elizabeth Archuleta's (2006) article "'I Give You Back': Indigenous Women Writing to Survive" challenges Western forms of knowledge production through Cherríe Moraga's "theory in the flesh" (see Moraga and Anzaldúa 1981, 23). Archuleta (2006) cites Moraga, arguing that a theory in the flesh is "one where the physical realities of our lives – our skin colour, the land or concrete we grew up on, our sexual longings – all fuse to create a politic born out of necessity" (101). Indigenous women theorize their lives through collective and lived experiences. Theory in the flesh is thus grounded in "struggles for knowledge in women's bodies" (89). For Indigenous women, these are racialized and sexualized bodies. Archuleta maintains that "Indigenous women reject paradigms that ask us to disassociate ourselves from our lived experiences before we can claim to have the skills and knowledge to theorize" (89). She adds that "[w]e believe theory comes not from abstract written ideas, but from the collective knowledge of Indigenous women" (89).

Indigenous women's experiences have been discredited by Western forms of knowledge production, including by those ways of being and knowing often dominant in academic institutions. In "Felt Theory: An Indigenous Feminist Approach to Affect and History," Dian Million (2009) explains that "felt scholarship continues to be segregated as a 'feminine' experience, as polemic, or at worst as not knowledge at all" (54). She further argues that "the Native's subjective, feminized, infantilized, and above all domestically positioned personal or oral narrative can never be proper history inside a disciplinary space protected by its gatekeeper's desire to be a 'science', convinced of its right to police the past" (71). In her view, Indigenous women *feel* their histories (54). Those histories are created through addressing the multilayered facets of Indigenous women's experiences and the emotions that encompass them. Because their knowledge is rooted in felt emotions, it is not credited in academia, which is often dominated by a focus on rational or calculated thought. Felt theory focuses not on what it is like to be an Indigenous person and the logistics of those histories. Rather, it focuses on

what it *feels* like to be an Indigenous person (61). Felt theory makes space for the brutal realties of ongoing colonialism to be heard, felt, and theorized. It also makes space for Indigenous women's acts of resistance, resurgence, and survival to be heard and respected. We need not seek validation in Western power structures and need not rely on experts, researchers, policy analysts, and bureaucrats. We can challenge Western modes of knowledge production by bringing to the forefront the lived experiences and emotions of Indigenous women, told and explained by us on our own terms.

Theory in the flesh and felt theory, then, are Indigenous feminist approaches that seek to challenge the colonial dynamic in knowledge production. These two theories address how Indigenous women's lived experiences have been discredited by academic institutions and offer anti-colonial ways for Indigenous women to theorize and account for their experiences. They allow us to begin to share our truths and find our way home.

How do I reclaim my ancestry when the feelings of my ancestors, their journeys, and their stories have been rendered largely invisible by white historians? By excluding Indigenous women's theories, emotions, and feelings in academic writing, the violence inflicted on us is concealed. Thus, I aim to theorize differently so that the words spoken by Grambear will not only be heard, but also respected and cherished in and of themselves.

All My Relations: Grambear's Storybook

The book I created that contains Grambear's stories could be considered an act of resurgence (Corntassel 2012). It is made up of goat leather, beading, embroidery, a family tree dating back to the sixteenth century, Grambear's stories, and two maps of where my ancestors lived (see Appendices A-D).

The leather that forms the outside of the book is goat leather that I fleshed, tanned, and stretched. Tanning and stretching hides have been central practices in my family for many generations. My great great grandfather was a trapper and used to work the leather so my great great grandmother could make different items for my family. As I was growing up, my grandfather shared his leather making knowledge with me. I was involved in the entire process of making the leather for this book—from taking the goat's life, harvesting the meat, rendering the fat, removing the brain for tanning the

hide, and stretching the hide. As such, it was important for me to use this specific pelt. To create the cover of the book, I had to hand-scrape the hair off the pelt, which took about eighteen hours. After the hair was removed, I had to re-tan and stretch the hide as well as smoke it. By using a home-tanned hide as the book cover, I also attempted to include and honour the knowledges of men such as my great great grandfather and my grandfather who have walked before me.

The second feature of the book is the beading. There have been many Métis teachings that have been shared with me about the process of beading. Métis peoples are known as the "flower beadwork people" (Belcourt 2008, 144). Christi Belcourt (2008) speaks of reclaiming collective Métis history through art in her article "Purpose in Art, Métis Identity, and Moving Beyond the Self." Belcourt is a Métis artist who creates art to raise awareness and educate people about Métis issues. She describes the use of beadwork in her own paintings by saying that it "infers a sense of history" (147). She also uses "beadwork to make the statement that Métis culture is not fossilized but alive" and as a tribute to her ancestors (147). While beading the outside of the book, I kept Belcourt's teachings in my heart. Beading is a way to honour my ancestors and to tell their stories. Beading is an act of everyday resurgence and part of my process of decolonization.

Beading is something that my family has engaged in for generations. My great great grandmother knew how to bead. Grambear knows how to bead. In my own beadwork, I do not necessarily create a flower or leaf to symbolize each person in my life. With every bead stitched, there is a thought that goes onto the material. Every bead placed onto the material represents everything that was being thought about and the intention behind the beading. A piece of beadwork can thus encompass several different stories within it – those stories are passed down to the person for whom the beadwork is made. Before I began beading the outside of the book, it was first important to transcribe Grambear's stories so that I could think about the strength within them. Those stories and that strength will be passed down to each person who carries the book in the future.

One of the teachings that has been shared with me is the importance of always placing a bead that is not the right colour in the design to remember that nothing

can be as perfect as the Creator. Another teaching that is specific to Métis beading pertains to a particular design where beads are placed along the flower stem. These are called mouse tracks. Traditionally, the Métis from Red River used white beads for their mouse tracks because different colours symbolized different locations. However, today there are many Indigenous peoples who use the "mouse tracks" of a variety of colours in their beading.

The beaded design on the cover of the book was done collectively with Grambear (see Appendix A). After our initial conversation, we talked about different flowers and looked at different styles of beading to create something together. The numerous colours in the piece show the variety and complexities of Métis peoples' experiences today. The colours are inspired by the colours of our homelands. The four stages of plant life—leaf, stem, flower, and bud—show the intergenerational knowledge that was crucial to this process. Finally, the infinity symbols on the side of the book surrounded by blue are the emblem of the Métis nation—which has not always been a source of pride in my family (see Appendix B).

Embroidery also played a crucial role in the creation of the book. Grambear taught me to embroider while I was growing up. It first appears on the cover of the book. I embroidered the words *All My Relations* (see Appendix A). *All My Relations* is a Métis teaching that speaks to the interconnectedness of human and non-human beings and the responsibilities we have to those relations. The second place embroidery appears is on the family tree. I made a ten foot long family tree on cotton fabric dating back to the sixteenth century. In order to connect my ancestors to each other, I used the same embroidery whipped backstitch that Grambear taught me (see Appendix C). Using embroidery was a way to honour the knowledges shared with me by Grambear and how those teachings and her stories connect me to my Métis ancestors.

Honouring Grambear's Experiences

My grandparents' house has always been a comforting place for me. It smells of firewood and leather oil and is filled with "knick-knacks" they have collected over the years—one being a piece of embroidery that says "I love you" that I made for them when I was in the fourth grade. Grambear and I sat in the kitchen of her house—the same house that my grandfather built when my mother was only two years old and the house where I was raised for part of my childhood. Located on top of a hill with a view of the Rocky Mountains to the west across the plains, it is surrounded by their farmland. While I sat listening to Grambear, she often had to get up to stoke the wood stove that kept us warm.

As we talked, three themes emerged: violence against Indigenous women, the importance of family and community, and the value of sharing knowledges. When considering what is important for me to convey to future generations of Métis peoples, these three themes seemed crucial. As "everyday acts of resurgence" (Corntassel 2012), Granbear's teachings on these topics inspired me when considering my responsibilities to my people, community, and family. Métis women give birth to the future of our people. If our women do not feel proud and safe to be Métis, our people will disappear. This means that we need to reconnect as a community to collectively support each other as we awaken, as Gaudry (2009) described, like a sleeping giant. In doing this, we also need to be committed to sharing our knowledges and teachings with each other as a means of healing from the impacts of colonialism.

Several times throughout our conversations, Grambear talked about how Indigenous women were treated by non-Indigenous peoples and, specifically, by non-Indigenous men. When discussing why my family changed their last name, Grambear said that "they changed their names so many times because I think they were on the run and they didn't want to be arrested, especially the men. And there was no respect for the Indian woman or the Métis woman from the white people. I think they raped and did whatever they wanted with them —killed them and left them." She explained that there are men who prey on Indigenous women, that men "are waiting for them—to use them." She identified cultural attitudes in colonial society where "nobody gives a shit about [Indigenous women], except for their parents or their sisters!" The reason for this violent apathy is "because they are Métis or they are Indian." However, she concluded by affirming the strength and inherent worth of Indigenous women in saying that Indigenous women have to "be strong enough to believe what they got in them is every bit as good as the next" (Grambear, personal communication, December 23, 2012). Grambear's words resonate with Andrea Smith's

(2003) insight that colonialism is inextricably linked to sexualized violence against Indigenous women.

It was important for me to hear Grambear's insight on violence against Indigenous women. I have been involved in many different actions and campaigns that attempt to raise awareness about this travesty. When Grambear was talking about this, it was incredibly painful. Anytime she mentioned the violence experienced by many Indigenous women, she would pause for a length of time in between the sentences while shaking her head and sometimes tearing up. I often feel the same way.

At the time when I was transcribing Grambear's stories, I was in the process of organizing the Stolen Sisters Memorial March in Victoria, British Columbia, an annual march intended to raise awareness about and remember the missing and murdered Indigenous women across Canada. That year, the participation of community members was significantly lower than it had been in the past. It was so frustrating to hear Grambear's words and then consider how few people came forward to support us in organizing the event. The frustration increased when I thought about the fact that the Missing Women's Commission of Inquiry report had just been released in British Columbia and how it fell so short of anything even remotely resembling justice (British Columbia. Missing Women Commission of Inquiry 2012; Ball 2012); when I thought about the large crowds at Idle No More events (Ip 2013); and when I thought about how there was increased violence against Indigenous women as a backlash against the Idle No More movement (Nason 2013).

In the giant's awakening that Gaudry (2009) described, it is imperative to look critically at how our women are treated as this process is crucial for our survival. When Grambear said that Indigenous women needed to be strong enough to believe that they are important, it is because the women in our communities are under constant attack, physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Being proud of our Métis heritage is something that did not always exist in my family. When I was a child, Grambear told me not to tell anyone that I was Métis because there was a lot of sexualized violence in our community. This violence was inextricably connected to the violence against the land. Those working in extractive industries were often perpetrators of both kinds of violence. In my own process of awaken-ing, I have begun to identify and challenge those colonial narratives that say Indigenous women are worthless. In my own journey, I have done what Grambear has suggested. I have started to feel strong enough to challenge the attackers. It was through the mentorship and guidance of Christine Welsh (1991 and 1995) and Adam Gaudry (2009 and 2011) that I began to think of my Métis self as important and valuable. This is about being strong enough to recognize that what we have to say, our experiences, our emotions, our frustrations, and our anger are vital to our survival, resurgence, and decolonization.

In Canada, there are currently many hundreds of missing and murdered Indigenous women (NWAC 2012, 4). Grambear's words remind me that colonialism continues and is still based on the subjugation of Indigenous women's bodies. As a Métis woman, I take Grambear's emotions and words very seriously. I will fight so that, in time, when I talk to my grandchildren or nieces and nephews, I can say that something has changed. I will fight so that when I talk to them, and share my own stories, I can say that our communities —Métis communities, but Métis women in particular—are actively resisting colonization.

In order to carry through everyday acts of resurgence while seeking revitalization and moving towards decolonization, it is crucial to consider how we are raising future generations. They are the future of our people. Our children need connection to their community. They need connection to their ancestors (both human and non-human). Their ancestors' knowledge can guide them forward.

The theft of children from our communities by the child welfare system is one major factor that has contributed to our "weakened and dispirited state" (de Leeuw, Greenwood, and Cameron 2010). Grambear and I agreed that the easiest way to destroy a culture is by removing the children. We spoke about how the child welfare system is essentially the same as residential schools, but with a new name. Grambear grew up near the Makwa Sahgaiehcan Nation Reserve. She said that when the children were taken away, it was "like a flood." The reserve became a sad and empty place. She also grew angry when talking about how many children were raped by both priests and nuns, saying that "those bastards should have been hung by their nuts" (Grambear, personal communication, December 23, 2012).

While there was always a risk of being taken away by the state, Grambear was lucky to be raised by her grandparents when her father and mother could not care for her. She further explained that when she was growing up, there was never a babysitter or someone from outside the community that raised the children. Everyone in the community had to participate in taking care of the children and youth.[3] The children would go with their parents or family to social gatherings and even sleep under the desks. Hearing Grambear's stories reminded me of my own childhood. Like Grambear, my sister and I were raised by various family members. We never had a babysitter. This meant that, over time, I had access to many teachings, such as hide-tanning, embroidery, horseback riding, harvesting herbs, farming, and wilderness skills, that were passed down to me. This is something that I may not have had the opportunity to experience had I not spent a significant amount of time with my grandparents. Reconceptualizing parenting to focus on reciprocal relationships with children and youth in the community is something I learned directly from my grandparents. I felt valued and cared for.

The removal of children from their communities is something that must be addressed (de Leeuw, Greenwood, and Cameron 2010). It is difficult to provide a universal solution to the theft of children by the child welfare system. In reconnecting as a people, however, it is possible that it will become easier to directly and collectively resist such removals.

During our conversations, Grambear and I also connected when she shared her practical knowledge with me. She taught me about making moccasins as I was making a pair for my cousin's baby. When referencing the beading design, she said "Yeah and you make your own designs. They got their designs apparently from nature, whichever ones they wanted to look at. And they implemented them. Sometimes animals, sometimes flowers. But mostly flowers I think." Grambear also explained how to use and harvest sinew. Sinew was often used to sew and make moccasins with. She said that after she harvested the muscle memory from the back of the animal, her grandmother would "hang it on the logs in the house until it dried. Then you could separate it into little strings. And all it is is a muscle mass. And then you had to wet it and then twirl it." The final teaching Grambear shared with me was about

canning. Grambear explained that it took "four hours to cook meat" in the broiler pot and that "you had to keep the water boiling, which meant you had to keep the fire going." She also indicated that they did not have pressure cookers growing up, but that she was still able to can meat and that it is possible to do that today (Grambear, personal communication, December 23, 2012).

Why are these teachings relevant? Why do we need to consider empowering our women and thinking about what leaders are emerging from our communities? Simply put, much has been lost in many Métis communities through the forced removal of our people from our homelands and during the hundred-year sleep that Gaudry (2009) described. When I asked Grambear for specifics, such as whether we were involved in the Hudson's Bay Company or if we were part of the buffalo hunt, her common response was that her family members "probably talked about that stuff, but as you are growing up, you only absorb what you want to absorb. It's too bad because we lost a lot over the years." She also explained that many things were not talked about. For example, when I asked if our family was part of the Métis resistances of the late nineteenth century, her response was "Oh I think there was a lot of them but nobody talked about it. They learned how to keep their mouths shut. I think there was lots" (Grambear, personal communication, December 23, 2012). This is because, as mentioned above, after the resistances, many Métis families were on the run.

Conclusion

In only a few conversations, Grambear taught me so much about making moccasins, beading, and making sinew. The potential for knowledge and strength to be shared will increase as we connect more deeply with each other.

The Métis have a teaching that speaks to recognizing that we carry the journeys our ancestors took with us in the paths we walk today. That is the meaning of "All My Relations." It reminds us that, through the Creator, we are all connected and that we need to look out for one and other. Grambear said that "I think the world has to learn how to sustain itself. Everybody has to put in for later on, for seven generations" (personal communication, December 23, 2012). Just as Shirley Green (2007) stated, "it is only by reclaiming our heritage that we can gain an understanding of who we are

and enable us to achieve our full potential, as Aboriginal women" (172).

To conclude, I wanted to honour the Métis woman who helped inspire this project and inspired Grambear to share her stories. Christine Welsh (1991) says:

> Native women will be rendered historically voiceless no longer. We are engaged in creating a new history, our history, using our own voices and experiences. And as we raise our voices—as we write, sing, teach, make films— we do so with the certainty that we are speaking not only for ourselves but for those who came before us whom history has made mute. We have a responsibility to our children and our people to ensure that the voices of our grandmothers are no longer silent.
>
> And so the voices of my grandmothers are alive today, for they speak through me. (24)

The voice of Grambear will speak through me. I will carry her strength, courage, patience, love, and wit in my heart. Her voice and teachings will be passed on to young Métis women to guide them on their journeys of resistance and resurgence. It is only through the voices of our grandmothers that the giant's awakening can occur.

....

Endnotes

[1] I will be using the terms Indigenous and Métis throughout this paper. Taiaiake Alfred and Jeff Corntassel and Alfred (2005) write that "indigenousness is an identity constructed, shaped and lived in the politicized context of contemporary colonialism" (597). Unlike colonial societies that have spread from Europe, Indigenous peoples "are indigenous to that lands they inhabit" (597). Being Indigenous is an "oppositional, place-based existence, along with the consciousness of being in struggle against the dispossessing and demeaning fact of colonization by foreign peoples, that fundamentally distinguishes Indigenous peoples from other peoples of the world" (597). Brenda Macdougall (2006) uses the term *Wahkootowin* when writing about Métis peoples. She says that "*Wahkootowin* is the Cree cultural concept that best represents how family, place, and economic realities were historically interconnected, the expression of a world view that laid out a system of social obligation and mutual responsibility between related individuals—between members of a family—as the foundational relationship within communities" (432-433). Being Métis today is about living a *Wahkootawin* life that was established by our ancestors in the prairies in the nineteenth century. Being Métis means

being Indigenous.

[2] My sister and I call our grandmother "Grambear." To personalize this paper, I will use Grambear when referencing my grandmother.

[3] There many parents whose economic lives and distance from relatives necessitate non-communal practices such as babysitting. So this is not to say that children must always be cared for by their ancestors. Rather, this is a long-term goal as we reawaken and reconnect as a people.

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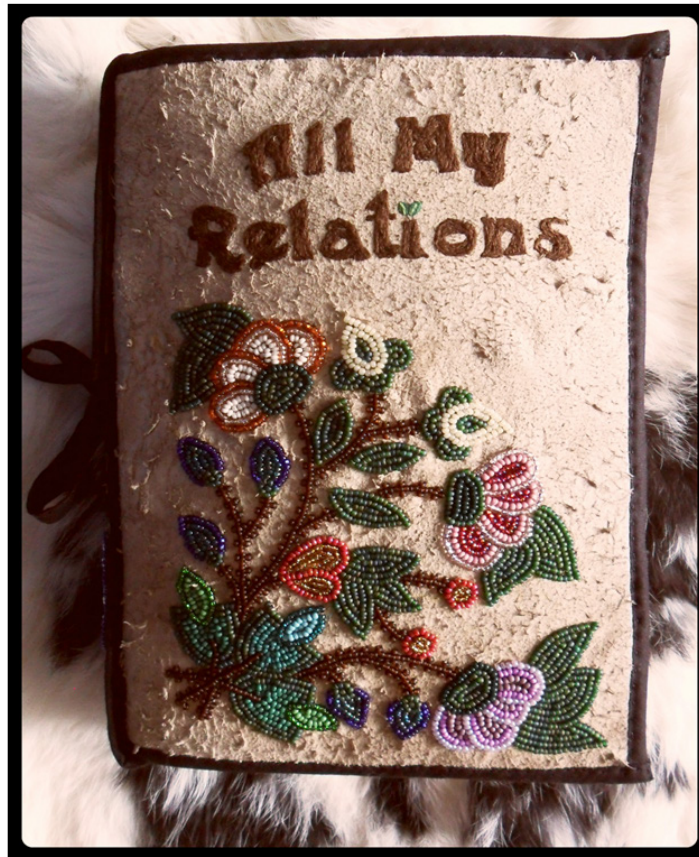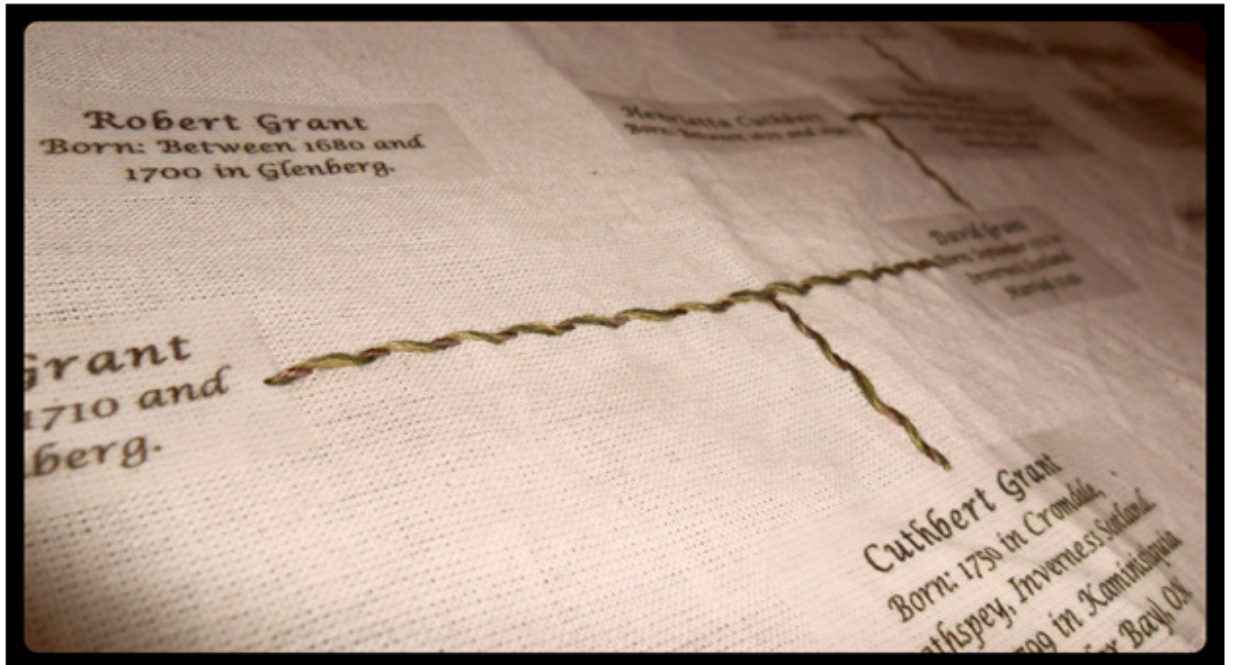
Appendix A

Appendix B

The front and side of the book. The binding is removable so I can add more stories as time passes. The leather is a goat hide that I tanned and stretched. The beadwork was designed by my grandmother and me. *All My Relations* is a Métis teaching.
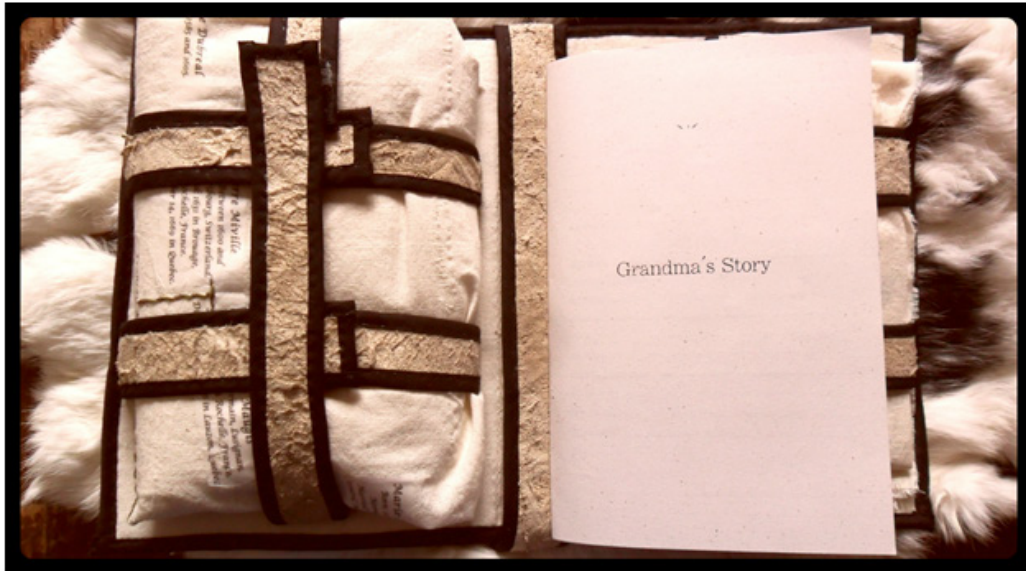
The Metis flag is beaded on the outside binding to pay tribute to my nation.

Appendix C

The family tree is ten feet by two and a half feet and dates back to the early 1500s. I did embroidery to connect each ancestor's name.

The inside of the book: family tree on the left and my grandmother's story in the middle. Behind my grandmother's story are two maps: one of the Red River Settlement and the other of what is now Alberta and Saskatchewan that shows Battle River.

Appendix D

"I Am Not My Bodies": Transgender Embodiment in Nina Arsenault's *The Silicone Diaries*

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Abstract

This article examines transgender embodiment through analysis of Canadian transgender performance artist Nina Arsenault and her autobiographical play *The Silicone Diaries* (2012b). I discuss Arsenault's life writing, plays, and self-portraiture to explore how her pursuit of an exaggerated ideal of beauty simultaneously subverts essentialist notions of what it means to be a woman.

This paper was awarded the second prize in the Women's and Gender Studies et Recherches Féministes (WGSRF) Graduate Essay Prize competition in 2014.

Résumé

Cet article examine l'intégration transgenre au moyen de l'analyse de l'artiste de performance canadienne transgenre Nina Arsenault et de sa pièce autobiographique *The Silicone Diaries* (2012b). Je parle de la vie, de l'écriture, des pièces et de l'autoportrait d'Arsenault pour explorer comment sa poursuite d'un idéal exagéré de la beauté subvertit simultanément les notions essentialistes de ce que signifie être une femme.

Cet article a remporté le deuxième Prix de l'essai (cycles supérieurs) de l'association Women's and Gender Studies et Recherches Féministes (EGFRF) en 2014.

Canadian transgender writer, performer, and artist Nina Arsenault has described herself as an aesthete, an art object, a cyborg, a faery, and a Barbie. This list is not exhaustive; Arsenault fosters spiritual and artistic identifications with a myriad of concepts and figures through her gender transition. Her performance is not restricted to formal productions; she continually enacts her evolving persona and *body* of work. To talk about Arsenault is to engage with her artistic canvas —her body—and thus her physical form as object and image. Her autobiographical one-woman play *The Silicone Diaries* (2012b), a series of seven monologues depicting various points in her life during her extensive body modification and the development of her art, is not the story of a makeover, but of a metamorphosis. Rather than suppress her past experiences presenting as male and her complex subjectivities, Arsenault recuperates the maligned position of "fake"—part of the history of the marginalization of trans people—as fodder for her art practice.

The Silicone Diaries (2012b) spans thirty years of Arsenault's life, beginning in 1979 when she was five years old (206) and ending in 2009, overlapping with the time she started performing the work (224). The play also chronicles the period during which she began her transition, circa 1996 (Halferty 2012, 33). The play was first workshopped and performed in Saint John, New Brunswick in August 2008, but premiered at Buddies in Bad Times Theatre, Toronto in November 2009. The full text of the play was first published in the anthology *TRANS(per)FORMING Nina Arsenault: An Unreasonable Body of Work*, edited by Judith Rudakoff, in 2012. In addition to this play, and another one-woman autobiographical play *I was Barbie* (Handley 2010), Arsenault has created many collaborative self-portraits, which have been showcased in galleries, journals, magazines, and on websites. She has also published a "Manifesto of Living Self-portraiture (Identity, Transformation, and Performance)" (2012a), containing her artistic work-

ing principles and autobiographical reflections on her transition as a quest.

This article will employ feminist, queer, and transgender studies theories, particularly as they pertain to gender performance and transgender subjectivities, to explore Nina Arsenault, both as a self-fashioned, hyperfeminized woman and as an art practitioner. Specifically, I will demonstrate how Arsenault's embodied experience of gender further unsettles ideas within a transgender context in which the social construction of gender is a foundational concept. Although transgender theories posit gender as distinct from the anatomically sexed body, some trans people decide to undertake gender reassignment to align the physical body with their internal gender identity, what trans theorist Julia Serano (2007) refers to as "subconscious sex" (78). Arsenault, meanwhile, has undergone extensive body modification and has crafted a hyperfeminine appearance through hair, makeup, and clothing, but has not undertaken gender reassignment surgery. By feminizing her body through the pursuit of an excessive ideal of beauty while deciding that gender reassignment is, for her, unnecessary and undesired, Arsenault (2012a) participates in what she calls the "aestheticization of the female form" (65) while simultaneously subverting essentialist or naturalized notions of what it means to be a woman.

I argue that Arsenault documents her gender transition as a quest, negotiating gender change and the pursuit of normative femininity in relation to societal expectations and her own sense of authentic selfhood while, seemingly paradoxically, evoking artificiality. Of particular relevance is Arsenault's engagement with concepts of beauty and hegemonic femininity as a trans woman struggling to "pass" and then deciding to pass at a hyper level, which initially inspired her art practice. My analysis of *The Silicone Diaries* and her other artistic work suggests that Arsenault reveals transgender embodiment, for her, as a process of becoming and ongoing assemblage, rather than a linear or straightforward change from one gender to the other. In the play, she also situates gender as both a psychic and embodied experience that, all the while, can be completely detached from sexed anatomy. Arsenault thus explores and challenges what it means to be a woman and what it means to be *real*, refusing to pass, blend, or disappear and instead pursuing femininity as a conceptual experience that exceeds the limits of the "natural" body.

Starting with Judith Butler's (1990) notion of performativity and the social construction of gender as a series of repeated acts, I examine Arsenault's self-conscious creation of a feminine gender expression through extensive cosmetic surgery and body modification. I will then discuss the foundational essays of Sandy Stone (2006) and Susan Stryker (2006b), first published in 1991 and 1994 respectively, on theories of transgender embodiment and experience, re-reading these texts through a focus on Arsenault as a contemporary trans person who represents and enacts several arguments Stone and Stryker offer. Finally, I will turn to Donna Haraway's (2006) "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century," first published in 1991, to examine Arsenault as, in the words of one scholar, "the apotheosis of Haraway's 'image of the cyborg'" (Halferty 2012, 30). As Haraway (2006) theorizes, "[t]he cyborg is a creature in a post-gender world…In a sense, the cyborg has no origin story in the Western sense" (104-105). Although Arsenault has undergone over sixty cosmetic surgeries and procedures, costing approximately $200,000, she made the decision to retain her penis, a point she chooses to emphasize in her work. As a cyborg figure, Arsenault embodies seeming contradictions: as a hyperfeminine woman in appearance, dress, and physical movement, she demonstrates how anatomical femaleness is peripheral and unimportant to the experience and performance of femininity.

Nina Arsenault's hyperfeminine embodiment pushes the boundaries of how gender is imagined. Susan Stryker's (2006a) introduction to *The Transgender Studies Reader* examines how trans identities problematize feminist and queer ideologies and studies by further complicating categories and signifiers once thought stable. She writes that "[t]ransgender phenomena challenge the unifying potential of the category 'woman'" (7) and "call into question both the stability of the material reference 'sex' and the relationship of that unstable category to the linguistic, social, and psychical categories of 'gender'" (9). If the perceived category of "woman" has been integral to the plight of feminism, trans identities unsettle this category. If one of the aims of feminism has been to fight the construction of women as essentially different (and inferior) to men, transgender theories

usefully emphasize and further elucidate the disconnection between birth-assigned sex and social gender.

In *Gender Trouble*, Judith Butler (1990) posits that identity is constructed or made manifest through performance; that is, the repetition of embodied acts. She writes: "That the gendered body is performative suggests that it has no ontological status apart from the various acts which constitute its reality" (185). Thus, gender does not exist apart from how a body performs it and how others interpret that body. In other words, the body writes and is read by others. Butler goes on to explain that "[g]ender ought not to be construed as a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts follow; rather, gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a *stylized repetition of acts*" (191; emphasis in original).

Throughout *The Silicone Diaries*, in interviews, and in writings, Arsenault represents her womanhood in such a way—self-consciously aware of its constructed nature and its existence through performance. While Arsenault is, in the traditional sense, a performer, a theatre artist who performs before an audience and uses websites and social media to share her ongoing artistic work, both formal and informal, she is a performer of gender at all times, on stage and off, in public and in private. As a transgender woman, her gender may not be correctly interpreted if she is not thought to pass. Rather, her projected identity as feminine must be continually reinforced and reenacted in order for her to be read as female. Still, I argue that all women engage in the performance, or communication, of their gender, including those assigned female at birth. Thus, a cisgender woman's femininity isn't more "natural" or less performed. In her discussion of the butch/femme dynamic within lesbian couples, Butler (1990) denaturalizes the assumption that gay is a derivative of straight, with straight being the perceived "original" by arguing that,

> The replication of heterosexual constructs in non-heterosexual frames brings into relief the utterly constructed status of the so-called heterosexual original. Thus, gay is to straight *not* as copy is to original, but, rather, as copy is to copy. The parodic repetition of 'the original'…reveals the original to be nothing other than a parody of the *idea* of the natural and the original. (43; emphasis in original)

Arsenault's gender performance, then, can be viewed not as a copy of the "original"—perceivably posited as the cisgender woman, but as a copy of a copy—an imitation of a woman, which is an imitation of the *idea* of a woman.

Butler's theory of the original as "nothing other than a parody of the *idea*," as it applies to heterosexuality and homosexuality, could be rewritten to apply directly in a trans context. I suggest that, similarly, trans woman is to woman not as copy is to original, but rather as copy is to copy. This analogy plays out in *The Silicone Diaries* in the diary "Me 'n' Tommy Lee (2006)" (Arsenault 2012b). In this diary, Arsenault recounts meeting Mötley Crüe drummer Tommy Lee and ex-husband of Pamela Anderson. This experience resonates as a momentous occasion in Arsenault's life in which she passes for a (cisgender) woman. Solicited to meet Tommy by one of his lackeys, she thinks that "it's a huge ego boost to be hand-picked out of a pack of posing, real women" (218). "Mistaken" as a "real" woman by Tommy Lee, Arsenault invokes Butler's idea of parody while describing "the ultimate silicone sex symbol of all time" (218), Pamela Anderson: "She is a caricature of a woman. Tonight I am a caricature of her. An imitation of an imitation of an idea of a woman" (219). Arsenault acknowledges gender as imitative and understands the performance of femininity by woman as the representation of a concept, not a stable, Platonic truth.

Through the encounter with Tommy Lee—who is not only a straight, cisgender man, but also hypermasculine and, as Arsenault (2012b) claims, "the biggest dicked rocker in the world" (219)—Arsenault reveals the effects of gender performance. Due to her feminine attractiveness and passing as having been assigned female at birth during their meeting, Tommy Lee becomes sexually aroused; Arsenault's performance of sexy, heterosexual femininity is convincing, genuine, and has palpable effects in the real world. While theoretically Tommy Lee *might* not as readily admit to being attracted to a transsexual woman, he is attracted to Arsenault. She monologues that "[e]verything that attracted you to me in the first place, Tommy Lee—synthetic hair, make-up, silicone, attitude, radiance—I don't have to be born a biological woman to have these things, and I want you to get that it is these things that give you the physiological feeling of a hard on" (221). Interestingly, Arsenault and Pamela Anderson are two Canadian

women who have both undergone surgery to achieve a certain appearance—one was assigned female at birth, the other male. While each woman's decision to pursue surgery to achieve a sexualized ideal arose for different reasons, the similarities show hegemonic femininity as achievable unrelated to the gender assigned at birth.

In her examination of gender performance, imitation, and parody, Butler (1990) employs the concept of drag to illustrate how performative gender can operate distinctly from the culturally constructed notion of anatomical sex. She explains how drag, cross-dressing, and even butch/femme identities are a form of parody of a (falsely perceived and exalted) "original or primary gender identity" (187). Butler understands drag as productively informing and reframing how we might understand the relationship between the imitation and what is being imitated (the so-called original). She argues that, "[i]n imitating gender, drag implicitly reveals the imitative structure of gender itself, as well as its contingency" (187). Thus, part of the experience of viewing a performance as drag is recognizing the distinction between the (presumed) sex of the performer and the gender they are portraying. In fact, for a performance to be "drag" hinges on a perceived disjunction between the sex of the performer and the gender they perform, all the while presuming that their sex and gender match. A man performing as a drag queen is able to communicate the signifiers of femaleness, revealing how gender can be communicated —or performed—separate from the "true" gender of the performer. Similarly, for a woman to perform as a drag king, she must communicate maleness while also conveying her (primary) gender identity as a woman. Thus, in drag, two concepts are simultaneously conveyed—the *performance* of one gender and the underlying "truth" of another.

The Silicone Diaries evokes Butler's theories of drag and parody as Arsenault negotiates performing femininity in a way that can be seen as resembling drag due to her transgender status. Her representation of femaleness is exaggerated—long, big hair, thick eyelashes, full lips, large breasts—in the same way that (male) drag performers may typically portray women. The difference, of course, is that she identifies as a woman so she constantly performs femininity, rather than for limited periods of time. In the play, Arsenault (2012b) reflects on the unsolicited advice she has received from people on how to look "real" and "nat-

ural": "People say, 'Don't do that. Don't do that. You won't look like a real woman if you do that. You'll look like a drag queen'" (216). Using Butler's understanding of drag, we can read this passage as indicating that drag is viewed as inherently parodic; it is always understood in terms of a person of one gender imitating the so called "opposite" gender. The drag queen signals femaleness, but is also understood as actually male. Arsenault is not being warned to avoid looking like a *man*, but a drag queen; in other words, a man performing as a woman.

As I have shown, Arsenault demonstrates the ritualized performance of gender as a series of repeated acts in *The Silicone Diaries.* Due to the fact that she was told she was too masculine to ever transition successfully and live as a woman (Halferty 2012, 33), Arsenault approaches the projection of her femininity with artistic alacrity. The feminine appearance she desires to present is effortful, but its deliberateness does not make it any less authentic. In the diary "I am my own self-portrait (2004)," Arsenault (2012b) describes sitting at her "hypermodern, see-through, plastic vanity table" (215) overlooked by a large print of Botticelli's painting of the goddess Aphrodite:

> I'm just looking at myself in the mirror, like I do every day. Different angles. Inspections. This is the most my face will ever look like a natural woman…I'm reaching for my professional aesthetics tweezers. I've had them imported from Iceland. They are capable of getting even the tiniest, finest, white, invisible hairs. I'm not only interested in the perfect shape of the perfect brow. I'm interested in the annihilation of the presence of even the most invisible hairs…Next on my face is a layer of moisture…Next on my face, foundation in little dabs…I draw a dark line where my red lip meets white skin. Inside that line, I like to do another paler line. Inside that, I put lots of lip gloss. (215-216)

Although the careful effort Arsenault describes of creating a feminine image can be seen as arising, in part, from an over compensatory effort because she is transgender, her play describes a socialized, ritualized performance of femininity that is undertaken by many, non-trans women. The application of make-up and the preening of physical appearance are obvious examples of how gender is prepared and performed, but this is only one element of Arsenault's overall mediation of

self and one manifestation of how gender, generally, is enacted in society. Just as her worshipfully displayed Aphrodite print that overlooks her vanity table is, as she describes it, an imitation of a Renaissance masterwork, which is the representation of an idea of the goddess, Arsenault posits "woman" as a concept to be imitated and re-imitated, de-essentializing any notion of what *woman* is or has to be. But as Sandy Stone (2006) explains, performative gender is even more complicated in the case of trans people. She writes that "the varieties of performative gender, seen against a culturally intelligible gendered body *which is itself a medically constituted textual violence*, generate new and unpredictable dissonances" (231; emphasis in original). Arsenault's ability to perform as a social woman, even while retaining anatomy that seems counterintuitive to essential ideas of femaleness, highlights "woman" as a set of tenuous characteristics socially agreed upon to *signify* woman.

How we understand the performance of gender, particularly around how transgender people communicate their gender identities, links to Sandy Stone's idea of "passing." Stone's (2006) essay "The *Empire* Strikes Back: A Posttranssexual Manifesto" is a foundational work in the development of the field of transgender studies. Stone charts the development of transsexualism in the medical arena of sex-reassignment surgery, examining how transsexual experience has been represented autobiographically and speaking to the erasure of transsexual identity through the culturally reinforced goal of passing, as appearing to have been born into one's new (perhaps surgically) constructed gender. Stone (2006) writes of the difficulty making transsexual/ transgender voices heard (and bodies seen): "it is difficult to generate a counterdiscourse if one is programmed to disappear. The highest purpose of the transsexual is to erase him/herself, to fade into the 'normal' population as soon as possible" (230). Thus, Stone calls for reclaiming the transsexual's "erased history" and including that past as a relevant, meaningful, and productive element that informs the transsexual subject's "now" (230). For the male-to-female transsexual, such as Stone, to discredit and discount the complexity of experience that comes from making a transition is to pretend that she was always socially and physically female – to erase a personal story that disrupts cisnormativity or the assumption that biological sex and gender identity always match. As Stone asserts, while passing is posited as "the most critical thing a transsexual can do…to be accepted as a 'natural' member of that gender," passing also "means the denial of mixture" (231). It is this recuperation of mixture, ambiguity, and erased history that Stone imagines as contributing to transsexual theory. Stone's advocacy for a transsexual/ transgender politics that moves beyond the desire to pass, to be erased and invisible, is reflected in Arsenault's identity as a hyperfeminine, hypervisible trans woman. Feeling that she would never pass as a "normal" woman, Arsenault (2012b) decided to go beyond normal, to fashion herself into an ideal, inspired by concepts of "supernatural beauty" (215).

Stone critiques the socially enforced mandate for transsexuals to pass as having always expressed their true gender, which results in the erasure of a transsexual's pre-transition past. Arsenault, on the other hand, undermines the politics of passing by continually acknowledging and even reasserting her origins in a male body. She continues to signal her transgender status through engaging in the reality of that status artistically and through developing an appearance that is "unnatural" and hyperfeminine. Thus, Arsenault's stylized repetition of acts (Butler 1990, 191) includes not only the performance of a female identity, but the performance of a trans woman identity and embodiment—something that occupies its own conceptual space.

I read Arsenault's artistic politics/political art as a response to the call for action by Stone, whether or not Arsenault considers her refusal to try to pass as a deliberate political action. While Arsenault is a woman, she does not deny her past or experiences with masculine physical embodiment. The process of transformation, rather, has brought about a series of significations and resignifications in which Arsenault finds meaning. As Stone (2006) writes, "[t]o deconstruct the necessity for passing implies that transsexuals must take responsibility for all of their history, to begin to rearticulate their lives not as a series of erasures in the service of a species of feminism conceived from within a traditional frame, but as a political action begun by reappropriating difference and reclaiming the power of the refigured and reinscribed body" (232). Arsenault (2012a) seems to assert a similar belief in the intertextual, layered possibilities of her understanding of her body. She explains in her "Manifesto:"

My body was profoundly changed with each surgical shape-shift. I would have about six operations at a time and, therefore, the transformations book-ended distinct phases of my life. Each new version of my body and the societal meanings that were inscribed upon it were destroyed and reinscribed again and again. With every incarnation, I was compelled to create a HIEROGLYPH of who I was in the Now—each new social role, sexual manifestation, gradation of femininity, shade of beauty, layer of artificiality. (66; emphasis in original)

While Arsenault marks the distinct phases of her life, she does not conceptualize her gender transition as a complete rebirth, or, one (male) body dies and a new (female) one is created. For Arsenault to view herself in such a way would be part of the politics of passing, to discount the validity of pre-transition experiences. Rather, she describes the transformation process as one of layering, adding new physical elements to her body while keeping some of the old. Her surgeries and aesthetic modifications are instead perceived as "layer[s] of artificiality" that coincide with the emerging and evolving significations of her socially inscribed body (66). Haraway (2006) contends that "bodies are maps of power and identity" (115), which are read and interpreted socially. However, as Arsenault (2012a) proclaims: "I am not my bodies, which are constantly disappearing" (68). Her sense of psychic embodiment follows the flux and multiplicity of her dramatic physical transformation.

Arsenault's provocative work proposes a re-visioning of what it means to be a woman and what it means to be *real,* unabashedly reclaiming fakeness and plasticity as well as the long denied and avoided associations of woman as sexual art object. In *The Silicone Diaries* (2012b) she recounts, as a young boy, looking at "girlie magazines" for the first time: "The pictures are not of women. They are Goddesses. They have the biggest hair I have ever seen. They have smouldering darkness around their eyes. Fingers rest on exposed round breasts" (207). This monologue ends with her recollection "…I know this is exactly what I will be when I grow up" (207). In the narrative of the play, this episode demonstrates the starting point of Arsenault's quest, the point at which a little boy became enthralled and enamoured with images he would later aspire to resemble. It also evokes a consideration of authenticity.

If the pictures are not of "women," what are they? It is not a flesh-and-blood woman walking down the street, or a photo of a woman whose gender expression is less explicit, that Arsenault (2012a) chooses to highlight in her autobiography. Rather, it is images that engage with "the aestheticization of the female form," (65), which are connected to, and yet distinct from, any notion of the "real woman." "Goddess" becomes Arsenault's name for femininity that exceeds the real, entering the realm of icon and fantasy.

Arsenault has appropriated and sculpted her femininity to the point of exaggeration and unapologetic reverence for an ideal. Her body provokes a re-consideration of the concepts of authenticity and realness as related to feminine embodiment. As Arsenault responded in an interview,

I certainly never walk around thinking, 'I've got a dick,' like that means anything…when I first started to transition, I thought, 'I want to be a woman. I'm going to have a sex-change operation. I'm going to have a vagina.' And then, as I did the surgical procedures, I began to reevaluate what a woman can be…Once you start loosening those rules, you start reevaluating everything. (Thomas 2012, n.p.)

Arsenault's autobiographical and artistic work powerfully contributes to the body of knowledge that argues for a wide variety of ways that transgender, genderqueer, and gender non-conforming people understand gendered embodiment in related to the sexed body. While Arsenault desired extensive body modification to assist her feminine embodiment, she does not comply with the mainstream expectations for gender reassignment that focus on genitals. Considering that Arsenault funded her own surgeries through sex work and was able to spend at least $200,000 on procedures, including an orchidectomy, breast implants, silicone hip and buttocks injections, a tracheal shave, and various facial feminization surgeries such as a jaw shave, brow-lift, and nose job, she could have had a vagina constructed had she so desired.

In Susan Stryker's (2006b) essay "My Words to Victor Frankenstein above the Village of Chamounix: Performing Transgender Rage," she invokes Mary Shelley's classic gothic-science fiction novel *Frankenstein* to use the monster as a metaphor for transgender em-

bodiment. The title alludes to a scene during which the monster speaks to its maker, Victor Frankenstein, for the first time. Stryker (2006b) writes: "The transsexual body is an unnatural body. It is the product of medical science. It is a technological construction. It is flesh torn apart and sewn together again in a shape other than that in which it was born" (245). She locates a powerful and empowering affinity between herself, as a transsexual, and Frankenstein's monster. She theorizes the medical and surgical intervention in the creation of the transsexual body—indeed, the necessity of these interventions for gender reassignment—as similar to Frankenstein's monster, able to exist because of its creator, but exceeding what its maker imagined. She writes: "As we rise up from the operating table of our rebirth, we transsexuals are something more, and something other, than the creatures our makers intended us to be… Transsexual embodiment, like the embodiment of the monster, places its subject in an unassimilable, antagonistic, queer relationship to a Nature in which it must nevertheless exist" (248). Here, Stryker indicates what the transsexual or transgender subject may experience in the world having, through medical science, become "unnatural" or a freak of nature.

Stryker links transgender embodiment to feeling like a monster or a creature, pointing to the potential constructed *un*nature of the transsexual body. By linking the narrative of Frankenstein's monster to transgender experience, Stryker implies that there is a journey that takes place. Just as the monster is created, lives as an vilified outcast, and then finally confronts his maker and tells the story of his creation in his own words, so too, in Stryker's personal history, there are stages of becoming and growing awareness that cultivate "transgender rage." Stryker's essay is an adaptation of a performance piece—an autobiographically informed performance similar to the format of Arsenault's *Diaries*—and both use metaphor and extraordinary identifications to convey their experiences of transgender quests. Similar to Stryker (2006b), who states that "I want to lay claim to the dark power of my monstrous identity" (246), Arsenault is inspired by spells, magic, and myth. Stryker writes that "words like 'creature,' 'monster,' and 'unnatural,' need to be reclaimed by transgender people. By embracing and accepting them, even piling them on top of another, we may dispel their ability to harm us" (246). Here, she articulates a reclaiming of potentially

pejorative identities, a theme which is certainly picked up in Arsenault's work. Instead of shying away from icons of fakeness, such as mannequins and Barbie, Arsenault invites the comparison, and incorporates these icons into her work. A transgender theory of monstrosity, as articulated by Stryker, fits with Arsenault's (2012a) self-portraiture, as she explores identification with various creatures and personae:

> In my life, I have been a boy, a girl, a man, a woman, an academic, a drag queen, a theatre director, a teacher, a reality TV star, a stripper, a whore, a nightlife hostess, a mistress, a storyteller, an aesthete, an art object, a cyborg, an icon, Barbie, an actress, a faery, a witch, and an ascetic. I have also noted that often it is the identities that society despises and degrades that give me the most pleasure and excite my sexuality—the phallic woman, the transsexual, the whore, the woman as object, the woman as property, the woman as art. (68)

The trans person who does not pass may not be able to reconcile themselves neatly into the socially mandated binary labels of man or woman. Just as Stryker advocates for a reclaiming of certain words, the aforementioned litany exemplifies Arsenault's multifaceted identity. The length and diversity of the list illustrates not only a history of transformation as part of her changing genders, but a comfort with multiplicity and ambiguity. Reading them through the lens of Stryker's idea of identifications with the monstrous and unnatural, these identifications can be seen as productive strategies—practical and political—in terms of claiming a transgender identity that is based on identifying with more figures, rather than fewer, and with identities that are often maligned. Trans theorist and performance artist Micha Cárdenas's (2012) notion of the "transreal," a way of understanding multiple and simultaneous realities as a political and artistic medium, is a useful lens for thinking about how Arsenault embodies different personae and embraces different notions of reality. Cárdenas explains that

> the transreal emerged as a response to the daily experience, with varying degrees of violence or banality, of being told that as a queer femme transgender woman my gender was not real, my sexuality was not real and even my body was not real…The transreal is the embracing of an identi-

ty that is a combination of my 'real' body that I was born with and my personal history with another identity that I have written in flesh, in words, in pixels, in 3-dimensional models and across multiple strata of communications technologies. (29-30)

Arsenault's identification with many personae, comfort with embracing artificiality, and invitation for readers/viewers to understand her as a cyborg figure relates to this notion of the transreal. In a world where trans bodies—particularly trans women's bodies—are frequently subjected to transmisogyny and denigrated as fake, Arsenault has welcomed and thus subverted this kind of attack. This fluid, manifold self-concept is not only a source of artistic inspiration, but it is also a strategy of survival, a means to endure the inherently painful process of change and growth, generally, and changing gender in society, specifically.

Arsenault's identification with Barbie, explored in her writing and self-portraiture, is particularly full of complexities. A mascot for literal plasticity, Barbie is a universal symbol of the commoditization of white femininity and proliferation of idealized beauty. As Mary F. Rogers (1999) points out, Barbie is "[a] fantastic icon [which] contributes to a culture by exaggerating what is actual, possible, or conceivable" (3). The "unattainable" beauty posited by the Barbie doll is undermined by Arsenault's attainment of these unrealistic proportions. Her other solo show, *I was Barbie* (cited in Handley 2010) emphasizes the already visible resemblance to the doll in terms of hyperfeminine beauty and plasticity. Another motif of feminine fakeness or unrealness that she employs is the mannequin, present in *The Silicone Diaries* and in much of her portraiture. In several self-portraits, some of which are featured in *TRANS(per)FORMING Nina Arsenault* (Rudakoff 2012), she poses lifeless and doll-like among mannequins. The effect of this is to highlight her own uncanny resemblance, in terms of physical proportions and styling, to a female mannequin. Arsenault's surgically altered, enhanced, and unnatural face and body have served to inspire further art practice, portraiture, and costuming, such as when she is styled to resemble highly constructed or unusually embodied figures.

Arsenault's use of plastic surgery and deep incorporation of her own body into art is completely intertwined with her gender transition and pursuit of hyperfemininity. I read Stryker's monster, Haraway's cyborg, and Stone's call to reclaim erased history through Arsenault's surgical shape-shifting. Like Arsenault's art through surgery, French artist ORLAN's work grapples with beauty, femininity, and the female body and has involved plastic surgery as performance art. Alistair Newton (2012) examines Arsenault's use of her body as the medium through a comparison to ORLAN. He writes: "By way of surgical interventions, both Arsenault and ORLAN interrogate and blaspheme against the Western beauty myth by ironically engaging with its purpose, but also by acknowledging its impossibility as an ideal state in a natural world" (111). Both artists have used surgery to change their appearances for different reasons, but neither has tried to hide their surgical constructedness or appear "natural."

Among many notable performances and installations that engage with themes of femininity, beauty, and female icons, ORLAN did a series of surgical performances in which her face was reconstructed to resemble aspects of different beautiful women from art history such as DaVinci's the Mona Lisa and Botticelli's Venus (Prosser 1998, 61). As Peg Zeglin Brand (2013) argues, ORLAN was not attempting to become more beautiful by transposing these supposedly beautiful features from mythology and art onto her face (311). Kathy Davis (1997) concurs. She explains that, "[a]lthough she draws upon mythical beauties for inspiration, she does not want to resemble them. Nor is she particularly concerned with being beautiful. Her operations have left her considerably less beautiful than she was before" (29). While, ostensibly, aspects of Arsenault's self-portraiture and art practice arose as a result of an initial engagement with cosmetic surgery to facilitate her physical feminization, ORLAN's deployment of surgery emerged through experimental art practice and a focus on the female body and non-conformity. As Jay Prosser (1998) documents, ORLAN responded to a question about the nature of her transformation, stating "that she felt like 'une transsexual femme-à-femme'" (62). Clearly, ORLAN offers a view of cross-body feminine transformation that is not about changing core gender, from one binary to the other, but about changing the representation of gendered embodiment. Arsenault's cosmetic surgery exceeds the basic aspects of gender reassignment. Like ORLAN, her conscious use of extreme or excessive cosmetic surgery explores the relationship of feminine embodiment with legacies of beauty.

As a result of Arsenault's frequent association with cyborgs, a particularly fruitful theoretical text for understanding Arsenault is Donna Haraway's (2006) "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Social-ist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century." I read Arsenault as a cyborg, due to the intervention of surgery, silicone, and hormones into the creation of her body and self. But beyond the superficial connections between Arsenault and cyborgs, insofar as she, in her own mind, has fake, plastic parts, Arsenault corresponds with Haraway's cyborg because she traverses and transgresses boundaries and binaries: male-female, real-fake. Haraway claims that "there is nothing about being 'female' that naturally binds women. There is not even such a state as 'being' female, itself a highly complex category constructed in contested sexual scientific discourses and other social practices" (591). Stryker (2006a) adds to this idea and, using Butler's language, states that "[a] woman, performatively speaking, is one who says she is—and who then does what woman means" (10). Now, as a social and material woman, Arsenault's (2012a) surgeries have "created an external feminine gender to match [her] own internal sense of being" (65). Arsenault was assigned the gender male, but is a woman insofar as she *does* what woman *means*.

There is overlap between transgender and cyborg theories and Arsenault's art practice can be read through both lenses. Just as the trans person traverses boundaries of gender and sex identifications, the cyborg transverses boundaries of human and machine, flesh and silicone. Additionally, the cyborg person is mediated by technology, perhaps surgically, and the trans person who is surgically altered through gender reassignment is also mediated by technology. The cyborg is a crucial identification, as Arsenault exploits, rather than conceals, scenes and poses that illuminate the role of technology in shaping her body and gender change.

Arsenault's work meets at a complex ideological intersection; it works within the ancient narrative of aestheticization and objectification of the female form as well as, simultaneously, the narrative that vilifies the human impulse to be recognized as beautiful and attractive in society. Accepting and embracing this desire, Arsenault's work finds meaning and profundity in the "shallow"—in appearances, skin, and "fake" cosmetic additions to the "real" body—hair extensions/wigs, fake eyelashes, make-up, clothing, collagen and silicone implants and injections. Arsenault has never minimized or downplayed her surgical and hormonal constructedness; rather, she emphasizes her unreal and "plastic" beauty in her art and portraiture. Her play *The Silicone Diaries*, specifically, highlights the centrality of silicone as a ubiquitous signifier of plastic surgery in its title. Her striving for an idealized beauty can be judged as narcissistic, yet Arsenault is comfortable and confident in this self-focus. A mythological narrative finds its way into Arsenault's (2012a) understanding of the inherent narcissism of her work, as she explains: "The work is narcissistic in that I stare at my reflection and an artistic work blossoms within this gaze. In this way, the Narcissus myth is rewritten as productive and communicative" (65). Just as superficiality is reworked and reclaimed for the generation of meaning and self-awareness, narcissism is reconstituted as having creative and dynamic potential.

While Arsenault has stated that her work is not necessarily designed to be inspirational or empowering to others, I see Arsenault's art practice as opening up new and radical ways of finding meaning and profundity in that which has been viewed as shallow, meaningless, or apolitical. In her "Manifesto" (2012a), she writes of her art as "the creation and recreation of the Self understood and presented without shame…not through the minimizing gaze of…a society that attempts to convince marginalized people that they are weak, sick, freaks, victims, unworthy" (69). Here especially, Arsenault's work can be read as an activist's response to Sandy Stone and Susan Stryker's calls to action and the development of a transgender politics.

While transgender experience can sometimes be viewed in a limiting manner, Arsenault shows how there are many different ways being transgender intersects with gender performance. Not all trans people desire to gain access to gender reassignment or to live in society unrecognized as trans. Arsenault's particular experience involves pursuing femininity beyond a typical gender transition, beyond what many assigned-female-at-birth women ever seek to achieve. While her pursuit of feminine beauty is queered because of her transgender status and self-conscious, embodied art practice, her attraction to a certain appearance, and how that appearance would affect one's experience in the world, may not be that different than what brought Pamela Anderson, a

cisgender woman, to plastic surgery and the curation of a certain image.

In this examination of Nina Arsenault's stage play *The Silicone Diaries*, her "Manifesto of Living Self-portraiture," and the use of her corporeal body as a medium for art, I have shown how Arsenault pursues her authentic self—a hyperfeminine gender identity and expression—through, seemingly paradoxically, invoking artificiality. I argue that Arsenault has worked not only to become a woman, but has also created a conceptual space for a transgender identity—not just "passing," but instead going far beyond looking "normal." As Judith Butler posits parody, such as drag, as revealing how gender performance is imitative of socially sanctioned ideas, rather than an original truth, so Arsenault can be read, to paraphrase her own words, as a caricature of a caricature of a woman. Sandy Stone's call for transsexuals to reclaim erased history is foregrounded in *The Silicone Diaries* and Arsenault's life—the play rests on the value of communicating and sharing the transgender quest. This quest can also be read through Susan Stryker's invocation of Frankenstein's monster as a metaphor for transgender rage, as Arsenault recuperates maligned and monstrous identities as part of her layers of self. One such identity, frequently examined in relation to Arsenault, is Donna Haraway's (2006) cyborg, "a condensed image of both imagination and material reality" (104). But while Haraway famously ends her essay with the statement, "I would rather be a cyborg than a goddess" (116), Arsenault combines these figures, showing cyborg and goddess to not be either/or identities, but perhaps mutually constituted facets of a transgender odyssey.

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Delayed Critique: On Being Feminist, Time and Time Again

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Abstract

In this article, I argue for a systematic critique of transphobia in feminism, advocating for a reconciling of trans and feminist politics in community, pedagogy, and criticism. I claim that this critique is both delayed and productive. Using the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival as a cultural archive of gender essentialism, I consider how rereading and revising politics might be what is "essential" to feminism.

Résumé

Dans cet article, je défends l'idée d'une critique systématique de la transphobie dans le féminisme, en préconisant une réconciliation des politiques transgenres et féministes dans la collectivité, la pédagogie et la critique. Je soutiens que cette critique est à la fois tardive et productive. En utilisant le Festival Michigan Womyn Music comme archive culturelle de l'essentialisme de genre, j'envisage comment la relecture et la révision des politiques pourraient être ce qui est « essentiel » pour le féminisme.

In "On Being in Time with Feminism," Robyn Wiegman (2004) supports my contention that history, theory, and pedagogy are central to thinking through the problems internal to feminism when she asks: "… what learning will ever be final?" (165) Positioning feminism as neither "an antidote to [n]or an ethical stance toward otherness," Wiegman argues that "feminism itself is our most challenging other" (164). I want to take seriously this claim in order to consider how feminism is a kind of political intimacy that binds a subject to the desire for an "Other-wise" (Thobani 2007). The content of this "otherwise" is as varied as the projects that feminism is called on to justify. In this paper, I consider the marginalization of trans-feminism across mainstream, lesbian feminist, and academic feminisms. Part of my interest in this analysis is the influence of the temporal on the way in which certain kinds of feminism are given primacy in the representation of feminism. Following the work of Clare Hemmings (2011), I want to intervene in the kinds of stories that are being told about feminism; I want to contribute to a less partial narrative, one where the feminisms included do not simply reproduce histories of belonging for some women. At stake in this paper is a willingness to risk my own unintelligibility, to admit—if even temporarily—to not knowing how to think together all of the tensions that the theoretical project of feminism raises.

In what follows, I will argue that trans-feminism has been a structuring aspect of much contemporary feminist thinking on gender and sexuality. Simultaneously, I will examine some of the conditions that have excluded trans[1] subjects and trans issues from feminist cultural, material, and discursive spaces. In particular, I will consider the politics of trans-exclusion in the entrance policy of Michigan Womyn's Music Festival as a case study and connect this to other exclusions in feminism. I argue that the persistence of these trans-exclusions needs to be evaluated in relation to the ongoing forms of resistance by trans scholars, trans activists, and trans allies. Encouraged by the belief that feminist

theory, activism, and pedagogy can lead to a disruption of hegemonic relations, I am hopeful that the marginalization of trans-feminism is losing currency. Moreover, I am interested in how feminism, as a politic of critique, can be routed toward self-reflexivity in order to re-imagine itself. To conclude my analysis, I will engage in a personal practice of "recitation" (Hemmings 2011) and "reparative reading" (Sedgwick 2003). In this exercise, I aim to signify how feminist political subjectivity is a process of becoming, but also of return, with compassion, to a moment of my own opacity around trans politics in order to read it differently for the present and hopefully for the future. This analysis, then, is about how feminism is a timely project; it is a system of making sense of, valuing, and structuring politics as well as the projection of an image that is outside of, but pivots on, the self. The shape of this project, I suggest, takes and makes time.

Michigan Womyn's Music Festival

The origins of this paper began with my insistence that Michigan Womyn's Music Festival (MWMF) was out of time with contemporary feminisms. At the time, MWMF was still hosting an annual "womyn-only" music and cultural festival in Michigan, USA. Responding to misogyny, homophobia, and racism, MWMF was created in 1976 to provide a place for women where their "difference" would be celebrated and not vilified, protected and not threatened. The majority of the festival participants have historically been lesbian feminists (Kirby 2013). For the duration of the festival years, known colloquially as "Fest," "Michfest," or just "Michigan," festival attendees camped out for a week on what was described as "women's land"[2] and participated in community-building through anti-oppression and self-empowerment workshops, volunteer work, and communal eating and showering. In May 2015, MWMF released a statement that it would be closing its doors that summer, in its 39th festival year (Merlan 2015). The closure of this iconic festival no doubt elicited a range of reactions across disparate feminist communities, including disappointment, ambivalence, and satisfaction.

I chose MWMF as a case study through which to analyze the ongoingness of transphobia within feminism precisely because of the lengthy duration of both the festival and its trans-exclusive entrance policy, the "womyn-born-womyn policy." I suggest that, prior to

closing its doors in 2015, MWMF was peculiarly out of time with itself, an anachronism that was intentional, produced, and revered as such. Through a range of cultural practices, the most obvious being the trans-exclusive entrance policy, MWMF presented itself as a kind of impermeable time capsule of second-wave cultural feminism, an insular and insulating refusal to change in order to preserve its attachments to the presumption of violence inherent in a specifically sexualized gender binary. However, the festival's "womyn-born-womyn only" admission policy, which functioned to exclude trans women and undermine trans men, performed its own kind of discursive and material violence in the demarcation of whose bodies count as women. As a festival grounded in feminist principles and attended by feminist participants, the festival also asserted which feminist subjects counted as the worthy subjects of feminism.

The expulsion of two trans women from the festival in 1991 resulted in the formalization of the "womyn-born-womyn policy" in 1993, and, significantly, in the establishment of the protest movement Camp Trans that same year (Sreedhar and Hand 2006, 161). Each year thereafter, Camp Trans was mobilized as a temporary site of trans politicization and community building, occupying land adjacent to the MWMF grounds (camp-trans.org). Despite this and other highly visible forms of dissent and critique over the following two decades, the exclusive policy persisted and, as recently as 2013, the director of MWMF defended its necessity as a way to preserve women's space (Hurst 2013). Despite the exclusivity of the policy which targeted the barring of certain women, the festival nonetheless sustained a significant place in the life of many feminist subjects. Why and how was it justifiable that safe space for some women pivoted on the formal exclusion of trans women, especially when trans women are so often the recipients—not perpetrators—of violence? That this violence is often at the hands of other women is perhaps not surprising, as feminist theory has made clear the ways in which symbolic violence materializes in everyday practices and actions.

MWMF's trans-exclusive policy demonstrated explicit transphobia and reified an essentialist gender ideology, where gender is both biologically and socially constructed, in order to secure an imagined (festival) culture of (liberated) female victims and (distanced)

male perpetrators. Through sustaining this binary, MWMF cast itself as a utopic "womyn's space" that operated outside of the very oppression it insists upon. In my view, those who attended MWMF colluded with transphobia, benefited from it, and sought to preserve transphobia as an inevitable aspect of feminist culture and therefore feminist politics, activism, and theory. Furthermore, MWMF perpetuated a division between cisgender[3] women and trans women by insisting on the incompatibility between "women's spaces" and trans spaces (Nicki 2006, 159), women's issues and trans issues, and feminist politics and trans politics. I actively write against these distinctions. That transphobia—and its attendant avowals and disavowals—needs first to be recognized in order to be reconciled with contemporary feminisms is an argument I take seriously. This concern prompts me to ask: what does feminism make time for and what does feminist time make?

What strikes me as untimely and therefore paradoxical about MWMF's entrance policy is that it was at odds with the structuring tenet of liberal feminism, mainly the intellectual and activist pursuit of gender equality. More critically, it was at odds with an increasingly diverse range of third and fourth wave feminist politics whose very participants are aligned as and with trans-feminist subjects. The "womyn-born-womyn-only" policy, and the festival culture it created, actively reinforced the hegemonic ideology that gender and—by extension—sexuality are biologically determined. Alice Echols (1989) described this gender essentialism as the key signifier of second-wave cultural feminism, which involved a deepening—rather than an eradication—of gender difference between men and women in the pursuit of an elevated alternative female culture (6). Elements of cultural feminist ideology continue to influence contemporary claims for "women's rights," "women's culture," and "women-only spaces."

MWMF was one site where the persistence of such claims were dramatized. It signaled what "being female" might mean in a space that was constituted in defense of its right to claim itself as such. MWMF was positioned at the intersections of female, feminist, lesbian, and queer subjectivities that continued to struggle for forms of recognition both within and outside the festival boundaries. That these subjects may have been both trans and non-trans was a condition that structured the festival, revealing that the parameters of what

"being female" might mean were not as clearly demarcated as some MWMF organizers and attendees would have liked to believe. The double-edged insistence on sustaining the kind of "don't ask, don't tell" gender injunction alongside an explicit request for trans people not to attend (Sreedhar and Hand 2006, 162-163) revealed that festival organizers were aware that the policy—and, by implication, the festival itself—was frighteningly precarious, capable of being undone *or* upheld by a wide range of "female-bodied" subjects at any given moment. The desire to contain "female bodies" at the festival was as much an effort to celebrate, empower, and liberate "womyn" as it was to categorize, discipline, and police them as such.

Looking backward, how will we read the feminist politics of MWMF and its relationship to trans subjects and to contemporary articulations of womanhood? Perhaps more critically, moving forward, what lessons will we, as diverse feminist subjects—theorists and activists alike—learn not only from the trans-exclusive policy, but its *endurance*? What information does this struggle for meaning and recognition between different groups of feminists suggest about the ways in which access and privilege continue to structure feminist cultural and institutional spaces? Significantly, how will we make sense of the delayed nature of the boycotts to the policy and the festival's resolution to uphold the policy and to close its doors instead (Merlan 2015)?

Lesbian Feminism and Histories of Exclusion

To understand the persistence of Michigan Womyn's Music Festival as a feminist site for community and intimacy for some and as a feminist site of exclusion and hostility for others, it is useful to consider how the practiced prohibition of lesbian feminism from the second-wave feminist movement and its remembering has had ongoing effects on the relation between feminism and lesbian, queer and trans politics (Echols 1989; Jay 1999; Kennedy and Davis 1993; Lorde 1984; Nestle 1987). Freeman (2010) examines how lesbian feminism continues to constitute a "drag" on normative narratives of feminist history (62). She asks how drag might be thought of temporally, as "the excess…of the signifier 'history' rather than of 'woman' or 'man'" (62). In exploring how the lesbian feminist performs a temporal drag on the present by re-signifying as current the presence of a politics of sexuality, separatism, and

essentialism that characterized segments of the second-wave feminist movement, Freeman argues that this "drag" can be "a *productive* obstacle to progress, a usefully distorting pull backward, and a necessary pressure on the present tense" (64; emphasis in original). For her, temporal drag destabilizes feminism as a linear series of progressive movements leading to a better (i.e. *queer*) feminist present. As Freeman emphasizes, the historical and ongoing use of the specter of the lesbian feminist as an ambivalent symbol of second-wave feminism is significant and speaks to the tensions over MWMF in the contemporary feminist movement.

While I contend that lesbian feminism is no more or less attached to gender than other feminisms, its history of exclusion from feminism has come with a sense of loss (Love 2007). This loss manifests—and perhaps rightly so—in a melancholic desire for lesbian spaces, discourses, and intimacies. I suggest that this desire is melancholic because it pivots on the loss, exclusion, and negation that is always already a structuring element of lesbian desire under heteropatriarchy. Thus, the specificity of lesbian feminist transphobia is often mobilized around a fear of loss. This is apparent in the familiar rhetoric of "losing" those members of the lesbian feminist community who transition, become partnered with trans subjects, or identify as bisexual. It is particularly visible in the arguments made about the so-called decline of butch lesbians, a historical debate described as the "border wars" between butches and transsexual FtM, transgender, and trans-masculine subjects (Halberstam 2005; Noble 2006). The renewal of this rhetoric in recent criticism demonstrates the endurance of loss as a condition of contemporary identity politics (Halberstam 2015).

This projected sense of loss is most clearly evident in the sentiment of "giving up" lesbian feminist space to include trans subjects. Rather than an extension of lesbian feminist politics across a broader range of subjectivities navigating misogyny, racism, classism, and homophobia, this kind of politic tightens rather than expands lesbian feminism—as demonstrated by MWMF and other struggles over "women's space." For example, in "Reclaiming Raunch? Spatializing Queer Identities at Toronto Women's Bathhouse Events," Catherine Jean Nash and Alison Bain (2007) initially position their research as invested in how queerness as a politic and not just an identity might allow for

enlarging "women's spaces" to include trans subjects. And yet, their conclusion laments what they deem is a lack of "material and symbolic spaces where lesbian identities can be expressed" (58). Drawing on the logic of cultural feminism as an elevation of "female" over "male" embodiment, Nash and Bain charge trans and butch lesbian masculinities with eroding women's spaces *for cisgender lesbian feminist subjects*. What is striking about this article is not its commonplace transphobia, but rather how it initially displaces it only to confirm it in the end. In this way, I suggest that feminism is often mobilized as a Trojan horse for certain lesbian (and queer) politics that resist a logic of loss through a retreat into gender essentialism.

Discursive Struggles: Trans-Feminism in the Academy

Michigan Womyn's Music Festival's entrance policy was a manifestation of an ongoing history of transphobia within feminism that, despite decades of opposition, continues to find an audience across a range of discursive and cultural modes. The most scathing and by now historical document promoting transphobia in the name of feminism has been Janice Raymond's (1979) *The Transsexual Empire: The Making of the She-Male*, which posited that trans women seek to undermine feminism through their admission into feminist and women's communities. Emerging out of the ideological moment of cultural feminism, Raymond's text continues to effect the present as it is called on to justify and make sense of contemporary expressions of gender essentialism and transphobia. For example, in 2013, Janice Raymond was invited to speak *as a representative feminist* at the Montreal Massacre memorial event organized by Vancouver's Rape Relief—a women's shelter renowned for its explicit transphobia (Eliot 2004; Chambers 2007)—that was immediately boycotted by trans activists and allies (Vancouver Rape Relief and Women's Shelter 2013). There has also been a marked expansion of transphobic feminisms, particularly with the formation of groups identifying as "Trans-Exclusive Radical Feminists" (TERFS). TERFs subscribe to a scarcity version of so-called radical feminism, arguing that they are the border-vigilantes of its project. TERFS have organized online and in feminist and queer community spaces and have become known for bullying, harassing, and even physically assaulting trans women and trans

feminine people (Williams 2013). Echoing Raymond's vitriolic and transphobic text, Sheila Jeffreys' (2014) *Gender Hurts: A Feminist Analysis of the Politics of Transgenderism* has been revered by TERFS. However, the successful mobilization of trans activists and trans allies against the promotion of the book has effectively shut down a number of public launches (Goldberg 2014). It is evident that through the leadership of trans advocates and activists, broad based resistance to explicitly violent forms of feminist transphobia are gaining momentum.

Significantly, the tightening of MWMF borders in 1993 occurred at the same time as what can now be categorized as the explicit emergence of trans-feminist scholarship in the 1990s (Enke 2012, 1). Making space for trans scholars, trans studies, and trans-feminism within the academy, however, has been a continual struggle, landmarked by Sandy Stone's response to Raymond's personal attack on her in "The *Empire Strikes Back: A Posttranssexual Manifesto*" (Stone 2008). Critical scholars continue to describe a complicated relationship between trans scholarship and feminist studies (Noble 2006, 2012; Scott-Dixon 2006; Stryker 2007). Anne Enke (2012) suggests that, while "Gender and Women's Studies is one place where transgender studies has managed to make itself an institutional home," it is nonetheless "an ambivalent home" (2). Enke argues that "trans might be central, not marginal" to the project of academic feminism, but maintains that, in the contemporary university, "trans literacy remains low" (2). In an assessment of his experience working in the institutional structure of an academic Women and Gender Studies Department, Bobby Noble reflects:

> Trans-entities have always been present inside feminist spaces; to make a claim to the contrary is to fly in the face of at least thirty years of writing and debate about the presence of trans bodies 'on the front line.' The degree to which those bodies remain *located within* or *dislocated from* stories about actively reimagined pasts as well as academic and disciplinary communities and their nomenclatures is precisely the stake to be won or lost. (283)

The stakes remain high in how feminist space will be occupied, particularly in academic institutions. Feminist pedagogy holds the promise of transforming existing power relations and engaging in inter-generational knowledge transmission; however, the preservation of exclusionary spaces and hierarchical relations is equally possible.

Susan Stryker (2007) argues that the necessary inclusion of trans issues in academic feminism must be accompanied by the presence of trans scholars at the faculty level (67). She emphasizes that the failure to do so is neither "intellectually responsible, nor ethically defensible" (67). She further insists that "it is past time for feminists" to locate the urgency of transgender issues within feminist institutional environments (68). Critically, what both Noble and Stryker point to is not only the struggle for discursive space from which to launch trans-feminist critiques, but material space as well. Advocating for the adoption of affirmative action programs for trans scholars, Stryker (2007) argues that the construction and preservation of the borders of academic feminism remains contested (68). Academic feminism is also situated in increasingly neoliberal and corporate institutions that can be ambivalent about or hostile to Gender and Women's Studies programs, which in some instances experience conditions of precarity (Carlson 2010). In a similar way that "loss" becomes mobilized in lesbian feminist imaginings of space, academic feminism, as currently positioned in the contemporary university, might be reticent to assert its goals for fear of closure or co-optation (Eichler 1999). How individual departments and institutions navigate issues related to access for marginalized subjects is certainly heterogeneous; however, as long as trans scholars and trans issues remain marginal to academic feminism, the borders of the discipline will be subject to contestation and critique.

On Critique, Recitation, Repair

I am certainly not the first to suggest that what we read and write matters, that what we give time to is politically relevant. In his discussion of the centrality of pedagogy in the production of liberatory knowledge, Paulo Freire (1993) wrote about the intimacy between dialogue and critical thinking, which "discerns an indivisible solidarity between the world and the people and admits of no dichotomy between them—thinking which perceives reality as process, as transformation, rather than as static entity— thinking which does not separate itself from action, but con-

stantly immerses itself in temporality without fear of the risks involved" (92). Friere's emphasis on "process" and "transformation" that is "immerse[d]" in a "temporality" is instructive to my project here, as it points to the critical potential for dialogue to generate—not stifle—knowledge (92). This critical intention and its connection to time—as it is the most anxious of times that beg for the most serious of questions—is taken up by Wendy Brown (2005) who offers "critique as a practice of affirming the text it contests" (16). The pursuit of knowledge, through a loving engagement with a text, is to Brown a "reclamation" wherein "critique takes over the object for a different project than that to which it is currently tethered" (16). I don't use the word "loving" here blithely, but rather I wish to draw attention to the affects that are mobilized in turning towards a text that at once generates discomfort, frustration, or even worry as well as the optimistic promise of possibility. In a project like feminism that is bound by its politics in time, there is certainly a lot at stake in returning to a text—or a cultural object like Michigan Womyn's Music Festival—that might signify an intellectual impasse or appear anachronistic to current political urgencies. As I hope to demonstrate below, that there is an affective dimension to what counts as a feminist priority might signal where our affective attachments lay dormant and this is precisely where critique is required.

In her analysis into Western narratives of feminism, Hemmings (2011) performs one such powerful strategy through her concept of recitation, which she describes as a "reading process" that begins "from the affective investments" in narratives of absence (180). This process of textual recitation, which could mean interrupting, substituting, or revisiting earlier texts, is envisioned as "a breaking open of the presumed relation between past and present" and not the pursuit of "a new, fixed relation between the two" (181). She insists that, in order to engage in this practice of recitation, our "attention" must be directed towards "what happens" in this process of dialogue between the prior occlusions and "what is, importantly, *already there*" (180; emphasis in original). I would suggest that Hemming's strategy builds on Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's (2003) discussion of "reparative reading," which is an "impulse" that is "additive and accretive": "it wants to assemble and confer plentitude on an object that will then have resources to offer an inchoate self" (149). Particular-

ly in relation to the encounters between feminism and lesbian, queer, and trans politics or, more specifically, the encounter of the knowledge-seeking subject with feminism itself, the impulse to repair offers political, affective, and intellectual possibilities that extend beyond the not-so-simple injunction to critique what is obviously there. Thus, both recitation and reparative reading signify a temporal modality of knowledge that asks texts—and authors—to be accountable in the present, perhaps for a better future. This accountability is not only to the absences, the ignorance, or the injuries the text may have produced, but also to its context, its process, and its relationality. To return to a text with an eye to compassionate critique is to offer it a chance to speak again, to articulate itself differently, and, perhaps most importantly, to recognize its attachments. This is a process of generosity—but what else could we offer "our most challenging other" than an invitation to learn?

I return, then, to my own feelings around MWMF. I am moved by the idea that remembering has a pedagogical function; in dramatizing a "difficult return," it enables a "reckoning that beckons us to possibilities of the future, showing the possibilities of our own learning" (Simon, Rosenberg, and Eppert 2000, 4, 8). To allow that feminism is temporally bound is to acknowledge that politics can—and do—change. To insist, as I have throughout this paper, that feminist projects make and take time is to draw attention to the "directions" that feminisms take in relation to the worlds they make and unmake around them (Ahmed 2006). I offer, here, a recitation of my own writing in the effort to undertake a reparative reading, as a gesture of accountability and of compassion, to a feminist self I am no longer in time with, but that I need to make time for in the present, if only to learn with her. I hope, in continuing to fumble through my own intellectual and emotional opacity, that the feminisms I encounter and am a part of can become not only increasingly accountable to trans-feminisms, but can become deeply unsettled and moved towards new possibilities by these relations.

Rereading My Own Michigan Womyn's Music Festival History

Towards the completion of my undergraduate degree, when I was pursuing a major in Women's

and Gender Studies and a minor in Sexuality Studies, I wrote a course paper called "Moving Beyond Fantasy: Lesbian Feelings, Utopias, and Performances Across Space and Time." I recall that, in the process of writing, I felt thrilled about the unfolding dialogue between my developing ideas and the primary texts. For the first time in my education, I felt visible within the grammar of my own writing. As a self-identified lesbian feminist throughout my early-mid twenties, I often felt the drag my politics produced as I forced lesbian/queer critiques into Women's Studies classrooms and feminist critiques into what seemed like the predominantly male canon of queer theory. Through reading feminist theory, I had begun to register how "another world" of queer lesbian feminism was being articulated in theory. I wanted, desperately, to be part of this world—and my feminism, in line with my body, was drawn to this utopic space. Thinking about utopias is a theoretical and imaginative way to acknowledge what is not real, but what is simultaneously longed for—and the discursive resonances of those imaginings, in writing, do have real effects. This excerpt from my 2008 paper signifies, I think, how my own sense of invisibility and undesirability as a cultural agent took precedence over critically engaging with those effects:

The Michigan Womyn's Music Festival is a fully functioning and legitimate temporary lesbian world, renowned, revered, and reviled for its 'Womyn Only' policy. The 'Womyn Only' policy, which is not explicitly stated on Michigan Womyn's Music Festival website or registration form, has nonetheless given rise to charges and protests against the Festival's 'transphobia.' The Festival's conviction to create a female-only space has resulted in their rigid definition of 'woman' as a womyn-born-womyn only. Clearly, transsexual and transgender men and women are excluded from this definition and the Womyn's Music Festival, resulting in the formation of a radical opposition festival, Camp Trans. Furthermore, while the utopic vision of the female-world of Michigan welcomes and relies on its lesbian participants, the 'Woman Only' policy can raise uncomfortable issues even for lesbians, as many lesbians feel they are at odds with the essentialist and feminizing notions of what 'woman' means. Nonetheless, the Festival operates as an alternative space within culture where normative notions of gender and sexuality can be abandoned and challenged, provided these challenges are concomitant

with the particular kinds of lesbian feminist politics and ideologies the Mich Fest represents…Within young queer urban subcultures, Mich Fest can represent a regressive, stale climate that some politically correct queers aggressively avoid. (McKenna 2008, 15-16)

In this analysis, I contemplated for whom MWMF might be a utopic space and theoretically grappled with its "womyn-born womyn only" policy. I have never attended the festival and have for a long time been critical of the policy; yet, what I want to insist on here is that my logic ran parallel to the discourses that other cisgender feminists continue to make—that is, critique of MWMF is entertained only up to the point that it demands that non-trans women give up aspects of their privilege (for evidence of this, see Cvetkovich 2006; Browne 2011). While I *sympathized* with the problematic of a politics of exclusion, this excerpt reveals how my provisional acknowledgement of "transphobia" was eclipsed by an assertion that MWMF still offered a "good time" to some women—specifically, cisgender lesbian feminists. Significantly, it is my "nonetheless" that signifies my prior willingness to grant to cisgender lesbian feminists the choice of a "utopic," "temporary," and "legitimate" space against the rights of trans people, specifically trans women, to also participate in this liberatory choosing (McKenna 2008, 15). I certainly did not consider myself politically equipped enough to be a trans ally when writing that, but I also did not imagine that I had attachments that might be transphobic either. However, when rereading the anxiety that is expressed in my acknowledgement of the opposition to MWMF contained in the phrase "that some politically correct queers aggressively avoid" (15), I can account for possessing a real "fear of the risks involved" in expressing what I *already knew* were untimely lesbian feminist politics and desires (Freire 1993, 92). I would later be forced to reconsider those politics; however, in this excerpt, my unease about my own temporal subjectivity was supported by an orientation to a feminism that clung, with equal anxiety, to trepidation about change, to a way of thinking about gender that relied on a sex/gender binary, and melancholically believed in the inevitability of inequality.

To acknowledge this, as I did then in an accidental way, speaks to the way in which our temporal attachments inform our politics and to how these partial truths are often buried in our criticism. Significantly,

it was in my pedagogical relationship to the non-iden-
titarianism of Sedgwick and in the proximity of trans
activist communities that I began to abandon what
I thought I already knew in order to learn something
different. This is not simply a story of my relation to
trans-feminism, but of how my encounters with the in-
herent difficulties of feminist theory have provided me
with the analytical tools from which to view the world
beyond my own limited subjectivity. As my feminism
has transformed in relation to letting go of certain ideas
and directing itself towards uncertain ones, I continu-
ally come up against the limits of my ability to imagine
otherwise. These new impasses are made all the more
frightening when I experience prior incarnations of my
self within them, aspects still struggling for recognition
against the sheer magnitude of my own unknowing.
But to occupy a temporality that engages with the prior,
present, and future fears of error, misrecognition, and
ignorance is precisely to learn—what is pedagogy, poli-
tics, or intimacy without the hope that being shaken up,
broken open, or reassembled anew is really possible?

Conclusion

To speak out against the temporal pull of the
mainstream, to interrupt the hegemony of liberal fem-
inism as *the* platform for gender equality for certain
privileged "women" is to elucidate a kind of "drag"
against the overwhelming flow of feminist discourses
moving in the direction of liberation for some "women."
To recall Freeman (2011), there is indeed something
"productive" in the "obstacle" posed by this undertow
(64)—it demands us to look beside, behind, and per-
haps underneath the tendency to represent feminism as
a politic stuck within—and captivated by—the gender
binary. I suggest that we might now be able to conceive
of the possibility of being feminist in a fourth-wave mo-
ment. This is not to dismiss the movements and poli-
tics that inform the contemporary, but to consider them
alongside the urgencies of the present, one of which is, I
argue, the prioritizing of trans-feminism within all fem-
inisms (Enke 2012; Irving 2014; Serano 2007; Stryker
2006). As trans women—particularly those who are ra-
cialized—continue to be among the most socially and
economically marginalized women, experiencing accel-
erated rates of incarceration and violence, a feminism
that ignores, downplays, or undermines these realities
is certainly anachronistic and ahistorical. Moreover, the

contributions of trans people to a variety of liberation
movements across race, class, sexuality, and gender, in-
cluding their own, is of critical significance to any po-
litical project that seeks to challenge and account for
gender inequality.

Instead of turning away from a moment of my
own opacity to understand trans politics in relation to
feminism, I have argued that non-trans feminists have
a responsibility to become more familiar with the in-
equality those moments engender. Precisely because
transphobia is difficult, confounding, or uncomfort-
able—*least* of all for cisgender people—requires actions
of solidarity and allyship by those who have the privilege
to interrogate and, ultimately, to challenge this form of
gender inequality. Through this return to a prior fail-
ure to take seriously the transphobia inherent in Mich-
igan Womyn's Music Festival's trans-exclusive entrance
policy, I have hoped to demonstrate the possibility for
reevaluation that time enables. The temporal influenc-
es feminist politics not only by situating them within
a nexus of power relations between the historical, the
present, the local, and the global, but also through the
sheer banality of time's passage. Subjectivity is not static
and neither are our politics; indeed, the possibility that
we can and will change makes feminism a worthy ven-
ture. As Michigan Womyn's Music Festival shut its gates
for the last time last year, the struggle for recognition,
representation, and access to resources for trans subjects
remains, beyond the festival grounds. How trans-femi-
nism, trans activism, and the diversity of trans people
will be included within broader feminist accounts of
this complex history continue to unfold. This closure, I
argue, is certainly delayed, but with some confidence I
can say that it is, indeed, about time.

Endnotes

[1] I employ trans here as an umbrella term that is inclusive of such gender identifications and gender expressions as transgender, transsexual, gender queer, gender neutral, etc.

[2] Without having attended the festival, I am unclear about how the festival framed this assertion in relation to settler colonialism and Indigenous peoples land rights.

[3] Cisgender refers to someone whose gender identity and gender expression aligns with the sex categorization made at birth by a medical practitioner.

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Feminist Accused of Difference from the Self

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Abstract

In this article, I read Cynthia G. Franklin's (2009) discussion of Jane Gallop's (1997) *Feminist Accused of Sexual Harassment*, arguing that Franklin's criticism is rooted in disavowed identification. Next, I explore Gallop's memoir as generating such strong reactions as Franklin's because it describes the intense and originating conflict of separating from one's mother to develop a mind of one's own. I conclude by analysing my own identifications with Gallop and her text.

Résumé

Dans cet article, j'examine la discussion par Cynthia G. Franklin (2009) de l'ouvrage *Feminist Accused of Sexual Harassment* (1997) de Jane Gallop, en affirmant que la critique de Franklin est enracinée dans une identification désavouée. Ensuite, j'explore l'idée que le mémoire de Gallop génère des réactions aussi vives que celles de Franklin parce qu'elle décrit le conflit intense et initial de la séparation d'avec la mère pour développer sa propre individualité. Je conclus en analysant mes propres identifications avec Gallop et son texte.

Introduction

A woman's intellectual and academic work bears a complex emotional history. The infantile separation of one's body and mind from that of the mother is at the origin of one's capacity to think, learn, and create something in and of the world (Kristeva 2001; Pitt 2006). The development of subjectivity—of an individual self—thus depends on an unbearable and destructive loss: the loss of the infantile belief that one's self and one's mother are the same (Harrison 2013). Alice Pitt and Chloë Brushwood Rose (2007) argue that attending to the psychical processes that structure one's capacity to think and learn will help to free up those capacities and, concurrently, that analysing the blocks, strange eruptions, and difficulties of one's intellectual life can help elucidate the vicissitudes of the inner world. They call this the work of making emotional significance and argue that such work is crucial for those who wish to make for themselves a life of the mind. In this article I explore the emotional significance of the mother's difference for feminist women academics.

A life of the mind can feel at once welcoming and alienating for women scholars who may experience the academy as a site of simultaneous belonging and estrangement. Nancy K. Miller (1997) evokes this ambivalence with her questions: "Can a woman, more precisely, *how* can a woman be at home in the university? Or can't she?" (983). Susanne Luhmann (2004) argues that generational conflict is a factor in what constitutes at-home-ness for feminist scholars. Because the future directions of Women's and Gender Studies, for instance, will not necessarily align with the history of the field—its past directions—what feels homely for a given scholar will likely shift with her generational identifications. Generational conflict implicates the dilemma of the mother's difference. Luhmann contends that the mothers of institutionalized Women's and Gender Studies often experience its future as a loss if it doesn't align with the past priorities and paradigms that those mothers set in place. Through the inevitability of generational

conflict—inevitable because it is a condition of our very subjectivity and capacity to think—the mothers of the field may no longer feel at home in the very home that their labour built.

Clare Hemmings (2011) highlights how generational conflict informs the structure of scholarly feminist narratives, conversations, and debates. She notices that Western feminist theory tends to proceed along particular discursive lines: progress and loss narratives dominate the field. Generational conflict haunts these narrative structures: progress narratives tend to be employed by junior feminist scholars who imagine that Women's and Gender Studies is steadily ridding itself of the exclusions that have marked its history. Hemmings argues that theorists who deploy progress narratives cannot notice the debt that they owe to the founding mothers of feminist theory and Women's Studies. In wishing to represent Women's and Gender Studies as increasingly inclusive, progress narratives can exclude the important contributions of the intellectual mothers of the field. Loss narratives, on the other hand, operate through a reversal of this kind of discursive aggression. More senior theorists who tend to draw on these narratives imagine a loss of intellectual rigour in the field as well as of political action. These theorists appear resistant to change in the academic terrain of feminist theory and resentful that junior scholars take their work in new and unanticipated directions. These narrative structures, which organize the field, both effect and reflect conflict; conflicts within feminist theorizing can feel so intolerable because they recall an intolerable condition of subjectivity and language: the original confrontation with the mother's otherness.

To grapple with how generational conflict emerges in feminist narrative and what kinds of emotional significance one might make of it, I undertake a close reading of a memoir by an academic feminist, one who positions herself as both a daughter and a mother of Women's Studies in the United States. A story about generational conflict and its effect on women's at-homeness in the university, Jane Gallop's (1997) *Feminist Accused of Sexual Harassment* brings into sharp relief the emotional significance of the dilemma the mother's otherness poses for the feminist academic woman. I begin with Cynthia G. Franklin's (2009) reading of Gallop's memoir, asking what is at stake for Franklin in *Feminist Accused*. In the next section, I offer my own in-

terpretations of *Feminist Accused of Sexual Harassment*. I read it as a tale describing academic women's defenses against the condition of loss that enables thinking. Gallop's memoir chronicles the thinking woman's need to navigate the problematic reality that she is not of one body, mind, and self with her intellectual mothers. In section three, I turn my focus to my own ambivalent identifications vis-à-vis this memoir, noting the ways in which my reading repeats both daughterly violence on Gallop and motherly violence on the graduate students who populate the text. I risk exposing the tangle of my defenses and identifications in order to think in new ways about how ambivalence structures academic life for women.

Memoir and the Crisis in Authority

In her book *Academic Lives: Memoir, Cultural Theory, and the University Today*, Cynthia G. Franklin (2009) argues that academic memoirs, proliferating rapidly since the 1990s, offer us a vantage through which to consider the problems, issues, and intellectual trends that higher education faces in the context of the increasingly neo-liberal university. In particular, Franklin is interested in debates surrounding and shaping the status of the humanities, contending that "academic memoirs serve as a barometer for the state of the humanities during a period of crisis" (2). She also notes the way in which the genre of memoir offers established academics (to whom she refers as participating in the "academic star system" [see, for example, 1]) a complex opportunity to comment on their academic and institutional environments: academic memoirs, frequently published by prestigious university presses, often offer critiques of the university, but they do so from the author's secure and privileged location as tenured "stars" *within* the academy. Franklin highlights the way in which the memoir genre softens the blow of academic memoirists' critiques not only because of their ironic position vis-à-vis the academy—they critique the very institutions which support their capacity to offer critique—but also because the genre itself is structured around a logic of individualism and, as such, allows writers to present their views as personal while also, paradoxically, overlooking the "ways reigning theories can be fueled by personal investments" (26). Franklin is interested in "the complex story that accounts of individual professors' lives have to tell about the current

cultural and political climate in the academy" and regards memoirs as "offering spaces that are more musing and pliable than those afforded by theory [allowing authors to] display contradictions between the personal and political without having to reconcile them" (1-2, 2). Yet Franklin is also wary of the individualism of "the monological genre of 'me-moir'" because it can obscure the power and privilege inherent to the academic memoirist's professional position (158).

Even for scholars committed "in their other work…[to] a progressive politics and structural analyses of power," memoir can offer tenured academics a space in which to posit themselves an exceptional individual and thus, Franklin (2009) argues, to overlook their own locatedness within matrices of power and politics (4). Franklin articulates this complexity: "I am especially interested in how memoir both depends on institutional privilege and can render it invisible" (23). Franklin identifies this function of memoir as specific to the "memoir boom" of the 1990s (see Miller 1997; Gilmore 2001), arguing that the memoir writing coming from the academy in the 1970s and 1980s functioned as a demand for recognition of the ways in which the personal is, precisely, political (Franklin 2009). In those decades, academic memoirs tended to be "by those challenging or at the margins of the academy (i.e., Gloria Anzaldúa, Angela Davis, and Cherríe Moraga)" (4). 1990s memoirs, on the other hand, tend to be written by academics "around the age of fifty, after they became full professors and established a national reputation" (4). Franklin's characterization of the landscape of academic memoirs in the 1990s relative to those from the 1970s or 1980s evokes the problem of generational conflict: how can one acknowledge one's indebtedness while also creating something that differs from—and perhaps appropriates, alters, or even ruins—those objects to which one is indebted? And, how does generation affect one's relative power in the world? The intellectual labour of the women of colour memoirists whom Franklin cites above includes carving out an academic place for personal narrative by using it to expose complex workings of power and privilege in everyday life. Built on the back of this important work, Franklin argues, memoirs that come later destroy, or at the very least render invisible, the important links between the personal and the political that those early memoirists' labour helped to forge. Franklin's analysis raises the question not only of how

generation informs the "academic star system," but also how that system—which both influences and is influenced by who gets canonized as the fathers and mothers of a given field of thought—is structured by race, class, power, and privilege.

Writing of academic memoirs written since the 1990s, Franklin (2009) asks: "Must a focus on the individual happen at the expense of larger, potentially revolutionary, social and political identities and concerns that challenged the academy in the 1980s?" (6). This echoes a question that fuels feminist scholars' debates about the dilution of a politically feminist agenda that may or may not accompany feminist theory's institutionalization in the academy. For instance, just as Franklin argues that academics who regard themselves as politically progressive have, in their memoir writing from the 1990s on, traded their social situatedness for a radical individualism, M. Jacqui Alexander (2005) argues that "subordinated knowledges within the academy have traded radicalism for institutionalization" (5-6).

Franklin's (2009) focus on the state of the humanities includes the field of Women's and Gender Studies—one such home for the "subordinated knowledges" to which Alexander refers. Franklin points out that the contemporary humanities are influenced by theories innovated and/or foregrounded by the labour of Women's and Gender Studies such as the multiplicity of the subject and shifts in our understanding of the human condition in light of the insights generated by "identity politics, postcolonial studies, feminism, and disability studies" (4). As such, Franklin's discussion of memoir and its capacity to provide unique insight into tensions and issues in the university joins a conversation which precedes *Academic Lives*: the question, which resonates in Alexander's critique, of what happens when we institutionalize feminism. Robyn Wiegman (2012) characterizes the fraught history of these debates surrounding the institutionalization of feminism and the formation of the field now known as Women's and Gender Studies as structured by the narrative possibilities that Hemmings (2011) identifies: institutionalization gets represented variously as progress or as loss. Yet, Wiegman invites those scholars invested in feminist theory to risk acknowledging and embracing the ambivalence which, she argues, constitutes the field: the institutionalization of feminist theory and the field of Women's and Gen-

der studies must always involve both progress *and* loss. How might bearing (with) this ambivalence affect the stories one can tell—about feminism; about Women's and Gender Studies; about oneself; about another feminist's text?

One memoir Franklin (2009) focuses on is Jane Gallop's (1997) *Feminist Accused of Sexual Harassment*. Franklin reads the memoir as symptomatic of Gallop's inability to recognize her culpability in the ways in which she, individually, has benefitted from the problem of political dilution that attends feminism's institutionalization. Franklin (2009) "[argues] that prominent feminists write pedagogy memoirs to negotiate the anxieties that attend the institutionalization of feminism, particularly as it is accompanied by the academic star system, the underfunding of the university, and the devaluation of the humanities" (26). Gallop is one of these "prominent feminists" to whom Franklin refers. "As Gallop attempts through her feminist pedagogy to transgress—but reinstates—institutional roles and rules," writes Franklin, "she suggests the difficulties for feminists of maintaining an oppositional politics when feminism has achieved institutional power" (26). Franklin's worry about Gallop's position as an 'institutional(ized) feminist' points to a problem which we might understand as the paradox of feminist pedagogy. What becomes of Gallop's "oppositional" feminism when she suddenly finds herself, as feminist pedagogue, a figure of authority in the classroom? Luhmann (2012) argues that the problem is not with feminist pedagogy per se, but rather with a conception of learning as linear, transparent, and knowable. What fuels the paradox of feminist pedagogy, she asserts, is a common wish that the feminist desire driving an educator's teaching will simply translate directly into the student's feminist learning. Yet, human difference and subjectivity—the emotional significance of an individual's inner world—will always interrupt this simple translation. Feminist pedagogues might have particular desires regarding what they would like to teach their students, yet the students' otherness makes teachers powerless to control what it is they actually learn. Franklin (2009) argues that in the face of this powerlessness, the academic memoirs of "prominent feminists" serve to reify—and to remind us of—their authority.

In its basic form (*Feminist Accused of Sexual Harassment* does not present a straightforward, linear telling of the "'facts"), the scandal that Gallop's (1997) memoir describes goes like this: in April 1991, at a party held in a lesbian bar following a busy and stimulating day at the First Annual Graduate Student Gay and Lesbian Conference held at the university where she is tenured, Gallop publicly kissed good-bye a woman student at the party. The student, an advisee of Gallop, was to present a paper about Gallop's writing and the erotics of their pedagogical relationship at the conference the next day. While it had become the habit of Gallop and her advisee to kiss good-bye after their meetings, for the first time this public kiss was of a more passionate variety: "the usual good-bye peck suddenly became a real kiss" (91). According to Gallop and her report of witnesses' accounts, the kiss between the two women was consensual and enjoyed by both parties. Gallop's physical relationship with the student did not exceed the kiss. Sometime between this public kiss in April 1991 and November 1992, Gallop and her advisee ceased working together and speaking to one another after Gallop found some of the student's work unsatisfactory. In November 1992, this student and one other woman student filed a university "Complaint of Discrimination" against Gallop, charging her with sexual harassment (77). Both students charged Gallop with quid pro quo sexual harassment, claiming that she had tried to initiate sex with each of them (which Gallop denies) and that, when they refused, she began "rejecting" their work (94). In their complaints, both students sought four remedies from the university. They requested that Gallop "be reprimanded,…that [she] be kept out of any decisions regarding their work,…that the department create a mechanism to deal with sexual harassment," and that she "'understand that making the complaint the subject of intellectual inquiry constitutes retaliation'" (77, 78). Although the complaints, while open, were meant to remain confidential, the students organized their colleagues to vocally oppose Gallop's involvement in a conference she organized in the spring of 1993 and they handed out flyers detailing the case. In the end, Gallop was found not guilty of sexual harassment although, in the case of the student whom she had kissed, she was found in contravention of the university's policy against "consensual amorous relations" between professor and student (57). In 1994, the story of students accusing Gallop of sexual harassment and Gallop's perspective on the case was the cover

story of the popular academic magazine *Lingua Franca* (Franklin 2009). The case rapidly rose to notoriety; its sensationalism both drew on and contributed to what Franklin describes as Gallop's rising "star" status in the academy. The scandal was—and is—the object of much inquiry and debate (see, for example, Talbot 1994; Malcolm 1997; Showalter 1997; Kaplan 1998; Patai 1998; Cavanagh 2007; Miller 2011). The prestigious Duke University Press published *Feminist Accused of Sexual Harassment* in 1997.

For Franklin (2009), *Feminist Accused of Sexual Harassment* is symptomatic not only of Gallop's pedagogical anxiety in the face of feminism's institutionalization, but also of her "crisis in authority" (see, for example, 144). Franklin locates this crisis as specific to the late 1980s and the 1990s, a time when theoretical trends in the humanities demanded of academics—particularly of white men—that they examine their "formerly unmarked positions of privilege," a demand arising directly from, among other intellectual locations, the memoir writing of feminists of colour, mentioned above (144). But, Franklin argues, this crisis in authority has also to do with the contemporary and popular degradation of the status of and resources for the humanities in the university and in the public imaginary alike. For Franklin, then, Gallop's memoir is the work of a privileged, if anxious, academic who holds all of the relative power in this case—including the support of the university, despite how she rhetorically positions the institution as working against her. The memoir functions to divest the students of power, control, and authority, both academic and feminist, and to "shore up her authority in the name of feminism" (146). And, according to Franklin, it is relevant that Gallop uses the memoir genre in order to tell this story because it allows her to elide the kind of theoretical rigour which would certainly bring Gallop's power play to an unflattering light.

Franklin (2009) argues that, in the course of Gallop's effort to secure her own authority, the "student is diminished to the status of prop" through Gallop's telling about their difficult encounter (157). Moreover, for Franklin, this is a part of Gallop's larger problem in that she positions her students generally "as passive recipients" of her feminist pedagogy—including the ways in which she eroticizes her classroom (157). But in suggesting that this aspect of Gallop's pedagogy is extended to the case under scrutiny—that her students were

passive recipients of her attentions, both in the form of her flirtation and her criticism—Franklin positions the student accusers merely as passive victims[1], overlooking the powerful threat that they represent for Gallop in their structural relation to her. Herself Gallop's junior—she writes about being in graduate school during the scandal and of hearing Gallop speak right around that time—Franklin also overlooks her own capacity to pose a threat. In an earlier text about the history of feminism's institutionalization in the academy, Gallop (1992) offers a strategy for thinking about the vehemence of our revulsion to certain texts and narratives such as that which characterizes Franklin's condemnation of *Feminist Accused*. We must try, argues Gallop, "to recognize the intensity of [our] negativity as a symptom of disavowed identification" (9).

The intensity of Franklin's response to Gallop's memoir carries the trace of maternal loss at the origin of her thinking subjectivity, a conflict that gave rise to the pleasures and dangers of language and selfhood. Through the lens of generational conflict, it is perhaps easier to notice Franklin's identifications with Gallop's students: Franklin positions herself, analytically, "against" Gallop and she demonstrates Gallop's relative authority by telling the reader that she needed to solicit Gallop's permission to quote her comments from an online forum in *Academic Lives*, for instance (Gallop granted the permission). But we should also consider Franklin's identifications *with* Gallop. After all, like Gallop, here is Franklin writing a book. Now that she has written a book, what will become of her? If her book is contingent on the destruction of Gallop, for instance, then a part of her aggression speaks to her *own* anxiety and crisis of authority: for who might be waiting to destroy Franklin?

The complexity of Franklin's identifications vis-à-vis *Feminist Accused of Sexual Harassment* speaks to another way to understand how it articulates a crisis of authority. For Franklin, what is at stake in Gallop's crisis of authority is her status as a professor, pedagogue, and feminist and the memoir genre serves her purposes in this crisis by allowing her to overlook her structural position within matrices of power and powerlessness: it renders her radically individualized. But I want to think about what is at stake in the crisis in authority that attends feminism's institutionalization a little differently. Although her story is of her individual experience, Gal-

lop's memoir elaborates a psychical crisis that structures women's academic lives.

The "Terrorist Graduate Student" and the Problem of the Mother's Otherness

In *Feminist Accused of Sexual Harassment*, Gallop (1997) tells the story of a scandal in which she found herself ensnared. Although Franklin (2009) is suspicious of the trickiness of the time of the narrative in *Feminist Accused*, the uneven time of Gallop's telling of the scandal contributes to the tangle of identifications the reader encounters. In the memoir, Gallop plays out a drama that evokes an uncanny familiarity for women engaged in the labour of conceiving and delivering ideas in language. As such, through its tricks of time and its confusion of identifications, the scandal she describes arouses one's deep affective relations to the academic life, leaving no reader untouched. This explains the fascination with the scandal and the impulse that many readers feel, to varying degrees, to condemn those involved, either Gallop or the graduate student accusers, or both. Thinking about the way *Feminist Accused* evokes complex identifications highlights its emotional significance and, importantly, invites us all as readers to risk locating and implicating ourselves in the attraction or revulsion (or both) we feel in relation to Gallop's narrative.

In *Feminist Accused of Sexual Harassment*, Gallop's side of the story is that of the mother who has had to survive her own destruction at the hands of her daughters, a destruction—and survival—upon which the daughters' capacity to understand themselves as women scholars at the university is contingent. The case that the memoir describes has captured the imagination of the academic community, and particularly of the humanities, for years not only because of its sensationalist structure—sex!; student-teacher sex!; intergenerational sex!; lesbian sex!—but also because it unfolds along the lines of a painfully personal scene of loss, that of encountering the mother's otherness. Confronting and enduring the mother's otherness is a conflict which structures every subject's capacity to become an independent thinker; yet, for women-identified subjects, the conflict of the mother's otherness poses at once a great intellectual burden and a fertile creative drive (Harrison 2013).

Gallop (1997) positions herself, in no uncertain terms, as one of the mothers of Women's Studies, a bourgeoning discipline in the university beginning in the 1970s:

> At the time, women's studies was not yet a formal program; a steering committee was set up to conceive its shape before we applied for official university status. The decision was made, on principle, to include students on what would more traditionally have been a faculty committee. As an undergraduate, I got to serve on the committee, and I felt privileged to be allowed to join the faculty in building women's studies. The inclusive composition of this committee betokened our vision of women's studies as different from the rest of the university: knowledge would be more egalitarian and more alive. (17)

Though a student at the time, occupying what might be thought of as a daughterly role, Gallop is invited to help "conceive" Women's Studies. She is there at its conception and at its birth in the university. In the conception of Women's Studies as Gallop describes it here resides a fantasy that marks women's intellectual work: the fantasy that knowledge (women's knowledge, knowledge about women) could be "more alive"; that the labour of thinking, reading, and writing need not be haunted by the spectral mothers upon whose destruction such work is contingent. Ann Braithwaite et al. (2004) describe this haunting with the trope of "passing-on" (see, for example, 12): for them, learning is both a series of gifts and of losses. Junior scholars owe a debt to senior scholars who pass on the legacy of their labour. But "passing-on," in its reference to death and dying, also names the violence and sorrow of loss and separation upon which junior scholars' work is contingent. Thus, the fantasy of knowledge that could be "more alive" is doomed to falter and Gallop herself becomes one casualty of generational conflict and this dilemma of "passing-on." And, in the tangle of identifications, aggression, and desire that originate in the first, infantile need to separate from the mother, Gallop also leaves casualties in her wake.

As one of the mothers of contemporary and institutionalized Women's and Gender Studies, Gallop has certain intellectual and political hopes for the field; in *Feminist Accused of Sexual Harassment* she details her disappointment that sexual harassment, a concept fleshed out by feminist intellectuals, has been coopted in ways beyond her control, including by her students who use the concept to denounce her and what she regards as her feminist pedagogical practices. The memoir is so captivating because it tells the familiar story

of a woman whose maternal hopes and expectations are violently dashed. The objects and subjective and symbolic positions which Gallop has helped to make possible in the world through her conception and her labour—contemporary and academic feminism, feminist theory and discourse, feminist women graduate students—turn against her in the scandal. In "Talking Across," a conversation with feminist then-graduate student Elizabeth Francis,[2] Gallop speaks abstractly (during their conversation about generational conflict in the feminist academy, neither she nor Francis explicitly mention the scandal—as if an analysis of the case bears no relation to their topic) about the women students, self-identified feminists, whom she names with the category of the "terrorist graduate student" (Gallop and Francis 1997, 118). In *Feminist Accused*, the "terror" constitutive of Gallop's graduate students' "terrorism" is of a Gothic variety: by taking what she has given them and using it to turn against her, the fruits of Gallop's labour—her feminist women students and their use of the feminist discourse of sexual harassment—have become, in Gallop's narrative, quite monstrous.

Structuring Gallop's encounters with her graduate students and her telling of the tale are the defenses which, as Miglena Nikolchina (2004) argues, particularly plague the feminist intellectual community: "merginality" and "abjectivity" (see, for example, 9). The passionate kiss between Gallop and her student represents the fantasy of merginality: it functions as what Julia Kristeva (1980) calls a moment of symbiosis. In this moment, the mother and the daughter are one; they have not yet arrived at the need to recognize each other's otherness. When Gallop reads her student's work and declares it unsatisfactory, this is the interruption of language—the paternal function—into the symbiosis between mother and daughter and it is a rude awakening indeed. Although it is arguably the kiss that renders *Feminist Accused of Sexual Harassment* so sensational, the literal kiss is beside the point. What makes this story so familiar and unsettling is that there need not be a kiss at all. Rather, what the story stirs inside the reader is the infantile fantasy—one that repeats through subsequent relationships with people and with texts—that mother and daughter are of one body and mind; that my needs and her needs, my desires and her desires, are merged, the same. And, as in the events described in *Feminist Accused*, one cannot sustain this liminal state of symbiosis: eventually a woman "must tear herself from the daughter-mother symbiosis, renounce the undifferentiated community of women and recognize the father at the same time as the symbolic" (Kristeva 1980, 279). This tearing is painful for both mother and daughter, each of whom might seek shelter in the defense of abjectivity: actually, we are nothing alike; we have nothing to learn from or with the other. In the case of this particular story, the pain that the students cannot tolerate is that Gallop has desires beyond them: she wants their work to be something that it is not. And the pain that Gallop cannot tolerate—a pain that is tantamount to a violent betrayal—is that her students have developed minds of their own and relationships to language that exclude her.

"Good luck with the diss…"

Neither I nor my intellectual work can escape the dilemma I describe. Through the act of my analysis, I risk becoming another of Gallop's "terrorist graduate [students]" (Gallop and Francis 1997, 118). Just as Gallop's students took what she gave them and used it to terrorize her in the case described in *Feminist Accused of Sexual Harassment*, here I am doing the same. Although I certainly repeat on Gallop's work the aggression her students displayed toward her, I also repeat Gallop's violence toward her students who explicitly requested that her use of the case as an object of intellectual inquiry be regarded as an aggressive retaliation for their accusations against her. In identifying with and repudiating the mother as a way to structure and develop a mind of my own, the boundaries of the self become slippery indeed.

One complexity of my identifications, which informs my capacity to interpret, analyse, and write about *Feminist Accused of Sexual Harassment,* is that my copy of the memoir literally bears the trace of Jane Gallop herself. Early in the same academic term when I would begin drafting my analysis of *Feminist Accused*, I had occasion to meet Gallop in the context of a graduate seminar at the university where I studied. Gallop's visit and the seminar had been organized by two women professors—one of whom supervised my doctoral research—in the Faculty of Education whose work, and whose opinions of my work, I care intensely about. The seminar offered me and several other graduate students the opportunity to talk to Gallop about her recent book

The Deaths of the Author (2011). At the conclusion of the seminar, many of us asked Gallop to sign our copies of her new book. I had brought along my copy of *Feminist Accused of Sexual Harassment* and asked her to sign it too because—and as I told her—it is a book that is important to me and my work. Gallop graciously agreed and thrilled me by inscribing a little message along with her signature. "For Mary," she wrote, "Good luck with the diss…"

I felt (and feel) very proud of the inscription. Gallop knew that I was writing about *Feminist Accused of Sexual Harassment* in my dissertation—I had told her this news when I met her two days before the seminar and she seemed to have held it in her mind since then—and her well-wishes felt at once like permission and encouragement. But, a few months later when I began writing the analysis of *Feminist Accused* that had been percolating in my mind since I had reread the memoir just before Gallop's visit, her kind inscription began to take on new layers of meaning which haunted me, inhibiting and inhabiting my writing. Gallop's (2011) own methodological practice of closely scrutinizing the meanings of words that stand out to us in our reading encourages me to attend to these layers.

I grew up in the 1990s, the very period of the memoir boom and of the events described in Gallop's memoir: how interesting that, in my work of seeking the emotional significance of a history of mother-daughter dynamics for women's intellectual work, I turn to books that were published when I was an adolescent. Having been a teenager in the 90s, I cannot hear the short form for "dissertation"—"diss"—without always also hearing the gleefully taunting short form for "disrespect"—"diss!"—which was a popular saying then. As I began to apply my analysis of the significance of the mother's difference to Gallop's memoir, this old, if not entirely forgotten, taunt resurfaced in my mind. "Good luck with the diss…," she wrote. What could those ellipses possibly contain?

The ellipses serve a function for the development of my analysis because, in conjunction with the laden word "diss," they render Gallop's well wishes complex and ambivalent. Contained within the ellipses is my own implication in the dilemma that the mother's otherness poses for the academic woman. Regardless of Gallop's intentions when she wrote the inscription, my interpretation of it—full as it is of pleasure and guilt—

reifies the way that the dilemma structures my reading of and writing about Gallop's work. Just as her students' use of sexual harassment policy depended on the efforts that Gallop and others invested in creating and implementing such policy, so my academic work depends on using the labour of my intellectual mothers in ways which might treat with disrespect their original intentions for or visions of their work. To forge my own intellectual life, I must take what my forebears have given me and use it to make something new, something that is about expanding the possibilities of *my* world, regardless of the kind of interpretive carnage I must leave in my wake. To have found and made any kind of home for myself in the academy, I have needed to rely on the work of women thinkers who have gone before me. And yet, I am entangled in the very problem that is my object of inquiry here: the dissertation as violent act of disrespect.

Arguing that conflict is a necessary and desirable component of learning, not least because it keeps our thinking moving by demarcating intellectual generations, Jen Gilbert (2009) draws on Alice Pitt and Madeleine Grumet to argue that "the phantastical killing and survival of the mother is both an obstacle to and the precondition for entering symbolization" (67). Gilbert emphasizes the paradoxical survival of the destroyed mother: her capacity to survive is yet one more debt that we owe her. She asks: "Can parents survive their child's adventures in reading?" and goes on to answer that, although "one may have to destroy one's mother…she in turn will have to survive this destruction, in order that we may think through and with her" (67, 70). The inscription: "For Mary, Good luck with the diss…" functions for me as Gallop's acknowledgment of my need to destroy her and as her resilient survival. The language of the inscription contains my necessary destruction and the work of reparation—Gallop's and mine. It holds my reparative act insofar as my writing about Gallop's work, while certainly a tearing-to-shreds, is also already an attempt to put-back-together-again; writing about Gallop's texts conveys my indebtedness for the deeply meaningful role those texts have played in my intellectual development. The inscription functions as *Gallop*'s reparative act insofar as I stand in for those earlier graduate students and their disrespect; by giving me permission and encouragement to use her work to make my way in the academic world, she can, in the deferred

and transferential time and space of thinking, offer her student accusers the same. The inscription's few words convey conflict, aggression, loss, permission, and forgiveness. And in those ellipses lies the interminability of the dilemma.

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Endnotes

[1] Making a different, but related, claim about the problem with asserting the students' passivity, commentators such as Joanne Boucher (1998) and Michelle Miller (2011) have argued against critics' insistence on the students' powerlessness, passivity, and victimhood. These authors agree with Gallop's own contention that this view of students renders them incapable of claiming their own sexual subjectivity—or even incapable of having an experience of desire, pleasure, or power—in a sexual(ized) encounter.

[2] Francis, though a graduate student during their conversation, is not Gallop's student. She is the wife of Gallop's male advisee to whom Gallop dedicates *Feminist Accused of Sexual Harassment*, published in the same year as "Talking Across" (Gallop and Francis 1997; Franklin 2009).

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When Students are Consumers: Reflections on Teaching a First-Year Gender Course (That is Not a Gender Studies Course)[1]

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Abstract

This paper considers my experiences teaching a first-year course, *Gender and the Law*, at York University. I situate these experiences in the context of the corporatization of universities under neoliberalism, and the scholarly literature on gender, race, and course evaluations. I contend that many students are disengaged and alienated, viewing themselves as consumers and me as a service provider. I outline some of my pedagogical strategies that attempt to disrupt student mindsets and promote engagement.

Résumé

Cet article examine mes expériences de l'enseignement d'un cours de première année, *Gender and the Law* (Le genre et le droit), à l'Université York. Je situe ces expériences dans le contexte de la privatisation des universités sous le néo-libéralisme, de la littérature scientifique sur le genre, la race et des évaluations de cours. Je soutiens que beaucoup d'étudiants sont désengagés et aliénés, se considérant comme des consommateurs et me considérant comme un prestataire de services. Je décris quelques-unes des stratégies pédagogiques que j'utilise pour tenter de bousculer la façon de voir les choses des étudiants et promouvoir l'engagement.

Introduction

> *Many professors speak of the mall mentality, arguing that the more campuses act and look like malls, the more students behave like consumers. They tell stories of students filling out their course-evaluation forms with all the smug self-righteousness of a tourist responding to a customer-satisfaction form at a large hotel chain…A professor at Toronto's York University, where there is a full-fledged mall on campus, tells me that his students slip into class slurping grande lattes, chat in the back and slip out. They're cruising, shopping, disengaged.* (Klein 2002, 98)

In her now-classic book *No Logo*, Naomi Klein (2002) critiques the pervasiveness of the "mall mentality" among students on university campuses. She reads this as an extension of the widespread "branding" (or commodification) of every aspect of life. Today, over a decade since this book was published, many of my students exhibit this consumer-like behaviour. In the large first-year course I taught as contract faculty at York University from 2010-2015, I often received anonymous course evaluations adopting the tone of the customer satisfaction surveys Klein describes. For example, I received complaints about the "tasteless" food in the student centre (2011-2012), the "uncomfortable" seating (2012-2013) and weak wireless internet signal (2010-2011) in the lecture hall, and the insufficient number of films shown during lectures (2010-2011, 2011-2012, 2012-2013, 2013-2014, 2014-2015).[2] *(This theatre uses fake butter on the popcorn and the seats do not recline.)* The language of the market was also regularly employed. One student wrote that, in comparison to their other courses, "this one was definitely tolerable and even enjoyable"; they concluded with "the *bottom line* is that I learned a lot so it was definitely *worth the money*" (2012-2013; emphasis mine). *(I have to buy an air conditioner anyway; this one is decent and does the job.)* Every year, a small but vocal group of students complained that the course title, *Gender and the Law*, was

misleading: they objected to having to study feminist perspectives on Canadian law, suggested that teaching feminist perspectives is indicative of my "bias," and/or indicated that an equal amount of course time should be spent on (presumably cis) men as is spent on women. One student wrote on their course evaluation: "I only got half the knowledge I paid to receive" (2011-2012). *(This product was falsely advertised.)*

Yet, in universities, unlike in malls, the "customer" is not always right. Indeed, the idea that it is somehow possible to study gender *without* reference to feminist perspectives is rather odd. As Michelle Tracy Berger and Cheryl Randeloff (2011) note, feminist scholarship "made gender a lens with which to understand the world" (132). In addition, my course encouraged students to question and challenge binary sex classifications and to think through the ways in which Canadian law can be implicated in maintaining these classifications. For example, we explored a variety of topics including trans lives and the limitations of trans jurisprudence, family law and its (hetero)gendered assumptions, the differences in treatment between male and female violent offenders (with female violent offenders often being tried both for the crime and "gender betrayal"), and media representations of violent crime (which emphasized the supposed "threat" of Black, Islamic, and other racialized masculinities). As such, the idea that a study of gender should involve an "equal" amount of time on (cis) men as women not only re-inscribes binary sex classifications, but also disregards the course focus on intersectionality and ignores the complexities of people's gendered experiences with the law.

I read course evaluations using the language of the market to critique the "misleading" nature of the course title in two ways. First, these evaluations are a symptom of the broader corporatization of universities under neoliberalism. Janice Newson and Claire Polster (2010) describe this corporatization trend as a process whereby universities move away from their role as "public-serving institutions dedicated to meeting a wide range of citizens' needs" and towards "operating more and more as businesses…dedicated to generating income by meeting the needs of customers who pay for their services" (5). This shift has several facets, including broad cuts to public funding for post-secondary education, increased dependency on corporate funding, a

focus on research with the potential to generate profit, and a move away from equity and social justice concerns (Henry and Tator 2009, 6-7; Newson and Polster 2010, 5-6; Côté and Allahar 2011, 16-18). The customers who pay for the "services" of the university-cum-business are not only the corporate funders, but also the students themselves. Given that students are paying higher tuition fees to sit in increasingly larger classes—while taking on more debt and more hours of paid work—it is not surprising that many understand themselves as consumers and their degrees as purchasable commodities. Second, in addition to being a symptom of the corporatization of universities, I read these course evaluations as emblematic of the challenges of teaching a gender course that is not housed in (or affiliated in any way with) the Gender and Women's Studies program at my institution. It is the word *law* in the course title that attracts most students to this course, not the word *gender*.[3] When students are consumers whose degrees are linked to the promise of jobs, law-related courses are seen as a valuable commodity associated with a (potentially) highly lucrative career.

This paper reflects on teaching a first-year gender course (that is not a gender studies course) when students are consumers. My purpose is not to complain about anti-feminist or disrespectful students. Indeed, I do not wish to replicate increasingly commonplace—and in my view, misguided—media discussions of supposedly lazy, spoiled, entitled "millennials" with "helicopter" parents.[4] Rather, I seek to explore the gendered, racial, and other power dynamics involved in the university/corporation and student/consumer nexuses and to think through my own embodied pedagogy and its effects on student perceptions and classroom dynamics. In the latter case, I reflect on both the ways in which I have privilege (white, normative gender expression) and the ways in which I do not (woman, contract faculty). Overall, my reflections aim to shed light not only on the specific challenges of teaching a first-year gender course (which is not a gender studies course) at a corporatized university, but also on the possibilities for disrupting the "cruising, shopping, disengaged" mindset of students as described by Klein.

The University as Corporation and the Student as Consumer

Under contemporary neoliberalism in Canada,

universities are increasingly run like corporations. Most notably, there has been a centralization of power in the upper echelons of university administrations. This has significantly reduced the input of faculty, students, staff, and community members in agenda-setting and decision-making (Polster and Newson 2009, 32). For example, academic senates, in which faculty are supposed to sit down as "equals" to shape the scholarly policies and priorities of the university, are increasingly serving more as "a rubber stamp for administration" (Turk 2008, 301). Along with this centralization of power, presidents and other upper administrators increasingly act—and are compensated—in a manner akin to CEOs and vice-presidents of corporations. This has been attributed to the increasing number of administrators with a background in business methods and the "new managerialism" ethos currently pervading university administration (Deem 2008; Côté and Allahar 2011, 17). As a neoliberal approach to public service organizations, new managerialism is characterized by a hierarchical organizational structure, prioritizing management above all other functions, and "doing more with less" (Deem 2008, 257-259). In other words, as more and more well-paid positions in upper administration are created, resources for core academic functions (such as teaching and research) are eroded (Polster and Newson 2009, 32).

Neoliberal values such as large income disparities, individualism, and competition are reflected in the corporatized university. In June 2014, the increasingly bloated salaries of university presidents became the subject of national discussion when four professors from Halifax applied together to share the work, salary (starting at $400,000), and benefits of one position—the President and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Alberta. In their application letter, the professors called attention to the large income disparities between academic workers at Canadian universities. They wrote: "we believe that our commitment to higher education is evident in our willingness to job-share and to each take only a fair and reasonable salary, rather than one which is four or five times that of a tenured academic and at least ten times that of a sessional" (Kathy Cawsey et al. cited in Magi 2014, A2). The job was advertised to replace the retiring President and Vice-Chancellor who made close to $1.2 million in salary and benefits in 2013 (Magi 2014, A2). New managerialism encourag-

es individualism and competition between universities, between departments within a single university, and between individual professors within a single department (Deem 2008, 257-259). In other words, just as un- and under-employed academics compete with each other for fewer and fewer full-time jobs and research funds, full-time academics (as individuals or representing their departments or universities) compete with each other for funds, students, and at times even their very professional survival. Universities are rewarded for putting "bums on seats" and are treated like private institutions requiring "marketability" (Côté and Allahar 2011, 87) instead of like public institutions working for the public good.

"Branding" is important at the corporatized university, with increasing amounts of money being spent on both in-house public relations and outside corporate marketing firms. This is a major shift. Indeed, for much of the twentieth century, Canadian university administrators did not consider marketing to be part of the university's mandate (Brownlee 2015). Consider the money spent by York University on the outside marketing firm *dougserge+partners inc.* in recent years. York has used this firm since 2007, paying it an annual average of $1.25 million between 2009 and 2013. In April 2014, York's Board of Governors authorized the signing of another contract with the same firm for three years with an optional two-year renewal. This contract involves a $6,250 (plus tax) monthly retainer fee—required even if no work is done that month—for an estimated total cost of $6.23 million over five years (Ibrahim 2014; York University Senate 2014). This trend invites comparison between York University and the corporations discussed by Klein (2002) in *No Logo*. In a similar manner to Nike—which famously shifted from product-focus to brand-focus, completely leaving the production business altogether (365)—York University spends millions on marketing while relying on contract faculty (including myself) to do the majority of its production/teaching. Teaching *Gender and the Law* at a corporatized university posed several challenges, not least of which were the "demands" of the student/consumer who have been sold a brand. In the next section, I explore the gendered and racial politics underpinning these demands through an interpretation of my own teaching evaluations.

(Hetero)Gendered Evaluations, Or, the Consumer Demands a Nice White Lady with Long Hair

The student evaluations I analyze in this section are from the five academic years I taught *Gender and the Law* (2010-2011, 2011-2012, 2012-2013, 2013-2014, and 2014-2015) at York University. The number of students enrolled ranged from 212-244 each year and the evaluations were completed in class in the middle of the last class of the winter term. Every year response rates hovered around 50 percent of the total number of students enrolled,[5] with the exception of 2014-2015 which had a lower response rate of 34 percent. This anomaly can be explained by the winter 2015 strike of contract faculty, teaching assistants, and graduate student research assistants at York.[6] I did not provide any incentives, such as bonus marks, to encourage students to complete the evaluations. York policy (quite justifiably) forbids the professor and teaching assistants from being in the classroom when the evaluations are distributed, written, and collected. As such, I have no way of knowing which students filled out the evaluations and which students opted to leave for the break early. In analyzing my teaching evaluations for *Gender and the Law*, I draw on the scholarly literature on gender, race, and course evaluations.

It has long been established that gender and race play a role in the ways in which students respond to their professors. Various studies have demonstrated that racialized professors and white women are held to higher standards of teaching than white men. Male professors are more likely to be seen by students as knowledgeable, professional, effective, objective, and unbiased (Laube et al. 2007, 89-91; Flood 2011, 146-147). Racialized faculty and white women faculty are far more likely to be challenged by their students on the basis of assumptions about their classroom authority or level of expertise (Laube et al. 2007, 93; Young, Furhman, and Chesler 2013, 46). In discussing the different criteria applied to male and female professors—and white professors and racialized professors—Michael Flood (2011) describes the process as one in which professors with privilege are "graded up" while others are "graded down" (146). Although the scholarly literature tends to focus on gender and race, discussions with colleagues who are visibly queer, have a disability, or whose first language is not English report being "graded down" in a similar fashion.

A recent and highly publicized study from *Innovative Higher Education* measured gender bias in course evaluations by separating the impact of gender from other factors. The researchers examined the course evaluations of four sections of a first-year (non-feminist) social sciences course; two were taught by a man and two were taught by a woman (MacNell, Driscoll, and Hunt 2015, 291-292). The students had no face-to-face contact with their instructors as everything was done online. The male instructor's two sections were assigned two different instructor names—one associated with women and one associated with men—as were the female instructor's sections with two different names than her colleague. Gender identity was assumed by students based exclusively on the first name assigned to the instructor.[7] This study is important because it is the first to control for almost all possible variables that affect student evaluations; for example, the syllabus, online materials, grading criteria, and length of time to receive grades and feedback were all identical (292, 296-297). Across the board, the research findings indicated that the instructors thought to be male received significantly higher evaluations than instructors thought to be female, regardless of the actual gender identity of the instructors. For example:

> When the actual male and female instructors posted grades after two days as a male, this was considered by students to be a 4.35 out of 5 level of promptness, but when the same two instructors posted grades at the same time as a female, it was considered to be a 3.55 out of 5 level of promptness. In each case, the same instructor, grading under two different identities, was given lower ratings half the time with the only difference being the perceived gender of the instructor. Similarly, students rated the perceived female instructors an average of 0.75 points lower on the question regarding fairness, despite both instructors utilizing the same grading rubrics and there being no significant differences in the average grades of any of the groups. (MacNell, Driscoll and Hunt 2015, 300)

Over the course of my five years teaching *Gender and the Law*, my numerical scores increased every year in each of the five categories measured; that is, "all aspects of the course," "ability to present ideas and concepts clearly," "ability to create an atmosphere conducive to learning," "ability to present material in an interesting

way," and "overall rating of lecturer."[8] This was undoubtedly due to the significant growth in my teaching experience as well as my continued efforts to improve both my teaching and the course content.[9] In light of Lillian MacNell, Adam Driscoll, and Andrea N. Hunt's (2015) study, I wonder how much higher my numerical scores could have risen in the various categories if I were not "graded down" for my gender identity.

These "grading down" problems are compounded when the professor teaches courses that focus on feminist, anti-racist, and other equity issues. As George J. Sefa Dei (2010) notes, "there is a cost in doing this work, namely, that the person doing it is perceived to be always criticizing, angry, and at times not intellectually credible" (171). In each of the five years I taught *Gender and the Law*, I received several evaluations that suggested that I was biased, angry, irrational, and/or hate men. On average, 12 percent of the student evaluations I received annually employed this type of language. This ranged from a low of 4 percent in 2014-2015 (which may or may not be significant due to the low response rate that year) to a high of 24 percent in 2011-2012.[10] This is common in course evaluations of women who teach gender-related courses and to a lesser extent gender and women's studies courses (Laube et al. 2007, 95). Men who teach gender-related courses (and gender and women's studies courses) tend to be evaluated by students as less biased and more open minded (Flood 2011, 147). Such evaluations relate to cultural stereotypes of the angry, male-bashing (female) feminist as well as to hegemonic femininity being associated with hysteria, excesses of emotion, and irrationality.

When I received evaluations that advised me to "work on [my] tantrums/rants about certain topics" (2012-2013) or to "not freak out when someone comes in late" (2011-2012), I felt like how I imagine Ida Bauer (the "Dora" of Freud's famous 1905 case study) felt when Freud attempted to "cure" her of "hysteria." Of course, there is no way to know if all students who complain about my supposed hysterical tendencies are men (that is, the male Freud to my female Bauer). Indeed, female students can be just as misogynistic and anti-feminist as male students. The student complaining about my "tantrums/rants" responded to the question "what did you value most about this course?" with a comment about the "pretty girls in lecture"; this suggests, but does not necessarily determine, that the student identifies as a man.[11] Whereas most students seem to understand that feminist research (at least in socio-legal studies) "emerged in part to counter truth claims by researchers who, on the face, seemed 'unbiased,' but systematically ignored or distorted women's experiences" (Berger and Randeloff 2011, 138), a vocal minority do not. I also suspect that I receive course evaluations like this because, as noted above, students generally take the course because of the word *law* in the title, not the word *gender*. As one student noted, "I signed up to learn about *Gender and the Law*; instead I was suckered into a feminist course which was very good at degrading men" (2012-2013). Men and women who take gender and women's studies courses—that is, people who *intentionally* take feminist courses—are generally self-selecting and more likely to be sympathetic to feminist scholarship (Flood 2011, 138).

In addition to being more critical of the teaching abilities of their female professors, students are also more likely to call attention to their bodies and clothing (Laube et al. 2007, 95). Although I was very well aware of this, the year I decided cut off my long hair for a shorter, darker, more androgynous style, I was shocked by the number of students that felt compelled to criticize (or simply comment on) my new hairstyle in their course evaluations. The only advice one student had in response to a question concerning how the course could be improved was the following: "Don't cut your hair. Stop making corny jokes" (2011-2012). Is my value in the classroom, then, primarily determined by me having long blond hair and not cracking jokes? (Clearly the short, darker hairstyle was not working for some students.) Why is my perceived attractiveness—which is linked to me adhering or not adhering to hegemonic forms of femininity—even an issue? It might have something to do with the popular website ratemyprofessors.com, where students can rate their professors' "hotness" by granting them a chili pepper. As the late Barbara Godard (2010) noted, "with the prize of a chili pepper…pleasure in the classroom is heavily eroticized" (28). I am not sure if my current lack of a chili pepper on ratemyprofessors.com has anything to do with my apparently highly unpopular short hairstyle. As for the critique of my "corny jokes"—which I have received on a few other occasions in teaching *Gender and the Law* (although interestingly never in courses taught in gender and women's studies)—should I improve my jokes

or leave the attempts at levity to male professors? This particular evaluation was done the year of several popular culture firestorms suggesting "women aren't funny." But then again, perhaps my jokes really are just bad.

Beyond the question of my attractiveness and comedic talents (or lack thereof), underpinning such comments is not only sexism, but also the idea that, as a professor in a corporatized university, I am in the business of what Claire Polster (2010) calls "edutainment." Large courses tend to get better course evaluations when the professor lowers teaching standards in favour of being "edutaining" (13). This evaluation is a case in point: "Lecture slides need to be more colourful. And the class needs to be more entertaining" (2014-2015). Admittedly, I have only ever received one other *Gender and the Law* evaluation that actually contains a variation of the word "entertain"; a student suggested that "more entertainment for the students should occur" (2012-2013). However, as noted above, I received complaints that not enough films were shown every year I taught the course. Student evaluations of my inadequacies in terms of attractiveness and attempts at comedy, combined with the supposed shortage of films in my course, suggest that my edutainment factor is lower than the students/consumers expect.

Although anti-feminism and sexism have clearly negatively impacted some students' perceptions of the quality of my teaching, my course evaluations have also been boosted by the multiple ways in which I have privilege. I am privileged as a cis woman who generally performs hegemonic femininity (hair length notwithstanding), I am usually (but not always) read by students as heterosexual, and I am white. For one student, it seemed that my performance of hegemonic femininity was the sole redeeming quality in a course, the content of which they otherwise found offensive:

> I was DEEPLY offended by the content as a conservative… and I would not recommend this course to any of my conservative friends. The prof was actually quite enjoyable and a delight despite the content she was teaching. Nice lady and engaging speaker. (2012-2013)

It was not clear from this particular student's evaluation what exactly they found "deeply offensive" from a conservative perspective. The year that evaluation was written, Stephen Harper's federal Conservative Party had a new mandate, forming a majority government for the first time. That year, I remember critiquing Harper's omnibus crime bill (passed in March 2012) more than once for favouring incarceration over rehabilitation and for its potential to contribute to the over-incarceration of Indigenous peoples. In a course entitled *Gender and the Law*, critique of laws passed by any governing federal or provincial parties (past or present) should be expected. If the student meant *socially* conservative (rather than Conservative in the partisan sense), potentially anything in the course could be understood as "offensive"—from discussions of inadequate access to reproductive justice (including abortion) to the paucity of protections for trans people in most provincial human rights codes. Despite the "offensive" course content, the student had almost entirely positive comments in response to the other questions about my teaching. I suspect that if I was trans, butch, and/or a racialized woman, I would have received a significantly harsher evaluation from this student. I am also fairly certain that I would *not* been read as enjoyable, delightful, nice, and/or a lady.

Studies have demonstrated that students of all genders are more likely to evaluate their professors using sexist stereotypes if they have traditional views about gender (Flood 2011, 146). However, I found that even students who found the course enlightening feel compelled to praise me for my performance of hegemonic femininity. For example, one student wrote:

> One of my favourites of York! As a student who has never taken a law course, I found the material presented in a way that I could comprehend and it never felt as if I was missing info. I loved the discussions of homosexuality *[sic]*, violent fem[ininitie]s, and trans issues! Julie really engages with the material and she is adorable, but commands attention as well. (2012-2013)

The term "adorable" is not necessarily gendered feminine; however, it is infantilizing as the term is commonly used as a synonym for cuddly and cute (such as "adorable baby" or "adorable kitten"). At the same time, the context in which the term was used in the last sentence is highly gendered, insofar as adult women are more likely to be infantilized than adult men and being "adorable" is set up in opposition to "commanding attention." Indeed, as Flood (2011) notes, "it is easier

for men to live up to the expectations attached to their statuses as 'man' and 'professor' than for women to live up to those attached to 'woman' and 'professor'" (146-147). I read this evaluation, therefore, as praise for my supposedly difficult negotiation of both (hegemonic feminine) "woman" and "professor."

My privilege as a white, cis, able-bodied person assumed to be heterosexual also manifests itself in the fact that I have never once read a course evaluation suggesting that I have an "axe to grind" or an "agenda" with respect to anti-racism or trans rights. Only once (2013-2014) in five years did I receive a complaint about the course focus on critiques of heteronormativity and queer rights. I have also never received a single complaint about course content critiquing Islamophobia, the phrasing of an essay topic on Muslim masculinities and femininities in Canadian law and society, my varied critiques of classism, or course content on the criminalization of poverty. Only once did I receive a complaint about course material on ableism; one student felt that I did not acknowledge the "good" aspects of eugenics laws in Canada (2011-2012). Yet, in *Gender and the Law*, the coverage of most of these issues—particularly race and racism, heteronormativity, queer and trans rights, homophobia and transphobia, Islamophobia, Indigenous issues, class and classism—is substantial. Not a week passes without the course touching on the plethora of ways in which Canadian law participates in processes of racialization. Flood (2011) suggests that white anti-racist and heterosexual anti-homophobic standpoints are possible for the same reason that male feminist standpoints are possible; that is, "the experience of privileged groups generally is not so determining that the production of alternative forms of knowledge is impossible" (149). The idea that white people (such as myself) have no "stake" or are "unbiased" in discussions of race and racism undoubtedly helps my course evaluations. I have received exclusively positive comments about the strong emphasis of my course on race, racism, and the effects of white privilege in the Canadian legal system with one exception (in 2014-2015, one student felt the discussion of Indigenous peoples was excessive). As such, I am almost certainly "graded up" in my course evaluations for my "alibi" of the "good" white scholar whose teaching about groups underrepresented in the academy is easily assimilated by students.

Disrupting the "Cruising, Shopping, Disengaged" Student Mindset

I understand contemporary first-year students at large corporatized universities (such as York) as both disengaged and alienated. As members of the largest commuter university in Canada, York students are particularly disengaged as most live and work far from campus. Yet Canadian university students as a whole are enrolled full-time but study part-time (Côté and Allahar 2011, 118). Such a situation hardly encourages the transformative potential of higher education. Students are alienated in the Marxist sense; that is, alienated from their life activities (namely their academic and paid labour) and their institutional environment. Thus, I read course evaluations that were petty or sexist as—at least partially—akin to the person who yells at the customer service representative because the students in question feel wronged by a large and impersonal corporation. That is not to suggest that the people writing such evaluations (or yelling at a customer service representative) would not be sexist if they were more engaged or less alienated; indeed, it is likely that the sexism would simply take different forms. In addition to an expression of disengagement and alienation, I read these troubling course evaluations as an expression of discomfort – in response to having one's worldview challenged and to facing one's own privilege. Yet discomfort can be productive. Although some degree of disengagement and alienation at the corporatized university is inevitable, I believe discomfort can be used productively to disrupt (at least in part) the "cruising, shopping, disengaged" mindset of students described by Klein (2002) in the epigraph to this article.

Part of my pedagogical approach to teaching *Gender and the Law* was to name privilege in its various manifestations. For the second lecture of the course, I had the students read Peggy McIntosh's (2001) classic piece on white privilege and male privilege as well as Barbara Perry's (2011) application of McIntosh's work to Canadian socio-legal studies. Perry's article—which extends beyond white and male privilege to include the operations of heterosexual, Christian, class, and citizenship privilege in Canadian law and society—is foundational to the course. We returned to Perry's discussion of privilege and the "mythical norm" multiple times. For example, in winter term discussions of multiculturalism policy and immigration law, we used Perry as a starting

point for a deeper analysis of citizenship and class privilege among groups who share some of the advantages outlined but may not be racialized "white." Perhaps in part due to the incredible diversity among undergraduates at York, most students have little difficulty with the idea of privilege as "unearned advantages" and the "mythical norm" as a process through which Canadian law treats whiteness, masculinity, heterosexuality, and other identities as "normal."

I try to disrupt my status as an alibi by calling attention to my own privilege (that is, privilege that is often covered up in the alibi of a "good" white scholar). I talk about how systems of privilege have impacted interactions I have had with the law. For example, I tell a story about being stopped by two white police officers at an anti-poverty protest I attended with two friends from graduate school. My two friends, both of whom are brown men, had the contents of their small bags spilled on the grass. I was simply asked about the contents of my considerably larger bag and, when I told them school books, they smiled and told me I needed new friends and should be studying. I ask the students what assumptions about brown masculinity and white femininity might have underpinned this interaction with the police and how this fairly tame encounter (which my friends found mostly annoying) could have been far worse. In class discussions and assignments, students are encouraged to reflect upon personal and familial interactions with the law; many have their own stories about immigration and other forms of law.

In naming my own privilege, I link the past to the present. For example, I discuss my family's involvement in the British colonial project and its lasting legacy on my own life. I tell the students about my great-great-great-grandfather, Philip Dowsett, who came to what is now called Canada from England in the early 1800s. He arrived to protect "British interests" by fighting in the War of 1812 on the promise of land; he was eventually "granted" several acres of Haudenosaunee land in eastern Ontario. I contrast the relative ease with which Philip was granted land (which was contingent on him not getting killed in war) and citizenship and voting rights (which were automatic despite his illiteracy) with an Indigenous man of Philip's generation. The *Act for the Gradual Civilization of the Indian Tribes* enacted in Upper and Lower Canada in 1857 did not provide any

rights to land and granted the Indigenous man citizenship and voting rights only if he could prove he was "civilized" (that is, read, write, and speak either English or French, choose a surname approved by the state, have no debt, and be monitored by a Christian clergyman for three years who would attest to his "sound moral character"). Later in the term, I ask the students to consider what laws from two hundred years ago would mean for contemporary descendants of Philip and his Indigenous contemporary. I tell them that the year I graduated from high school was the same year the last residential school closed. As such, if I was a descendent of Philip's Indigenous contemporary instead of Philip himself, my education (insofar as residential schools offered any education) and opportunities in life would have been very different.

Although I strongly hold the view that discomfort and facing up to privilege can promote student engagement and be a useful remedy against alienation, I often wonder how my concerns about my own precarity have impacted my pedagogy. Clearly, my course evaluations have been dragged down by some students thinking I am "anti-men." In the five years I taught *Gender and the Law*, I gradually increased course content coming out of critical masculinity studies as more readings became available and particularly readings that were accessible to first-year students and relevant to Canadian socio-legal studies. (I always showed Jackson Katz's classic film *Tough Guise* (1999), which I substituted with the updated and improved *Tough Guise 2* after it was released in 2013.) Increasing the critical masculinity studies content undoubtedly improved the course. However, if I am honest, part of my motivation for these changes was my perceived need to shield myself from an "anti-men" charge. When I discussed sexual assault (or other forms of violence perpetrated largely by men against women), I would always remind students that there are multiple masculinities, only some of which justify violence against women. In repeating the "multiple masculinities" line, I wonder if I was legitimating the "not all men" discourse, in which discussions of rape culture (or other issues disproportionately affecting women) are redirected to be about how this is not the fault of individual men. While I know students who believe I am "anti-men" are incorrect in their reading—and that I can safely ignore their course evaluations—the reality is that hiring committees for the full-time,

tenure stream jobs for which I am applying will see all of my teaching scores, not just my scores from feminist students.

Conclusion

This paper has reflected on the challenges of teaching a first-year gender course (that is not a gender studies course) at a large corporatized university. Yet, despite these challenges, there are many rewards. Students may not necessarily have known what they were getting into, but they often find that the course content helps them make sense of their own life experiences. Every year, I have students tell me (in my office hours or on their course evaluations) that they grew up in a household with domestic violence, that they are survivors of intimate partner violence and/or sexual assault, or that they are rethinking masculinity and what it means to their own identity. It is also common for me to get thank you e-mails from students a month or a year or longer after the course ended, saying how much it meant to them personally. And course evaluations such as this one make me temporarily forget about the problems of contract faculty at corporatized universities: "it got me to question everything I believed in; re-evaluate those beliefs and to see things from a different perspective" (2012-2013).

Today, universities are supposed to be concerned with neoliberal values such as "maximizing global competitiveness" and "meeting the demands of the knowledge-based economy" (Newson, Polster, and Woodhouse 2013, 53). Yet as James Côté and Anton Allahar (2011) note, the more "universities sell themselves as purveyors of marketable credentials, the more they encourage the student-as-consumer model, setting in motion myriad problems associated with entitled disengagement" (90). I have read many of the students at York University as disengaged and alienated, causing them to view themselves as consumers and me as a service provider. Part of my service provision is the expectation that I am there to "edutain," which can take the form of showing more films or putting a happier spin on social justice issues. Indeed, one student suggested that "some of the topics were a little too negative; the course needs to have a few more positive aspects to it" (2014-2015). For some students, my service provision is lacking due to my supposed hysteria, inappropriate hair length, and lack of comedic talent. Given the increasing-

ly important role of course evaluations in hiring, tenure, promotion, and salary decisions, faculty with marginalized identities are put at a significant disadvantage. Indeed, I feel particularly compelled to be responsive to course evaluations, even those that are underpinned by sexism or anti-feminism, due to my own precarious employment as contract faculty. My paper suggests that course evaluations require considerably more feminist attention, particularly with respect to contract faculty (such as myself) at corporatized universities.

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Endnotes

[1] I wish to thank my colleagues who employ feminist and anti-oppression pedagogies both past and present and who have supported me and pushed me in directions I needed to be pushed. Discussions with Lykke de la Cour, reese simpkins, Healy Thompson, and Emily van der Meulen have been particularly fruitful. I also wish to thank the anonymous reviewers at *Atlantis* for their helpful comments. Any shortcomings with this article or my pedagogy are mine alone.

[2] In this paper, bracketed date ranges indicate the academic year in which the evaluations were conducted.

[3] *Gender and the Law* is cross-listed with the undergraduate Law and Society program and the first-year interdisciplinary General Education program at York. As such, students tend to be either Law and Society majors or students from a variety of departments—primarily in the liberal arts and less often the sciences and fine arts—looking to fulfill their first-year General Education requirement.

[4] This thinking was exemplified in a *Time* magazine cover story, entitled "The Me Me Me Generation: Millennials are lazy, entitled narcissists who still live with their parents" and published on May 20, 2013.

[5] The response rate was 47 percent in 2010-2011, 48 percent in 2011-2012, 50 percent in 2012-2013, and 51 percent in 2013-2014. The slight annual increase in the response rate might be attributed to my concerted effort to improve my pre-evaluation discussion on the importance of student evaluations. For example, in recent years, I have provided concrete reasons that illustrate how evaluations can be useful in my understanding of what did and did not work and why.

[6] As a result of the strike, most classes at York were suspended. In many classes, including my own, attendance rates declined significantly after the strike was settled and classes resumed.

[7] The authors do not discuss race or other forms of identity. Presumably, with simply a name and no photograph, other aspects of their instructor's (fictional) identity remained ambiguous for the students.

[8] There was one minor exception to this trend: "all aspects of the course" in 2014-2015, which at 3.70/5 was a drop of 0.12 from 3.82/5 in 2013-2014. This drop may or may not have been strike-related.

[9] The first year I taught *Gender and the Law* (2010-2011), I had only taught one other course, a third-year seminar course comprised

of 15 students, in addition to the usual graduate school TA experience. I had no experience lecturing to a large class or managing TAs. Since 2010, I have participated in a variety of teaching development workshops and encouraged feedback and constructive criticism from my TAs.

[10] The percentages were as follows: 6 percent in 2010-2011, 24 percent in 2011-2012, 15 percent in 2012-2013, 9 percent in 2014-2015, and 4 percent in 2014-2015.

[11] It also suggests that the primarily value (for heterosexual men) of a course like *Gender and the Law* is the high number of women in the course. This is similar logic to the varied reasons given for admitting women to formerly men's colleges and universities in the United States—for example, as a retention strategy for male students or to "civilize" male students' behaviour. In short, it hinges on what women can do for men (Poulson and Miller-Bernal 2004).

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Affecting Art and Theory: The Politics of Shame and Creative Academic Performance

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Abstract

In this paper, the author explores their experience of integrating art-making into the academic conference presentation. This practice moves beyond the limitations of the traditional presentation by developing a dialogue between content and form. It is also productive in transgressing the norms of white, middle-class academic decorum and transforming shame into pride.

Résumé

Dans cet article, l'auteure explore son expérience de l'intégration de la création artistique dans le cadre de la conférence universitaire. Cette pratique va au-delà des limitations de la présentation traditionnelle en engageant un dialogue entre le contenu et la forme. Elle est aussi productive de par sa transgression des normes du décorum universitaire bourgeois et blanc et sa transformation de la honte en fierté.

"What do you regard as most humane? To spare someone shame." (Nietzsche 1974, 274).
"One is an artist at the cost of regarding that which all non-artists call 'form' as content, as 'the matter itself.'" (Nietzsche 1967, 433).

In the spring of 2014, I presented a paper tentatively titled "Performing Theory" at the Women's and Gender Studies et Recherches Féministes annual conference during the Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences.[1] The intention of the paper was to explore productive relationships between performativity and academic theory. I asked the question: "How does academia already make use of the performative and how can this be made more explicit through an active integration of art-making into specifically feminist academic knowledge production?" (Cameron 2014). I replied that the traditional academic presentation is already always performative even if it does not explicitly understand itself as such. The stylized presentation of the academic lecture or conference talk "produces a series of effects," the primary of which is to "consolidate an impression" of academic legitimacy (Butler 2011).[2] Specifically, the academic lecture or conference talk is stylized through the use of common tropes: the performer/author outlines their purpose; situates their argument or organizing question within a body of literature or a disciplinary debate; works through a few key arguments or conceptual ideas; provides proper substantiation; uses visual materials in an explanatory manner only; and speaks clearly in a sober fashion and appears well groomed in professional clothing. Additionally, quantitative and empirical research is subject to the demand that its results be reproducible, that its methods be transparent, and that its findings be clearly articulated. But perhaps most significant, at least for the purposes of this paper, is that the presenter position the content of their speech as the most salient aspect of the presentation. These tropes, particularly the last, indicate that form is only of secondary importance in the traditional

academic presentation. The function of the traditional academic form, it would seem, is to render form invisible; it is often adopted unconsciously as if it held no consequence for the reception of content.

My intention in "Performing Theory" was to deliberately foreground embodiment through a play on form. After providing an introduction to the topic and informing the audience of my purpose, I screened a short video of a pre-recorded lecture exploring the relationship between art and theory. My brief lecture adhered to standard academic conventions; it was a formal exploration of the theme that used established academic theorists to ground its arguments. The presentation of my chosen theme, however, was anything but standard. While speaking to my audience, seated upright in a chair behind a desk, hands folded in front of me against a plain white background, my speech was regularly interrupted by taking long swigs from a one litre bottle of water. When my water had been consumed, I placed the bottle between my legs, off screen, and filled it with urine. I finished my lecture and set the bottle back on the desk in plain view of the camera.

This active integration of performance art into the traditional academic presentation went over well with my audience. My panel, aptly titled *Epistemological Challenges,* was poorly attended, as is common at early morning sessions, but those who did attend were generous in their reception of my work. One audience member even approached me afterwards to tell me that they loved my presentation and that I had "made their Congress." Despite this positive affirmation and the fact that the worst comments I received were neutral, I had mixed feelings about the presentation after the fact. When I returned to my hotel room and was finally alone on the night of my talk, I experienced an odd combination of shame and pride. Upon reflection, I realized I frequently experience these feelings in close proximity to matters concerning my creative work.

In order to understand how these two seemingly oppositional affects might be felt simultaneously vis-a-vis the same object, this paper looks closely at the traditional academic performance as well as alternative, creative forms that productions and presentations of academic knowledge might take. I begin with an exploration of the traditional academic presentation and its tendency to avoid foregrounding embodiment and "unnecessary" expressions of emotion. When these un-

spoken rules of decorum are not adhered to, presenters can feel impelled to experience shame. In the second section, I look at the tendency of feminist performance art to highlight embodiment and affect in a manner that pushes back against shame and calls forth new reading practices and modes of audience engagement. I close with a discussion of alternatives to the traditional academic presentation. Drawing on the relatively new field of research-creation, my intention is to foster diversity in the academic form and resist the institutionalization of feminist scholarship through the nurturing of academic relationships with embodiment and affect.

The Limitations of the Traditional Academic Presentation

Privileging content over form is not just common to the traditional academic presentation, but to academic texts in the humanities and social sciences as well. Journal articles and books often adhere to the aforementioned tropes that position form as a mere vehicle for content. But form, as I will argue, continues to be integral to the reception of academic content. Feminist texts tend to be more aware of this than those produced in historically well-established disciplines. Two examples include works by Gloria Anzaldúa and Ann Cvetkovich. Queer cultural feminist theorist and poet Anzaldúa, originally published *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* in 1987. It is a semi-autobiographical text, exploring her experiences of being caught between cultures and nations. As a Chicana woman, Anzaldúa had to negotiate the Anglo American, Spanish Mexican, and Indigenous cultures located in what was once northern Mexico and is now the state of Texas. She investigates these palpable, but invisible, borders by moving seamlessly between personal narrative and discussions of colonial history, pagan mythology, and political economy. More significantly, for my purposes, she moves, sometimes mid-sentence, between poetry and prose and between Spanish and English. As Anzaldúa (2000) explains, "[u]ntil I am free to write bilingually and to switch codes without having always to translate…my tongue will be illegitimate" (81). Here, we find that choosing an unconventional form is an integral part of her anti-colonial, feminist practice.

A more recent example of a feminist text that makes use of autobiography is queer literary scholar Cvetkovich's (2012) *Depression: A Public Feeling.* In this

text, Cvetkovich uses memoir-as-methodology to perform her political commitments; memoir becomes the means through which she adheres to the "activist principle of presenting criticism in the form of a productive or alternative suggestion" (78). Her unconventional form further helps to nurture the reader's investment in the text. Having empathized with how she felt during her episodes of depression, we find we already have an emotional interest in the more theoretical chapters. This points to form's intimate connection to questions of affect; empathy and investment are never purely cognitive affairs.[3] Seen here, how an author or artist chooses to present their work is as important as what is said in terms of the affects it has on audiences.

Feminist theory has not just been effective in acknowledging form's impact on content. It, along with other areas of study focused on social justice such as critical race, Indigenous, and disability studies, has also been effective in addressing questions of embodiment. But focusing on how the specified body is read and understood within the social and specifically within academic spaces has not been standard in the humanities and social sciences. The tendency is to assume that listeners and readers can have unmediated access to content as if the embodiment of the presenter was of no consequence. When embodiment is not taken seriously, it does not simply fall into insignificance, but remains silently acknowledged. For legal scholar Patricia Williams (1998), this is of negative consequence. She explains that the imperative in liberal democracies is to treat markers of social difference, particularly race, as if they were an obscenity. This refusal to see race, as if we already live in a post-racist society, she warns, inadvertently reproduces the material conditions of racism. By leaving race "unknown," the manner in which race is closely coupled with political and economic inequalities is left unaddressed. Put another way, the conditions that enable "race" to exist encourage it to remain silent so that both racial categories and the material conditions under which they exist can be reproduced.

There is also a tendency to devalue expressions of emotion or affect in traditional academic work. While it could be argued that the standard academic presentation has the advantage of improving the comprehensibility of theoretically complex content, this premise shuts down inquiry into relations between affect, content, and form. A societal imperative to avoid expressions of emotion is explained by queer cultural theorist Sally Munt (2008). The demand that we be emotionally self-contained stems from the assumption that healthy people should be able "to manage 'their' emotions within the individual self" even while our "everyday experience is one of extreme permeability" (13). We are constantly absorbing affects as they circulate in our environment, she continues. This ruse of affective or emotional impenetrability is exactly that—a ruse. Further, the illusion of the emotionally bounded self has been historically tied to the masculine ideal while feminine subjects have been discursively situated as porous (13). In this way, we could argue that the traditional academic performance is a masculine form of being marked by affective sterility.

Perhaps not coincidentally, the traditional academic form and its sidelining of embodiment and affect coincides nicely with the imperatives of the neoliberal university. According to affect theorist Melissa Gregg (2010), the "modern white-collar workplace relie[s] on perceptions of competence and professionalism for its functioning" (186). This necessitates proper psychological and emotional "control" of the self in the face of increasing workloads and decreased institutional supports (187). According to Gregg, this demand for self-control obscures the extent to which academic labour is already deeply affective.[4] But the affective relationships academic workers have to both their working conditions and the content of their labour must be repressed. Here, it does not matter what you feel; what matters is what you produce. While feminist and affect theorists understand that affect is productive, this is not the case elsewhere in the academy where emotion sometimes reads as an impediment to rational contemplation and the production of objective outputs.[5]

When we are open about our emotional investments and affective attachments, when we are overt in the discussion and display of our embodiment, what are the consequences? We may experience shame. Psychologist Marilyn Sorensen (2006) explains that, while guilt arises on account of having done something wrong, shame is connected to feelings of *being* wrong. We may be the wrong type of thinker, the wrong type of academic, or even the wrong type of subject. For femmegimp theorist Loree Erickson (n.d.), shame is a common experience when one fails to measure up to standards that are not one's own (7).[6] Not surprisingly, socially

and economically marginalized subjects are most likely to be affected by shame in this manner.[7] Similarly, Munt (2008) says shame is characterized by asymmetric transference; it involves an objectifying gaze that cannot be returned with equal force. Within academia, this dynamic might be exacerbated by gendered dualisms that create false distinctions between emotion and reason. Insofar as women and racialized folks have historically been associated with the emotional side of this dualism, it stands to reason that presentations performed by these groups would be more closely policed. Even the smallest exhibition of emotion, in some disciplines, might elicit the shame of not doing academia "right" and might therefore throw one's academic credibility into question. In my own case, I may have experienced shame on account of the fact that I was not the kind of theorist who could just be happy delivering a standard presentation.

Feminist Performance Art and Affective Transformation

In this section, I look closely at feminist performance art. Comparing feminist performance art to the traditional academic form is somewhat precarious insofar as it is based on a characterization of both genres. Art too can tend towards formulaic delivery and can uphold the neoliberal imperative of marketability and sales. There are, however, tendencies that make sketching a distinction tenable. Performance art, as is not uncommonly argued, resists commodification in its time-based momentary existence. Only the documentation, and not the work itself, can be sold. More significant to my argument is the unique relationship between feminist performance art and questions of embodiment and affect. Instead of repressing displays of the body and expressions of emotion, feminist performance art deliberately foregrounds them. Here, the feeling/thinking body's socially constituted specificity is actually accentuated. As articulated by feminist art historian Amelia Jones (1998), performance art is precisely that domain which "places the body/self within the realm of the aesthetic *as a political domain*" (13).[8] In opposition to more traditional academic presentations, the performing body exists for artistic and intellectual contemplation and is, as such, crucial to audience reception. For Jones, this has feminist implications. There is no room for a gendered Cartesian dualism when the artist is positioned as mind and body simultaneously – when the artist is situated as both the subject of intentionality and as the object of analysis (1, 8).

Foregrounding embodiment, in this way, affects the politics of shame. Munt (2008) borrows Charles Darwin's understanding that shame involves "a strong desire for concealment" from the gaze of others (5). Similar to Jean-Paul Sartre's famous position that "hell is other people," Darwin argued that attention can incite shame as we evaluate how it is that others evaluate us.[9] For Darwin, we are particularly weary of the evaluative gaze of our personal appearance and moral conduct (Munt 2008, 6). A significant way we experience evaluations of personal appearance is on the basis of embodied difference. The body is only ever seen within its specificity, but, yet, we are brought into existence through discursive terms that were never of our own choosing (see Butler 1997). Put another way, we do not choose the social codifications through which we are publicly known. Here, shame may arise from feelings of misrecognition or, alternatively, as a desire to conceal that which cannot be concealed. Evaluations of personal appearance are prevalent in art forms that foreground the body, particularly those that foreground the female/femme, nude, or sexualized body as is common in feminist performance art. The feminist performance artist is further evaluated on the basis of her moral conduct. She is suspect for moving against established social convention in the articulation of new ideas. Further, she is frequently criticized for being narcissistic. Given our culture's long history of feminizing narcissism, as observed in the work of Sigmund Freud, this is not surprising. Here, a women's physical appearance, whether it remains a central concern to her or not, becomes a basis for moral evaluation; female/femme subjects are judged as morally deficient for falling short of the beauty ideal, but are also deemed wanton when adhering to it too well. This is why Jones (1998) maintains that flagrant narcissism, or what is often perceived as such in feminist performance art, might operate as a defence against shame. By positioning themselves as objects to be looked at, female artists trouble the classic "to-be-looked-at-ness" of women. And, in doing so, they simultaneously resist two vectors of shame as organized around appearance and morality.

The tendency of feminist performance artists to invite difficult evaluations points to the transformative

potentials of shame. For Munt (2008), "[s]hame has political potential"; "it can provoke a separation between the social convention demarcated within hegemonic ideals, enabling a re-inscription of social intelligibility" (4). And this, she continues, has radical potential in "instigating social, political and cultural agency amongst the formerly disenfranchised" (4). Put another way, examinations of personal shame experiences can alert subjects to the fact that their shame may not originate in deficiencies of the self. By doing so, it mobilizes the shamed against exclusionary hegemonic ideals in the interests of rearticulating social convention. Munt points to the example of reappropriating the epithets dyke, fag, and queer as terms of pride against a culture that would hold them as marks of shame (24-25). This transformation of shame into pride is facilitated through creative production and reception. "Art and literature," Munt explains, "are a symbolic conduit for the reorientation of emotional states, the intensification of existing emotions or the movement from one affective condition to another" (214).[10] Performance art, for instance, throws off the shame associated with embodiment. When the body is deliberately centred and exposed, the politics of shame surrounding concealment and "obscenity" are rendered inert. This is why I feel the incorporation of performance art might have positive implications for academic work. The movement from shame to pride in performance art talks back to the shaming tendencies of traditional academia by highlighting how the reception of content is dependent upon form even when that form is nude or urinating into a water bottle.

Borrowing from Jones (1998) again, we find that foregrounding embodiment and affect also shifts conventional reading practices. Traditional art history and criticism attribute stable meaning to the object of analysis. Performance art makes this reading strategy difficult; it "destabilize[s] the structures of conventional art history and criticism" (5). By deliberately staging embodiment, both the bodies of performer and audience are marked as contingent and this, in turn, exposes a lack of clear perspective in all acts of interpretation (5, 9). According to Jones, this is even more apparent in the case of non-normative bodies for they have greater access to revealing the incoherence of the modernist subject and the interestedness of all interpretation by presenting knowledge from non-privileged points of departure. Feminist work by female/femme subjects

further exposes reader interest in its "feverish solicitation of spectatorial desire" (40). Opportunistically playing on the to-be-looked-at-ness of women, this work "eroticize[s] the interpretive relation to radical ends by insisting on the *intersubjectivity* of all artistic production and reception" (5). It is interesting the way this was reflected in the kinds of questions that were asked of me both during my panel and afterwards in private conversation. In addition to seeking clarification, audience members offered their own interpretations of what they had seen. No one engaged in the academic tendency to argue with my work or to attempt to position their own perspective as dominant. This intersubjectivity of viewing wherein audience members are themselves implicated in the process of meaning making further enables art to operate as a tool for the reorientation of emotional states of viewers as well. If performance art can help transform shame into pride for practitioners as well as audiences, this would certainly explain the feminist fandom performance art receives.

But here, we might inquire into how it is that the very thing that causes shame, foregrounding embodiment and affect in academic presentations, could simultaneously operate as its antidote when presented in another forum. My answer has to do with the context of reception. My Congress presentation was given in an unusual space: on the one hand, receptive to unconventional work in its anti-oppressive orientation and, on the other, designed and geared towards standard academic delivery. I had the privilege of speaking to a feminist audience. Our longstanding relationship with the catch phrase "the personal is political" means that explicitly dealing with embodiment and affect is, to a certain extent, to be expected. It ought further be acknowledged that Women's and Gender Studies et Recherches Féministes included a cabaret performance that year, thus strengthening the discursive space for integrations of artmaking into the academic environment. Yet, the transformation of shame into pride was not fully successful. Despite what was otherwise a positive reception, I presented a performance art piece in what was still an academic forum. And while academic feminism has been more open to alternative forms beyond scholarship produced in other areas of the academy, it has certainly not been immune to institutionalization. Since the first women's studies program opened its doors in 1970, women's, gender, and sexuality studies

has become a respected member of the academic community.[11] The cost of increased institutional legitimacy, however, is often standardization. This is perhaps why it is that my own writing in this very article continues to adhere to standard academic practice despite my claim that I am trying to do otherwise.

Practicing Performative Academic Feminist Theory

Here, I want to argue for the continued importance of exploring incorporations of performance art into academic presentations in order to resist the institutionalization of feminist scholarship and to retain what was originally so radical about women's, gender, and sexuality studies. Using creative methodologies to produce feminist scholarship reinvigorates the area's commitment to interdisciplinarity. Art historian and visual artist Natalie Loveless (2015b) concurs: "research-creation re(con)figures our approach to disciplinarity" (53). Communications scholars Owen Chapman and Kim Sawchuk (2012) further argue that it reconfigures our relationship to the university. Research-creation acts as an "epistemological intervention into the [university's] 'regime of truth'" (6). This kind of work that not only tolerates, but encourages the use of creative practice in the communication of theoretical ideas can be termed "working *practicetheoretically*" (Loveless 2015a, 41). Here, as Loveless explains, "the practice in theory and the theory in practice [are] differential only in the context of a particular moment of production" (cited in Chapman and Sawchuk 2012, 20). Theoretical knowledge is not produced through "but as creation" (19). This is to say, the project is not one of explaining creative work through theory or interpreting theoretical work through creation. Research-creation, rather, asserts the "theory in practice" and the "practice in theory" "without collapsing one into the other" (Loveless 2012c, 101).

There are, of course, many theorists engaged in research-creation in a manner that recognizes form is not extraneous to the articulation of content, theorists who understand that the actualization of certain ideas necessitates methodological flexibility. Here, a lack of fidelity to any particular mode of production becomes a mark of fidelity to the idea the thinker/artist is trying to work through. Friedrich Nietzsche, for example, wrote theory as art and art as theory by using poetry and prose to articulate his philosophies. Fast feminist Shannon Bell (2014) provides another example, this time through integrating theory with photography and videography. In "Shooting Theory," she argues that political theory cannot be thought within language alone (39). By actively shooting philosophical concepts, such as Emmanuel Levinas' idea of "facing the elemental," Bell creates new theory through the creation of new modes of doing theory (39). Another example can be found in critical theorist and intellectual historian Martin Jay's (1993) discussion of feminist theorists who explicitly embrace the performative. These kinds of practitioners/thinkers are explicitly theatrical in the staging of their arguments; they remain mindful of the "performative as opposed to [the] constative dimensions of truth claims" (28). Like performance artists more generally, performative academic feminist theorists are deliberate in their staging of embodiment; they perform the specified body in relation to the content of the theory they are thinking through. In doing so, they decenter the universal subject of knowledge found in the traditional academic presentation (30). This is an anti-oppressive practice because it moves against the more conservative tendencies in academia to erase or marginalize the body while allowing it to silently continue to speak itself into existence. Jay cites Judith Butler, Jane Gallop, Avital Ronell, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak as examples. I would add to this list queer theorist Judith/Jack Halberstam for her refusal to resolve the ambiguity of his name. She clarifies that he is not transitioning even though she increasingly goes by Jack (Sexsmith 2012). Nor does he attempt to police other people's pronoun use: "[a] lot of people call me he, some people call me she, and I let it be a weird mix of things" (cited in Sexsmith 2012, n.p.). This ambiguity is significant in that it reflects a refusal to resolve gender ambiguity in her theoretical work. Here, we might say that Halberstam is engaging in a "performance of theory" (Peggy Phelan cited in Jones 1998, 14).

Fascinated by performative feminist theory and frustrated by the monotony of the traditional academic presentation, I decided to actively try my hand at research-creation by borrowing from my experience as performance artist. Incorporating body-based gestures into the formal lecture enabled me to make an important argument regarding the persistence of embodiment in seemingly disembodied practices such as theorizing and thinking. My academic labour was accompanied by

attending to the body's needs through acts of hydration and urination. In this way, the body could not be ignored nor could its mere presence be rendered obscene in the face of my more overtly "obscene" actions. But the specificity of how I attended to the body's needs was also intended as a comment on the materiality of the body as it exists in time. Producing large intellectual works does not happen overnight. Looking back on my own experience of completing my doctorate, I am struck by the dramatic changes my body and psyche underwent; I began bright eyed without a line on my face and finished with upper back problems and a history of depression. Urine-making is, of course, also a time-based process that witnesses change. The body is different at the time of elimination then it was at the time of taking water in—even if only imperceptibly so. This is what I hoped to translate in my unconventional exploration of the materiality of the immaterial labour.[12] By communicating in a time-based, embodied manner, I anticipated that the embodied, time-based character of academic thinking would not remain unthought.

I now want to return again to the question of why I experienced shame despite the fact that the audience reception of my work was positive. Shame, as I have established, only occurs when we perceive that we have fallen out of line with the social ideal. But this presupposes that an internalization and naturalization of social ideals has already taken place. Here, we find that shame is tied to processes of object cathexis. To cathect with a person, object, or idea is to develop an attachment as based in identification; we tend to cathect to objects that either reflect characteristics of the self or that reflect characteristics that are missing in the self.[13] For shame to occur, then, there needs to be an identification with the desirable/undesirable in order for the stigmatization of falling short of the ideal to have an emotional impact on us, in order that we might recognize the properties of the undesirable as associated with the self.[14] Read in this light, my shame had something to do with beliefs I continued to hold regarding academia and how unconventional presentations are received. Academic conventions, it seems, are deeply ingrained even when not strictly enforced.

The identification-based character of shame highlights the importance of finding strategies to interrupt damaging attachments that incite shame and that can, in turn, inhibit a thinker/artist's intellectual/ creative curiosity. Here, I am interested in possibilities for practicing modes of being that help in the formation of new cathexes. Cvetkovich's (2012) work on habits is informative. In *Depression*, she talks about crafting modes of daily living that work against a culture that would nurture depression. When it comes to shame-inducing social ideals, developing habits that contravene those ideals constitutes a practice of resistance. Attachments are formed anew and old bonds of identification are broken; or, as philosopher Blaise Pascal (2015) entertains, if you want to believe, get on your knees and pray. Within the context of the neoliberal university, the establishment of new habits can contribute to, what Loveless (2015a) terms, a "contemporary queering of the academy" (42). In my own case, I am attempting to do so through an integration of performance art into the academic form. And while this might not be full stop cure for shame on an individual level, over time and with enough participation, it might change academia enough to provide some social relief. Relief might also be found in research-creation's tendency to challenge the gendered, raced, and classed specificity of proper academic decorum. "[T]he result," we could use Jay (1993) to confer, "is to empower previously marginalized people, who were in some sense at a disadvantage when the rules of decorum were set by others" (32). But, of course, this is not to say that the previously shamed subject suddenly steps out from under power because decorum disappears. It is rather that social law is rewritten so that subjects become formed through power in new and different ways—as embodied, feeling thinkers, I would hope, who perform content through form.

Conclusion

Halberstam (2011) argues that disciplinarity, including the power of the formal academic disciplines, operates in the interests of normalization (7). This includes privileging productive outcomes over the kinds of experimental inquiries that might nurture new ideas and modes of thinking, but that may also sometimes result in failure (6). In an academic climate of decreased university funding and increased reliance on contract faculty, those amongst us who have yet to win an elusive tenure track position might avoid experimentation all together. Here, engaging in work that carries less risk, but that more easily aligns with the dictates of the neoliberal university, is a potential way to mitigate

the shame of institutional exclusion.[15] Despite this unequal access to alternative methodologies, I think it is important to continue championing research-creation. As I have argued, form always shapes the reception of content even when content operates under the pretence that it is not the case. Research-creation recognizes this close relationship between form and content and the importance of affect and embodiment in the expression of both. Overt displays of emotion are no longer considered improper academic comportment. The circuits of shame accompanying the explicit body are interrupted. Simply put, affect and embodiment cannot compromise research outputs when research is understood as already creative and creative work is understood to always take place, in part, through emotion and the body.

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Endnotes

[1] Congress is a yearly conference that brings together many Canadian academic associations in the humanities and social sciences. In 2014, it was held at Brock University in St. Catharines, Ontario.

[2] Academic legitimacy is read onto presentations that adhere to standards of knowledge set out by the academy. And these standards, in turn, are partially met through how they are delivered.

[3] Cvetkovich's (2012) use of affect in *Depression*, from which I borrow in this paper, allows for ambiguity between affect, emotion, and feeling. Many affect theorists, conversely, draw clear definitional lines between the three. Brian Massumi, for example, conceptualizes affect as "precognitive sensory experience" and emotion as the "cultural constructs and conscious processes that emerge from them" (cited in Cvetkovich 2012, 4).

[4] For Gregg (2010), academics are forced to do the affective labour of developing "psychic strategies appropriate for positions and workloads that have no definitive beginning or end" (187). This is part and parcel of contemporary "*production cultures* of knowledge work" (183).

[5] Sigmund Freud's (1989) notion that repression is always a failure provides an interesting reading of the suppression of affect in the standard academic form. He argues that the repressed always returns in disguised form as an "unrecognizable *substitute*" or symptom (26). Here, we might consider that repressed emotional attachments or affective investments could result in the development of academic symptoms. The competitive need to vigorously defend one's position while discrediting all others may be about more than the validity of one's argument; it could be an amplified return of repressed affect.

[6] It is also the case that we feel shame when we fail to live in a manner that is congruent with our own system of valuation. Shame, in this case, has positive, productive proclivities. As explained by Munt (2008), it alerts us to the fact that a personal law has been transgressed and we are provided an opening for corrective measures.

[7] As Erickson (n.d.) explains, shame operates as a social harm that silences and isolates the historically oppressed. It is a strategy of normalization that urges bodies towards uniformity (9).

[8] Jones (1998) actually makes this comment with regards to body art. Body and performance art are closely related, but while body art does not always involve performance, performance art always makes use of the body.

[9] See Jean-Paul Sartre's play *No Exit* (1958).

[10] Munt (2008) explains this through the work of Tracy Emin who transforms shameful personal narratives into acts of defiant survival.

[11] The first women's studies course was offered at the University of Kansas in 1960 and the first women's studies program was established in 1970 at San Diego State College (now University).

[12] I might mention here that there were certainly shortcomings in my presentation. If I were to record the video component again, I would concentrate more on this particular dynamic of the presentation. The lecture I actually performed focused too much on Nietzsche's understanding of the relationship between art and theory.

[13] Freud (1991) describes this, respectively, as narcissistic and object-choice identification insofar as we always choose those objects that reflect our own ego ideal (88, 96).

[14] Munt (2008) similarly argues that affect, and shame specifically, is "organized around issues of attachment and detachment" (22).

[15] Munt (2008) explains that shame has the ability to consolidate discourse (28). In this way, experiences of shame resulting from one's status as adjunct faculty can indirectly increase the value of full-time faculty positions despite their indirect reliance on contract labour. Collective organizing, of course, can help transform this shame into pride by fighting inequality in the two-tiered university system.

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Moving Forward, Looking Back: Taking Canadian Feminist Histories Online

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Abstract

Canadian feminist histories have long been bound to the printed page, potentially eluding audiences online. This article investigates how feminist histories can be expanded beyond traditional paper-bound venues by adopting a form of scholarly production that we call the "networked model." Drawing on digital humanities methods, we argue that this model enables greater alignment with feminist epistemologies and an improved capacity to reach new audiences.

Résumé

Les récits féministes canadiens ont longtemps été confinés à la page imprimée, éludant potentiellement les publics en ligne. Cet article étudie comment les récits féministes peuvent être étendus au-delà des supports papier traditionnels en adoptant une forme de production que nous appelons le « modèle en réseau ». En s'appuyant sur les méthodes numériques des sciences humaines, nous défendons l'idée que ce modèle améliore l'harmonisation avec les épistémologies féministes et la capacité à atteindre de nouveaux publics.

Introduction

> I realize that much of the experience of the second wave of feminism, that of my generation, is getting lost…It is not only that the wheel is being reinvented, which is natural for each generation, it is also that the rich experience of the women's movement, particularly regarding many of the same issues and struggles that preoccupy young activists today is not easily available. (Rebick 2005, xii-xiii)

Although there is a desire to chronicle the second wave of the Canadian women's movement, initiatives that do so have largely been bound to the page—in numerous monographs, edited volumes, and journal articles. As such, these histories, which seem divorced from the digital, may fail to reach new generations of feminist thinkers and activists who primarily communicate with one another and their communities online.

In an era of peer-to-peer scholarly production (Fitzpatrick 2010), academics are challenging long-standing models of academic publishing tied to the output of "products," organizing instead around models of community trust. The worry is that the process of scholarly production may be superseded by its outcomes, the scholar and the scholar's work obscured by the seeming knowledge produced. For feminists, the contestation of conventional models of scholarly production—produced by one or a few authors, undergoing peer review, for publication in a monograph, edited collection, or journal—has been important and invested in bringing together activism and academia through creative methodological interventions. Many forms of publication derived from the digital humanities are well-suited to filling this new role, but are not adequately recognized as sites for feminist scholarship and publication. Digital humanities is an approach to the humanities aimed at producing or utilizing online and digital outputs, often conceived and produced through online forms of collaboration. Digital humanities projects run the gamut

of diversity and ambition, from the first wave of digital humanities projects (then called "humanities computing") that used emerging digital computers for computational linguistics, to the digital conversion of important Western works (often Shakespeare), and, most recently, pioneering new interfaces for reading, writing, and doing humanities scholarship.

In this article, we explore the evolving production of Canadian feminist history online. We discuss existing models chronicling the history of feminism, especially the second wave, noting how the result is often traditional in terms of scholarly production, but novel and exploratory in terms of epistemology. In these works, we identify four key values for feminist epistemology, namely, an emphasis on experiential knowing, broadening what counts as a scholarly resource, forms of collaboration between scholarly and activist communities, and, more recently, a focus on other markers of differences beyond gender, including class, race, and (dis)ability. We introduce a new model of scholarly production that emerges from the digital humanities—the "networked model"—that we identify with three socio-technical qualities: expanding authorship, contesting peer review, and enabling access for readers. We compare three selective digital projects that disseminate feminist scholarship online; these include the Orlando Project, the *Women Suffrage and Beyond* website, and attempts to address deficiencies in Wikipedia's entries on Canadian feminism. While these initiatives are very different in terms of purpose and format and each have particular strengths and limitations, we are particularly interested in assessing the degree to which they are consistent with feminist epistemologies (Karraker and Larney 1984; Code 1991; Alcoff and Potter 1993; Doucet and Mauthner 2006) and the qualities associated with the networked model of scholarly production. We conclude by suggesting that feminists, and historians of Canadian second wave feminism more specifically, could benefit from deeper engagement with the digital humanities and that, in turn, the digital humanities could benefit from the integration of feminist critical approaches and epistemologies.

Chronicling the Second Wave

Although academic research on women's historical significance in particular periods has a long history (for example, Cleverdon 1950), it was not until the

1970s that women's experiences in Canada and their contributions to Canadian history began to be accepted as a legitimate focus of scholarly interrogation (Brandt 1991). Some of this historical work was published in well-established Canadian academic journals (Strong-Boag 1978; Pedersen 1996); however, the establishment of periodicals, such as the *Canadian Newsletter of Research on Women* (1974), *Atlantis* (1974), and *Canadian Woman Studies* (1978), provided dedicated space for the publication of feminist scholarly research on women and their histories, which took the form of articles, bibliographies, and guides to archival resources (Pedersen 1996).

In the 1980s and early 1990s, a number of key volumes which focused on the history of women in Canada were published, including *Histoire des femmes au Quebec depuis quatre siècles* (Dumont-Johnson and Collectif Clio 1982), *Changing Patterns: Women in Canada* (Burt, Code, and Dorney 1988), *Rethinking Canada: The Promise of Women's History* (Strong-Boag and Fellman 1986a), *The Widening Sphere* (L'Espérance 1982), and *Canadian Women: A History* (Prentice et al. 1988). These ambitious works sought to chronicle the expansive histories of women in Canada and Quebec as well as to document the second wave of the women's movement. Other volumes published in this period re-affirmed the importance of committing feminist histories to the page (Pierson et al. 1993; Backhouse and Flaherty 1992; Andrew and Rodgers 1997; Wine and Ristock 1991; Parr and Rosenfeld 1996), as did the historical research published in new academic journals, such as the *Canadian Journal of Women and the Law* (1985). In addition to these collections and journals, the proliferation of academic associations and research groups dedicated to fostering feminist historical and contemporary research ensured that the histories of women and the women's movement in Canada would continue to be documented and analyzed.

The publication of monographs, edited collections, and journal articles that explore women's history and the history of second wave feminisms has since continued. Of particular note is a collection edited by Catherine Carstairs and Nancy Janovicek (2013) that discusses the production of feminist histories in Canada over a forty-year period and examines the work of the Feminist History Society, an organization dedicated to creating a lasting record of the women's movement

in Canada and Quebec. The Feminist History Society has focused its attention on the years between 1960 and 2010 in part in an effort to chronicle the surge of activism and "energy" during this period. The Society intends to publish several books a year for a decade (2010-2020) to make sure that the history of the second wave is well documented and told by those who participated in the movement.

In too many ways to mention, this brief historiographical overview does not do justice to the nuanced historical work that has been produced on women's movement in Canada. The rich and unique history of the women's movement in Quebec, the ways in which Indigenous feminisms have been articulated and chronicled, and the many feminist initiatives that defy the language of "waves" are absent from our analysis. Works like *Looking into My Sister's Eyes* (Burnet 1986), which focuses on the lives of immigrant women in Canadian history, or *Painting the Maple* (Strong-Boag et al. 1998), which examines the intersections of gender, race, and nation-building in the Canadian context, contest the largely white, Anglocentric historiography outlined above. Further, given that this historiographical overview has concentrated mainly on the feminist and activist histories of the so-called second wave, the complicated intersections of liberal and socialist feminists within and across academia are missing here, as are the debates over women's versus gender histories (Dua and Robertson 1999; Luxton 2001; Nadeau 2009; Sangster 1995, 2000).

At the same time, our engagement with the historiography of the women's movement in Canada illuminates two important principles. First, feminist scholars and activists have long been committed to chronicling the history of the second wave to preserve the historical record, while those involved are still able to share their stories, and to enable new generations of feminists to build on the work of those who came before them. Reflecting on her reasons for writing *Ten Thousand Roses*, Judy Rebick (2005) notes that the death of Kay Macpherson in 1999 spurred her to write as she was concerned that the experiences of her peers might not get communicated to younger feminists (xi). The Feminist History Society proposed its monograph series in the same spirit, expressing concern about missing the opportunity to "chronicle our history" and articulating a desire to communicate it to "encourage and challenge

all those who follow" (Dumont-Johnson 2012, x). This sentiment—that it is important to chronicle the history of the second wave and make it available to young feminists—is perhaps most clearly expressed by Constance Backhouse (1992) in the introduction to *Challenging Times*. She asserts that feminists of the second wave

> have an obligation to set down how we think we have arrived at this place, documenting our sense of victories, challenges, defeats. The greater the access to these recollections, the more quickly incoming feminists will be able to take their place as more full participants, questioners, and challengers to our understandings and ideas. (5)

Feminist histories in Canada, then, are both a means of preserving the past and enabling future feminists to learn from the experiences, successes, and mistakes of their predecessors.

The second principle we draw from our brief historiographical overview is that feminist historical writing has been used as a vehicle to challenge conventional modes of knowledge production. Much has been written about the ways in which feminist histories have not only been a medium for telling women's stories, but also a venue for putting feminist epistemologies into action by presenting women's experiences in their own voices (Pierson 1991). Because of this emphasis on the experiential and the need to "tap some previously unused, even uncollected sources" to illuminate women's stories, feminist historians have been instrumental in broadening understandings of "what counts" as an archival source and as scholarly production (Strong-Boag and Fellman 1986b, 5). Furthermore, despite an early emphasis on the ways in which women's experiences challenged dominant histories, the use of feminist epistemologies to conceptualize women's histories, including histories of the second wave, has meant that race, (dis)ability, class, and other markers of difference have, to some extent, been important categories of analysis.

The writing of feminist histories is also notable because it is itself a site of activism and collaboration between scholarly and activist communities—though feminist scholars and activists often were (and are) one and the same. Histories of the women's movement are part of the broader project of feminist knowledge production and, as such, are part of the movement. Two of the early major volumes on women's history in Canada

(Dumont-Johnson and Collectif Clio 1982; Prentice et al. 1988) were the "result of research and writing undertaken by historians who purposefully constituted themselves as feminist collectives," at once advancing the scholarly project of knowledge production in various forms with the goals of articulating women's experiences and making women's history known (Brandt 1991, 443). Between the 1970s and 1990s, these feminist commitments were further realized through the publication of edited volumes that incorporated primary documents from the women's movement (as found in Pierson et al.'s [1993] *Canadian Women's Issues*) or books that integrated the voices of activists (as in the case of Judy Rebick's [2005] *Ten Thousand Roses*) as well as through the establishment of a Women's Movement Archives in the late 1980s (Fulford and Canadian Women's Movement Archives 1992; Loyer 2006) and the creation of feminist documentary filmmaking (in the work, for example, of the National Film Board's Studio D founded in 1974) (Vanstone 2007). In short, women's histories, including feminist histories and the histories of the second wave, are themselves part of a feminist epistemological project invested in contesting power relations through collaboration and challenging conventional modes of knowledge production in academia.

Digitizing Histories: The Potential of the Networked Model for Scholarly Production

Documenting the history of the Canadian women's movement through journal articles, monographs, edited collections, documentary films, and the ongoing development of archives has been, and continues to be, critical to the movement. Significant opportunities are missed, however, when these media are seen as the only sites of historical documentation and scholarly production. Online initiatives offer new possibilities for sharing feminist histories among existing and new generations of feminists and across sites of interaction. Such possibilities might also, for example, enable those with motor, visual, or auditory (dis)abilities to better access and participate in these histories. It is also important to think about the ways in which digital initiatives might facilitate the dissemination of women's histories and feminisms outside of academia.

The use of online initiatives to capture feminist histories is part of a broader shift toward what we call the "networked model" of scholarly production.

This model can be considered a re-articulation and expansion of many of the methods used in the digital humanities, based on participatory, non-hierarchical, and inclusionary understandings of how to "do" scholarship and undergirded by the technical infrastructure of Internet connectivity. Unlike conventional models of scholarship (which include some projects in the digital humanities) where one or several authors produce the entirety of a text, the work of scholarly production in the network model is no longer linear and univocal, but rather divided into small, discrete parts that can be managed, ordered, and algorithmically combined.

The promise of the networked model lies in the values that it brings to new forms of scholarly production. The mere act of taking scholarship online does not mean that it engages in a substantially new form of scholarly production; indeed, some digital projects—such as simply putting a book online—can be interpreted as re-inscribing pre-existing notions of expertise, authority, and access that are germane to conventional publishing practices. Additionally, these works are particularly challenging to maintain given that they most often reside with one or a few scholars and the sustainability of these projects may be lost as academics move on and the sites go dark (Earhart 2012). The networked model moves beyond the mere technical advantages on which such projects focus and instead rethinks how the avatars of "the digital" and "the network" might be used to enable new models of sociality and production. Although the diverse scholarship on the contributions of digital initiatives in the humanities raises a range of issues about how techno-social transformations contribute to new modes of scholarly production, we have nonetheless identified three key contributions: expanding authorship, contesting conventional peer review processes, and enabling reader access.

Expanding Authorship

Whereas conventional forms of scholarly production have valued the transmission of knowledge from one author to a mass readership (one-to-many), the network model challenges the notion of sole authorship. The scenario in which one or several authors contribute large swaths of knowledge is displaced as the networked model of scholarly production presumes that many people can make smaller contributions to create scholarly outputs. A famous dictum in open

source software engineering—"given enough eyeballs, all bugs are shallow"—points to one of the benefits of such a model; it suggests that, with a sufficient number of "authors" (or simply "contributors"), errors will be detected and fixed (Raymond 2001, 19). The networked model of scholarly production, then, builds on the idea that the production and transmission of knowledge occur best when the thoughts of many are transmitted to many (many-to-many). From this view, enabling a participatory and inclusive form of knowledge production ensures that the quality of the outputs will be improved simply by drawing on a wide range of experience and expertise.

The networked model of scholarly production also challenges conventional notions of expertise. Here, anyone can potentially become an author or be involved in scholarly production. The many-to-many movement of information in the networked model of scholarly production enables "participatory expertise" by integrating a broader range of potential participants in scholarly work (Pfister 2011; Fitzpatrick 2010). Moreover, potential participants have the option of being anonymous (or use pseudonyms), displacing many concerns about whether or not one has the right training or credentials to participate in scholarly work.

This model of a many-to-many network is perhaps best captured by Wikipedia, the free, online, collaboratively-built encyclopaedia to which many contributors provide small, discrete parts of a larger entry. Alone, these contributions might entail the addition or deletion of a single word, but, in the aggregate, the contributions form entries and, more broadly, a comprehensive encyclopaedia. Wikipedia also challenges conventional notions of expertise. Writing about the "rhetoric of expertise," Damien Pfister (2011) points out that Wikipedia is often seen as a less legitimate contribution to scholarship because it is not written by "experts" (217-231). In the networked model and the changing understanding of epistemology that accompanies it, however, Wikipedia may be viewed as a site of scholarly production *because* it does not require the engagement of experts. While scholars might still publicly deny using Wikipedia, it has become acceptable in some domains to start an investigation using Wikipedia resources or even, in rare cases, cite Wikipedia directly. Matthew G. Kirschenbaum (2008), for example, argues that "information technology is among the most reliable content domains on Wikipedia" and cites it appropriately and approvingly (xvii). That said, while information technology on Wikipedia may be a reliable content domain, feminist histories remain underrepresented (Eckert and Steiner 2013; Cattapan 2012).

Contesting the Peer Review Process

Today, the peer review process is considered the gold standard in academic publishing. This model developed as academic publishing shifted from in-house decisions made by a sole editor to a structure that protected the editor-in-chief's decision, albeit in an acceptable (distributed) way (Guédon and Siemens 2002). In the traditional peer review process, the editor makes the initial decision to reject an incoming submission outright or to send it to approved reviewers. Typically, this review process is performed in secret and anonymously with no outside dissemination of information until a decision to publish or not has been made.

In recent years, the utility, fairness, and quality of traditional forms of peer review have been challenged for potentially perpetuating systemic bias or developing an "old boys club" (Fitzpatrick 2010). Double-anonymized (double-blind) peer review helps to address the worst problems associated with bias and gatekeeping; however, for many, especially those who seek to contest existing social and academic norms, this has been insufficient (Bingham 2000; Cook and Fonow 1984). The peer review process also requires editors and reviewers to give up time that might otherwise be dedicated to teaching and research. Since women academics generally undertake more service, including in the labour of the peer review process, than their male counterparts, there are significant concerns about the collective toll the peer review system has on academic women's career advancement (Misra et al. 2011).

Alternatives to existing forms of peer review have long existed and have usually been predicated on different epistemological assumptions about what "counts" as scholarship. For example, feminist journals, such as *Feminist Teacher, Journal of the Motherhood Initiative, and Ada: A Journal of Gender, New Media, and Technology*, have used collaboration and editorial board review, eschewing editor-led and review-bound publication processes (Mohr 2012). Similarly, while

still at the fringe, open and alternative models of peer review are becoming more common in the digital world. For example, *Nature* attempted and failed at an open review process in 2006, testing a model in which authors could post their manuscripts publicly for comment. Others, such as *Electronic Transactions on Artificial Intelligence* (ETAI), have a well-developed, two-stage open process whereby an extended open review is followed by a "speedy up or down refereeing stage" (Fitzpatrick 2010, 167). *Ada: A Journal of Gender, New Media, and Technology* is at once a feminist and digital initiative and uses a multi-stage public process that requires editors to pre-review articles after which submissions are open to review by any members of the Fembot Collective ("Submission Guidelines"). Perhaps most radically (and with some *jouissance*), Mark C. Marino (2014) has suggested that Facebook "likes" and Twitter "retweets" should count as peer review, a form of Buzzfeed scholarship fit for our times.

Ultimately, all of these alternate models of peer review still rely on peer review. While they challenge conventional models, they also re-inscribe them by granting authority to reviewers and editors over what counts as scholarship. Wikipedia provides an example of a fully networked mode of production that has no formal peer review process with all voices collaboratively editing contributions. Rather than a peer review model, Fitzpatrick (2010) refers to this type of production as "peer-to-peer" review, invoking the idea of peer-to-peer file sharing in which multiple contributors each provide a small part to be aggregated. This peer-to-peer model of review relies on users trusting the network, rather than an individual or credential, to ensure that the information provided is complete and accurate. This process of production encourages inclusion with contributors editing and revising one another's work until there is a near-consensus on the quality of the contribution.

Enabling Reader Access

The networked model of scholarly production may also work to broaden reader access. The expansion of readership may occur both because of the easy reproduction and dissemination of digital works and due to the nature of the network itself. Given that digital outputs are not bound to material constraints (page length, fixed text publication cycles, and economic concerns) in the same way as paper-based works, they can be accessed anytime by anyone with an Internet connection, including people who experience physical, physiological, or financial constraints. For example, the idea of open access scholarship resulted from the introduction of digital technologies that eliminated print costs, shortened or abolished publication cycles, and reduced the need to be bound to brick and mortar buildings. These "merely" digital modes of production, however, still fall short of the potential offered by the networked mode of production.

The networked mode of production may also work to eliminate some economic constraints by diffusing the human resources needed to author scholarly works. The network model enables many authors to contribute in small ways to a larger scholarly work. Authors may be from outside academia, including hobbyists and those with first-hand experience of an issue. Additionally, the network model enables broad sharing and dissemination through social networks like Twitter, Facebook, and Academia.edu, among others.

Taking Canadian Feminist Histories Online

Feminist historians and, more specifically, those involved in producing histories of the second wave women's movement in Canada, have long been engaged in collaborative projects. As a field dedicated to contesting conventional models of scholarly production and broadening authorship, feminist histories are also, in many ways, well-aligned to the networked model of scholarly production. Nevertheless, new initiatives designed to capture feminist histories (including the Feminist History Society) are still anchored by the material page. Disseminating the history of the second wave in monographs, edited volumes, and journal articles misses important opportunities offered by the networked model.

Feminist histories are an important epistemological inflection point for models of scholarly production. Indeed, feminist historiography sits between two worlds—"as an act in the present on behalf of the future" (Friedman 1998, 201). The way in which new generations of feminists come to know about feminisms is often through these histories, which are shaped by both a positivist mission of recovering the historical roles and contributions of women and an interpretive approach of sharing their stories and experiences. Through these

positivist and interpretive lenses, feminist histories have focused on making several key epistemological contributions, which include—at least minimally—telling women's stories in their own voices (with an emphasis on experiential knowing), broadening what counts as a scholarly resource, enabling collaboration between scholarly and activist communities, and, more recently, drawing attention to markers of difference beyond gender such as class, race, and (dis)ability.

In what follows, we examine three digital initiatives—the Orlando Project, the *Women Suffrage and Beyond* website, and Wikipedia—that, in our view, constitute exceptions to the traditional model of re-inscribing print production in digital media. Our selected examples are not exhaustive as there are other important projects that could have been examined; for example, the PAR-L listserv, Women and Social Movements in the United States, Library and Archives Canada's now-defunct Celebrating Women's Achievements project, heroines.ca, or Rise Up: A Digital Archive of Feminist Activism.[2] Nonetheless, the different approaches to networked modes of production that these three initiatives have adopted serve to illustrate some of the strengths and limitations of contemporary projects designed to capture feminist histories (Conrad and Mullally 2010). They also offer important starting points for theorizing how new histories of the second wave might move away from conventional modes of production and dissemination to contest embedded power relations and to reach new authors and audiences.

The Orlando Project

The Orlando Project is a digital archive of women's writing in the British Isles that was conceived around 1991, first funded in 1995, and finally released in 2006 (Brown, Clements, and Grundy 2006). It is a collaboratively produced, interdisciplinary database that uses new digital tools for critical literary and historical research.

While the historical documents housed in the Orlando Project are neither particularly Canadian (although it is a collaborative project led by scholars at the University of Alberta and the University of Guelph) nor focused on the history of the second wave, this archive does have particular strengths that could serve as a model for Canadian second wave histories. The project moves beyond the production of feminist

archives as a site of mere feminist "presence" and visibility and towards mediated contextual materials (Wernimont 2013; Brown, Clements, and Grundy 2006). It adds valuable context by attaching semantic mark-up to textual materials in the form of elaborate XML tags to identify categories such as relationships, location, occupations, race, and sex. Although this approach provides rich contextualization of the materials, the development team has noted that this practice of categorization affirms Geoffrey C. Bowker and Susan Leigh Star's (2000) insights about classification – that some points of view are valorized in the archiving process while others are silenced (Brown, Clements, and Grundy 2006).

The Orlando Project was initially conceived as a book project. The material limitations of a paper-based project, however, proved too constraining for its envisioned scope so it was brought online. The move away from print also enabled the team to provide additional functionality such as searching or dynamically reordering texts as well as offering deeper and more mobile contextualizations. That said, the project is traditional in its epistemological approach; while activist in nature, it is positivist in that the goal of the project is to shine a light on the (silenced) work of women rather than to narrativize women's experiences.

Although the Orlando Project is online, it has remained closed-access. The high costs of the technical production phase has been cited as the reason (Brown, Clements, and Grundy 2006) and this situation has presumably resulted in the establishment of a pay structure to recoup the upfront expenditures. One important lesson, then, is that highly valued technical expertise commands a high price, which can be a constraining factor for projects looking to explore the networked model of scholarly production.

Women Suffrage and Beyond

In 2011, a group of scholars at the University of British Columbia's Institute for Gender, Race, Sexuality, and Social Justice, led by feminist historian Veronica Strong-Boag, established a website called *Women Suffrage and Beyond: Confronting the Democratic Deficit*. The site is designed to draw attention to how historical struggles for women's suffrage are represented and remain relevant to contemporary questions about democracy. In part, *Women Suffrage and Beyond* has sought to

challenge attempts to limit academic freedom, unconventional histories, and knowledge production under a restrictive federal government and works to connect activism and scholarship through the lens of women's suffrage and democracy. The website is largely comprised of single-authored profiles of countries, organizations, or people or posts on one of three themes: activism, the democratic deficit, or race, class, and sexuality.

In some ways, *Women Suffrage and Beyond* replicates the conventional model of scholarly production with (mostly) single authors posting short articles written in an academic style with APA references and vetted for style and content by site editors. Though this is not, by any means, traditional double-anonymized peer review, the movement of knowledge from one author to the website audience through a relatively conventional editorial process re-inscribes commitments to traditional forms of scholarly production ("Submission Guide" 2015).

Women Suffrage and Beyond, however, does engage with the networked model of scholarly production in a number of important ways. The website focuses on open access and information exchange, hoping to make knowledge about the gendered politics of suffrage and the franchise available to a lay audience. It does so by sharing knowledge across platforms and including technology for sharing resources. Further, although the individual contributions are single authored, the website contests conventional notions of authorship by drawing together contributions and establishing a single digital resource that "eschews all pretense of impartiality and employs scholarship to raise public consciousness about democracy and social justice" (Strong-Boag and Johnstone 2013).

Wikipedia

Wikipedia has, for years, been the focus of much hand wringing among scholars. It seems clear, however, that no amount of critique will change the fact that its popularity has increased as it grows larger, becomes more comprehensive, and is less error-filled and error-prone. Traditional gatekeepers of knowledge, such as teachers, librarians, and book publishers, are often highly critical of and express consternation about Wikipedia (former ALA head Michael Gorman predicted a destructive "digital tsunami" due to the influence of Wikipedia), while digital technophiles invested in "disrupting" ossified forms of education and knowledge production usually offer praise (Lovink and Tkacz 2011). Ignoring Wikipedia comes at scholars' own peril since it represents far-reaching changes to scholarly production and contemporary epistemologies (Fitzpatrick 2010).

Of the three initiatives under discussion, Wikipedia best represents the possible synergies between the networked model and feminist scholarship. It has demonstrated pedagogical value, enabling students to engage with high-impact collectivized authorship of under-studied areas, including Canadian feminist histories. Similarly, it offers scholars a public venue for scholarly production that is available to all; in the case of the Wikipedia Zero project (not without its own issues), it provides free-of-charge access through mobile phones in the Global South. Wikipedia expands authorship by elevating all contributors to the same status with little or no need for traditional forms of expertise (Wikipedia contributors are usually anonymous or pseudonymous). The actual mode of production is discrete and piecemeal with algorithmic "bots" and humans collectively making changes, sometimes adding only a word or a sentence. Moreover, many of Wikipedia's production techniques extend to other projects such as Wikisource or Wikidata, which do not take the shape of an encyclopaedia entry, but are key to its comprehensive approach. The collective result is a diffuse form of multi-vocality, free of traditional authorial intention and bias.

One of the authors of this article has used the collaborative editing of Wikipedia in the classroom in an effort to improve the quality of articles on Canadian feminism (Cattapan 2012). Through the process of challenging the instructor/student hierarchy (helping to legitimate students' experiences and perspectives), creating connections beyond the classroom, sharing knowledge through collective sense-making, and addressing power relations, students and instructor alike gained a deeper appreciation for visible knowledge production. Benefits for the students included making their work tangible and real, (training for) identifying gaps in existing literature, and writing for a public audience in an encyclopaedic style. Since this early example, the use of Wikipedia in the academic classroom has become more commonplace and both authors have incorporated the practice into our own syllabi.

In practical terms, developing and fixing Wikipedia is a kind of public service that we believe all academics should perform.

Even though a core principle of Wikipedia is the "Neutral Point of View" (no bias), this principle can be problematic for feminist scholarship. As discussed above, many feminist scholars valorizes the experiential and interpretive, which, seemingly, has no place on Wikipedia. In fact, all academic scholarship (feminist or not) is produced from a specific perspective and militates against "factualist" accounts (Rosenzweig 2006). The worst cases of error on Wikipedia, however, are not the easily corrected "facts," but rather systematic and subtle bias. To address bias, errors, and other issues, Wikipedia has developed "working groups" called WikiProjects, including one that addresses feminist or gender issues. It should be noted that neutral writing is still a requirement and even stressed for those involved in WikiProjects.

None of the above digital initiatives perfectly bring together feminist historical contributions and the networked model of scholarly production. The Orlando Project is not open access and reproduces a traditional positivist epistemology rather than a more experiential one (although both are appropriate epistemologies for feminist histories). *Women Suffrage and Beyond* retains some elements of the traditional peer review process and conventional understandings of authorship. Wikipedia, as a site of scholarly production, emphasizes factual and "citeable" forms of knowledge to the exclusion of non-traditional sources and experiential, perspectival forms of knowledge. Further, while Wikipedia works to contest the peer review process and to expand authorship through its networked approach, it is important to note that editing on Wikipedia remains a male-dominated domain and is shaped by an in-group (masculine) etiquette (Lam et al. 2011).

Despite these and other limitations, the networked model of scholarly production does offer important possibilities. In some cases, the cost of production can be lowered significantly—especially when piggy-backing on existing technologies such as ready-built academic systems (for example, journal or conference systems) or general purpose systems (for example, Wikipedia or blogs). The (potential) lower cost may also broaden readership and, when combined with new attitudes about the review process and authorship,

expand the scope of who can contribute, which is especially important for recovering women's voices where they have been silenced. Finally, the relative ease of sharing electronic academic resources through non-academic venues is equally important and especially for the dissemination of feminist knowledge and work.

Conclusion

The networked model of scholarly production does not address all issues related to the production and dissemination of feminist histories of the second wave. There are important concerns about barriers for authors and readers, including access to the Internet, technological skill, and a general willingness to engage—which could be significant. Yet, these barriers could also be translated into opportunities for new generations of younger feminists who are more familiar with new technologies as well as others who are not closely aligned to feminist pursuits (Conrad and Mullally 2010, 48). The stakes are particularly high in the Canadian context where Canadian feminist historical and other scholarly work is often overshadowed or subsumed by American scholarship. Canadian feminist historians and scholars deserve their own (cyber)space.

At the same time, the networked model of scholarly production may contribute to a rethinking and expansion of feminist approaches to scholarly work by encouraging more collaborative authorship, challenging conventional peer review practices, and broadening readership beyond academia. If it is not always clear whether "feminism is relevant to considerations of digital technologies" (Petty and Crow 2008, 3), the parallels drawn here between the goals of feminist epistemologies and the projects of digital production demonstrate how the networked model of scholarly production can serve as a metaphor, even when the barriers are significant, for what scholarship could be when its very foundations are opened up for reconsideration.

The insights that feminist historians might gain from digital projects, specifically those produced in the digital humanities, and the principles that the digital humanities might learn from feminist epistemologies are substantial. Feminist scholars have been at the forefront of theorizing about technology (looking back to the pioneers of cyberfeminism), but are less involved in material technological pursuits, especially

in the area of scholarly production. Digital humanities, as a discipline, excels at large-scale projects, but some scholars have noted that it does not engage sufficiently with critical forms of scholarship (see Liu 2013). Digital humanities scholarship needs to be much more attentive to feminist and critical intersectional understandings of all markers of difference (gender, race, sexuality, (dis)ability, and so on), which might provide scholars, especially junior and early-career scholars, important inflection points to make real contributions. In some ways, this change is occuring. As this article was being prepared for publication the issue of how, and *if*, digital humanities can contribute to critical forms of scholarship has exploded, in rather public ways; and while we do not want to add to the infighting, we recognize that digital humanities has the potential for reform and therefore for making significant critical contributions (see Allington, Brouillette, and Golumbia 2016). We see a rising tide of young feminists who possess unique interests, approaches, and skills, who are working to realize feminist and other critical projects under the networked model of scholarly production.

Much hard work, however, remains to be done. Projects like the Orlando Project, *Women Suffrage and Beyond*, and bringing feminism to Wikipedia are real advances, but they must struggle against existing values associated with scholarly production. Issues related to career advancement, fame and egoism, funding, peer review, authority and credentialing, and closed-access work (Cook and Fonow 1984) will continue to haunt any project that attempts to deploy the networked model of scholarly production. While we offer few solutions here, one intervention might involve intergenerational collaboration: established senior scholars should work with junior scholars to fight for the networked model and engage with its outputs. The validation of new models, and the recognition of the legitimacy of scholarly projects growing out of them, must come from above and below. The more radical the approach, the greater the possibility that it might fail and jeopardize the broader goal, but also the greater possibility that change will occur. Despite the hard work and obstacles ahead, we see feminist and digital humanities scholars as ideally positioned to assist each other in mutually-supportive goals.

Endnotes

[1] Please note that the authors contributed equally to this article. Their names are listed alphabetically.

[2] Since this article was submitted for publication, Alana Cattapan has been on the organizing group of Rise Up: A Digital ARchive of Feminist Activism. This online archive, which launched in October 2016, chronicles the history of feminist activism in Canada from the 1970s to the 1990s. See riseupfeministarchive.ca.

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The Dividing Power of the Wage: Housework as Social Subversion

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Abstract

In this article, I revisit the Wages for Housework (WfH) perspective and movement in order to recover Marxist-feminist analyses of social reproduction. Social reproduction remains an important site of contestation, especially as women continue to bear the brunt of an increasingly neo-liberalized economy. WfH's nuanced view of wages and housework, I argue, should be reconsidered as a point of departure in responding to new forms of oppression in a re-organized economy.

Résumé

Dans cet article, je revisite la perspective et le mouvement « salaire au travail ménager » afin de retrouver les analyses marxistes féministes de la reproduction sociale. La reproduction sociale demeure un champ important de contestation, d'autant que les femmes continuent à faire les frais d'une économie de plus en plus néo-libérale. La vision nuancée du mouvement « salaire au travail ménager » au sujet des salaires et des tâches ménagères, devrait à mon avis être reconsidérée comme point de départ pour répondre aux nouvelles formes d'oppression dans une économie réorganisée.

Feminist scholars have increasingly been taking up the issue of care, a form of invisible emotional labour that permeates multiple aspects of women's lives (Boris and Parreñas 2010; Folbre 2001; Hochschild 2003a; Kofman and Raghuram 2015). In addition to the exacerbated exploitation of women on a global scale, care is also an important issue when sexist expectations dictate that women ought to be responsible for the emotional well-being of men, whether they are bosses, co-workers, intimate partners, or just some random man on the street telling you to smile. Women also continue to bear the burden of emotional labour and the care of the family in order to mitigate some of the pressures of the restructured neoliberal economy. One of the earliest groups to address the issue of care as a form of emotional labour was Wages for Housework (WfH), an international Marxist-feminist grassroots movement that began in Italy in 1972 and then spread to other countries including Canada, the United States, England, and Switzerland. Through written pamphlets and public presentations, WfH activists argued that women's oppression was rooted in the unequal power hierarchy produced by unpaid work performed in the household where the forces of patriarchy and capitalism intersected in critical ways. Rather than further entrench women in domestic labour, they maintained that wages would give them the power to refuse this work (Mian 1975). In broadly defining what constituted unpaid household work, they also engaged in various related struggles. These included the fight for access to abortion and contraceptives and the critique of forced sterilization and other restrictive reproductive policies aimed at marginalized women as well as the struggles for the right to sexual self-determination as they pertained to lesbians, welfare rights, and access to childcare and healthcare (Comitato per il Salario al Lavoro Domestico di Padova 1975; Ramirez 1977, 1978, 1979; Rousseau 2015).

Emotional labour, or care, is one of the most insidious forms of housework uncovered by WfH

feminists in the 1970s. In this paper, I revisit the WfH movement and consider the context in which it emerged, focusing on the movements in Italy and Canada. Drawing on the writings produced by WfH thinkers and activists as well as interviews I conducted with seven women involved in the movement in Italy (Mariarosa Dalla Costa, Silvia Federici, and Antonella Picchio) and Canada (Dorothy Kidd, Nicole Lacelle, Louise Toupin, and Francie Wyland), I explore WfH theoretical and political perspectives on questions related to wages and domestic work and how these were linked to broader struggles in the gendered sphere of reproduction. I also examine how the socialist-feminist analyses produced by WfH movement continue to have relevance in formulating responses to contemporary forms of oppression in a re-organized economy, particularly when we consider the work of care and emotional labour.

Theoretical Context: Domestic Labour Debate

In the 1970s, North American socialists, Marxists, and feminists (with some overlap in orientations) engaged in what is known as the domestic labour debate, which focused on the relationship between housework and women's subordination. Two main perspectives informed the debate. Some theorists concentrated on how housework was situated capitalist social relations and considered whether or not domestic labour is productive in a Marxist sense. This economic investigation of housework was primarily concerned with uncovering capital's creation of and reliance on housework and transposing analyses traditionally focused on the factory to the household (Briskin 1980; Harrison 1973; Seccombe 1980). Other theorists were more interested in the role of women vis-à-vis housework and how feminist political practice might address gendered relations in the household (Barrett 1980; Chodorow 1978; Delphy 1984) Though various important texts emerged on both sides of the debate in the 1970s and early 1980s (Blumenfeld and Mann 1980; Coulson, Magaš, and Wainwright 1975; Gardiner 1975; Holmstrom 1981; Molyneux 1979; Seccombe 1974; Vogel 1981), I will focus on three texts produced in the early years of the debate that were crucial in laying the foundation for the subsequent discussions: Margaret Benston's "The Political Economy of Women's Liberation" (1969), Peggy Morton's "A Woman's Work is Never Done" (1971), and

Mariarosa Dalla Costa and Selma James' *The Power of Women and the Subversion of the Community* (1972).

In Canada, Margaret Benston was one of the key feminist scholars to initiate the domestic labour debate with the publication of her 1969 article, "The Political Economy of Women's Liberation." Because this piece had such a significant impact (Holmstrom 2003), I would suggest that it marked the beginning of the domestic labour debate even though the earlier work of writers like Mary Inman (1941) and Juliet Mitchell (1966) provided important socialist feminist analyses of women's oppression.[1] Copies of Benston's article were circulated among feminist and consciousness raising groups in Canada prior to its publication and her work soon formed the basis of a debate among Marxist and socialist feminists about women's oppression under capitalism, which focused on the role of unwaged labour in the household as its root (Benston 1969; Fox 1980, 2009; Luxton 1980, 2001; Seccombe 1974).

In her piece, Benston (1969) critiqued society's resistance to recognizing child-rearing and other forms of domestic labour as work, showing how paid forms of this work (i.e. daycare, cleaning services, etc.) made this classification easier. For Benston, the work women did was different from that of men; housework did not count as work because it was not attached to a wage: "To pay women for their work, even at minimum wage scales, would imply a massive redistribution of wealth" (23). She further argued that women were permitted to enter the workforce as secondary wage earners as long as they were not negligent in their primary responsibility: childcare. Even as women were granted more equal access to employment, they had not been granted the liberation many sought due to the persistence of housework (21) and the extra burden placed on them as both waged and unwaged workers. In Benston's view, women constituted a separate class because housework was "pre-capitalist" and their relation to the means of production was different than that of male waged workers (13-14). The assertion that women constituted a separate class clearly overlooked the intersections of race and gender in familial and social relations, the class differences that exist among women, and the ways in which the working class is stratified according to wages. While heteronormative social pressures may compel many women to marry, sex (or gender) does not represent a condition similar to class.

Peggy Morton's "A Woman's Work is Never Done" first appeared in 1970 and an expanded version was then published in 1971. Much of Morton's (1971) analysis was similar to Benston's; however, she emphasized the need to develop a foundation upon which to build a strategy for liberation: "Our revolutionary potential lies in the fact that most women are both oppressed as women and exploited as workers, and our strategy must reflect this duality" (224). While Benston (1969) argued that women would see material changes in their lives once housework was socialized and they were able to enter the workforce (21), Morton (1971) maintained that such an approach to liberation would fail because it did not take into account the changing nature of the family as an economic institution or the shifting demands of the labour market (214). For example, Morton discussed how women were pushed out of industry jobs as the need for job training increased. Since women were seen as requiring time off for childbirth and child rearing, investing time and money on their training was not seen as cost effective. As labour demands shifted, however, women's presence in the workplace increased, indicating that they were central to capitalist production (even as a reserve army of labour) especially given that they often filled low-waged positions (221-223). As a liberation strategy, Morton advocated organizing around issues that would give women economic independence like access to abortion and birth control. Addressing such needs was not seen as an end in itself, but as a means through which to develop revolutionary consciousness: "We can give expression to the needs that women have and at the same time raise the level of these struggles through militant actions around some of these issues" (227). This call to build struggles out of specific demands was similar to the strategy adopted by the WfH movement.

Mariarosa Dalla Costa and Selma James' (1972) *The Power of Women and the Subversion of the Community* was also influential in the domestic labour debate, laying the theoretical foundation for the development of a Marxist-feminist praxis aimed at attacking the oppressive nature of housework. Informed by the discussions at the meeting of the International Feminist Collective in Padua in 1972, Dalla Costa wrote an essay called "Women and the Subversion of the Community." This piece was published along with Selma James' "A Woman's Place" as *The Power of Women and the Sub-*

version of the Community in 1972 and was foundational to the WfH perspective. In this work, Dalla Costa and James examined unwaged housework in the United States, Britain, and Italy in order to demonstrate how capitalism was predicated on the oppression of women. Women, they argued, were not only oppressed by the sexual division of labour in the household, but also by their position in the working class. In providing a Marxist-feminist investigation of the changing nature of the working class, the authors identified wagelessness as the major dividing line between workers. Building on Benston's (1969) and Morton's (1971) analysis, they identified unpaid housework as the root of women's oppression. As a strategy for liberation, Dalla Costa and James focused on the demand for the housework wage as critical in the struggle against the exploitative nature of capitalism because it produced the capacity to refuse this work and to subvert social relations.

For Dalla Costa and James, the family unit was essential for capitalist production and all women could be classified as housewives whether or not they also worked for a wage outside the home. Dalla Costa's latter assertion was based on a nuanced definition of housework, recognizing that it was not only a type of work, but also constituted a "quality of life and quality of relationships which it generates, that determine a woman's place wherever she is and to whichever class she belongs" (Dalla Costa and James 1972, 21). In other words, it was capitalist social relations that gendered housework as feminine. According to Dalla Costa and James, the working-class housewife represented the position of all women. It was precisely the lack of wages that obfuscated the productive nature of housework. For Dalla Costa, women's exploitation as household workers did not end when they left the home and worked for wages:

> The question is, therefore, to develop forms of struggle which do not leave the housewife peacefully at home…we must discover forms of struggle which immediately break the whole structure of domestic work, rejecting it absolutely, rejecting our role as housewives and the home as the ghetto of our existence, since the problem is not only to stop doing this work, but to smash the entire role of housewife. (Dalla Costa and James 1972, 36)

The struggle for wages, therefore, was presented as ne-

cessary for abolition of housework and the liberation of women.

An analysis of the emotional complexity of the family unit and domestic labour was largely absent in the more economistic writings produced during the domestic labour debate (Briskin 1980; Harrison 1973). Benston (1969), however, did identify the emotional elements of housework, asserting that relationships formed with friends or co-workers were not valued in the same way as the mother-father-child relationship within the nuclear family was. For her, the emotional ties of the nuclear family tended to create a stable workforce, in that male workers as "family wage" earners were less likely to withhold their labour power. That said, the so-called nuclear family ideal is a Western, Eurocentric, middle-class construction that was normalized by the church and state. Its emergence was intimately connected to imperial and colonial expansion and the rise of capitalism. As such, the nuclear family model has been shaped not only by capitalism and patriarchy, but also by racism. While some early second wave feminists identified women's liberation from the confines of the nuclear family as a central goal of the movement (Millet 1970; Greer 1970), this vision did not take into account role of the family unit in the lives of marginalized women. Morton (1971), for example, cautioned against calling for an outright abolition of the family because of the contradictory role it played in women's lives. While it constituted a site of women's oppression, the family was also a unit where the basic needs for love, support, and companionship were met.

Wages for Housework
Organization and Political Framework

The WfH movement drew from two main tenets of feminism. First, it was influenced by the socialist feminist perspective that maintained that women's emancipation was connected to the broader working-class movement. Second, it revisited the works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in an effort to analyze the reproductive and productive oppression of women inside and outside the home. Approaching women's oppression from a historical materialist perspective, Marxist-feminism examined material forces and class relations, arguing that women's oppression was connected directly to class position and the operations of patriarchy specific to capitalism. In other words, patriarchy was not the-

orized as a freestanding system. In their re-reading of Marx and Engels, WfH thinkers also borrowed from anti-colonial scholars and movements in order to deepen their analysis of unwaged labour and to challenge distinctions between productive and reproductive forms of labour.[2] The household, they argued, was the basis of the factory system rather than its alternative (Miles 1974).

Beginning in 1972, WfH emerged as a response to the politics of the New Left. During my interviews, both Italian and Canadian WfH theorists and activists indicated that they were critical of the tendency of many men in the New Left to dismiss women's specific struggles around unpaid work in the household, to conflate women's and factory workers' oppression, and to subordinate feminist struggles to a homogenous working-class struggle. Silvia Federici (2012a) discussed the different forms of resistance that feminists in Italy had to confront:

> I was part of a process where women in Padua put out a journal, which was, in part, a response to some of these attacks that different groups, different parts of *autonomia*, were making on the feminist movement…The anomaly of the situation in Italy was that they had to deal not only with the right, but also with the Left in a much more serious way because it was very prominent in the social scene.

In 1972, feminists from several countries (Canada, the United States, England, and Italy) met in Padua to discuss feminist activism oriented around the issue of housework. This resulted in the formation of the International Feminist Collective demanding wages for housework and the development of a feminist manifesto that focused on the family and unwaged labour as the root of women's oppression. The WfH movement adopted a radical and autonomous organizational practice, which meant that its women-only feminist activism was separate from the New Left, the state, and from men (Federici 2012b; Picchio 2012; Toupin 2014).

Federici was instrumental in developing one of WfH's originating manifestos—*Wages Against Housework* (1975). Born and raised in Italy and then based in New York where she formed a WfH chapter, Federici was connected to autonomist-Marxism. In *Wages Against Housework*, Federici (1975) noted that "Wages

for housework…is a revolutionary demand not because by itself it destroys capital, but because it forces capital to restructure social relations in terms more favorable to us and consequently more favorable to the unity of the class" (19). In other words, the goal behind the demand for wages was not to reify housework as women's responsibility; instead, the aim was to abolish housework in order for capitalist patriarchal domination to be eradicated. Hence, unlike those feminist scholars and activists who focused primarily on women's exclusion from the paid labour force and legal structures (Friedan 1963; MacKinnon 1989; Wendell 1987), Federici (2012b) continued to insist that the home and domestic labour should remain central to the analysis of women's exploitation and revolutionary change.

In contrast to some liberal feminists who argued that working-class and increasingly middle-class women's entry into the paid labour force constituted a form of emancipation (Friedan 1963) and allowed them to become "economic actors in their own right" (Eisenstein 2009, 39), feminists involved in WfH campaigns promoted a broader revolutionary model of liberation that addressed the social and economic structures that fostered systematic gender inequalities. They drew on the notion of the social factory, which was connected to Italian autonomist-Marxism or *operaismo* (workerism). They argued that capital's hegemony was so dominant that every social relationship was incorporated within this system, making it increasingly difficult to draw distinctions between what was social and what was work. *Operaismo* moved from a sole focus on the factory and waged production to a consideration of the social factory and unwaged work in the home as sites of struggle (Tronti 2006, 2009). Building on this work, WfH maintained that housework and relationships in the home, which had long been considered separate from the work of the factory, must be acknowledged as part of and as the basis of the factory system and as *work*. From a socialist-feminist perspective, the liberation of women required the defeat of capitalism and a "Marxist-inspired alternative" whether it be socialist or communist (Eisenstein 2009, 57).

For some feminists in the 1960s and 1970s, identifying the home and the family as the origin of women's oppression meant the rejection of the family structure. This entailed not only controlling the number of children one bore as a measure to mitigate against "overwork," but also often entailed refusing marriage and procreation altogether (Dunbar 1970; Frye 1983; Solanas 1967). As such, reproduction became a major terrain of struggle. The rejection of unpaid reproduction would provide women with the opportunity to define themselves outside of their role in the family with options for work outside the home and the chance to build capacity for struggle.

Wages and Housework

For those active in the WfH movement, home and housework were considered key sites of political struggle. The potential for social subversion was imagined beyond the narrow vision articulated by the New Left that saw struggles limited to the workplace; the community and the family were sites where women could fight for change in their lives. WfH's demand for wages and their political perspective sought to demystify the hierarchical structures used to divide the working class. Feminists operating from the WfH perspective emphasized that the demand for a wage was for house*work*, not for house*wives*; the strategic demand for the wage related to the power it held and was not designed to restrict women to the role of housewife. The power associated with the wage meant the creation of greater opportunities to struggle and to subvert social and economic power relations (Cox and Federici 1975; Dalla Costa and James 1972; Federici 1975).

The link between wages and work was contentious in terms of what counted as "real" work and what *mattered* in a class-based analysis. According to Dalla Costa (1988), "…the family was identified as the other factory…within which the woman was exploited and not just oppressed as the prevalent literature claimed, caged in a form of labour—housework—with an unlimited working day, no wage, no vacation, no pension, and no social assistance" (25). The concept of the social factory offered a way to view reproduction in the home in a similar manner to the production that took place in the factory. Unlike workers who were paid for their labour, a housewife was limited in the way she could negotiate the terms of her work in the home because there was no wage exchanged for her labour power. In *Counter-Planning from the Kitchen,* Nicole Cox and Silvia Federici (1975) highlighted the importance of the wage as an instrument in fighting against oppression:

Our power as women begins with the social struggle for the wage, not to be let into the wage relation (for, though we are unwaged, we were never out of it) but to be let out, for every sector of the working class to be let out. Here we have to clarify the nature of our wage struggles. When the left maintains that wage demands are 'economist', 'union demands', they seem to ignore that the wage, as well as the lack of it, is the direct measure of our exploitation and therefore the direct expression of the power relation between capital and the working class and within the working class. They also seem to ignore the fact that the wage struggle takes many forms and it is not confined to wage raises. Reduction of work-time, more and better social services, as well as money—all these are wage gains which immediately determine how much of our labour is taken away from us and therefore how much power we have over our lives. (11)

As Cox and Federici suggested, whether or not they received pay for their work, all workers operated in relation to the wage. This key 1975 WfH document articulated the importance of the wage as it was connected to structures of power and highlighted the different ways in which WfH envisioned fighting for wages in a concrete sense and in the form of social wages. Social wages were meant to provide a certain basic standard of living for individuals on the basis of citizenship, rather than employment, and included welfare, family benefits, healthcare, childcare, and so on. According to Federici (2012b), "Welfare mothers…denounced the absurdity of the government policy that recognizes childcare as work only when it involves the children of others, thus paying the foster parent more than the welfare mother" (43). The position of welfare mothers amplified and clarified the position of all housewives.

WfH activists in Canada focused much of their energies on the struggle for welfare provisions, family allowance increases, and divorce law reform so that wives would receive alimony payments that recognized their household labour (Toronto Wages for Housework Committee 1976). WfH's early work on family allowance provides one example of the link that was made to the question of social wages. Family allowance was issued monthly to all families with children, regardless of income, and was paid directly to the mother. It was often the only income women who worked exclusively in the home received in their own name. The payments also suggested that, at some level, the state recognized the value of raising children. As Francie Wyland (2012) indicated in her interview, when cuts to family allowance were contemplated in 1970s, women in Toronto mobilized in what was known as the "Hands Off The Family Allowance" campaign:

> We went to work early fighting against cuts to the baby bonus. We took petitions door to door in Regent Park. Through that, women came into the movement from those situations. Then later I helped start the Lesbian Mother's Defense Fund, which were all women with kids. Most of them had left their husbands, but not all of them.

During the campaign, women went door to door, to schools, and to community groups, asking people to sign a petition demanding that the federal government under the leadership of Pierre Elliot Trudeau not claw back the family allowances program as part of larger cutbacks to social services. The flyer attached to the petition read in part as follows:

> The $220,000,000 Baby Bonus increase we were all expecting has fallen victim to the government's 'anti-inflation program.' Why have they seen fit to make one of their biggest cutbacks from the pittance they give mothers? As always, we mothers are the ones who are expected to do without, to put ourselves last, and sacrifice 'for the good of others.' (Toronto Wages for Housework Committee 1976)

In addition to the family allowance struggle, the WfH committee in Toronto fought alongside women who attempted to maintain welfare benefits and to facilitate greater access. For a group of women in Winnipeg, the struggle for welfare rights was directly connected to women's position in the home and the lack of recognition of their unwaged work: "We are certainly not against a woman obtaining a job outside the home…But we are against the assumption that a woman's work in the home is not worth any financial remuneration, and that going into the workforce is the only mechanism toward financial independence…" (Kidd and Wages Due Lesbians Toronto 1977). In 1979, this group of Winnipeg women also demanded that the government keep its hands off the child tax credit, which the local housing authority was threatening to seize from mothers in rent arrears. Other government authorities were debating whether this money should

also be deducted from welfare amounts. The group's protest was taken up in Ottawa in less than a week and they won the first round when it was ruled that mothers could keep the tax credit (Kidd 1979). Within a month, they had also won commitments from both the City of Winnipeg and the Province of Manitoba to exclude child tax credits in calculating social assistance benefits. Other provinces soon followed suit with the same provisions (Johnson 1987). Welfare was presented as a social wage, suggesting that housework had, in some ways, been acknowledged by the state. This expanded view of the wage in the form of family allowance and welfare at least symbolically acknowledged the labour value in raising children (although, of course, social assistance was and is never enough to allow families to live with dignity). The wage, as both a literal cash demand and as an ideological demand, was used to highlight the unwaged work that women performed in the household.

The call to recognize reproductive work was a perspective that WfH feminists articulated and it was meant to extend to the entire working class. As Antonella Picchio (2012) stated in her interview:

> It's true that you have to bring this issue to the class, but then you have to challenge the class on the basis of the different quality of this work. So, in fact, instead of saying that we work as waged workers and want to be paid (the pay was the slogan, but the perspective was deeper than the money, though it included the money). At the end, we were, in a sense, trying to connect to the expectations of the waged work and had to, what I would say now, use the quantity of care and the quantity of housework and all that just to challenge the way the class views their whole life—not just their work—and the tensions between their home life and their work.

To say that this struggle was limited to a single demand—that of a wage in the form of cash—discredits and misrepresents what WfH attempted to achieve. If conceptualized as such, it is easy to dismiss the demand as unrealistic, unachievable, or divisive to working-class struggles. These campaigns, however, which were also connected to ones that focused on sexuality and bodily autonomy as discussed below, tackled multiple obstacles that women faced and reflected a nuanced view of housework and wages.

Sexuality and Bodily Autonomy

The fight for reproductive justice has been one of the most significant areas in women's struggles against gender and class based oppression. Such victories as gaining access to contraceptives and abortion as well as the delinking of women's sexuality from its reproductive role have provided women with the opportunity to advance in other areas in the fight against oppression. In Italy, WfH activists prioritized struggles related to sexuality and access to abortion, contraceptives, and healthcare in the 1970s because these issues were, in their view, connected to the central role of procreation in social reproduction and women's oppression and exploitation: "abortion was and is the extreme means of the rejection of motherhood that is, first and foremost, an intensification of the exploitation of women ... to try to lower the pace and reduce the amount of that housework which, because it is not paid, comes to be demanded without limits, and also to make the male wage sufficient" (Movimento per il Salario al Lavoro Domestico 1976, 29; my translation).

In Italy in the 1970s, abortion was generally not discussed openly because it was illegal under the fascist Rocco Code. Though most of these laws had been abolished once Italy became a Republic in 1948, abortion continued to be criminalized until 1981 and women who underwent the procedure faced a maximum penalty of four years in prison (Calloni 2001). An important case that became a rallying point for Italian WfH feminists was that of Giglioa Pierobon. At the age of 17, Pierobon had a clandestine abortion and, as a consequence, was put on trial in Padua in 1973. WfH feminists used the case to advocate for all women who were persecuted, shamed, and forced underground because they feared prosecution for having an abortion. In the end, the tribunal in Padua granted Pierobon judicial forgiveness on the basis that she had been a minor at the time of her abortion, but categorically refused to hear defense testimony that would have made this case stand as a burning example of the condition of women in Italy (Lotta Femminista 1973). The persecution of women who had abortions continued—forty women were arrested in Florence in 1975. Mass-rallies were organized in response and the number of women who participated in them continued to increase; for example, 50,000 women attended a rally in Rome on April 3, 1976 (Bracke 2014, 86).

Italian feminists, including WfH activists who mobilized around the question of access to abortion, contributed to intensified public discussions on the issue. In Italy, the rate of abortions rose significantly during the post-war period, with some claiming that upwards of thirty percent of all conceptions resulted in abortion even though both contraception and abortion were illegal at the time (Birnbaum 1986, 38). There was also a decline in birthrates in the post-war period, which further suggested women's efforts to reduce pregnancies and births (Dalla Costa and Fortunati 1976). This trend was also symptomatic of anxieties over impending war during the Cold War period (Federici 2012b) and a lack of desire on the part of women to support the destructive forces of capital (Dalla Costa and Fortunati 1976). Abortion and the issue of unwanted pregnancy, therefore, were no longer internalized as the personal problems of individual women and instead were considered from the perspective of patriarchal oppression and capitalist exploitation.

Almost three decades after the decriminalization of abortion in Italy (in 1981) and in Canada (in 1988), discussions about women's reproductive health have continued especially as these rights are under attack at various levels. As the site of reproduction, the female body has been a site of exploitation and oppression. In *Caliban and the Witch,* Federici (2003) contends that the female body can also be a site of resistance. Through an examination of the history of witch-hunts as a reaction against the power women had gained through control of their own sexuality and reproductive rights, she maintains that capitalist patriarchal society has relied on the control over women's bodies—from restricting and vilifying contraceptive methods, to persecuting midwives as witches, to denying and outlawing abortion.

When talking about abortion, contraception, and reproductive justice, it is important not gloss over the fact that reproductive health policies disproportionately impact women of colour (INCITE! 2006; Mullings 1996). Women from marginalized communities —including Indigenous women, incarcerated women, women with disabilities, Third World women, lesbians, etc.—have been forced to undergo procedures that limit their reproductive capacities or have had their children taken away. As Wyland (1976) argued, these forms of population control directly serve the interests of capitalism:

Capital *depends* on being able to tell us who we should sleep with and when, which of us should have children and who will be sterilized, how many children we should have, and under what conditions they will be brought up. Some of us are denied birth control and abortions, while others of us have childlessness imposed on us by forced sterilization and abortion, child custody laws and poverty. But whatever our situation, we are fighting for the power to control our own sexuality and our reproductive capacities. (7)

WfH feminists recognized that they could not demand access to abortion and contraceptives while simultaneously ignoring how marginalized women's bodies continued to be controlled. The WfH network, operating at an international level, reframed the struggle for access to abortion and contraceptives as a demand for the broadly defined right to "choose": "*The problem is not abortion. The problem is having the possibility of becoming mothers every time we want* to become mothers. *Only the times* that we want but *all the times* we want" (Toro and Colletivo di Lotta Femminista 1972, 86; my translation). In other words, the right to choose was connected to the right to bodily autonomy; this included being able to choose when and if to have children, how many, having access to services to care for children, and being able to afford to clothe and feed the children women did want. Ultimately, this right to choose would give women control over their own bodies and the power to fight against the state's attempt to control their sexuality.

Contrast to Liberal Feminism

This revisiting of the WfH movement comes at a time when we are beginning to see the effects of thirty years of neoliberalism on feminist struggles. It is important to consider the social and political reasons why liberal feminism has achieved relative hegemony while the influence of Marxist and socialist feminisms have diminished significantly. Given that various streams of feminism were active in the 1970s and beyond, it is important not to homogenize either socialist or liberal tendencies. That said, Joan Sangster and Meg Luxton (2013) have presented a comprehensive account of this waning of socialist feminism and the rise of liberal feminism. They identify the decline of socialist states and economies paired with the rise of neoliberalism (with neoliberalism as a partial response to the rise of so-

cialism and New Left movements in many parts of the world) as partially responsible. Mainstream liberal feminism's push for jobs outside the home was supported by deindustrialization and the rise of the service industry as well as the growing need for female labour to be diverted to the kinds of jobs once done for free in the home.

In the 1960s, the demand for female labour began to draw middle-class women into the workforce, a trend that Betty Friedan (1963) associated with their emancipation. According to Hester Eisenstein (2009), "The entry of both working-class and middle-class married women into the paid workforce was accompanied by a 'bourgeois revolution' for women. Liberated from the feudal aspects of the marriage contract, they emerged as economic actors in their own right" (39). In other words, shifts in the labour market were mutually beneficial for capital and for certain groups of women who gained greater access to financial independence.

Beginning in the late 1960s, the National Organization of Women (NOW) became one of the most prominent mainstream liberal feminist organizations in North America. Consistent with the mandate of other liberal feminists of the 1960s and 1970s, NOW advocated for individual women's entry into male-dominated employment and other spaces (NOW 1966), arguing that equal economic opportunities in a capitalist free market system (as well as sexual freedom) were necessary conditions for women's liberation. Although liberal feminists sought to disrupt the ideology of the traditional nuclear family and the family wage model, this work did little to address broader social and economic inequalities. Working-class and racialized women have long been working outside the home for a wage, yet their material conditions have not been altered much in the last thirty to forty years.

In North America in particular, the mainstream feminist movement has, since the 1970s, been critiqued (and this criticism is not limited to a particular "wave") for its tendency to ignore the intersections of gender, race, and class in shaping women's lives (Davis 1983; hooks 1984; and Lorde 1984). In contrast to mainstream feminist tendencies, WfH's materialist analysis allows for the inclusion of race, ethnicity, and class when examining women's oppression and exploitation. Further, in distinguishing Marxist and socialist feminist tenden-

cies from more mainstream feminist movements, it is important to reconsider core concepts like exploitation and oppression (Luxton and Bezanson 2006). Socialist and Marxist feminisms differentiated between exploitation and oppression. Exploitation referred to the expropriation of surplus value from workers by the dominant class; all workers are exploited under capitalism. Oppression is rooted in social relations and hegemonic power (Briskin 1980). In this vein, WfH's theoretical analysis considered women's specific oppression, both as a consequence of their working class status and as a result of their relationship to patriarchy. It is necessary, then, to examine the specific exploitation of women as workers and how they are positioned in social relations in order to develop a nuanced account of the specificity of women's oppression and to devise strategies to refuse these distinctions.

Conclusion

Feminists have long been arguing that "the personal is political" (Hanisch 2009). According to Selma James (2012), the WfH perspective inversed this adage:

> When feminism asserted that 'the personal is political' it usually conveyed that women's personal grievances were also political. I wanted to use this occasion to show that the political was profoundly personal, shaping our lives, and that applying Marx's analysis of capitalism to the relations between women and men illuminates them. (143)

When looking back to the domestic labour debate of the 1970s, there continue to be important feminist questions that remain unanswered: What is the relationship between ownership over one's own body and women's right to make decisions about marriage or having children? Is there a connection between the sexual division of labour and women's reproductive health or domestic violence? Further, what would happen if unpaid and unrecognized housework were collectivized (possibly even by the state)? What if jobs were no longer gendered (i.e. stigmatized and downgraded) as "women's work"? If housework were acknowledged as "real work" through the implementation of a wage, would it revolutionize how society perceives domestic labour both inside and outside the home? While the struggle for higher wages and women's access to male-dominated trades are useful as intermediary steps, these strategies do little

to address the situation of working-class women or the international division of labour. Women's liberation is only possible when existing social, political, and economic systems of power and domination are systematically attacked at their roots.

Most WfH activism had halted by 1980. This decline was due to a number of factors, including the general decline of socialist movements in the West, the powerful rise of neoliberalism, the threat of state persecution of activists in Italy, and internal political differences that splintered the WfH network in Canada.[3] However, the issues feminists active in the WfH movement engaged with have not disappeared. As economies are increasingly de-industrialized, the job market has become more flexible, the workforce more precarious, and the workplace more unstable. There are also ideological moves to restore women's traditional roles in the household and to assign them primary responsibility for social reproduction. The "...the female ability to shift roles and hybridize professional and personal life" (Fantone 2007, 13) does not sound that different from the idea that, under the male breadwinner ideal, women were the ones responsible for making ends meet on a tight budget (Creese 1999).

Thirty-five years after the decline of WfH, "domestic work has not disappeared, and its devaluation, monetarily and otherwise, continues to be a problem for most of us, whether it is unpaid or done for a wage" (Federici 2012b, 9). While there have been technological improvements that have restructured productive work, there has not been the same kind of advancement in the domestic sphere (106-107). Since the 1980s, housework might have been reorganized, which gives the appearance of a reduced work schedule. However, as Arlie Hochschild (2003b) argues in *The Second Shift*, the double day or second shift has not disappeared in the lives of women who work outside the home. Even though the majority of women in the Western world are employed outside the home, entry into the workforce does not appear to be the key to women's liberation. In many cases in fact, women's participation in the paid workforce has been facilitated by the employment of low-wage live-in caregivers or other precarious care workers (Pratt 2004; Bakan and Stasiulis 2005; Lenard and Straehle 2012). In order to develop a full account of the current implications of women's and especially racialized women's ongoing responsibility for social reproduction, it is

necessary to examine what kind of work is performed, where it is performed, and under what conditions (Ferguson 2008). Given these realities, feminists should also take seriously the political demand for a social wage in the form a guaranteed income—as a mechanism to acknowledge the value of both unpaid and paid domestic labour.

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Endnotes

[1] Mary Inman's 1941 book *In Woman's Defense* presented a challenge to the U.S. Communist Party for its inability to offer a meaningful analysis of women's oppression, which she saw as based in their position in the domestic sphere. While Inman viewed both housework and production as beneficial to capital, housework was different because it was not recognized as work. Juliet Mitchell's 1966 essay "Women: The Longest Revolution" (later published as a book entitled *Women's Estate* in 1971) examined classical Marxist writings on the "woman question," which she critiqued as being overly economistic. She explored women's social situation in relation to capitalist social relations and the emergence of private property, illustrating the ways in which ideological constructions of women's roles came to be viewed as natural facts.

[2] The influence of anti-colonial scholarship is most clearly seen in relation to Selma James, who had her early politicization with the Johnson-Forest Tendency in the U.S. In this group, the work of C.L.R. James, Raya Dunayevskaya, and Grace Lee Boggs focused on marginalized sections of the working class, specifically women, youth, and people of colour. James (who eventually married C.L.R. James) lived in Trinidad from 1958-62, and was actively involved in the West Indian independence movement. See James 2012.

[3] While the WfH network in Canada had dissolved by 1980, the Lesbian Mothers' Defense Fund remained active in Toronto until 1987. This fund was established in 1978 to support lesbian mothers navigating custody battles in the homophobic court system. See Rousseau 2015.

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Feminist Practices in Julie Shigekuni's *Invisible Gardens*: A Japanese American Woman in the Twenty-First Century

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Abstract

This article analyzes how Julie Shigekuni's (2004) novel *Invisible Gardens* offers a Japanese American feminist perspective on women's lives. The feminist themes explored include patriarchal familial relationships, the significance of mental spaces of refuge—like a garden and other 'beyond' spaces—and the explicit celebration of the (sexual) body as a site of women's empowerment.

Résumé

Cet article analyse comment le roman *Invisible Gardens* (2004) de Julie Shigekuni offre une perspective nippo-américaine féministe sur la vie des femmes. Les thèmes féministes explorés comprennent les relations familiales patriarcales, l'importance des espaces de refuge mental —comme un jardin et autres espaces imaginaires—et la célébration explicite du corps (sexuel) comme lieu d'autonomisation des femmes.

Pamela Thoma (2001) has remarked that "[i]n contrast to other women of color feminisms in the United States, Asian American feminisms, whether locally, nationally, or internationally organized, have often gone unrecognized and have been undertheorized by activists and scholars in the fields of Asian American studies and feminist studies alike" (101). Thoma asserts that hegemonic feminism has a history of overlooking Asian American feminist discussions and that many Asian American women refuse to identify with such a privileged approach to social justice. Even after twelve years, Thoma's assessment about the lack of (academic) visibility of Asian American feminism holds true.[1] And yet, analyzing Asian American women's feminism is of utmost importance as it offers "significant messages about alternative communities" and speaks to "internal pressures to choose between ethnic and feminist alliances in Asian American discourse" (Thoma 2001, 104-105). Asian American feminism captures the forces of oppression that women of Asian descent negotiate in the US and globally and renders their experiences visible and central.

In this article, I draw on Karin Aguilar-San Juan's (1997) conceptualization of Asian American feminism as a "feminist paradigm with its own cultural and political reference points" (x). According to Aguilar-San Juan, Asian American feminism adopts an intersectional approach to analyzing "social and historical processes of hierarchy and injustice" (x). While activists in the Asian American movement have primarily discussed discrimination in terms of race, Asian American feminism focuses on an analysis of the whole matrix of oppressions that includes gender, sexuality, ethnicity, class, nationality, ability, and other identity markers. For Sonia Shah (1997), too, "it makes political sense to talk about…how the forces of racism, patriarchy, and imperialism specifically affect Asian American women" and how they resist "those forces" (xiii). The combination of racism, sexism, and colonialism constructs an image of Asian American women as submissive, passive, and

hypersexual. Through their gender justice movement, Asian American women have exposed the social construction of stereotypes that affect them and identified the social, political, and cultural structures that maintain their oppression.

I see this kind of feminism operating powerfully in the writings of Japanese American author Julie Shigekuni.[2] While her texts cannot be said to speak for all Asian American women's experiences, Shigekuni's novel *Invisible Gardens* (2003) is important because it explores systematic and intersectional forces of control and domination that affect many women of Asian descent. Shigekuni challenges the assumption that women of Asian descent are "the über-template for Orientalist imagining and gender projection" and are necessarily pre-feminist and "lack critical gender and race consciousness" (Bow 2013, 1, 13). Countering representations of Asian/American women as one-dimensional and homogeneous, the author portrays her main character, Lily de Soto, as a multifaceted figure who negotiates complex values, beliefs, and attitudes. In analyzing this novel, I examine three main feminist themes: patriarchal familial relationships, the significance of mental spaces of refuge—like a garden and other 'beyond' spaces—and embracing the (sexual) body. Formerly taboo themes in Asian American women's writing, especially pleasure and sexuality, figure prominently in Shigekuni's work.[3] In the fight for the recognition of Japanese American women's humanity, *Invisible Gardens* adds the experiences of Asian American women to ongoing feminist discussions about "the home, the family, the body" (Thoma 2001, xi). It criticizes the commodification of women of Asian descent as submissive and hypersexual beings and reclaims Asian American women's bodies.

Invisible Gardens tells the story of Lily de Soto, a Sansei (third-generation Japanese American) in her mid-thirties, and her anxieties about her life as a woman married to a successful Caucasian doctor, Joseph, and as the mother of two small children. With the arrival of her Alzheimer-sick father, Yas, Lily starts drifting from the certainties in her life. Her father's presence also brings back painful memories about her mother's death in a car accident during Lily's last year in college. Lily works as a professor of history. When her sense of self becomes destabilized as she seeks to foster her identity as a Japanese American scholar—one that goes beyond

her roles as wife and mother—she begins a passionate affair with a Japanese American colleague, Perish, and temporarily leaves her husband and children. It is Lily's sense of dissatisfaction with her life and career that generates an identity crisis and prompts her desire to find her own voice and to embrace her sexuality.

Invisible Gardens

"I don't mean to sound boastful, but at this minute I think I have the perfect life" (Shigekuni 2003, 12). Early in the novel, the reader realizes that Lily's statement does not hold true. Her idea of perfection is precarious: "Her job at the university, her husband, her father, her children, her lover. They inhabit her, each filling her as urgently as her own desires . . . and she can no longer contain the whole" (192). Lily senses that she is losing command of her identity as others' demands and her need to fulfill socially-prescribed roles overwhelm her. Her emotional numbness manifests itself in images of bodily fragmentation that permeate Shigekuni's lines. At multiple moments in the narrative, Lily feels "like dust, fragmented and free-floating through the air" (36). Nothing anchors Lily in her life. When she lets her daughter take pictures of her, they, too, show Lily's split self: "Her body appears in fragments: her chin, the top of her head, a forearm with hand and fingers, a breast, a foot. Lily gives them to Jessie with a bottle of Elmer's glue, construction papers and scissors, and Jessie spends the afternoon making refrigerator art" (56). Lily feels split in her day-to-day life because of the incoherence between her inner self and the gendered expectations and pressures she experiences as a women of Asian descent.

Traise Yamamoto (1999) fittingly states that "writing by Asian American women suggests that feelings of invisibility compete with feelings of being all too visible, resulting in images of fragmentation, splitting and corrosion" (74). Many women of Asian descent in the US are torn between forces that declare them assimilated "honorable whites" and stereotypes that label them as hypersexual seductresses that need to be mistrusted. Lily perceives her life as a garden that is superficially, *visibly* gorgeous, but that does not prove satisfying for her since it does not fulfill her yearning for something different than the perfect beauty she has had the privilege to experience. Social pressure for perfection is heightened for women of Asian descent in North

America. As a "model minority" member, Lily is supposed to keep quiet about her experiences of discontent and oppression to keep up the façade of a racialized group that has fully "assimilated" and "made it." This "racist love" forces Asian Americans to become complicit in the racism and sexism against other minority groups, especially immigrants, who are not deemed as "good." Simultaneously, persistent orientalist prejudices about Asian people as childlike, heathen, submissive, feminine, and weak position Asian Americans as perpetual foreigners. For Lily, to critique her social and familial status takes courage.

The hypersexualization that Lily and other Asian American women experience in addition to racism and xenophobia is based in commonly-held perceptions of early Chinese immigrant women as prostitutes, US involvement in wars in Asia and soldiers' portrayal and treatment of Asian women as cheap and exotic sex workers, cultural practices such as the Japanese "picture brides" system, which stigmatize women of Asian descent as perfect wives, and a contemporary billion dollar Asian mail-order-bride and pornography business (Chow 1996, 255). In all her roles in life, Lily is the "Other" in both gendered and racial terms. When asked to speak about their experiences, Japanese American poet and activist Mitsuye Yamada (1983b) asserted that Asian American women are still only "expected to move, charm or entertain, but not to educate in ways that are threatening to our audiences" (71). They are reduced to their exoticized bodies and feared for their intellect and life experiences that could shatter the status quo. Lily feels constant pressure to prove herself, to be taken seriously for her accomplishments and feelings and not to have her body be reduced to a male-serving vessel. In other words, she yearns to break out of the systematic gendered and racialized expectations that shape many Asian American women's lives.

Yamada (1983a) has also written that, due to internalized racism and sexism, she did not realize that her "passive resistance…rendered her invisible" because "it was so much [her] expected role" (36). She appears to perceive this state of invisibility as negative: "The seemingly apolitical middle-class woman and the apolitical Asian woman constitute a double invisibility. I had created an underground culture of survival for myself and had become in the eyes of others the person I was trying not to be" (37). Her refusal to confront

oppression loudly was read as consent due to pervasive stereotypes about Asian American women as submissive. Lily, too, is trained—much like many other Asian American women—to consider voicing her own needs as selfish. For her, this culminates in the resolve that her "*unhappiness doesn't matter*" (Shigekuni 2003, 83; emphasis in original). While self-sacrifice is demanded of all women, and especially mothers, many Asian traditions create an environment in which women are expected to think of their own bodily and mental needs last. Initially, Lily finds release for her emotions, desires, and abilities in a collection of *invisible* gardens. Lily's ideal garden, a world without oppressive forces, is inside her and *invisible* to others.

Invisible Gardens goes beyond Yamada's theory on hiddenness. Lily's character development implies that invisibility is not necessarily negative, but, like silence, can be used as a means of empowerment, as a safe haven that protects Asian American women from the need to perform certain scripts and as a shield against a world that hypersexualizes them as "foreign…so remote, so beautiful" (Shigekuni 2003, 27). The overt use of silence and invisibility can serve as an anti-racist and anti-sexist strategy to challenge the suppression of Asian voices and bodies in US society. When read as a form of discourse and "unsaying," these mechanisms can "produce counternarratives of resistance" and support the refusal to be dominated (Duncan 2004, 217). Invisibility can relieve women of Asian descent of the responsibility to perform the oppressive role of fragile, exotic dolls for the (white) male gaze, which turns it into a tool for necessary self-care. It shows strength on Lily's part that she eventually resists the enticement that this perfect garden offers and begins a journey in search of personal fulfillment: "There is always something more that can be done. A mother's story. A wife's story" (Shigekuni 2003, 186). Lily suggests that these stories certainly need to be told, but that other voices, like that of a woman with sexual needs and desires and those of women operating outside of their patriarchically-prescribed roles, must not be silenced.

Eventually, the novel lays out the feminist practices through which Lily is able to move beyond this stage of quiet desperation, which offers a glimpse at the forms that Asian American feminisms can take. While some readers might judge Lily as egotistical and selfish, my feminist analysis sees her as breaking out of a state

of isolation and despair and as combating the collapse of her life by questioning the oppressive roles she was trained and expected to perform. She is encumbered especially by those stereotypes that stigmatize her as a docile wife and unconditionally devoted mother. One day, she gets "the odd feeling that she's spoken about someone else's life, not hers" (Shigekuni 2003, 27). At this moment, she decides to revolt against her dependence and the sense of isolation she feels in her marriage.

Gardening as Feminist Practice

For Lily, invisible gardens constitute a place of refuge, creativity, and intimacy to which only she can lay claim. They offer the potential to facilitate a realization that her experiences are systemic and not simply individual so that she can stop blaming herself. Only by acknowledging her invisibility does she realize the power it offers to understand the necessary conditions for the creation of healthy visibility. Lily's invisible gardens offer her privacy and normalcy, a space where she can cultivate her suppressed emotions and feel complete. The invisibility of Lily's refuge, importantly, does not connote passivity on her part, but rather signifies a complex emotional strength and symbolizes resistance to a social world that devalues her experiences.

The garden, as a vital element in the novel, is connected with ideas of beauty, agency, nurturing, and survival. In "In Search of Our Mother's Gardens," Alice Walker (1974) writes about her mother's devotion to her garden in terms that could be applied to Lily. According to Walker, her mother's garden was "magnificent with life and creativity." She was able to alleviate the intersectional effects of sexism, racism, and poverty with "ambitious gardens…with over fifty different varieties of plants" (241). Lily longs for such a space of creativity as she knows that "there is for each person a particular landscape that feels right" (Shigekuni 2003, 204). In her protective garden, she finds a sense of accomplishment and pride. Walker (1974) also notices that "it is only when my mother is working in her flowers that she is radiant, almost to the point of being invisible—except as Creator" (241). Invisibility, in Lily and Walker's mother's case, does not signal weakness; it connotes love for what they are doing, which replenishes them with energy and agency to fight oppression beyond the boundaries of the garden. Walker further writes that

"[g]uided by my heritage of a love of beauty and a respect for strength—in search of my mother's garden, I found my own" (243). Inspired by her mother's creative space, Walker discovered her own desires. In a society that suppresses the lives, desires, and skills of racialized people, possessing a safe space can be life-affirming. Interestingly, in Lily's case, it is her father's work with plants as a botanist that inspires her.

Lily's sense of self was very much shaped by her father with whom she bonded as a child when he taught her the names of plants. While Yas' reentry into Lily's life initially makes her uncomfortable, she eventually takes care of him as of a "third child" (Shigekuni 2003, 96). Given her father's return to a child-like state due to advanced dementia, she must adopt a different kind of mother role. When Lily starts to renegotiate her numbed relationship with her father, "who studies flowers and trees and plants, believing that they contain within their powerful beauty the miracle of life" (18), she realizes that she learned valuable lessons about plants and life from him: "*When potting, make sure you don't destroy the root system…Prune by clipping away the dead growth*" (Shigekuni 130; emphasis in original). The connections Shigekuni makes between plants and life decisions—deciding what is important, what grounds a person, and what to abandon—has important implications for feminist activism against systemic oppression.

In her essay, "Getting to the Roots; or, Everything I Need to Know about Radical Social Change I Learned in My Garden," Penny Weiss (2013) identifies fascinating parallels between gardening and activism. She analyzes how oppressive networks, like plant roots, "are complex systems, reaching out in multiple directions," negatively affecting others in their vicinity. She also suggests how natural roots and oppressive hierarchies often work underground and are not easily accessible (132). As Weiss further proposes, social justice activists can learn valuable techniques from natural roots, including the skills of "growing over and around, and claiming space and resources," being flexible, and forming coalitions (133). While eradicating plant root systems often constitutes the most effective approach, this is not always a feasible tactic with regard to pervasive cultural, social, and political organisms. Instead, "[s]ometimes, the best way to eliminate one thing is to plant something else that will eventually strangle it" (148). Violence need not necessarily be the only meth-

od, but nurturing powerful resistance that suffocates oppression can prove to be just as effective in the fight for social justice. While Lily's invisible gardens are spaces of personal refuge and revitalization, they also afford her critical wisdom about systemic oppression as well as lessons about social change.

Despite the gardening knowledge that Yas has taught Lily, the rekindling process between the two is painful. One episode in her childhood, for example, still rouses her anger: she killed a cactus by watering it too much, for which her father reprimanded her strongly (Shigekuni 2003, 131). Lily's childish ignorance about plants and Yas' overzealous protection of flora clashed, which rendered any form of effective communication between the two difficult. Lily's use of childhood memories about plants to negotiate her adult experiences does not seem accidental. Much like to her father, the everyday life in a garden appears rational and sensible to Lily, which is why her invisible garden can be such a stabilizing support to her. But even those kinds of memories are open to questioning in times when her world is overturned: "[M]aybe her recollection of the past is not what happened at all. What if the cactus was only a plant, and what if there was no sense to be made, or what if the sense she has made no longer served her" (133). All these years, Lily interpreted her father's reaction as a sign of his lack of love for her; now, while resetting the clock on her relationships with the men (her father, husband, lover) in her life, she begins to mistrust what she has been taking for granted—a very feminist act.

Jennifer Yee (2009) emphasizes that, in the development of Asian American and Pacific Islander feminist epistemologies, it is important to acknowledge that relationships with family members are based in an ideal, and mostly unachievable, model of womanhood. This norm determines social expectations and functions as a tool of "social control" (53). Through conscious feminist effort, these relationships, however, can morph into "sites of resistance" (54). It is, of course, extremely difficult, especially for people of color, to leave their families who often serve as safe havens in a racist society. That said, it might have been the realization that her home could be a site of change—if misogynistic elements were eliminated—that makes Lily return to her husband and children at the end of the novel after having run away with her lover for a short period of time.

As the novel progresses, Lily learns to appreciate the kind of gardener her father is as he proclaims that "[w]ithout good soil, everything will die" (Shigekuni 2003, 101). It is this kind of practical, yet philosophical, advice that Lily takes seriously while attempting to transform her life. Yas' words speak a truth that reaches beyond his garden: a society that does not provide solid support for all its citizens' needs is not conducive to a healthy and balanced existence. When her husband and father get into an argument about cutting down a tree in the garden, Lily ultimately sides with her father's point of view: "[a] dead tree needs to be cut down…There are many good reasons to cut down a tree" (135). Her father's matter-of-fact practicality pushes Lily to adopt a new approach to her life that she symbolically celebrates as she "gathers the dry brown remains of the garden into a pile and strikes a match" at the end of the novel (240). Understanding the necessity for clearing her garden of expired elements and the cathartic and fertilizing (in a quite literal sense) power such an act can have, instills in her—through an awakened sense of self-worth—the desire to rid herself of the obstructing and oppressive powers in her life.

Gardening as a feminist practice specific to Japanese American women operates in the novel to reshape familial and patriarchal relationships. Gardening constitutes resistance that demands renegotiating social systems, traditions, and relationships with others. In the Japanese American context, the garden has very specific historical and cultural meanings. The traditional Japanese art of gardening values the preservation of pure nature and avoids artificiality: "The Japanese ideal of garden form is a space in which the art itself is so artless as to be totally unapparent…One of [the] fundamental intentions is to inspire the emotion of rejoicing with [the] creations of nature and of figuratively blooming when they bloom" (Hayakawa 1973, 10). This freedom from artificial, socially-constructed, oppressive forces and this emphasis on the embodiment of unconstrained, natural essence promises to provide an atmosphere conducive to women's self-development as they negotiate sexist cultural elements on a daily basis. Lily guards and cultivates her secrets—her affair, her discontent, her anxiety—like a garden, and the garden symbolizes a place of quiet refuge for her. These elements mirror the Japanese garden's role in ensuring privacy as well as offering bodily and mental repose (161), which

is very different from American cultural understandings of gardens as more public spaces.

Gardens have also served as important sites of resistance within Japanese American culture. In his study of three generations of Japanese American gardeners on the Central Coast of California, Brett Esaki (2013) explains that, during and immediately after World War II with its intense xenophobia against people of Japanese descent, gardening constituted a form of self-preservation and survival in the internment camps and, after the war, was one of the very few job opportunities open to Japanese Americans. The many gardens that beautified Manzanar Detention Center where Japanese Americans were interned are evidence of this culturally important practice (283). According to Esaki, "[i]n order to exercise agency within contexts of racism, some immerse themselves in an internal silence that allows them to focus on crafting the art" (235). He further notes that taking up the profession of gardener after release from internment "was a strategy to mute the noisy impositions of land seizure and economic marginalization and to find the silences…of self-determination under oppression" (245). Much like for the Japanese American gardeners who Esaki (2013) interviewed, gardens for Lily are spaces of "dignity and respect, where life is given space to exist and to speak on its own terms and at its own pace." Within an oppressive environment, gardens constitute oases of agency and autonomy. Comparable to trees that bear scars from techniques of pruning designed by "Japanese Americans trying to succeed under oppression" (257), Lily embodies a tree with scars created in her fight against sexist and cultural expectations. To heal these scars, Lily longs for Japanese gardens' "ancient connection with nature and tranquility and…harmony" (258).

Shigekuni constructs the garden's interiority as a mental space of silence and introspection. Lily's garden nurtures her longings for "another life" and does not judge her for her actions. These characteristics are in tune with the fact that the Japanese art of gardening appreciates the power of difference rather than uniformity as the "Japanese ideal of beauty is most often expressed in asymmetry" (Hayakawa 1973, 166). This embracing of diversity clashes with the social and cultural forces that shape Lily's life: "'I want another life' …I'm not sure I can pull it off anymore—any of it'" (Shigekuni 2003, 129). In her imaginary garden, Lily is free to break out

of established and expected patterns. She longs to transplant this audaciousness into the real world where she fights the norms and roles that mold her life as a Japanese American woman.

The Body as a Tool for Self-Empowerment

Discussions about Asian American women's bodies must necessarily take into consideration colonial constructions of "'Oriental" women. The demand for Asian women in the global sex and marriage market strengthens stereotypes about them as submissive and unmarked by feminism, a characteristic that makes them more desirable for many men. According to Yamamoto (1999), Asian American women have historically refrained from explicitly referencing the body and sexuality as they have served as sites of otherness, humiliation, and repudiation (74). In that same vein, Lily's body initially only functions as a messenger for her outsider status and dissatisfaction: "She sees her body reduced to a mass of tissues and organs and knows that in some irreparable way, her marriage is fading, her life as it was is ruined" (Shigekuni 2003, 64).

In her marriage to Joseph, a white medical doctor, Lily cannot escape the dutiful and subservient role as a lotus blossom or geisha and as the perfect mother. Her husband's professional status and success also generate a great deal of self-doubt: "Can't she be, for one night, the loving wife of the good doctor? It shouldn't be so hard on this occasion, when Joseph is clearly the king of the world" (Shigekuni 2003, 65). Lily feels frustrated about her academic career. She questions her accomplishments and her own worth in academia and wonders if her hiring was because "the department need[ed] one more Japanese-American to fill some secret quota" (Shigekuni 2003, 14).

One day, Lily powerfully fights against these forces of unacknowledged male privilege when she seduces her Japanese American colleague, Perish, in his office. When she asks him a question in his position as an academic expert on the World War II internment of Japanese Americans, he makes it very clear that he is only interested in sex and not in any kind of intellectual exchange. As a result, she determines "to make the rules for what will happen in his office this afternoon." She physically takes control of his workplace by creating chaos, throwing books at him, and stuffing a ripped-out page of a valuable book into his mouth. In a

sense, Lily appropriates the space of oppression where men normally dominate and becomes the "master of this interlude" (127). This rupture of patriarchal space and power assumes a highly emblematic and destructive form when Lily damages her lover's books with his own semen (128). In this white and male-dominant environment, Lily asserts her presence and identity and symbolically stands up against sexist forces in the Asian American community that suggest that racial issues are more important than gender oppression.

Critics might argue that the overt celebration of sexual pleasure in *Invisible Gardens* works to reproduce the hurtful hypersexualization of women of Asian descent. Misogynist, racist, and orientalist images have long depicted Asian women as a "dragon lady, lotus blossom, the prostitute with a heart of gold, the little brown fucking machine powered by rice, the dominatrix, and the whore" (Shimizu 2007, 4).[4] They are portrayed as demure and passive (sexual) servants of white men or aggressive sexual predators and traitors. Celine Shimizu (2007) argues that women of Asian descent are associated with a "perverse sexuality," which usually stands in stark contrast to a white woman's 'normal' sexuality and which can be interpreted as "strength, diversity, or [as] pathology" (4). For many women and especially women of color, the fear of being marked as sexually perverse hinders them from expressing their sexual desires and experiences. While hypersexuality as a stereotype is damaging to Asian American women, it can be reclaimed in the form of "feminist, anti-racist, and sex-positive critique" against moralistic judgments and policing (6). I contend that Shigekuni challenges perceptions of the Asian woman's body by depicting Lily as an increasingly empowered sexual subject instead of a passive sex object or "other."

For Lily, this process includes experiencing the joy and pleasure of sexuality. *Invisible Gardens* presents an abundance of positive images of the sensual female body, including Lily's efforts to regain control over her body: "She has always lived inside her body. Spent the last years bearing children and feeding them milk produced by her body, and before that – before that she can barely remember. She was young then, living in a body that gave her pleasure, and that pleasure is no longer linked to her husband" (Shigekuni 2003, 63). The use of sexually explicit description in the novel is consistent with a recent trend toward unconcealed expressions of sexuality in Asian American women's writing: "She can feel her hips spreading apart, her womb opening to take him in, and a warmth emanates out of her center as her jaw trembles, then soundlessly releases" (Shigekuni 2003, 62). Lily's open embrace of sexual pleasure during her affair with Perish might be read as "politically productive perversity" (Shimizu 2007, 23) as the author seeks to confront Asian American women's sexual commodification. Gayatri Spivak (1987) explains: "[i]f to identify woman with her copulative or reproductive body can be seen as minimalizing and reductive, woman's orgasmic pleasure…can be seen as a way out of such reductive identifications" (258). By marshalling the power of sexually-explicit writing in *Invisible Gardens*, Shigekuni effectively challenges orientalist misogynic imaginings and presents pleasure as a form of feminist resistance.

Lily's sexual relationship with her lover allows her body, through its erotic desires, to become a medium to restore her holistic self. Audre Lorde (1984) writes that "the superficially erotic has been encouraged as a sign of female inferiority" (53), and Asian American women's constructed racialized hypersexuality—as is the case for other women of color—has been used as a tool to oppress them. Yet, Lorde argues that great power lies in women embracing their sexual powers: "[W]hen we begin to live from within outward, in touch with the power of the erotic within ourselves, and allowing that power to inform and illuminate our actions upon the world around us, then we begin to be responsible to ourselves in the deepest sense" (58).

Shimizu (2007) maintains that Asian American feminist cultural producers are challenging the systemic appropriation of Asian American women's sexuality as they "re-identify sexuality as crucial to their social legibility and self-recognition in terms of forging their freedoms from the bonds of racial, gendered, sexual, and classed classifications" (10). Shigekuni, too, suggests that Lily's re-encounter with ecstatic sexual pleasure changes how she perceives herself, offering her the self-knowledge, confidence, and courage to resist oppression. Lorde (1984) succinctly describes this process as follows: "In touch with the erotic, I become less willing to accept powerlessness…resignation, despair, self-effacement, depression, self-denial" (58). Not unlike Lorde's experiences, Lily's recognition of her body's sexual and liberating forces sparks her desire to ques-

tion the oppressive and paralyzing elements—like the commodification of female bodies—that shape many Asian American women's lives due to intersectional networks of domination.

A Mental Space of One's Own

While *Invisible Gardens* engages with various feminist themes, Lily's public fainting spell at a gas station after one of her illicit sexual meetings with her lover might, as an age-old device in fictional writing, work to undermine the portrayal of Lily as an empowered agent. I argue, however, that, when interpreted from a Japanese American perspective, the fainting episode does not have that effect. For Lily, it is vital to maintain an inner place for herself where she can find solitude: "The noise the children make, even Joseph's voice, cannot reach her in this place she inhabits alone" (Shigekuni 2003, 5). This remote, inner space offers protection from external forces beyond Lily's control. Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston (1985) clarifies that some Japanese women have the ability to create "a void that encircles her and cannot be silenced…This ability to create a psychological privacy, inherited from a people who for centuries have had to create their own internal 'space' in an overpopulated island, gave her the freedom, of which she was so deprived in her role as Japanese wife and mother. This was her way to survive…and to succeed" (74). The capacity for quiet and healing introspection becomes a quality essential to women's survival.

Lily's fainting spell, then, does not necessarily have to symbolize weakness, but can signify mental and physical liberation from oppression: "The body fighting the mind, vying for what is real" (Shigekuni 2003, 175). In Lily's case, the mind wins, forcing her to disregard mere bodily demands and to focus instead on her inner self to gain psychological strength. It seems that, for Shigekuni, a balance between female sexual *and* mental powers can be the most empowering for women.

This positive reading of Lily's fainting spell is supported when one considers other instances in the novel when something similar to losing consciousness is described: "It is while she is reading that her world falls away from her…She imagines her heart as a closed fist opening…as some part of her is lifted from her body, freed" (Shigekuni 2003, 81). In this scene, Lily's inner self is able to separate from its physical shell to embrace the strength and clarity within her. This mental wander-

ing occurs again when Lily is having sex with Perish and finds herself transplanted to her family's garden. Here she witnesses a fight between her husband and her father, but remains an unnoticed observer. This provides her with an opportunity, very much in accordance with the Japanese concept of a garden, to contemplate privately and calmly her relationship with her father.

On a larger scale, *Invisible Gardens* proposes that effective communication is essential when trying to survive in oppressive social and cultural environments. Lily believes in the Japanese concept of 'stomach talking' (Kato 1977, 96), which allows people who are extremely close to communicate without the use of words: "'I want to be understood without having to ask for understanding'…Joseph swears beyond all hope that such a state of intimacy cannot exist, even calls it blackmail" (Shigekuni 2003, 137). She not only seeks a mental space for herself, but is convinced that her relationship with her husband needs a completely private location, which no one else, not even their children, can enter. Because of the different levels of privilege in their relationship, bodies alone cannot procure the closeness which Lily deems vital to a fulfilled marriage.

Beyond *Invisible Gardens*

Shigekuni further explores the idea of a mental space of refuge in her 2008 novel *Unending Nora*. The work focuses on twenty-nine year-old Nora Yano's disappearance and follows the intertwined stories of four young Japanese American women whose parents are marked by the effects of internment: "[H]aving found no place for herself in the world of appearances, Nora was the natural ruler of the world that existed beneath the surface" (8). After losing all feeling in her hands and suffering from depression, Nora seeks refuge in her imagination and engages in a passionate sexual relationship with a stranger. These sexual encounters, as in Lily's case, make Nora feel alive, and she regains control over her body. Gardens, too, emerge as symbols for "beauty," "warmth," a "retreat," and "peace" (141) and as spaces of reconnection and negotiating memories.

As with the women depicted in *Unending Nora*, Lily's life reflects major changes that have swept through the Japanese American community and that have supported the emergence of Asian American feminism. In both cases, the women's social interactions are less influenced by the "dense web of intimate ethnic friendships,

extensive family ties, and other quasi-kin relationships" so characteristic of earlier Japanese American generations (Fugita and Fernandez 2004, 209). These shifts are also manifested by the many Japanese Americans who marry "outsiders" and by the loss of the Japanese language and culture as a pervasive influence. The fact that fathers, like Yas, are depicted as fragile figures further points to the weakening of patriarchal structures in Asian American communities (Xu 2002, 57). In their efforts to heighten their own visibility, women writers of Asian descent do not render men completely absent, but limit their capacity to exert patriarchal dominance.

While Shigekuni certainly explores the racial complexities of Lily's social location as a Japanese American woman in *Invisible Gardens*, she appears most interested in examining women's struggle against archaic gender roles. This is also the case in Shigekuni's (1995) first novel, *A Bridge between Us*, in which she explores women's experiences of various kinds of oppression such as sexism, racism, and sexual harassment. One of the characters, Tomoe, questions gendered expectations, describing how she "was raised to believe that doing something for myself means caring for others and Goro [her husband] grew up believing that caring for himself was enough" (76). Most of the characters in Shigekuni's first novel at some point admit that "I did not believe in myself" (98). A key focus of Shigekuni's feminist critique is Asian American women's socialization as submissive caregivers at the expense of their own needs. With her depiction of Japanese American feminism in her novels, Shigekuni steers away from the stereotypical portrayal of Japanese American women in order to claim, "'I am not exotic,'" which echoes the message of *The Forbidden Stitch,* the first anthology of Asian American women's literature (Lim 1989, 12).

Asian American women writers, like Julie Shigekuni, have made significant contributions, especially given that Asian women in America emerged "not as individuals but as nameless and faceless members of an alien community. Their identity has been formed by the lore of the majority community, not by their own history, their own stories" (Asian Women United of California 1989, 1). Through her portrayal of Lily and other female characters, Shigekuni has given a face to contemporary Japanese American women that is independent of widespread and detrimental stereotypes. She takes risks in her depiction of lives lived under the sur-

face and shows little judgment or moralizing. According to Elaine Kim (1990), "claiming America for Asian Americans is inseparable from the claim on female self and subjectivity" (81). Shigekuni confronts the hypersexualization of Asian women by showing that sexuality is an essential part in every woman. She portrays Japanese American women not as abstract others or as flat caricatures, but as real women and subjects. While *Invisible Gardens* is certainly not a perfect or neat feminist story, it successfully opens up discussions about Asian American women and their relationship to sexuality, family, and empowerment.

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Endnotes

[1] Asian American women began to organize in larger numbers in the 1960s. Despite public perceptions, the Asian American women's movement has a lively history. See Esther Ngan-Ling Chow's (1996) "The Development of Feminist Consciousness among Asian American Women" for a discussion of this feminist history and the challenges that women encountered.

[2] Julie Shigekuni received her MFA from Sarah Lawrence College and is currently the Creative Writing Program Director and Development Director of the Asian American Studies Program at the University of New Mexico. She has published three novels: *A Bridge Between Us* (1995), *Invisible Gardens* (2003), and *Unending Nora* (2008).

[3] *Invisible Gardens* might not only incidentally be similar in its title to Nancy Friday's (1973) *My Secret Garden*, a non-fiction compilation of women's sexual fantasies.

[4] One example of this typology is actress Lucy Liu as a dominatrix in *Payback* (1999) and *Charlie's Angels* (2000).

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Review Essay: *The Grads are Playing Tonight!: The Story of the Edmonton Commercial Graduates Basketball Club*

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Book Under Review

M. Ann Hall. *The Grads are Playing Tonight!: The Story of the Edmonton Commercial Graduates Basketball Club*. Edmonton: The University of Alberta Press, 2011. 352 pp.

With *The Grads are Playing Tonight*, M. Ann Hall, Canada's foremost historian of women in sport, turns her attention to one of Canada's greatest athletic success stories—the Edmonton Commercial Graduates women's basketball team. In ten briskly-paced chapters, Hall covers the story of the Grads from their formation in 1915, through their dominant world championship days of the 1920s when they won over 95 percent of the 500 plus games they played, until they disbanded in 1940. Although this is a well-researched and well-written study of one of Canada's most successful sports teams, it is one that is best targeted for casual readers and sports fans.

The Edmonton Grads team was originally formed in 1915 as the women's basketball team at McDougall Commercial High. Extremely successful in Alberta's high school competitions, the team stayed together following their graduation from McDougall, riding a wave of popularity for women's basketball to contest tournaments further afield throughout the 1920s and 1930s. Over the course of their existence, the team won four consecutive Olympic tournaments (although never a medal as women's basketball was not a medal sport). Moreover, in 1923, the team won the Underwood Trophy–the most prestigious challenge trophy in women's basketball–which they held until 1940, only relinquishing it when their team disbanded. For over two decades, the Edmonton Grads were perhaps the most dominant sports team on the planet.

Over the course of her study, Hall introduces her readers to a number of personalities who played for the Grads team. Indeed, three whole chapters are devoted to a fascinating series of mini-biographies of the players, spanning the team's early, middle, and later years. In so doing, it is clear that Hall is trying to reveal who the players were beyond their roles on the team. Hall relies on both published material and, in some cases, interviews with surviving relatives in her historical reconnaissance. Despite sincere efforts at detailing the young women who were the Edmonton Grads, it is

somewhat disappointing that the figure who emerges most fully-formed in this history is not one of the many female players over the 25 year of the team's history, but their male coach, J. Percy Page.

Hall clearly reveals Page's impact on the Grads team and its players. Not only did he schedule the Grads in various tournaments, arrange for travel, and teach the team smart strategy, but he also had a role in shaping the image the team projected by mandating that the players adhere to strict gender ideals. As Hall describes it, "Page insisted that his players be ladies first and basketball players second, and he kept a tight rein on their behavior both on and off the court." The players were not to smoke, drink, chew gum, or fraternize with young men, restrictions Hall contends the players gladly embraced not only because such behavior was seen as counter to "the ultimate pinnacle of womanhood," but also because as young women it was expected that they would soon marry and abandon their athletic careers in order to become wives, mothers, and homemakers.

While Hall's emphasis on Page may be expected—after all, he was one of the few constants over the 25-year history of the team—it nevertheless contributes to one of the books most serious flaws. That a history of a women's basketball team focuses more on the man who controlled the purse-strings and the schedule of the team than the female players themselves, without providing any real engagement with gendered hierarchy of the sporting administration that oversaw the Grads program and the sporting world at large is a lost opportunity. As a result, Hall studies a celebrated woman's basketball team without critically examining the expectation that the only role women were to fill for the Grads was to be players—team management positions were universally filled by men. To be fair, organizational positions for a number of women's sporting teams at the time were most often filled by men. Moreover, Hall does a fine job of relaying how the Grads often challenged gendered expectations for them on the court–for example, she relays a story of how after practicing against a boys high school squad, "to sharpen their knowledge of the men's game," they "ditched their respective bloomers and were outfitted in short-sleeved tops and knee-length shorts, with socks and kneepads covering their legs" (p. 39) in an effort attempt to allow for greater freedom of movement. It was through actions such as this, Hall claims, that the team was able to "fashion a new model of athletic womanhood, characterized by the masculine qualities of skill, strength, speed, agility, and energy, while at the same time retaining their femininity. Their very presence helped to redefine the earlier contested notions of womanhood." (p. 24) Unfortunately, in Hall's telling, this redefinition of womanhood stopped once the game was over and the players had left the court. It would have been interesting to explore how and if the Grads' on-court challenge to athletic gender roles translated to their off-court lives.

Despite the flaw mentioned above, this is an engaging study of an often ignored part of Canada's sporting past. It provides an excellent overview of the Grads' formation, of their championship years during the 1920s and 1930s, and of their disbanding in 1940. Indeed, the two appendices Hall provides on the Grads' chronology and their many awards and honours provide a useful overview of the team's impact on the world of women's basketball. Unfortunately, it is often heavy on description and light on analysis. Sports history has in recent years been on the frontline of gendered analyses of such concepts as womanhood and the body. While Hall hints at some of the ways the Grads challenged depression-era notions of feminine athleticism, in the end the reader is left wanting more. This failure to fully present a gendered analysis of the Grads both on and off the court means that *The Grads are Playing Tonight* is best suited for casual readers and basketball fans, or perhaps an undergraduate class in sport—and not gender—history.