

preface

IN THIS TIME OF PROTESTS against anti-Black violence, this issue brings together a range of essays that highlight the multifaceted work required to dismantle white supremacy and create a just world. The *Feminist Studies* editorial collective's opening statement, "Anti-Black Violence, Police Brutality, White Supremacy," grieves the many Black lives lost to police brutality, racial capitalism, and COVID-19 and pledges solidarity with efforts to achieve justice for Black people. Several essays in this volume advance the necessary work of examining structural racism in its myriad guises. Heather Berg's analysis of the #MeToo movement and Julienne Obadia's analysis of the movement to recognize polyamory as a sexual orientation find that both movements adopt an individualizing politics of white, middle-class respectability that looks to the law and the state for protection; in so doing, both movements erase the needs and experiences of people of color and working-class people. Minh-Ha T. Pham's essay about making face masks, Jaime Madden's commentary about socioeconomic divides pervading online instruction, and Callie Danae Hirsch's artwork each respond to the effects of structural racism brought into stark relief by the COVID-19 pandemic. The next three authors featured in this issue grapple with the ethical and methodological complexities of doing feminist research and activism. Aslı Zengin reflects on the challenges of conducting ethnographic research in Turkey, Su Holmes explores what feminist research may offer to women struggling

with eating disorders, and Becky Thompson offers two poems featuring the dilemmas faced by an aid worker assisting refugees in Greece. Three additional essays interrogate the relationship between gender and conceptions of home. Focusing on writings by prominent male nationalist figures in early twentieth-century India, Gyanendra Pandey explores the contrast between these men's domestic lives and their proclaimed commitments to reforming Indian womanhood. Cynthia Belmont and Angela Stroud explore how the survivalist magazine *Offgrid* encourages "disaster consumerism" as a means for white, middle-class men to salvage their masculinity in the name of protecting their homeland. Elizabeth Currans highlights how participants in the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival struggled, over time, to make it more hospitable to people of color and to genderqueer, non-binary, and transwomen participants. We close the issue on a hopeful note with pieces that illuminate the transformative power of feminist lineages of learning and collective knowledge-making. In her poems about making lace and crochet, Dana Sonnenschein foregrounds women's history of teaching each other "the art of making something of absences." Anna Guevara and Maya Arcilla describe recent activism by feminists against Philippine president Rodrigo Duterte's draconian Anti-Terrorism Law. Shelley Streeby's review essay underscores how working-class, Black, feminist author Octavia Butler continues, even after her death, to inspire writers, artists, and activists to engage in collaborative, interdisciplinary, and intersectional feminist world-making. With its sustained attention to racial, sexual, economic, and ecological forces, Butler's speculative fiction serves as a vital resource for envisioning justice and making equity a shared reality.

In "Left of #MeToo," Heather Berg intervenes in current discussions of the #MeToo movement by exploring its origin in "black left feminism." According to Berg, the contemporary #MeToo movement simplifies its analysis to "men doing bad things to women," which reinforces a rigid gender binary, ignores how racial capitalism and class domination enable harassment, implies that "legitimate working women" need to be protected from association with sex workers, and imagines "the state (and its private extension in corporate HR departments) as an uncomplicated ally," which "betrays a position of extreme privilege in relation to most working people." Indeed, while the mainstream #MeToo movement focuses on the poor enforcement of harassment protections,

domestic and agricultural workers are excluded from such laws in the first place. Drawing on black left feminism and sex worker feminism as resources for escaping what she calls the “dead ends” of the #MeToo movement, Berg calls for a position “left of #MeToo” that emphasizes working people’s need for organizing, not for protection from the state. “A theory of workplace abuse needs to be a theory of racial capitalism,” Berg concludes, “one that acknowledges that neither different bosses nor remedies from a violent state will save us.”

Julienne Obadia’s essay, “Responsibility, Respectability, Recognition, and Polyamory: Lessons in Subject Formation in the Age of Sexual Identity,” draws on ethnographic research to explore how advocates of polyamory increasingly interpret their practices as an innate sexual orientation. Obadia argues that historical conceptions of monogamy, respectability, and whiteness shape the current terms by which polyamory is recognized as legitimate. For instance, polyamory’s recent popularity has coincided with campaigns that have recast LGBTQ relationships “as respectable extensions of the heterosexual nuclear family.” Furthermore, American legal and political discourses have long associated monogamy with civilized whiteness and nonmonogamy with racialized barbarism. Thus, when Obadia’s interviewees contrast others’ desires for mere sex with their own desires for commitment, honesty, and love, they tacitly invoke “racialized specters of promiscuity, infidelity, and polygamy.” While advocates celebrate the increased civic inclusion of polyamorists, Obadia views this as evidence of “the assimilating strategies of the liberal state,” which funnels potentially transgressive differences into nonthreatening forms. By predicating nonmonogamists’ civic inclusion on their adherence to “deeply sedimented racialized and heteronormative discourses of civility and progress,” dominant polyamory discourse actually limits the ways in which marginalized groups can advocate for themselves and make claims for justice.

In “How to Make a Mask’: Quarantine Feminism and Global Supply Chains,” Minh-Ha T. Pham draws attention to structural racism by comparing the cultural meanings assigned to face masks sewn at home by white, middle-class women and girls in the United States with face masks sewn by low-wage women of color in US and Asian factories. While the homemade and locally produced mask has become one of the most visible means of civic, political, and economic participation during the pandemic, Pham argues that this model of “quarantine feminism” locates

civic participation in the white, middle-class, US home rather than in the garment factory; in so doing, it pushes women of color, low-income women, and immigrant women to the margins of the US social imaginary and threatens to erase them from the historical memory of COVID-19. As a result of this pandemic, garment workers in the United States and in Asia have faced job loss, loss of wages, and the impossible choice between having no income or risking their own health and that of their families to work in unsafe factory conditions where they are not even permitted to wear face masks themselves. Meanwhile, Pham notes, the media praises Western fashion brands for donating face masks to essential workers, rendering invisible the low-wage workers of color who bear the tremendous costs of making these masks under deadly conditions.

Jaime Madden's commentary on the mass transition to online teaching during the pandemic offers useful cautions to instructors. Drawing on the principle of access as understood in feminist disability studies, Madden asks whether online instruction offers students from a range of backgrounds appropriate levels of access to learning. Her focus is specifically on how online courses tend to emphasize writing-centered communication, whether in assignment formats or in instructors' assessments. Writing-centric formats, she finds, can underestimate students whose critical thinking skills are not best demonstrated in this mode and deepen existing socio-economic divides. Written assessments are also especially taxing for instructors who are burdened for time. Madden offers examples of alternative platforms and assignments that allow students to display a range of skills and also allow instructors to better communicate feedback. These cautions and alternatives are especially timely for instructors preparing to start the new academic year primarily in online mode.

Artist Callie Danae Hirsch describes *pandemic daydreams* as a "visual diary" of her experience of living in Brooklyn, New York, during the coronavirus outbreak. Prior to COVID-19, Hirsch was struggling to process her experiences of a double mastectomy and the removal of her ovaries. But when COVID-19 hit, she felt "the desire to connect and reflect with others about what we are all losing: our elders, our community members, our friends, our 'IRL' connections with each other." Hirsch's paintings, which she describes as "comical, nightmarish, filled with chaos and disruption," evoke the fresh graves and endless cremations she regularly witnesses in a nearby cemetery, the daily horror

stories of victims, her imagined vision of the virus, as she investigates “the discomfort of our present moment.”

Aslı Zengin’s “A Field of Silence: Secrecy, Intimacy, and Sex Work in Turkey” is the first of three essays that grapple with ethical and methodological complexities of doing feminist research and activism. Ten years after she conducted fieldwork with unregistered cis women sex workers in Turkey, Zengin reflects on the process of conducting ethnography, arguing that it entails “an absorption of the researcher by the field” more than “an immersion of the researcher in the field.” As she was conducting her fieldwork, Zengin’s gender, educational background, and non-sex worker status placed her in the category of “respectable” womanhood, which constrained her entrance into brothels and night clubs and shaped her interactions with sex workers and institutional actors. Rather than viewing unwilling participants and agencies as barriers to her research, Zengin ultimately realized that silence is both “a productive analytical category and an effective methodological tool.” Because sex work is legalized in Turkey, sex workers are required to register and undergo periodic medical examinations; state institutions signal their power by refusing to share information about sex work, turning knowledge into silence. Zengin also learned that sex workers’ silence denotes their subordination even as it serves as a form of agency; refusing to talk is a tactic women sometimes choose in order to protect themselves.

In “‘Why Hadn’t I Come Across This Sooner?’: Exploring the Relationships between ‘Feminism(s)’ and ‘Eating Disorders,’” Su Holmes explores how women and girls who struggle with eating disorders understand and engage with feminist approaches to eating problems. Tracing shifts in feminist conceptions of eating disorders, Holmes notes that biomedical treatment paradigms tend to view eating disorders through an individualizing, non-gendered lens. Over the past thirty years, there has been little discussion about ways in which feminist research about eating disorders might intervene in clinical practice. To address this troubling gap between clinical and feminist approaches, Holmes asked her research participants to respond to feminist critiques of biomedical eating disorder treatments and to evaluate a ten-week inpatient program based on feminist approaches to eating disorders. Offering women a space to evaluate both biomedical and feminist paradigms is critical, Holmes argues, for understanding everyday uses of feminist paradigms and for incorporating feminist approaches into clinical treatment of

eating disorders. While Holmes acknowledges that her research sample inadvertently reinforces the centrality of white, middle-class, heterosexual, and cisgender women in both clinical and feminist research, her research participants draw crucial attention to the difficulty of adding feminist perspectives to biomedical treatment frameworks. The participants also highlight how feminist sociocultural explanations of eating disorders may increase their perceived stigma. This article stresses the need to make feminist scholarship and perspectives on eating disorders accessible to women of varied educational, class, racial/ethnic, and sexual backgrounds.

Becky Thompson's two poems address a major humanitarian crisis—the plight of refugees—through the perspective of an aid worker in Greece who assists people arriving from Turkey, Afghanistan, Syria, and countries in Africa. The first brief poem, "In the Slip Between Coasts," offers an elemental, embodied, and geopolitical description of the world through images of the sea crashing against a "high stone wall" and aid workers scanning the waves for dots that will become "arms waving/rafts carrying the world." In Thompson's second poem, "Cartography in Greece," the speaker maps her "cacophony" of memories onto the local terrain. Asking, "What does it mean to miss the intimacy of disaster?" she toggles between highly personal memories (a family of thirteen who hid in her seaside room, a Syrian man who gave her his shirt, moments of "freedom" and "jubilation") and more emotionally distant images of institutionalized aid work: rescue teams, a "life jacket graveyard," barbed wire, young men guarding people in tents, photographers, academics, film crews. The line "Save the people, bury the dead, photograph the remains, repeat" suggests that the speaker is questioning what it means for aid work to become routine and what it means for her to miss—even feel nostalgic for—a time when refugee work offered her a deeper sense of human connection.

The first of three essays about gender and conceptions of home, Gyanendra Pandey's "Men in the Home: Everyday Practices of Gender in Twentieth-Century India" examines the domestic relationships of three early- and mid-twentieth-century male nationalist figures in India: Rajendra Prasad, a former president of the country, Premchand, a beloved Hindi fiction writer, and Rahul Sankrityayan, a travel writer and peasant organizer. While these men were hailed for their public commitment to social justice and gender equality, their personal trajectories included

startling examples of self-centered domestic relationships. Drawing on their life writings, Pandey offers a critique of masculinity in the upper-caste Hindu context by underscoring these three figures' dependence on the domestic sphere despite their disavowal of this dynamic. Pandey's essay advances scholarship on nationalism and domesticity by treating men as more than "a spectral presence" in domestic spaces and by dissecting what "being at home" involved for men.

Cynthia Belmont and Angela Stroud offer another perspective on masculinity, nationhood, and conceptions of home in their essay, "Bug-ging Out: Apocalyptic Masculinity and Disaster Consumerism in *Offgrid* Magazine." Drawing on insights from the sociology of masculinity, environmental feminism, and ecocriticism, Belmont and Stroud interrogate the "disaster consumerism" promoted by *Offgrid*—a magazine with a readership comprised almost exclusively of white men. *Offgrid* suggests that contemporary threats to masculinity—arising from a decline in traditional jobs and status—can be countered by individual white men purchasing expensive survival gear that enables them to protect their envisioned homeland, which includes defenseless women and children, and to dominate unpredictable, frequently feminized forces of nature. Through analyses of the magazine's preparedness tips, self-defense strategies, profiles of survivalists, disaster scenarios, gear reviews, and advertisements, Belmont and Stroud argue that disaster consumerism buttresses whiteness and American individualism by obscuring the structural foundations of disasters and by precluding "politicized investigation of the consumer's own mundane role" in systems such as racialized capitalism. Within such a framework, environmental extremes serve as ideal staging grounds for the performance of white heterosexual masculinity doing battle with nature. Furthermore, suggesting that men must also dominate on the home front, disaster consumerism masculinizes domestic chores such as cooking, shopping, and housekeeping, and it decenters mothers by emphasizing a "superior consumerism" that enables fathers to dominate parenthood, too.

Questions about gender, belonging, and the desire for home also pervade Elizabeth Currans's "Transgender Women Belong Here: Contesting Feminist Visions at the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival." While contemporary discussions of the festival often characterize it as a paradigmatic example of trans-hostile exclusion, Currans presents interviews with festival attendees and participants that illustrate their efforts

to make it more hospitable to a range of attendees, including women of color, disabled women, and non-binary, genderqueer, and transgender women. Currans focuses, in particular, on Transgender Womyn Belong Here, a group of cisgender and transgender women who fought for trans inclusion in the festival from 2008–2013. The inclusion of transwomen and non-binary people challenged the festival’s goal of creating a space for womyn-born-womyn and raised questions about the extent to which birth assignment and childhood socialization determine gender privilege and adult gender identity. In drawing attention to the range of ways in which festival participants sought to critique heteropatriarchy and “the normative gender binary,” Currans seeks to create a fuller historical record of this iconic music festival.

We close the issue with feminist lineages of learning and resistance that offer us hope. Anna Romina Guevarra and Maya Arcilla’s *News and Views* piece alerts our readers to authoritarian Philippines president Duterte’s misogynistic persecution of feminists and other dissidents, articulating the struggle against his draconian measures to be a specifically feminist cause. Guevarra and Arcilla point to resistance tactics being used by activists that draw on older feminist coalitions such as the Third World Liberation Front. Dana Sonnenschein’s two poems, drawn from a larger project about the history of women’s textile-making, offer a hopeful portrait of feminist learning and knowledge-making. Although “A History of Lace” concludes with the line, “There is no grandmother among us,” the poem explores how younger women learn about “the history of women” by examining the intricate handiwork of a deceased lace-maker. Making lace teaches them “the art of making something of absences, of what is felt more than known.” Lace is “the history of women, a series of holes that make a design.” The theme of women learning from each other likewise emerges in Sonnenschein’s second poem, “The Great Chain of Being.” As a friend teaches her how to crochet, the speaker reflects on how their “lives are linked,” how each learns from the other’s love of history, acceptance of change, or “willingness to wing it” and laugh at mistakes. As they share stories, the two friends also help each other to “go back / and untangle what twisted when / to see how the past got roped in.”

Shelley Streeby’s review essay, “Speculative Writing, Art, and World-Making in the Wake of Octavia E. Butler as Feminist Theory,” also closes the issue on a hopeful note. Discussing nine books that directly or

indirectly engage with Butler's legacy, Streeby illuminates how Butler's speculative fiction and intersectional feminism continue to influence a broad range of writers, filmmakers, musicians, artists, and activists even since her death in 2006. She argues that Butler — a self-identified “hermit” and “pessimist” — serves as inspiration for cultural productions that move “off of the page and out of the archive into the world, making new communities both virtually and in the real world.” A working-class Black feminist, Butler always contextualized her imagined disasters in relation to contemporaneous racial, sexual, economic, and ecological forces. Despite her “intense shyness,” Butler frequently engaged in collaborative thinking, especially with other women of color. Her visions of queer futurity cross literary genres of fiction, nonfiction, poetry, theory, and practice, and they have deepened the work of scholars in many fields, including — most recently — disability studies and transnational feminisms. Streeby, a science fiction writer herself, emphasizes that Black women's speculative fiction “changes the rules of reality to create worlds with new or different genders, races, disabilities, and other forms of life,” thereby encouraging us to alter “how we read and interpret these categories.” The powerful feminist lineage Butler has inspired encourages all of us to embrace the ongoing work of envisioning and enacting a more just future.

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