

preface

TWO THEMES CROSSCUT THE ESSAYS in this issue of *Feminist Studies*: what are the political stakes of comparison as a research method, and what is meant by relationality in queer, trans, and feminist scholarship. Benjamin Höhne compares the rhetoric of two powerful politicians in Germany and the United States to respond to the urgent need to understand the rise of both politicians. Their wide appeal, Höhne argues, comes from right-wing populism's capacity to hold multiple, even contradictory, anti-feminist positions and deploy them dynamically to include different social groups. This strategy allows the rhetoric to be recognizable as a transnational phenomenon that is deeply nation specific. Beenash Jafri compares two independent queer films set in urban and rural spaces in the United States to argue against the representation of the urban as a space of queer safety and the rural as the primary site of anti-LGBTQ violence and suicide. While Jafri argues against universal queer imaginaries by embedding suicide in place-specific histories of racialization and structural violence, Marlena Gittleman tracks how María Irene Fornés's 1977 play *Fefu and Her Friends* evokes sensorial responses to embodiment, thereby calling into question relationality to self, to other actors on the stage, to actors off the stage, to the audience, and to a shared sense of reality. Cyle Metzger advocates that scholars (feminist, queer, trans) look to a 1996 installation that, like Fornés's play, also emerged in downtown New York. Metzger probes how the reconstruction of artist Greer Lankton's

own apartment within a museum gallery space prompts insight into the differences between queer and trans temporalities while providing a specifically trans lineage to hold onto in the face of discrimination. Jameela F. Dallis's poetry also testifies to the merits of returning to art, this time connecting readers to a Dutch Vanitas painting. Dallis's two poems, as an iterative pair, offer a haunting depiction of the long-term interspecies impact of war, extraction, and capital. In a conjunctures essay, Cole Adams discusses new books in disability studies that address the limitations and possibilities of living, thinking, organizing, and writing in the "Age of Disability." Taken together, these books "paint a picture of a field continuing to make strides in generating a form of critical writing that offers capacious, receptive, and, indeed, experimental responses to the political exigencies of the present." The articles and art represented in this issue demonstrate the journal's commitments to interdisciplinarity and to queer, trans, and feminist politics. These essays offer important contributions to gender/women's/sexuality studies, film studies, art history, political science, and performance studies.

Benjamin Höhne's "Anti-Feminism in the Parliamentary Rhetoric of Leading Female Figures in the German AfD and US Republicans" explores the increasingly important role of women in populist right-wing parties in Germany and the United States. Based on content analysis of the speeches of four politicians, Höhne asks what kinds of antifeminism influential women in these parties promote and how the antifeminism evident in their rhetoric relates to right-wing populist narratives more generally. Höhne identifies conservative, conspiracy theorist, neoliberal, and nationalist antifeminisms as well as attempts to instrumentalize antifeminism. He argues that Far Right actors deploy antifeminism like a construction kit with various building blocks that they use, remove, combine, or modify. Antifeminist rhetoric is dynamic and flexible enough, he demonstrates, to exclude different groups at different times and in different ways. Höhne suggests avenues for future research to expand the scope of understanding right-wing populism and its anti-feminist politics in different locations.

In "Suicide-in-Relation: Sexuality and Space in *The Joy of Life* and *Mississippi Damned*," Beenash Jafri discusses two "queer" films that de-spectacularize suicide, enabling us to understand it as relational and embedded in structural violence. Juxtaposing a close reading of both films, Jafri argues that the suicides in each are not equivalent or

commensurable. She situates the films' representations of urban space and rural precarity within histories of white mobility amidst racialized gentrification and settler colonization, and she situates representations of Black poverty amidst histories of anti-Blackness and sexual and inter-generational violence in the US South. Jafri unsettles notions of San Francisco as a space of queer safety for all LGBTQ people, and she reads Black suicides as one of many possible responses to structural violence in small town Mississippi. While dismantling attachments to universal queer cinematic imaginaries, Jafri holds open feminist political possibility by recognizing *The Joy of Life* as a thoughtful meditation on grief and self-care and by noting that screenings of *Mississippi Damned* generate community spaces of care and healing.

In "Tuning Toward Feminist Feeling: María Irene Fornés's *Fefu and Her Friends*," Marlena Gittleman draws on the improvisational dance form of "Tuning Scores," which cultivates attuned movement between dancers, much like musicians tuning their instruments to the same pitch, to offer "critical tuning" as a modality of feminist analysis. Fornés's play and its experimental performance are the stage on which Gittleman brings together an ensemble of actors — including the reader — through an invitation to somatic attunement with each other. Fornés's play, Gittleman shows, allows women to "reclaim their bodies by coming to voice through their bodies, despite violent contexts such as patriarchy and authoritarianism." As the audience members move to watch the play being performed across four stages, they become committed to its goal of queer and feminist relationality, a goal that lingers with them as an embodied feeling after the play. By focusing on intimacy as it is embodied in *Fefu*, Gittleman makes the case for going beyond narrative plot and characterization to direct sensorial attention towards generating "shared feminist feeling and collective forms of embodied resistance that have the potential to challenge the limitations imposed on women's bodies by patriarchal violence."

Cyle Metzger's article, "Trans Femininity, Temporality, and Kinship in Greer Lankton's *It's All About ME, Not You*," invites prolonged attention to the artist's 1996 installation, which incorporates much of the artist's work and illustrates how she lived surrounded by her creations and collections. While some viewers might want to turn away from what may feel like voyeuristic gawking into Lankton's later years, which ended with a drug overdose, Metzger illuminates how *It's All About ME, Not You* is

both painful and empowering. By looking at the doll, a form of self-portrait, who looks towards a mirror that reflects her surroundings and her collection of idols and personal memorabilia, viewers can connect with an embodied trans lineage that acknowledges and preserves dislocations. Metzger brings to this investigation personal reflections and thorough archival research, arguing that the central doll is Sissy, who used to be Missy, an important doll in Lankton's oeuvre that has long been thought lost.

Jameela F. Dallis's two poems, "There's a place without oysters" and "There came to be a place with no oysters," return us to a Dutch Vanitas painting from 1551, Pieter Aertsen's *A Meat Stall with the Holy Family Giving Alms*, now in the collection of the North Carolina Museum of Art. These poems may transport the reader to multiple scenes of conflict given the impact of systemic violence on shorelines all over this planet. To quote Audre Lorde's "A Litany for Survival": "For those of us who live at the shoreline," these poems offer an expansive feeling of time and a particularity of place while allowing us to ponder how near we might be to these images in time or geography.

We close this issue with a conjunctures essay. In "Writing in the Age of Disability," Cole Adams traces how three authors of recent texts in disability studies simultaneously grapple with a sense of critical exhaustion in the field and illuminate how disability studies frameworks might help us to resist nihilistic resignation in the "long aftermath of settler-colonial violence, capitalist extractivism, and ecological harm." Adams argues that, "because of its institutional history, and its foundational critical orientation toward the temporal structures of crisis, disaster, and injury, disability studies might have something invaluable to teach us about working and writing in the humanities now." His analyzes highlight the strategies and lessons that each author offers for "living with uncertainty" in the aftermath of crisis.

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