
FEMINISMS IN A TRANSNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE 2024

Female Plenum: Experiencing New Radicalities

**17th Postgraduate Course
Dubrovnik, IUC, May 20-24, 2024**

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Department of
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CENTRAL
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UNIVERSITY



FEMINISMS IN A TRANSNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE 2024

Female Plenum: Experiencing New Radicalities

Programme & Abstracts

17th Postgraduate Course
Dubrovnik, IUC, May 20-24, 2024

Edited by: Renata Jambrešić Kirin & Mirela Dakić



COURSE DESCRIPTION

The philosophical proposals of the ‘Plenum’ and of ‘Corpus Infinitum’ constitute the images that the black scholar and artist Denise Ferreira da Silva offers to contemporary decolonial feminisms to materialize the shift in the imagination urgently needed in response to the catastrophic events (displacement of populations, devastation of the earth, pandemic, global warming and climate crisis, violence of war) that the western episteme, in its historical, scientific and cultural development, is and has been producing, and profiting from, according to racial, colonial, capitalist and cis-heteropatriarchal forms of extraction, oppression and appropriation.

The Brazilian philosopher calls for “the end to the world – as we know it” through the operations of “fractal thinking”, which is “immanent, scalar, plenteous, and undetermined” in revindicating material, cosmic, elemental ‘ancestral claims’. The seminar of “Feminisms in a Transnational Perspective” finds inspiration in da Silva’s experiments with imagining *otherwise*, focusing on the question of new experiences of thinking and praxis ‘at the root’; ‘radicality’ is the chosen term to mean the inventive investigation attending to the complex constellations of feminist existence, decolonizing its own origins and processes of development in order to move toward necessary instances of female social and global justice.

The theme calls for a radical theoretical and practical reorientation that aims at undoing and dissolving the notions of ‘separability’, ‘determinacy’ and ‘sequentiality’ that have been and are still active and operative in the colonial and racist constitution of the modern and contemporary world, to favour the ethical force of ‘deep implicancy’ among human and non-human living creatures. It is an attempt at *re/de/composing* the roots of our common and collective life, to be able “to express, enact, and embody the plurality of otherwise possibilities that are both radically ‘out’ of this world and radically immanent and ‘here’”, while providing momentary resolutions at each instance according to an intention mediated by the given context.

The radicalities of which we would like to discuss, elaborate and experience in our togetherness, might imply:

- the origin of transnational feminisms;
- the tracing of feminist genealogies different from the modernist enlightenment ones;
- the critique of universalism;
- the critical engagement in postcolonial and decolonial theories and praxes;
- the intergenerational dialogue;
- the reconfiguration of power in social struggle;
- the investigation of the *techne* of writing, literature and art;
- the radicalization of aesthetics;

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- the repositioning of language otherwise;
 - the discussion of what might open instance of justice for indigenous, migrant, LGBT, non-white populations;
 - the emergence of praxis of survival, resistance, and invention;
 - the experimentation with translation, transposition and transformation of entangled forces;
 - the feminist ongoing practices of care.

Course directors:

Silvana Carotenuto, Oriental University of Napoli, Italy

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COURSE PROGRAMME

Monday, May 20

Free Morning

Afternoon session

Moderator:..... **Lada ČALE FELDMAN (Uni Zagreb, Croatia)**

- 13:30–14:00 Gathering of the participants at the IUC, Don Frana Bulića 4
- 14:00–15:15 Self-presentation by all participants and short thoughts on self-understanding of radicality
- 15:15–15:30 **Silvana CAROTENUTO** (Uni Naples, Italy) Introductory remarks
- 15:30–16:00 **Silvana CAROTENUTO** (Uni Naples, Italy) The Woman ‘Partisan’ – Literary Examples of Feminist Radicality
- 16:00–16:15 Discussion
- 16:15–16:45 *Coffee break*
- 16:45–17:15 **Katarzyna TACZYNSKA** (Polish Academy of Sciences, Warsaw, Poland; Uni College Dublin, Ireland) Acculturation, Resistance, and Emancipation – between Israel and Yugoslavia: The Case of Ženi Lebl
- 17:15–17:30 Discussion
- 17:30–18:00 **Maria IACCARINO** (Uni Naples, Italy) The Otherwise of History. Saidiya Hartman’s New Radical Aesthetic of Representation
- 18:00–18:30 **Biljana KAŠIĆ** (CWS, Zagreb, Croatia) Radicality of Thought – Beyond Violence
- 18:30–19:00 Joint Discussion

Tuesday, May 21

Moderator: **Silvana CAROTENUTO (Uni Naples, Italy)**

09:30–10:00 **Calwin WALDS** (Uni Rutgers, USA): Toward a Decolonial-Queer Relational Aesthetic Connections, Gatherings & Collage

10:00–10:30 **Ana VIVODA** (Uni Zadar and Gospić, Croatia) Reflecting the Dynamics of Gender Identity Construction in Art Practice

10:30–11:00 **Aida ŠEHOVIĆ** (Sarajevo, B&H ; New York, USA): Radical Care in the Aftermath of Genocide

11:00–11:30 Joint Discussion

11:30–12:00 *Coffee break*

12:00–12:45 **Jasmina HUSANOVIĆ** (Uni Tuzla, B&H): Reimagining the Commons, Enacting Radical Communalities: From Trauma to Care and Revolt through Activism, Art and Academia

12:45–13:00 Discussion

13:00–16:30 *Lunch break*

Afternoon session

Moderator: **Nadia JONES GAILANI (CEU, Vienna, Austria)**

16:30–17:00 **Monika CVITANOVIĆ** (Uni of New South Wales, Australia): Crafting Time to Care: Animating the Embodied Personal and Cultural Histories of Women’s Textile-based Knowledge + The Example of the Australian CARE Network

17:00–17:30 **Antonia HUSERIK** (Uni Zadar, Croatia) The Intersection of Fast Fashion and Postcolonialism: A Feminist Analysis of Harm on Women

17:30–18:00 **Vanja PETROVIĆ** (Uni Belgrade, Serbia) Thoughts on Cooking as an Embodied Ethnographic Method

18:00–18:30 Joint Discussion

18:30–19:00 **Monika CVITANOVIĆ**: Creative Workshop – Stching as a Feminist Strategy of Care (optional)

Wednesday, May 22

Free Morning

Afternoon session

Moderator:.....**Biljana KAŠIĆ (CWS, Zagreb, Croatia)**

- 17:00–17:30 **Erzsébet BARÁT** (CEU, Vienna, Austria): Against the Colonization of “One Plot”
- 17:30–17:45 Discussion
- 17:45–18:00 *Break*
- 18:00–19:30 Presentation and workshop moderated by **Slaven CRNIĆ** (Uni Rijeka, Croatia) and **Mirela DAKIĆ** (Uni Zagreb, Croatia): Belonging Otherwise: Contemporary Feminist and Queer Perspectives on Literature and Politics

Thursday, May 23

Moderator:.....**Francesca Maria GABRIELLI (Uni Zagreb, Croatia)**

- 09:30–10:00 **Lada ČALE FELDMAN** (Uni Zagreb, Croatia) Dismantling – or Decomposing? – The Master’s House: On some Recent Feminist Re-Directions of the Classics
- 10:00–10:30 **Dora GOLUB** (Uni Zagreb, Croatia) Playing the Bride to Death: Avoiding and Embracing the Radicalities in Possible Feminist Stagings of *Romeo and Juliet*
- 10:30–10:45 Joint Discussion
- 10:45–11:15 *Coffee break*
- 11:15–11:45 **Iva RADAT** (CEU, Vienna, Austria) Politicized Nostalgia in Sarah Waters’ *Tipping the Velvet*
- 11:45–12:15 **Tamara CVETKOVIĆ** (CEU, Vienna, Austria): Transcending Cultures, Genres, and Class in Barbi Marković’s *Superheroines*

12:15–12:30 Joint Discussion

12:30–17:00 *Lunch break*

Afternoon session

Moderator:.....**Renata J. KIRIN (IEF, Zagreb, Croatia)**

17:00–17:30 **Catalina CORTES SEVERINO** (Uni Colombia; Uni Naples, Italy)
The Time of Care from the Relationalities and Materialities We
Use to Make and to Narrate Ourselves

17:30–18:00 **Eugenia SELEZNOVA** (CEU, Vienna, Austria) Gendered and Queer
Temporalities of Russo-Ukrainian War

18:00–18:30 Joint Discussion

Video “Vocal Cognitive Territory”, by Ursula Biemann

Friday, May 24

Moderators:.....**Nadia JONES GAILANI (CEU, Vienna, Austria),
Silvana CAROTENUTO (Uni Naples, Italy)**

09:30–10:00 **Anita DREMEL** (Uni Osijek, Croatia) Gender Dynamics and
Societal Dimensions of Mental Labour

10:00–10:15 Discussion

10:15–10:45 **Carla PAGANO** (Uni Naples, Italy) Situating Research:
A Decolonial Outlook to the Study of Transnational Gender
Politics

10:45–11:15 **Nina ČOLOVIĆ** (IEF, Zagreb, Croatia) The Femicide Problem in the
Feminist Theories of Violence

11:15–11:30 Joint Discussion

11:30–12:00 *Break*

12:00–12:30 **Course evaluation**

Departure

ABSTRACTS

(Participants as listed in the Programme)



SILVANA CAROTENUTO

University L'Orientale, Naples, Italy

The Woman 'Partisan': Examples of Female Radicality

In my teaching experience, I have been encountering some female narratives that I consider 'radical'. The notion of radicality, in my reading, comes from *Three Steps on the Ladder of Writing* by Hélène Cixous, where, in the third section called "The School of Roots", radicality is given as what goes to the roots, investigates the depths, follows the vegetation-germination of writing confronting its own mortality, matter and materiality. The writers I am reading and teaching, and that I would like to share with you, are Maaza Mengiste, Jesmyn Ward and Adania Shibli, whose recent works deal, respectively, with the Italian fascist colonialism in Ethiopia, slavery and its legacy, the Palestinian question. I will tell you about the singularity of each novel, and the radical connections among them. At the same time, the work that goes literally to the depth – of the political issue – is, to me, *How Beautiful We Were* by the Cameroonian American writer Imbolo Mbue. In this 'eco-novel', the return of the political on the scene of the contemporary novel, is interpreted by the figuration of a 'woman-partisan' who calls for collective insubordination to the deadly effects of global capitalist extractivism and exploitation through her intimate and caring connection – I will here evoke the question of 'female friendship' – with the community and the African land. I will try to present the roots of these narrations' enterprise and delineate the fruitful germination of their acts of re-writing memory and female intelligence, celebrating women's spirituality as a form of survival, inscribing the 'minor detail' of horror, returning to the question of revolution otherwise. These are the radical forms of accountability and responsibility that female writing is assuming today for the sake of a different sense of history and a different imagination of the future.

KATARZYNA TACZYŃSKA

Polish Academy of Sciences, Warsaw, Poland; University College Dublin, Ireland

**Acculturation, Resistance, and Emancipation – between Israel and Yugoslavia:
The Case of Ženi Lebl**

Balkan (Ashkenazi and Sephardic) Jewish women, characterized as a multiple minority (as described by Filipović and Vučina Simović), have been largely overlooked in scholarship due to their non-presence and non-visibility, stemming from their liminal and subversive nature. These women consistently transcended the primary divisions that underlie the fundamental ways of understanding and describing the dominant cultures of the Balkans. Yet it is precisely that through their experience and writings one can describe the original hybridity of the local community. This presentation examines the case of Ženi Lebl (1927–2009), a Yugoslav Jew, born into an acculturated family, who was a communist activist, Holocaust survivor, and after World War II prisoner of the Goli otok camp; she emigrated to Israel in 1954. I analyse Lebl's meaning-making practices (including genologically and linguistically different texts), as a minority discourse expressing the complex, fluid, and historically variable identities of the author (in the meaning of Giddens; Bauman). I am going to present the textual representations of the problems of Jewish, Balkan and women awareness and identity. I reconstruct the process that has expressed Lebl's identity, as it has changed over time, the process that includes taming "herself" through narration, as well as self-attribution and exclusion. I examine the characteristic ways of creating such narratives, and the particular discourse that shaped them in their local Balkan reality, but also in Israel (where Lebl lived until her death). My presentation is a critical reflection on the literary tradition of the region that shapes the image of various groups – national, ethnic, religious, cultural and gender.

MARIA IACCARINO

PhD candidate, University L'Orientale, Naples, Italy

The Otherwise of History. Saidiya Hartman's New Radical Aesthetic of Representation

My contribution investigates the critical-literary experimentations that try to recover the histories that have never been entirely told in the historical archive. Through the analysis of the critical fabulation – the method proposed by the historian Saidiya Hartman – I intend to examine the possibilities of reconstructing, without replicating its grammar, the history of quotidian violence, injustice, and domination, as well as resistance, experienced by the black community during the transatlantic slave trade and later in the “afterlife of slavery”. Undertaking a deep archival work, Saidiya Hartman reads the official historical documents “against the grain”. She denounces the distortions of national history, and by intertwining storytelling, visuality, and speculation, she highlights the relationship between power and voice. Her focus is on the constraints that determine what can be said and whose perspective matters. Her practice of critical fabulation combines different – documentary, historical, sociological – genres and styles. Writing at the edge of the unspeakable and the unknown she challenges the one-way representation built on the marginalization of historical events and actors. Whose voice is heard and whose is silenced? According to Hartman, “the very effort to represent the situation of the subaltern reveals the provisionality of the archive as well as the interests that shape it and determine the emplotment of history” (*Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-making in Nineteenth-Century America*, Oxford U. P., 1997). In this respect, contemporary radical thoughts and practices intervene in the archive by producing re-readings, revisions, and experimental poetics as a new ethical historical practice.

BILJANA KAŠIĆ

Centre for Women's Studies, Zagreb, Croatia

Radicality of Thought – Beyond Violence

Facing accelerating war conflicts across the world induced by the ideology of militaristic power(s), political desire for producing human havoc and neo-colonial toxicity, can we take a risk on the frontline of non-violence drive today and if so, what kind of risk are we talking about? By drawing on possibility of imagining life beyond violence as an ultimate point of human(-ist) departure I will try to contribute of what a complex conversation on post-/de-/coloniality, struggle for self-determination, and nonviolence might entail keeping in mind their contingent foundations, historical gestures and contemporary theoretical discourses that support this stand. There are three main questions that I will address in the presentation. Referring to “non-ethics of war” (Maldonado-Torres, *Against War*, 2008) as the concept that signifies the radical suspension of the ethical and the political, I will try to elaborate a set of issues that tackle “the force of non-violence” (Butler, *The Force of Non-violence*, 2020) as a philosophical, namely ethical problem. In this regard I will especially refer to the reflection of the Ukrainian feminist philosopher Irina Zherebkina (2022) on “antinomies of the ethical in the war in Ukraine”. The second question is how effectively a shadow of the past (imperial past, fascism, dispossession, protracted war conflicts, injustice) casts on contemporary geo-political configuration, ongoing wars and border zones accompanied by brutal displacement, extreme human suffering, racialisation, and genocide (Palestinian case today, for example). And thirdly, when we come to the human matter within “agonistic” and “unhealed” scape, questions like “who owns the human” and “to whom does the human belong” deserve special attention and incalculable responsiveness, or more precise, radical re-articulation of humanness (Athanasidou & Butler 2014), or potential co-humanness (Winter 2015).

CALWIN WALDS

PhD candidate, Rutgers University–New Brunswick, USA

**Toward a Decolonial-Queer Relational Aesthetic Connections, Gatherings
& Collage**

In *Remaindered Life*, Nefertiti X.M Tadiar describes working to provide a “layered picture of connections across the particular phenomena and social groups they cite or describe” (xiii). The connections that Tadiar draws across space, time, and phenomena between, in part, “refugee detentions center in Australia” to “slum dwellers in Metro Manila” to “urban migrant workers in China” to “overseas contract works,” the “US prison and punishment industry” and “femicide in Ciudad Juarez”, are thought “as suggesting submerged political lineages shared across given social groups and formations.” (xii) Tadiar’s work is a part of incisive efforts among critical theorists and activists working particularly in feminist, queer, anticolonial and decolonial frameworks to gather together, at least conceptually, lives and experiences – human and non-human – around the globe that are subject to precarity, debility and premature death, exploitation, forced movement, confinement and punishment, a loss of existential and spiritual possibilities, and severing of connections to ancestral and cultural lands and lifeways. Capitalistic media, in a corollary to some contemporary ‘human rights’ discourse, often portrays the grounds of human (and non-human) global connection around base physical facts intended to inspire or humble – e.g., all humans and non-humans experience love or joy – but rarely does such media have the capacity to politicize or question nationalistic and disciplinary boundaries that view human struggles around the world as discrete and inherently local. In the often montaged portrayal of a neoliberal globality, difference is foregrounded and maintained. Montages of the surface of global human and non-human connections do not allow for an understanding of the contradictions, political-economic and militaristic linkages, and shared antagonisms within positions of precarity. Tadiar and others writing toward connection, toward the formation of otherwise relations, is grounded in a decolonial and queer understanding of relation, and this presentation will offer creative and critical notes thinking through a decolonial relational aesthetic.

ANA VIVODA

University of Zadar and Gospić, Croatia

Reflecting the Dynamics of Gender Identity Construction in Art Practice

Artistic practice can be a powerful means of reflecting on the different definitions of feminism and various subjective perceptions and practices that build different femininities. The paper develops a statement that a notion of womanhood is complex, ambiguous, and fluid, constructed differently across time and place; the premise is elaborated in different mediums and considered from different perspectives, but it is the interconnecting thread traceable in all the artworks featured. The intention to use autobiography in creative practice, to consider in what ways, the first-person accounts can reveal different perceptions concerning a discourse of womanhood across generations as well as attempts at modifications of these constructions, came as a logical solution. I explore the persistence of feminism and attending to different ways women are coping with socio-economic challenges, while searching for personal recognition of female codes inside the family background. The paper examines representation of gender performances through belonging, recognition, identification, or alteration of the family bonds-based constructions, drawing on the selection of artworks, including the installations: *Book of Scars* (2024), *Fragments of Family Histories* (2023) and *Relations of Reciprocity* (2020), the artist book series; *Book of Scars* (2023), *Conversations over Coffee* (2020), *Faces* (2013) and *Frontiers* (2017). The notion of womanhood is analysed, reassessed, attending to challenges, revealing conflicts, confronting generational gaps in representing different feminist realities. The works represent the alternative feminist positions, formed through reciprocity and relationality, constructed, and reconstructed over time in the multi-layered intertwining contexts.

AIDA ŠEHOVIĆ

Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina; New York, USA

Radical Care in the Aftermath of Genocide

How can we imagine a radical way of gathering and caring for each other in response to a catastrophic event such as genocide? Who are the pioneers and care-takers on the frontlines of this collective work? What does it mean to make art as a form of mourning, healing, and resistance in the aftermath of loss, destruction, and violence that our communities have survived and endured? ŠTO TE NEMA is an idea and a commitment to building a world without genocide. It began as a one-day performance with collected cups filled with coffee in a public square; it continued as a nomadic monument that had travelled the world for 15 years; and it is now an organization that uses art, education, and activism as tools for fostering a culture of remembrance rooted in radical care and hospitality. These are the processes and strategies I will share and discuss.

JASMINA HUSANOVIĆ

University of Tuzla, Bosnia and Herzegovina

**Reimagining the Commons, Enacting Radical Communalities:
From Trauma to Care and Revolt through Activism, Art and Academia**

The overall concern of this presentation/paper is to foster new engagements with the three key categories of political action and social life – time, energy, and infrastructure – when attempting to reimagine the commons and to enact e-merging radical communalities in the face of, and against, “capitalist realism” of today (Fisher, 2009), its hauntological neoliberal cultural logic and the resultant “slow cancellation of future” (Berardi, 2011). I take examples from the context of Bosnia and Herzegovina to explain the shift back to the roots and the undercommons, using notions of logisticality and hapticality (Moten & Harney, 2013) in reimaging our responses to trauma, care and revolt, in order to counter the extractivist, expropriating, contractual and antisocial logic of ethnocapitalism. How to trace/engender the instances of communal tenderness and care, sensitivity and resonance, generativity, and generosity in our acting and thinking (knowledge production, cultural production, social activism) which go beyond the political and biosocial corruption of brutal institutions and institutionalities (Ferreira da Silva, 2021) in our social life today? This prompts me to explore the concepts of plenum and infrastructurality, in order to disrupt the conventional ways of thinking politics, and in order to orient ourselves in new vocabularies and a language which communifies us against the regime of knowledge, truth and power that “delights in accumulation by dispossession and profits from ecocidal and genocidal practices” (McKittrick, 2021).

MONIKA CVITANOVIĆ

PhD candidate, University of New South Wales, Australia

Crafting Time to Care: Animating the Embodied Personal and Cultural Histories of Women's Textile-based Knowledge + The Example of the Australian CARE Network

The presentation provides an overview of the practice-based PhD project engaging with embodied intergenerational knowledge of stitching as the main research method based in remembrance and reclamation as strategies of feminist ethics of care. While remembrance relates to witnessed women's textile-based reproductive labour and work within textile industry, reclamation as a strategy relates to three intersecting forms of care: 1) care for the textile-based knowledge, 2) care for the environment and 3) self-care. The textile-based body of work contextualises personal and found textiles and references sewing and mending practices of women in the artist's family which are animated through 'sloppy stitching'. This method involves intentional deskilling to critically engage with the historical relationship between women and needlework and with an aesthetics of care in relation to the devalued textiles in circulation. The project's inquiry into undervalued slow textile practices is considered in correlation with the historical devaluation of women's contributions to culture (Rozsika Parker; Pennina Barnett; Jessica Hemmings) and is aware of practitioners who are restoring slow making as means of resisting capitalism exemplified in the dominant art market and who are interested in acts of repair (Cecilia Vicuña; Slow Art Collective; Hana Miletić). Project's overall aim to foster an alternative to the dominant neo-liberal systems of values is aligned with the Australian CARE Network of feminist artists and researchers, which asserts applications of care in creative and social practices as vital to rethinking of dominant narratives (Jacqueline Millner, Gretchen Coombs, eds., *Care Ethics and Art*, Routledge, 2022).

ANTONIA HUSERIK

PhD candidate, University of Zadar, Croatia

The Intersection of Fast Fashion and Postcolonialism: A Feminist Analysis of Harm on Women

This presentation explores the links between fast fashion and postcolonialism and their impact on women in the global South as well as on different socio-economic groups in the West. Fast fashion, characterised by excessive consumption and the destruction of the natural environment, is deeply rooted in neo-colonial practises that exploit labour and resources in formerly colonised regions. The exploitative nature of fast fashion perpetuates the historical injustices inflicted on postcolonial societies, particularly and disproportionately on women. Furthermore, the cycle of using cheap labour of women in the global South fuels the rhetoric of female empowerment and the “girl boss” movement in the West as a paradoxical manifestation of the global fashion industry. While Western brands often promote women’s empowerment, these narratives are based on the exploitation of women in low-wage countries. This cycle not only perpetuates economic inequalities but is also linked to overconsumption based on female insecurity and the perpetuation of Eurocentric beauty standards. By analysing literature, statistics and case studies, this presentation will attempt to see through the cycle of exploitation and answer the following questions: How is fast fashion related to postcolonialism and how does historical exploitation shape contemporary labour practises? How does exploitation in fast fashion disproportionately affect women? How are women in the global South paradoxically exploited by Western narratives of women’s empowerment? What role do Western feminists play in this narrative and where has feminism “gone wrong”?

VANJA PETROVIĆ

PhD candidate, University of Belgrade, Serbia

Thoughts on Cooking as an Embodied Ethnographic Method

By and large, cooking remains a gendered activity, one carried out by women and relegated into private and home-adjacent spheres. The public/private dichotomy has long been under scrutiny by feminist authors as such gendering and hierarchization of activities works to deprive labour traditionally done by women of significance. Many feminists have focused on how the public/private dichotomy impacts political agency. This paper, however, questions the dichotomy in the context of the Western scientific tradition, and claims to universalism, which have stripped cooking and many other domestic activities – particularly those necessary for the survival of the body – of scientific potential as carrying them out requires the use of “non-objective” senses like smell and taste. This paper breaks from this tradition and offers cooking up as an ethnographic methodology uniquely equipped for researching a variety of topics that are not necessarily food related. I contend that cooking, as an embodied and always-relational method, challenges entrenched hierarchies present in Western academic research. Additionally, as an activity not traditionally categorized as “rational,” it calls into question the categorization itself. Further, its intrinsically relational nature opens up possibilities for researchers for the reflexive exploration of positionality. Most importantly, as a method, cooking is collaborative, egalitarian, and participatory.

ERZSÉBET BARÁT

CEU, Vienna, Austria

Against the Colonization of “One Plot”

I'd like to contribute to the question of how to decolonise feminist thinking as a scholar whose main interest lies in exploring the ideological work of meaning making. In the past seven years or so, I have mostly studied the anti-gender politics of the Hungarian government's propaganda, its stigmatization of any meaning of femininity/masculinity beyond a fundamentalist and essentialist meaning of biological sex as its anchorage. My ultimate interest is to figure out ways of contesting this dominant rhetoric. My central concern is the limits of the so-called 'radical feminist' disposition that – against its intentions – comes caught in the government's hate-rhetoric for multiple reasons. So far, I have focused on class relations, the explicitly articulated element of their “gender critical” disposition when disidentifying with trans* people's claim to a life worth living. At best, the 'radical' voices have pointed out trans* people's use of 'gender' as an act of misappropriation and argued for redefining the term through focusing on the 'real', i.e. 'structural' forms of exploitation of class relations. This time, drawing on a current publication in the making, I would like to revisit my criticism and point out how the self-identifying radical disposition comes entangled in “whitestream feminism” (Arvin et al., 2013). The two otherwise oppositional dispositions share an empiricist effort to re-biologize gender to counter the visibility of 'cisness' as a relatively different element of embodiment foregrounded by trans* claims to a livable life. They jointly reiterate what Evang (2022, 365) calls the “racialized hierarchy of biological plasticity”, which, ironically, positions white European *male* subjects as the most vulnerable targets as well as promises them the position of the most successful survivors of “genderism”. Consequently, gender-critical feminists cannot hang onto that logic unless they are ready to embrace this injurious neocolonializing rhetoric that cannot hold out the promise of empowerment. Instead, I propose an intersectional transfeminist approach to gender, and contest the viability of pitting reasons against each other that can only underscore difference as insurmountable and absolute over and against the 'other' in a fight for the 'right plot' (Yuval-Davis 2006), this time that of sexual difference. Instead, I demonstrate the viability of relative distinctions that can be productive of *multiple* plots of gender that may enable us to sideline a neoliberal nostalgia for 'progressive politics' informed by the ideology of the 'same'.

SLAVEN CRNIĆ

University of Rijeka, Croatia

MIRELA DAKIĆ

University of Zagreb, Croatia

**Belonging Otherwise: Contemporary Feminist and Queer Perspectives
on Literature and Politics**

This workshop will attempt to shed light on some of the focal points that emerge from contemporary feminist and queer critical engagements with literature. In recent decades, debates in these (inter)disciplinary fields have shifted from the question of how feminist and queer readings change the way we see literature to the question of how literature can change the way we perceive feminist and queer critical practices. While keeping in mind the crucial role that literature played in the initial formation of feminist and queer studies, we aim to reflect upon the broader contemporary theoretical discussions, and bring them into dialogue with a number of field(s)-defining theoretical questions. In particular, we are interested in the indelible impact that contemporary women, queer, trans*, and nonbinary authors have left on our notions of not only gender and sexuality, but also our understanding and perception of community, class, politics, and political belonging. More specifically, the questions we want to discuss are the following: How does literature shape and change the concepts of feminist and queer politics? Which contemporary sources encourage us to rethink feminist and queer theoretical and methodological presuppositions? How have the dynamics of the dominant genres in feminist and queer literature changed since the beginning of the 20th century, and how is this reflected in the various forms of criticism? What problems and critical practices can we derive from the contemporary (post)Yugoslav literary field? And could literature offer the possibility of opening a space for community building – or for belonging otherwise? The workshop will consist of two parts: an introductory dialogue and a follow-up discussion group.

LADA ČALE FELDMAN

University of Zagreb, Croatia

Dismantling – or Decomposing? – The Master’s House: On Some Recent Feminist Re-Directions of the Classics

Unable to present all the intriguing aspects of the theatrical work produced in the last decade or so by women dramaturgs and directors in Europe – or even only in Croatia, where they also gain in prominence – I decide to focus on five performances that – more or less boldly – aim at reconfiguring various classical texts from a feminist perspective: Katie Mitchell’s and Leo Warner’s “double vision” of Strindberg’s *Miss Julie* (Schaubühne in Berlin, 2013); Marina Petković Liker’s direction of a dance and sound performance *A House on the Cutting Edge* (Theatre &TD in Zagreb, 2016), Rebecca Frecknall’s and Alice Birche’s adaptation of Lorca’s *House of Bernarda Alba* (National Theatre in London, 2023), Selma Spahic’s and Emina Omerović’s take on Shakespeare in *The Taming of the Shrew* (Kerempuh Theatre, Zagreb, 2023) and Anica Tomić’s and Ben Yishai’s revision of Ibsen in *Nora or How to Digest the Master’s House* (Deutsches Theater in Berlin, 2024). I shall be interested in discussing one specific aspect of their feminist directing aesthetic, since the link that connects these women directors and/or dramaturgs in both their reportorial choice and their performative renditions consists in foregrounding and/or deconstructing the metaphor of the house – as household, privacy, family, (literary) tradition, economy, institution, patriarchy, the house of language or the house of (a woman’s) being. I shall explore to what extent this dismantling and/or decomposing of “the master’s house” entails a radical re-appraisal of “the master’s tools” – the house-boundedness and enclosure of the theatrical apparatus itself.

DORA GOLUB

PhD candidate, University of Zagreb, Croatia

Playing the Bride to Death: Avoiding and Embracing the Radicalities in Possible Feminist Stagings of *Romeo and Juliet*

This presentation will discuss possible radicalities of the concept of female death in William Shakespeare's play *Romeo and Juliet*, as well as necessary avoidance of performative radicalism in the staging of a tragedy, taking into account problems of aesthetic representation of the topic and its ideological implications. Limits of theatrical performance imply that no actress or actor will ever actually die to convince the audience in the truthfulness of the performed act. Consequently, these (ethical and aesthetic) restrictions make us recognize death as the last border of radicality in theatre which even performance art does not dare to cross. On the other hand, presentation will consider the potential of a radical reading of the canonical dramatic text from the perspective of feminist dramaturgy. While referring to the topic of fetishization of dead female body throughout art history of Western cultural domain, most famously interpreted through critical lenses of Elisabeth Bronfen in her study *Over Her Dead Body*, I will emphasize the specifics of dealing with intertwined topics of death, gender, and erotic representations of femininity in more theatrical terms. Taking into account the union between seemingly disparate rites of passage – marriage and funeral – throughout sacrificial rituals which traditionally bind the virgin-bride with masculine chthonic entities in the play, I will argue that it is possible to put into perspective a feminist inversion of this archetypal story in which Juliet's suicide becomes an act of resistance to marriage.

IVA RADAT

PhD candidate, CEU, Vienna, Austria

Politicized Nostalgia in Sarah Waters' *Tipping the Velvet*

Exploring the relationship between memory and activism, Ann Rigney argues in favour of recognizing 'the cultural transmission of positivity' through varied cultural forms. Rigney views hope as a political catalyst which can be used to strengthen civic commitment and facilitate the struggle for a better future. In the 1999 novel *Tipping the Velvet*, British author Sarah Waters exemplifies the positive use of nostalgia by portraying the unionization of female home workers in late 19th-century Great Britain. Crucially, the novel ends on a workers' rally portrayed as triumphant celebration, reinforcing Enzo Traverso's view of left-wing melancholia as an act of resistance in the face of historical defeat, facilitated via the focus on what Walter Benjamin calls *Jetztzeit*, a moment of time filled with revolutionary possibility. By freezing her story at such a charged moment, Waters makes it available for inspiration and encouragement as a counter-historical blueprint for the collective resistance of workers under the conditions of late capitalism and in the face of relentless exploitation and increasing precarity. Written decades before Rigney's and Traverso's conceptualization, the novel positions art and literature at the foreground of the innovative praxis of resistance rooted in the memory of activism and civic engagement.

TAMARA CVETKOVIĆ

PhD candidate, CEU, Vienna, Austria

Transcending Cultures, Genres, and Class in Barbi Marković's *Superheroines*

In my presentation I plan to analyse the novel *Superheroines* by Serbian-Austrian author Barbi Marković as an example of the specific form of transnational literature, which Susan Friedman defines as “fictions of mobility”. Namely, for Friedman, “fictions of mobility” are the works that thematize experiences of migration and transcultural encounters, and thus produce cultural translations within the novel. Friedman argues that the experience of migration produces encounters in which the participants attempt to translate cultural semiotics of the others into the terms that function in their own context. The plot of the novel *Superheroines* is built around three female characters, a group of friends who settled in Vienna, after failed attempts of living in Belgrade, Sarajevo, and Berlin. Their main goal is a class transgression from a precarious position into the middle class. To achieve this goal, they have secret weapons – dark superpowers, which are possibly dangerous to the social order of the city. In addition, the novel incorporates documentary notes about mentioned cities (commercials, billboards, graffiti, prices in shops, warnings, prohibitions, etc.), which Marković made in the attempt to rewrite the city as a text and bring social reality into the world of the novel. I plan to analyse the novel as a “fiction of mobility” to identify transcultural translations that happen in the encounter of the characters with the “text” of different cities as well as to analyse their gender, class, and social position as migrants, using the concepts developed within feminist intervention to narratology and intersectional analysis. My aim is to explore the (im)possibilities of imagining *otherwise* in feminist writings, ‘radicalities’ of experimental forms of writing, ‘radicalities’ of migrant experiences, and literary contributions to transnational feminisms.

CATALINA CORTES SEVERINO

National University of Colombia; University L'Orientale, Naples, Italy

The Time of Care from the Relationalities and Materialities We Use to Make and to Narrate Ourselves

My interest in participating in this event begins with my own presentation of the paths and interconnections I have undertaken both from my own experience of motherhood and nurturing to the experiences of women who have surrounded me throughout my life. I also dwell on other experiences and practices of care of women and collectives I have encountered through my own work thanks to my investigations throughout Colombia and Italy inside and outside the academia. These paths are situated in a political, ethical, and aesthetic dimension of care related to the need of maintaining bodies and objects through time, with everyday movements that go beyond big and loud events, with turns that produce different rhythms and cover different temporalities beyond the time of production. At the same time, where writing becomes a way to transit, a way of caring and connecting different paths. This is, writing as a practice of care from where we are caring histories, from where we keep histories that allow us to sustain ourselves day after day in order to create correspondences that help us to think about care within its enormous complexity. I want to begin by approaching the time of care, with traces attempt to touch those detained, repetitive, slow and circular times. New corporal relations with time that anchor us in the present from the relationalities and materialities we use to make and to narrate ourselves. Therefore, I continue with the necessity of situating myself in touching as an approach, in those skins that are membranes that allow us to compose ourselves in relation with others. Care is a touching ability that occurs all the time through the skin, knowing what the state of the surfaces are and how they reveal the state of environments and spaces. Touching as an epistemological knowledge that allows us to approach the world from contact and not distances. I finalized with different approaches to the makings that *make* us because we are always in contact with materials and bodies. Bodies that are being made mutually, mutating together. Makings that bring some forms of life to other ones. Care is precisely that. Therefore, we cannot understand it separate from makings and their transformations. Neither with the beauty and compassion that sometimes lives together with possessions and darkness.

EUGENIA SELEZNOVA

PhD student, CEU, Vienna, Austria

Gendered and Queer Temporalities of Russo-Ukrainian War

My doctoral research explores gendered and queer temporalities of the Russo-Ukrainian war as encountered by LGBTQIA+ Ukrainians from different regions of the country and with different (non)migration experiences, with a special focus on the war entering the full-scale stage in 2021–2022 and the following full-scale invasion. I aim to research how LGBTQIA+ Ukrainians navigate the recent variety of temporal modes (of the post-Soviet transitioning, attempts of decolonisation and national “awakening”, Europeanisation, COVID, and Russia’s invasion, both hybrid and full-scale); how intersectional oppressions occurring within these modes affect the (non)livability of the queer Ukrainians’ livelihoods, and how queer Ukrainians manifest their resilience and temporal agency in such conditions. I project my research as a comparative ethnography based on interviewing LGBTQIA+ Ukrainians originating from different regions of the country, with different experiences of the war and (non)displacement. I envision the possible contribution my research can make to the existing scholarship as supplementing the current debates on queer temporalities and gendered/sexual citizenship in the radicalised and militarised post-Soviet Eastern European context as well as the debates on Eastern European (non)whiteness and racialization dynamics and their connection to gender.

ANITA DREMEL

University of Osijek, Croatia

Gender Dynamics and Societal Dimensions of Mental Labour

In the realm of gender inequality research within the private sphere, prevalent subjects often revolve around physical and emotional labour, yet a significant and pervasive aspect that tends to be disregarded is the invisible mental labour. It encompasses *managerial* duties such as anticipating needs, identifying options, making decisions, and overseeing their implementation for all household members. Mainly carried out by women, it frequently has adverse effects on their overall well-being, particularly among employed mothers. The objective is to analyse gender distribution of mental labour within heterosexual relationships, especially concerning societal aspects like maintaining social support networks and organizing family life and time, and to examine gender disparities in the assignment of these responsibilities. This presentation brings an overview of results from two mixed-methods investigations into domestic mental labour and particularly delves into the intricate gender dynamics of these overlooked components of traditional gender roles in heterosexual relationships as well as their societal dimensions. Data collection methods include nationally representative survey and semi-structured interviews, all conducted in 2022. The results offer a nuanced insight into various facets of domestic mental labour as well as reflections on the invisible unpaid aspects of social reproduction based on coerced or implied time and dedication, mostly by women. Based on the research, a broader understanding of the unequal distribution of social power based on gender, as one of the dimensions of social identity relevantly informing the experience of subordination, is also sought. The interpretation of results relies on relevant theoretical background to advocate for a move away from an essentially gendered observation of the opposition between the private and public spheres and for an autoreflexion on the science and politics of difference.

CARLA PAGANO

PhD candidate, University L'Orientale, Naples, Italy

Situating Research: A Decolonial Outlook to the Study of Transnational Gender Politics

This paper discusses with examples from empirical research in the Maghrib the critical positioning in social-historical research to challenge the power relations inherent in the relationship between the researcher and their subject. The effectiveness of postcolonial gender studies and the decolonial approach to research has been demonstrated for understanding and analysing power relations and the construction of gender relations (Puar, 2012; Spivak, 2006; Abu Lughod, 2013). The historiography on the Maghrib together with certain transactional policies have reproduced the exoticisation of societies, referring them to a homogeneous whole that is radically different from the 'West'. Transformations and movements related to gender relations represent a key issue for the 21st century Maghrib societies (Kre-fa, Le Renard, 2020). Also in these societies, work and sexuality are the two major *topoi* of production and reproduction of gender relations. In transnational politics contexts, power relations are structural and are also expressed through epistemic violence (Spivak, 2006). Gendered production patterns, including pattern of how knowledge is produced, are embedded in concepts that are being referred to as colonial because they are instrumental to (neo)colonial agendas. This is the case, for example, of concepts such as *empowerment* (Mestiri, 2016) or *agency*, that got trapped in what Lugones (2010) calls a 'modern colonial gender system'. The decolonial critique of this system is centred on the assertion that the intersection of race, class, sexuality, and gender transcend the categories of modernity (Lugones, 2010). Within this framework, the researcher needs to take and make explicit their position in order not to make knowledge and the production of knowledge caught in violent power relations. At this aim, what situated knowledge, methods, and tools can we use?

Nina ČOLOVIĆ

PhD candidate, IEF, Zagreb, Croatia

The Femicide Problem in the Feminist Theories of Violence

According to the Proposal for Amendments to the Criminal Code, femicide in Croatia should become a separate criminal offense, referred to as “aggravated murder of a close female person”. As a special rapporteur to the UN in 2013, Dubravka Šimonović has advocated for changes in the United Nations General Assembly Policy to include gender-related killing of women and girls, recognizing its inclusion in various countries’ laws. Research by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, on a sample of 42,000 women in 28 EU member states, found that only 14% of women who experienced intimate partner violence reported it to the police. For many women, especially those whose bodies are racialized, ethnicized, or affected by other mechanisms of violence that further sharpen the gendered experience, violence is primarily generated and enabled by institutional structures to which, paradoxically, the power to punish is delegated to. From the legislative sphere itself, the individualization and reduction of the problem of gender-based violence to laws have been critically analysed since the 1980s (see, for e.g., Smart 1989). At the same time, in Black, queer, and Marxist feminisms (Vergés 2022, Spade 2011; Davis 2003, 1981), questions are raised about how to create conditions for transforming violence within collectives, both from the perspective of those affected by it, and the person who perpetrated it. The presentation will consider the functions of violence in the production of gender relations and examine the reach and limitations of criminal regulation, while delineating alternative approaches to understanding and addressing it.

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