

# Not Mine Alone, Nor Mine to Own: Some Reflections on the Young Girl

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**Abstract:** This essay looks at the role of the young girl in the curatorial practice of Jacqueline Mabey. Mabey reckons with the young girl as the signifier of a spectrum of mutable cultural signifieds and young girls as subjects on their own terms in the two exhibitions under review, *Miss World* and *Utopia Is No Place, Utopia Is Process*. In doing so, she recognizes a shift in motivations from an interest in what the young girls mean as a narcissistic reflection to how she could work in service of the development of young girls.

**Keywords:** feminism, contemporary art, young girl, Bennington College, curatorial practice, youth culture, queer utopias, radical feminist pedagogy, fail better, Belleveau (Geneviève), Black (Hannah), Chan (Jennifer), Crossman (Adrienne), Dunne (Emily Peterson), Gilmore (Kate), Hileman (Gabriella), Hirsch (Ann), Kennedy (Jen), Killian (Nicole), Linden (Liz), Liu (Jen), Lucas (Kristin), McGeough (Ella Dawn), Mehra (Divya), O’Grady (Lorraine), Prasad (Sunita), Russell (Legacy), Wagenknecht (Addie), Washko (Angela)

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My curatorial practice was profoundly shaped by formative experiences of the liberatory aspect of subcultures and their potential to create reverberations in the larger society. Rave music, like most cultural forms, came late to my hometown of Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada, and our subsequent contribution to electronic music worldwide was negligible. However, like in Chicago, Detroit, and Manchester, our iteration of rave came in the wake of economic catastrophe—specifically, the moratorium placed on Atlantic Northwest cod fisheries and the collapse of the coal and steel industries—and the concomitant social fallout.<sup>1</sup> In this vacuum, we practiced fluid and ecstatic living as a critique of the old world order. We danced all night, shirked work and laws, got out of our heads and out of straight time, exuberantly failing to become productive members of society.<sup>2</sup> We fled homes that held no comfort, creating instead our own queer family units; “once you enter my house it then becomes OUR house” (Rhythm Control 1986), as the lyric in the classic house track goes. For me, participation in rave culture was a tangible demonstration of the worlding function of ideological forms and the role that young people can play in their development. At four in the morning, dancing in the sticky heat of an illegal venue, a radical new lifeworld seemed not only possible but *imminent*.

Despite the sincerity and conviction of our collective desires, that new world did not emerge. Nonetheless, my work is shaped by the memory of its possibility. I try to solicit a similar spirit of collective agency working toward alternative lifeworlds and I frequently look to the cultural production of young people, especially girls, as a source of inspiration. In this text, I will examine two exhibitions I curated, *Miss World* and *Utopia Is No Place, Utopia Is Process*, to try to unpack my encounters with the young girl as the signifier of a spectrum of mutable cultural signifieds and young girls as subjects on their own terms. In doing so, I recognize the shift in my motivations from an interest in what the young girls mean for me as a narcissistic reflection to how I could work in service of the development of young girls. That is, a shift from

what I could learn from the young girl to how I could create scaffolds for the agency, self-reflection, and learning of young girls.

*Miss World* was on view at PARMER, Brooklyn, from October 5 to 26, 2014. PARMER operated out of a private residence in the Brooklyn neighborhood of Bedford-Stuyvesant. Now, take note of the date: This exhibition was only two years out from the publication of the English translation of Tiqqun's *Preliminary Materials for a Theory of the Young-Girl*. That text seemed to me another example of how the young girl is overinvested with symbolic meaning, so much so that it can impede the expression of her political agency. For example, she is a pliant sex object or the consumer par excellence<sup>3</sup> or a source of cooptation and commercial exploitation,<sup>4</sup> all depending upon who is looking at her. During my first visit to PARMER, I was struck by its status as a space of both domestic and discursive production. When working through what kind of exhibition would make sense in that context, I remembered something Kathleen Hannah said in the 2013 documentary *The Punk Singer*: "A girl's bedroom can sometimes be a space of real creativity" (Anderson 2013). My thoughts turned to the creative production of young girls, the manner in which many take to their rooms to wrestle with and create bulwarks against cultural expectations. These bedrooms can serve as refuge, studio, rehearsal space, and so forth. My hope was that exploring this concept might provide a productive model of everyday imaginative resistance for the viewer. In their form and content, the individual works I selected suggested the performative acts and objects of youth, and together they spoke to surveillance (both external and self-surveillance), the performance of gender, and the creation of separate worlds either through online community or individual labor.<sup>5</sup>

Although gender policing begins before the young girl leaves the womb, it is particularly during adolescence that she is pressured to abandon certain allowances of childhood, like androgyny.<sup>6</sup> In its absurdity and visceral physicality, Kate Gilmore's video *Double Dutch* (2004) renders visible the labor involved in heteronormative gender presentation and evokes the punishments for an unconvincing performance. Gilmore works in a variety of media, including installation, sculpture, and photography, but she is well known for performance videos in which she sets out to accomplish difficult and frequently preposterous tasks. In *Double Dutch*, we see the artist attempt to skip with a jump rope made of multiple, thin strings. A static camera captures Gilmore from the waist down, dressed in a silky, rose-colored slip and magenta heels. As she skips, the high heels puncture numerous holes on the false floor beneath her. The video is, at times, difficult to watch: The sound of her skipping is discordant, and Gilmore's heels repeatedly catch on the rope's strings or the holes, causing her to fall to the floor. The work presents a kind of "girly massacre" (Minter and Gilmore 2009) in the combination of the color palette, the childlike activity, and the artist's single-minded pursuit of her goal despite the pain it causes her. *Double Dutch* suggests the psychic and physical costs of conformity to coercive gender norms.

Feminine models of behavior are in no short supply for the young girl. *PRISM Break Barbie* (2013) by Addie Wagenknecht employs that paragon of patriarchy, the Barbie doll, in service of more radical ends. This conceptual art tool was conceived for PRISM Break Up at Eyebeam Center for Art and Technology in New York, an event dedicated to investigating and providing creative forms of protection from surveillance. The step-by-step instructions to produce *PRISM Break Barbie* at home were released via the Free Art & Technology (F.A.T.) Lab's website (Wagenknecht 2013a). *PRISM Break Barbie* is an inexpensive and portable do-it-yourself tool to destroy hardware. It consists of a spring-loaded spike (e.g., ResQMe) attached to the small of the doll's back, either with duct tape or a drill. Should the young girl have to quickly destroy their smart phone, USB, or hard drive, she can simply place their modified Barbie doll on the device and activate the spike to shatter the hardware. Wagenknecht, an artist and technologist, created

*PRISM Break Barbie* both as a tool and as a means to begin a conversation about the unequal distribution of suffering *and* protection from government surveillance. A limited number of the population have the computer programming skills required to evade state surveillance and that population is, on average, white, male, and twenty-eight years old (Stack Overflow 2015)—a demographic less likely to be subject to the kind of surveillance that is a part of larger structures of inequality.<sup>7</sup> *PRISM Break Barbie* is a way to shift the focus of the conversation away from debates about privacy—the privilege of a few—and, instead, to the development of tools accessible to the general population.<sup>8</sup>

Surveillance culture takes many forms, some more pernicious than others. During her teen years, the young girl begins to test the boundaries of selfhood in earnest, and her bedroom becomes a space of experimentation, a place where she can try on and shrug off various expressions of identity. The selfie is a way for her to affirm these expressions through representation and to enter them into circulation for the confirmation of her community. The young girl's relationship to the selfie is the subject of Jennifer Chan's *Cam Twist* (2013). The work was produced for a series of performance GIFs curated by the artist Jesse Darling for Rhizome. In her statement on *Cam Twist*, Chan asserts: "Self-portraiture is the emotional labor of young women who—through the mirrored feedback of webcam and video previews—observe themselves both as digital subject and object" (Darling 2013). In the GIF, we see Chan from the shoulders up as she moves her head side to side in an endless loop. The image of her face blurs as she moves from left to right, regaining visual coherence at each opposing side. The work hints at the ambiguity at the heart of the selfie. On the one hand, it seems to contain the potential for radical self-presentation.<sup>9</sup> On the other hand, as the selfie circulates via online platforms like Tumblr, Instagram, and Facebook, it exposes the young girl to various forms of online gendered surveillance and harassment, encouraging damaging forms of self-policing.<sup>10</sup> The meaning of the selfie for the young girl seems to oscillate between these two poles, in a move similar to Chan's physical gesture, never settling in one place.

No man is an island, and this is particularly true of the networked young girl. The Internet's extension into the young girl's bedroom also offers the possibility of community building, the recognition of self in others that might not otherwise be present in their immediate environs. Artist and designer Nicole Killian looks at online girl culture and how it informs identity from a queer feminist perspective. A frequent subject of her investigation is the representation of magical girls as they circulate on social media platforms such as Tumblr. The magical-girl genre of manga emerged in the early 1950s. Its central conceit is that by some twist of fate the magical girl is gifted with special powers to battle evil, which she most often does in collaboration with a band of fellow magical girls. The genre was revitalized in the 1990s by the manga and anime series *Sailor Moon*. Killian's *Flag for the United States of Magical Girls* (2013) is a nylon flag embroidered with the image of a pink wand, similar to the various "sticks" used by the characters in *Sailor Moon*. In her writing on the magical-girl genre, Killian asserts: "Tumblrs become living, breathing fluctuating bodies—a combination of many motions, organs, fluids and limbs.... Choosing clips from *Sailor Moon*, for example, then removing them from their bookends and re-presenting them as if waving a flag for the United Nations of Magical Girls" (Killian 2014). The image of a magical girl becomes a watchword, an identifier of and entrance into a community, and an assurance that the young girl is not alone.<sup>11</sup>

For digital natives, a life lived online creates a complicated and unprecedented relationship with screens. *Blinded by the Light #7 (cover\_cool)* (2014) by Ella Dawn McGeough examines our relationship to the computer screen through the lens of the Medusa myth. The work is an iteration of McGeough's site-specific collages, which are made using holographic and mirrored vinyl interspersed with images of snakeskin and marble, but here the collage is digitally printed on silk. These collages offer a gateway and a warning: The

screen can dazzle with its revelations, but it can also petrify. Her other work in the exhibition, *Field Drawing from Deer Cave, Borneo #12* (2014), is a small watercolor on stone paper, depicting a specific deer cave in Borneo. This cave mouth is vast, and hundreds of bats move in and out from it nightly. McGeough returns to this image, creating new versions of the same view in watercolors, again and again. Sometimes the young girl seeks escape in a world far from her own and the production of material talismans creates a pathway to those real or fictive worlds. McGeough's works suggest liminal spaces of transformation and holding, "both gateway and envelope," akin to the transitional nature of adolescence.<sup>12</sup>

Sometimes the young girl employs destruction as an avenue of creation. The selection of collage works by Emily Peterson Dunne display a wealth of wit, material sensitivity, and high degree of formal sophistication. At the time of the exhibition, Dunne was in her early twenties, a recent college graduate living with her parents and making collages in her childhood bedroom. During my first visit, I saw the raw materials of her work stacked up in piles on the floor: old magazines, instructional manuals, and found photographs sourced from estate and garage sales. Dunne gathers together these cast-off items, chosen for their material affect, and weaves a poetic, curious world. Collage is, as a form, fundamentally contingent, offering "the promise of transformation, not through the positive production of the image but through a negative destruction of it that nonetheless refuses to relinquish pleasure" (Halberstam 2011, 136). *The History of the Spirit Passing through Marcel Duchamp, Joseph Cornell, Ray Johnson and Resting with Emily Peterson Dunne* (2014–ongoing) is a found math book into which Dunn has created collages on selected pages. The work emerged out of Dunne's realization that the majority of her critical influences are male artists. In this instance, the act of cut, place, paste, repeat is partly a way for the artist to perform an all too common endeavor, the parsing out what is internalized misogyny and what is simply preference. There is a wealth of toxic stereotypes the young girl must unlearn to make space for herself.

I had a number of visitors to *Miss World* comment that the show really did have the feeling of a young girl's room. But upon reflection, I had to ask myself, What young girl? The young girl of my imagination, the girl I had in mind when selecting works, looked very similar to my childhood friends and me: white, middle class, mostly cisgendered, and either queer or straight. It seems I had fallen into the trap of the narcissism of the (not so) universal.<sup>13</sup> This realization was a part of a larger stock-taking, identifying the disconnects between what I knew intellectually—we cannot understand gender in isolation from other categories of identity—and my practice, the things I put into the world. When it came to creating texts and contexts to elucidate the nuances of inequality, I came up short. The whiteness of *Miss World* was a failure on my part. However, I work under the name ~~failed projects~~ as a reminder to myself to always "Try again. Fail again. Fail better" (Beckett 1996, 89). So when Robert Ransick, artist and professor at Bennington College, invited me to curate an exhibition at the college's Suzanne Lemberg Usdan Gallery, I was cognizant of past oversights.

I began work on *Utopia Is No Place, Utopia Is Process* as I do most projects, by learning all I can about the context in which it will be realized. When looking into the school's history, my interest was piqued by the college's origins as a single-gender institution, legacy of experimental pedagogy and experiential learning, and focus on the arts. From this emerged the rough concept of creating a feminist school-within-a-school. During research, I also discovered that the student body is mainly white and middle class or affluent. I decided that my overarching goal was to bring in voices that might not otherwise be present in that space. Ultimately, the project consisted of a group exhibition; crowd-sourced library; DIY printing press; extensive program of discussion groups, talks, and student-led initiatives; a project website, <http://www.utopiaisnoplacenet>; and a three-week pop-up module on Feminist Praxis, which I cotaught with Robert Ransick in Usdan Gallery.

The inclusion of moving-image-based works felt essential, given the importance of work made by female artists in the early days of video art.<sup>14</sup> However, I chose to highlight video made within the last ten years as a way to expose the student work that might provide more salient models of feminist strategies and artistic production. Genevieve Belleveau, an alumna of Bennington College, is an emerging artist whose work encompasses live performance, interventionist activity, writing, video, healing, and new media navigation. In *The Trigger* (2015), we see the artist walking across a log on a pond, shooting off a gun at random intervals, eventually walking into the water toward the static camera and pointing the gun at the viewer. The work is accompanied by a strange, evocative backing track and lyrics running along the bottom of the screen. *The Trigger* is from the *Karaoke Meditations* series and, as with regular karaoke, the work presupposes viewer participation. The lyrics create a sketch of an unhealthy relationship, suggesting the trauma a trigger warning presupposes. Trauma can produce anxiety, the condition of being paralyzed by fear of the future and its infinite variables. Meditation, amongst other things, can be a means to being present in each moment as it unfolds. In the song, the viewer/singer progresses from “And I think you are the trigger” to “It is I who wears the gun.” In this way, *The Trigger* provides an embodied practice for working trauma.

Hannah Black’s *My Bodies* (2014) speaks directly to the specificities of embodiment. The first third of the video juxtaposes vocal clips of famous black female singers, such as Aaliyah, Beyoncé, Whitney Houston, and Jennifer Hudson, singing the phrase “my body” with images of white businessmen and politicians. The disjuncture between our knowledge of the bodies of the women signing the phrase “my body” and the images of smiling men on the screen undermines any notion of a universal body, potentially communicating the manner in which bodies are always raced, classed, gendered, abled, and so forth.<sup>15</sup> Two thirds of the way into the video, the work takes turn for the speculative. We accompany a recently deceased soul and its dog as they consider rebirth. The visual becomes digitally processed images of caves, and the soundtrack shifts to water dripping and echoing off wet walls, accompanied by an R&B-style backing track. Along the bottom of the frame a poetic text appears, narrating the soul’s journey to a place in between death and rebirth, where it must decide: Should I do it again?

you will hesitate at the gate of the world  
asking, “what will become of me?”  
and the dog says, “girl, try your luck”  
“every birth is a bone, is a wager” (Black 2014)

*My Bodies* leaves the viewer in the cave, the sound of wind outside, deliberating this question. Knowing all the illegitimate systems of exclusion and privilege that are based upon the randomness of embodiment, “knowing how many people in this world have bodies that are racialized or impoverished or perhaps don’t, in some senses, fully have bodies at all” (Darling 2015), Black asks, Do you take the risk on “the Manhattan of your next life / with no cops or broken hearts”?

Our process of defining the natural is explored in Adrienne Crossman’s *Plant Series 1* (2015). Crossman is an artist, educator, and curator working and living in Windsor, Canada. She is interested in the exploration of nonbinary spaces, altering digital and analogue materials in pursuit of a queer aesthetic. *Plant Series 1* presents us with the close-up view of a garden, recorded with a handheld camera that moves in and out of the plants. A few seconds into the video, a glitch: The solidity of the plants melts into a pixelated smear, only to reform and glitch again, for the duration of the video. The overall effect is beguiling. From the Yiddish word for “slippery area,” a glitch is a transient fault in a system. In the work, the viewer slips along in a state

of extended anticipation, waiting for the next visual detour. In *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*, José Esteban Muñoz describes anticipation as a utopian temporality:

Concrete utopias are relational to historically situated struggles, a collectivity that is actualized or potential....  
Concrete utopias are the realm of educated hope.... Hope along with its other, fear, are affective structures that can be described as anticipatory. (Muñoz 2009, 3)

In *Plant Series 1*, the glitch functions as a means to interrupt straight time. But because its transient faults move across flora, it also brings to mind the ideological motivations involved in the definitions of the natural. In “Animal Transex,” Myra J. Hird asserts that “most plants are intersex, most fungi have multiple sexes, many species transsex, and bacteria completely defy notions of sexual difference. This means that most living organisms on this planet would make little sense of the human classification of two sexes” (Hird 2006, 31). However, these scientific facts had little influence in the modern conception of the natural in relation to gender and sexuality. The act of attribution is not neutral.<sup>16</sup> *Plant Series 1* reminds the viewer of this fact and that, as J. B. S. Haldane states, “The universe is not only queerer than we suppose, it is queerer than we can suppose” (quoted in Hird 2006, 35).

We find ourselves in a paradoxical moment where conceptions of gender and sexuality are expanding while other kinds of gendered sexual stereotypes are becoming more entrenched.<sup>17</sup> In her immersive work, Ann Hirsch examines the influence of technology on popular culture and gender, with a particular focus on the shape expressions of female agency take online.<sup>18</sup> Hirsch’s *Semiotics of the Camwhore* (2015) nods to an older feminist work, Martha Rosler’s *Semiotics of the Kitchen* (1975) in title and format. Set in a domestic interior, the video presents Hirsch as she deadpans her way through a demonstration of thematically relevant words such as duck face, lipstick, and vibrator in alphabetical order. This video is part of a larger Internet art project, called *horny little feminist* (2014–5), which explores the potentially contradictory relationship between our desire and our politics, particularly in relation to the power dynamics at play in mainstream pornography. Before a camera came standard in computers, and before user-friendly social networks like YouTube and Facebook, setting up a streaming video feed and a website to display it required specific equipment and coding skills. Effectively, there was no model of self-presentation and site aesthetics for a camgirl like Jennifer Ringley, creator of JenniCam, active from 1996 to 2003. Much has changed in a relatively short period of time. The O’Reilly Media Web 2.0 Conference, which took place in 2004, marked the beginning of a shift to a more social, end-user-focused web. As the web became more user-friendly, there were more users. And as it became more “social,” it became more *societal*, a space from which emerged clear power dynamics prescribing the roles of the growing population of users. Thus, we moved from relative freedom of JenniCam to “Tits or GTFO” in about three years.<sup>19</sup> Current college students are the first generation born digital and, as a result, they have had greater ready access to pornography than previous generations.<sup>20</sup> *Semiotics of the Camwhore* is, at moments, uncomfortable to watch because it invokes this reality and hints at the complicated relationship between the preponderance of Internet pornography, our presentations of self online, and our sexual identities.

Divya Mehra’s research-fuelled practice explores diasporic identities, racialization, otherness, and the construct of diversity. *The Importance of Being Earnest* (2009) begins with the twinkling piano of “A Whole New World,” the song from The Walt Disney Company’s cartoon *Aladdin* (1992). The image fades to a frontal view of Mehra, her hair stirred by a breeze as if she is flying on a magic carpet, while stock images of mountains, exotic seaside ports, and flowers flash behind her. The lyrics to the song scroll along at the bottom of the frame, letters and phrases highlighted in time with the melody, like a karaoke video.

During the first third of the video, Mehra is reacting to the male vocals in character, turning her head to the side and shyly smiling at her non-visible suitor, generally reacting to the magical journey with wide-eyed enthusiasm. As the female vocal begins, the tone shifts: Mehra begins to earnestly lip sync the words while images of bloody conflict in the Middle East and South Asia appear behind her, replacing the previous stock images. *Aladdin*, roughly based on tales from *One Thousand and One Nights*, was sharply criticized upon its release for relying heavily on racist stereotypes.<sup>21</sup> In the cartoon, all the “good” characters are lighter-skinned, have more Caucasian features, and speak in Americanized English, whereas the “bad” or “stupid” characters are dark-skinned, behave violently or insipidly, and speak with “foreign” accents. Further, *Aladdin* presents the viewer with a generalized portrait of exotic Otherness. Indeed, many of the personages represented in the cartoon are Indian, not Arab. For example, in one market scene, we see characters lying on a bed of nails, walking across hot coals, charming snakes, swallowing swords, and eating fire, practices associated with the Indian subcontinent. *The Importance of Being Earnest* is deeply evocative, bringing to mind the racist stereotypes in the film, the lived reality of people who have to navigate those stereotypes on a daily basis, the history of colonialism in the region, the contemporary conflicts that are connected to that colonial legacy, American colonialism (cultural and otherwise), and so forth. Mehra holds these various, sometime irreconcilable layers together with a disruptive humor that pointedly destabilizes the viewer without foreclosing discussion of the issues at hand.

One of my first steps in organizing *Utopia Is No Place, Utopia Is Process* was to reach out to Ella Dawn McGeough to create a site-specific work for the show. *Memorial for the Present Is the Future of the Past* (2015) consists of thirteen silk banners printed with the image of a cross-section of fossilized coral stretching over forty feet in length. The work emerged from the artist’s previously mentioned research on the Medusa myth. Gorgonacea is an order of soft coral, whose name refers to the mythical story of its origin. In Ovid’s telling of the story, Perseus laid Medusa’s still lively head into a bed of seaweed, which hardened into coral in response to the Gorgon’s petrifying effect. The Red Sea’s coral reef was formed by sea nymphs scattering the mineralized plants.<sup>22</sup> One of the genetic names for coral is *corallium*, *korallion* in Greek, which comes from the word *kore*, meaning “maiden” or “young girl.” Poseidon raped Medusa when she was a young girl in a temple of Athena. In a rage, the goddess cursed Medusa, replacing her hair with serpents and giving her a gaze that petrified whatever it fell upon.<sup>23</sup> In her moving statement about the work, McGeough says:

When I read Ovid, when I speak to my girlfriends, my nieces, my mother, I feel my feet press into fossilized strata of young-women who came before. Women, who for generations found themselves petrified—bound and held—within a hybridized three-way: mineral (to be kept and carried), flora (to be eaten and examined), fauna (to be acted upon, to be grieved, to grieve). (McGeough 2016)

The statistics on sexual assault and harassment on campus are brutal. One in five women is sexually assaulted while in college, nearly two-thirds of college students experience sexual harassment, nine out of ten rape victims know their offender (National Sexual Violence Center 2016), “63.3% of men at one university who self-reported acts qualifying as rape or attempted rape admitted to committing repeat rapes” (National Sexual Violence Center 2015), and many more do not recognize their behavior as sexual assault.<sup>24</sup> The key themes of *Utopia Is No Place, Utopia Is Process*—violence, bodies, imagining utopias, identity after the Internet, and cultural constructs—emerged from a serious deliberation of what concerns are most pressing to the students. I selected works I thought spoke to these themes. It was my hope that they would challenge the students and provoke new realizations and lines of flight. I would assert that *Memorial for the Present Is the Future of the Past* was a success in this regard. Through a series of material analogies, it created a space for reflection on sexual trauma that was thoughtful and transformative.

Robert Ransick generously lent his edition of *The Clearing: or Cortez and La Malinche, Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings, N. and Me* (1991) by Lorraine O'Grady for the exhibition.<sup>25</sup> The work was a moral anchor for the show, a reminder of the complexity of the issues in play and a call for rigorous honesty. *The Clearing* is a difficult work. The left panel presents an entwined interracial couple, floating in the sky, their clothes abandoned on the ground, near a gun and two playing children; and in the right panel, a chain-mail covered, skeletal figure looms threateningly above a vacant-looking black woman. In a 2012 article by Andil Gosine, O'Grady shared a story about the early reception of the work. *The Clearing* was included in the exhibition *Coming to Power: 25 Years of Sexually X-plicit Art by Women*, at David Zwirner Gallery in 1993. At the opening reception, however, O'Grady discovered that the curators of the show had chosen to install only the left panel.

"The show was about sexuality as an uncomplicated, positive blessing," O'Grady discovered, "not sexuality as a complicated life issue or even sexuality as an issue far more complicated for women of color than for white women. I said 'what have you done? You've put my piece up and it's not my piece.'" Another curator—"a very nice white guy from the South," O'Grady remembers—said, "That's not what sexuality is, or at least that's not what it's supposed to be." "But well," O'Grady replied, "that is what it is." (Gosine 2012)

There is a long and terrible history of sexual violence against black women in the United States<sup>26</sup> and equally pernicious and persistent stereotypes of the asexual mammy and the hypersexual Jezebel, which leave black female bodies overdetermined yet invisible.<sup>27</sup> Here we see O'Grady making visible both the history of violence against black women *and* their sexual agency, in a way that honors their bodily integrity and expands the field of representations of black female subjectivity. The copy on view was from the original printing, each panel measuring 20 x 24 inches (the panels of the 2012 reprint measure 40 x 50 inches each). To view the 1991 print of *The Clearing* in detail, the viewer must be relatively close to the work. Personally, I felt more implicated by the intimate scale. Standing close to the glass frames, I saw my face reflected. I looked at the bodies represented and thought about my body in that space, in a country of stolen land made rich from labor coerced from stolen bodies. I thought how even as desire offers the potential for radical forms of embodiment and exchange, it is complicated, irresolvable, and imbricated with the narratives of imperialist and white-supremacist capitalist patriarchy.

Around the corner from *The Clearing* was the crowd-sourced library and reading room. I sent a request to many of my peers, a solicitation to share the titles of books that have been important to their thinking about gender and feminism, particularly those texts that are unexpected, embarrassing, and/or noncanonical.<sup>28</sup> Some of the contributors to the crowdsourced library include writers Wendy Vogel and Emily Spivack, artists Mary Mattingly and Sam Vernon, art worker JiaJia Fei, and curator Catherine Morris, amongst many others.<sup>29</sup> Along with titles, participants were asked to provide a rationale for inclusion. These passages spoke of rage,<sup>30</sup> of lifelines for weirdoes,<sup>31</sup> of collaboration and queer family making,<sup>32</sup> of first encounters with intersectional feminism,<sup>33</sup> and much more. In an e-mail to the author dated April 13, 2016, Joanne McNeil sent a moving message about her complicated love of *The Passion of New Eve* (1977) by Angela Carter, and her hopes for its author:

This book first came to mind as something "important to [my] thinking about feminism and gender" because I was knocked off my feet when I first read it. Internalized misogyny had me believing that things feminine and intellectual were always at odds with each other and this book helped dislodge that unhelpful insecurity of mine. But in later years, I have come to think of the novel laced with an element that is problematic and insensitive. (...)



Carter died in 1992. I wish she were alive today so she could read *Nevada*. Or essays by Katherine Cross or add books like Kate Bornstein's *Gender Outlaw* and Janet Mock's *Redefining Realness* to her library. Or just get online and learn basic stuff like this *Autostraddle* piece, "It's Time for People to Stop Using the Social Construct of 'Biological Sex' to Defend Their Transmisogyny."

I want to believe that Angela Carter would have loved to learn that gender, sexuality, and identity are even more complex than she considered in this novel. She was such a thoroughly curious person that I imagine she would have been eager to shed her ignorance of these matters. But I don't know, which is why I recommend this novel with reservation and sadness and the hope that people who read the book today will pair it with more enlightened contemporary literature that Carter never lived to see.

In a similar gesture, visitors to the exhibition were encouraged to contribute their voices to the conversation by submitting their texts to the pilot press... library. Created by art historian Jennifer Kennedy and artist Liz Linden, pilot press... is a do-it-yourself feminist publishing house. Participants are invited to print and bind as many copies of their publication as they like, and in exchange they leave a single bound copy behind for the pilot press... library. There are no barriers to participation, no peer review, no editorial committee. pilot press... is radically open, yielding "a non-hierarchical, unedited, and uncensored look at the self-identified feminist community" (Kennedy and Linden 2017). My intention with both the crowdsourced library and the installation of pilot press... was threefold: to visualize the rich variety and continuing production of feminist thought; to communicate that there is not one proper path to feminist consciousness; and to undermine any suggestion of my own mastery through the distribution of authorship. These hopes also informed the public program, which included thematic brown bag talks, lectures from curator Lindsay Howard and artist Jen Liu, and Do It Yourself Utopias, a call to the Bennington community to self-organize events in the gallery.<sup>34</sup>

My desire to communicate the diversity and salience of feminist thought emerged from my initial contact with a class of Bennington students. I visited in the fall of 2015 and the impression I got from the students was that many of them thought that feminism was purely theoretical. Indeed, one asked me, "What are the practical implications of feminism?" I developed the syllabus for the three-week pop-up module on Feminist Praxis—cotaught with Robert Ransick—with this in mind.<sup>35</sup> Students read texts by authors such as Aria Dean, bell hooks, T. L. Cowan, Che Gossett, Reina Gossett, A. J. Lewis, José Esteban Muñoz, Paul B. Preciado, Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, and Martine Syms to unpack their real-world manifestations in projects and movements such as Afrofuturism, Black Lives Matter, Chicana punk, Idle No More, networked feminism, and transgender activism. Some classes were supplemented with guest speakers. For example, Amber Berson, writer, curator, and scholar, gave a lecture entitled "On Digging a Hole to the Other Side: Utopia as a Method towards a Feminist Future in Artist-Run Culture," which she subsequently added to the pilot press... library. Rea McNamara, artist and writer, spoke of her involvement in *Sheroes* (2011–2), a do-it-yourself queer art party series that bridged the on/offline divide to explore, in performances, sounds, installations, and visuals, the iconography and cultures of fandom surrounding the female musicians such as Chaka Khan, Yoko Ono, Dolly Parton, and Nina Simone. Over the course of the six classes, the students worked together to create a collective final project. Inspired by the model of *Sheroes*, they organized a closing reception party for *Utopia Is No Place, Utopia Is Process*, which they called *If I Can't Dance, I Don't Want to Be Part of Your Revolution!*<sup>36</sup> This event featured various platforms for conversation and collaboration. For example, participants were encouraged to write down their anxieties around gender on squares of brightly colored construction paper as they entered the gallery space. The scraps of paper were then sent through a shredder and transformed into confetti. There was a station for group karaoke; a rack

of costumes for play; a tea station; temporary tattoos, made with ink gifted by Ella Dawn McGeough to the Feminist Praxis students, which she made during a recent artist residency in the Amazon; a collaboratively written feminist manifesto; and a performance of DEEP Aerobics.<sup>37</sup> Visitors were encouraged to contribute to pilot press....

On the first day of class, I began by introducing myself to the students and laying out my hopes for the next three weeks. I stressed the importance of being thoughtful and intentional in the language we used, and being generous with our peers and ourselves. I told them that I hoped we would work together to create a collective, noncompetitive space of inquiry. “It’s not a competition, it’s not about being ‘right,’” I said. “Nobody ‘wins’ feminism.” In a space that was not quite classroom, not quite social, I communicated to them that we should work together to create

A safe space, but not one free from discomfort. Discomfort is an important part of learning; transformation usually demands some kind of sacrifice. A safe space is one where we choose to listen, to reflect, to share together, and where we hold each other, as a community, in our discomfort, our trauma, and alienation. (Mabey 2016)

My hope is that the students left the pop-up module understanding that feminism is not a static set of ideas or practices. I shared with them how my understanding of feminism has changed with time and how, at this moment, I look at feminism as a kind of gift economy—and not all gifts are easy to receive. As a lens that problematizes all systems producing inequality, feminism requires a radical reflexivity and openness to change. What does that mean in practice? For me it means that if, as a white person, I am really committed to racial justice, I have to acknowledge my own internalized racism and work to systematically dismantle white supremacy and to undermine all the unwarranted privileges I receive from it. It means that, for me as a feminist in this moment in history, I think our central fight is ensuring the right of self-determination of gender identity and expression for all. To these ends, I have embraced a practice of decentering, trying to use the opportunities I am given to create space for other voices. The past few years have made me aware of many of my blind spots. I told them that, at times, feminism has felt like the hardest gift, with the constant framing and reframing and the moments of profound doubt. But I cannot conceive of my life without it.

The framing and reframing: If *Miss World* was about what I get from the young girl, I tried to make *Utopia Is No Place, Utopia Is Process* about about what I could leverage from myself and my community in service to a group of young girls. I wanted to have the Feminist Praxis class structured by their desires and interests, so at the end of the first class I threw a Question Party. On a cue card, everyone wrote down a question about feminism they were afraid to ask out loud. I collected the questions and pinned them to the wall. In the classes that followed, I would circle back to their questions, such as, “How, as a white woman, can I express my feminism without overpowering the voices of POC?”; “How can we best communicate feminist theory outside of an academic environment?”; “What actually makes a person a feminist?” I wanted my experience and that of my peers to be a support for but not dictate their process of learning. To encourage the development of feminist consciousness, but in their own way and their own time. To, if nothing else, encourage the students to be thoughtful in how they move through the world and how they treat others, and cognizant of the things they will leave behind.

The moments of profound doubt: In a recent conversation with a friend, I floated a dark thought. Maybe the academy had not changed significantly since its inception, maybe it was still best suited for the education of princes and politicians. Bodies not white and male are barely tolerated, if the widespread protests by black students and the sexual assault crisis across college campuses are any indication. How can we expect young

girls to learn in environments so hostile to them? Where an act of plagiarism is grounds for expulsion, but sexual assault is not? If we are to pursue education as a practice of freedom, then we must decolonize our institutions and educational practices. It is not a matter of making space for minoritarian subjects within a broken system, but a matter of radical change. As Jack Halberstam asserts in the introduction to Fred Moten and Stefano Harney's *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning & Black Study*,

If you want to know what the undercommons wants, what Moten and Harney want, what black people, indigenous peoples, queers and poor people want, what we (the “we” that cohabit the space of the undercommons) want, it is this—we cannot be satisfied with the recognition and acknowledgement generated by the very system that denies a) that anything was ever broken and b) that we deserved to be the broken part; so we refused to ask for recognition and instead we want to take apart, dismantle, tear down the structure that, right now, limits our ability to find each other, to see beyond it, and to access the places we know lie outside its walls. (Halberstam 2013, 6)

One young girl at Bennington confessed to feeling overwhelmed: With so many troubles in the world, where to begin? Where to focus her energies? I said that I could not decide for her, but for myself, at this moment in time, I use urgency as a guideline. Most of the aggressions directed at me are of the micro sort. Very real and exhausting, to be sure, but I will survive them. And I know that there are far worse aggressions a girl can encounter. Nonetheless, like my student, I too sometimes feel overwhelmed by a toxic political climate and seemingly endless series of tragedies, and I fall into despair. But I hold out hope that my work as a curator could be a part of a critical mass. That by creating spaces for speculative experience and consciousness raising like *Miss World* and *Utopia is No Place, Utopia is Process*, along with the creation of platforms for more concrete activism, like the Art+Feminism Wikipedia Edit-a-Thons—cofounded in 2013 with Siân Evans, Michael Mandiberg, and Laurel Ptack—these labors will combine with the work of others, and all these moments of collective liberation and concrete utopias will add up to something more.

Of course, there is no Young Girl, only young girls, in all their specificity. Young girls like Dajerria Becton, physically assaulted by a police officer at a Texas pool party. Or like Lana Derrick, who disappeared along Highway 16 in British Columbia, the Highway of Tears, one of thousands of missing and murdered indigenous women in Canada. Or like Rehtaeh Parsons, a Nova Scotia teen raped by four boys who circulated an image of the act online; she later hung herself when the ensuing harassment from her peers became too much to bear. Or like Gwen Araujo, a transgender teen murdered by four men in Newark, California. Or like Akyra Murray, recent high school graduate and talented athlete, shot down along with forty-nine other people at Pulse nightclub in Orlando, Florida. I feel that my responsibility is to these girls, as a feminist and as a person who tries to be a person of conscience, to be a part of the collective effort to create a world where girls like Dajerria, Lana, Rehtaeh, Gwen, and Akyra can live to see adulthood.

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## Notes

1. Christopher T. Conner covers this in “Electronic Dance Music: From Deviant Subculture to Culture Industry,” his PhD dissertation from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas: “Early on then the EDM subculture contained critical elements addressed to broad social issues such as deindustrialization, failing city economies, intolerance based on race and sexual orientation, and a rejection of the prevailing conservative political atmosphere” (Conner 2015, 4).

2. As many others do, I take my lead here from José Esteban Muñoz's notions of "straight time" and the linkage between queerness and "failure": "Heteronormativity speaks not just to a bias related to sexual object choice but to that dominant and overarching temporal and spatial organization of the world that I have been calling straight time.... Queerness and the politics of failure are linked insofar as they are about doing 'something else.' And in both cases they may be doing something else in relation to a something that is missing in straight time's always already flawed temporality" (Muñoz 2009, 154).

3. For example, as understood by Tiqqun, "The Young-Girl is the central article of permissive consumption and commodity leisure" (2012, 102). This is nothing new: From the start, consumer culture has been coded as female and positioned as a threat to high culture (see Huyssen 1986).

4. Consider, for example, the creation of the phrase "on fleek" by teen Kayla Newman and its rapid corporate cooptation: "It's impossible to track the chain of ownership from there on out. In fact, the chain becomes more like a swarm. Put plainly, there is no recognized ownership. The phrase Newman gave the world was used to sell breakfast foods and party cups, but it only belongs to her in an intangible sense, on the rare occasions in which people choose to give her credit" (St. Felix 2015).

5. The exhibition was paired with a thematic, speculative discussion series called *All My Little Words*, coorganized with my frequent collaborator, Siân Evans, the Instruction Librarian at Decker Library, Maryland Institute College of Art. The three conversations focused on the themes of labor and economics, digital subjectivity, and love and sexuality. Invoking the young girls' spirit of creativity, these conversations aimed to bring together alternative viewpoints, skipping from politics to play to theory and everything in between.

6. We are gendered via sonogram technology before we leave the womb or by physicians upon our exit. In the article "My Words to Victor Frankenstein above the Village of Chamounix: Performing Transgender Rage," Susan Stryker speaks of the process of gendering without consent: "Other true stories of those events could undoubtedly be told, but upon my return I knew for a fact what lit the fuse to my rage in the hospital delivery room. It was the non-consensuality of the baby's gendering. (...) [B]odies are rendered meaningful only through some culturally and historically specific mode of grasping their physicality that transforms the flesh into a useful artifact. Gendering is the initial step in this transformation, inseparable from the process of forming an identity by means of which we're fitted to a system of exchange in a heterosexual economy. Authority seizes upon specific material qualities of the flesh, particularly the genitals, as outward indication of future reproductive potential, constructs this flesh as a sign, and reads it to enculturate the body. Gender attribution is compulsory; it codes and deploys our bodies in ways that materially affect us, yet we choose neither our marks nor the meanings they carry. This was the act accomplished between the beginning and the end of that short sentence in the delivery room: 'It's a girl.' This was the act that recalled all the anguish of my own struggles with gender. But this was also the act that enjoined my complicity in the non-consensual gendering of another. A gendering violence is the founding condition of human subjectivity; having a gender is the tribal tattoo that makes one's personhood cognizable" (2006, 253).

7. As Rachel E. Dubrosky and Shoshana A. Magnet assert in the introduction to *Feminist Surveillance Studies*, "Surveillance is inseparable from ... interlocking oppressions, ones that are often integral to the structures that underlie our culture" (2015, 3).

8. Again, Dubrosky and Magnet: "Privacy is, however, a limited lens for thinking about surveillance, since it is a right not granted equally to all.... For instance, many communities—including prisoners, those receiving certain forms of welfare from the state, people with disabilities living in institutional care, as well

as immigrants and refugees—have historically had, and continue to have, their bodily privacy invaded, but there is almost no public discussion about the infringement of their rights to privacy” (2015, 4).

9. As Aria Dean explains, “Maybe 2013 felt like the beginning of something; around then we began to hear murmurs at the margins of this idea that the selfie might be powerful. It started with young queers and people of color and a realization that perhaps if you could flood the network with something, it would become impossible to ignore. The selfie soon was written of as a ‘sign of life’—as the ultimate tactic toward #visibility. As we were taught via the likes of Susan Sontag, ‘photographs furnish evidence.’ The image is, or can be, a powerful verifying tool, and with the selfie it seemed that you could continually verify and affirm your very existence on your own terms” (Dean 2016).

10. Dean again: “Making one’s subjectivity visible, or affirming one’s existence through a selfie has yet to ‘demolish the gaze.’ We must be well aware that the Internet is arguably—at least in America and much of the Anglophone west—dominated by a mucky sphere saturated with subjectivities flowing amidst and rubbing up against each other, all stark naked. In 2016, catapulting our selves into circulation as image-fragments no longer makes for a resistance or revolution” (Dean 2016).

11. *Sailor Moon* is acknowledged as a touchstone for LGBTQ youth of 1990s because of the relationship between Sailor Neptune and Sailor Uranus, and the gender-fluid Sailor Starlights (“How ‘Sailor Moon’ Fandom Became a Refuge for 90s Queer Kids” 2016).

12. In an e-mail to the author sent on June 23, 2014, McGeough explained the origins of the project: “A number of years ago, my partner and I watched the BBC Earth series on caves—we both became fascinated by the film’s visit to Deer Cave in Borneo, which at that time was considered to have the world’s largest cave opening. In this clip swarms of bats are seen exiting the cave at dusk. These swarms form dark winding clouds, which leave the cave over a space of nearly an hour—a nearly unimaginable nightly occurrence of bodies moving. While living in China, we began researching the cave and as a present Colin gave me a printed photograph of the entrance as an invitation to travel there. It took us over a year to formalize our travel plans, and in the meantime I began using various found images of the cave as a source for drawings, without much thought as to reasons beyond my general interest in caves. But why had I become so fixated on this cave? (...) In retrospect, perhaps it began to signify the potential for all caves to offer themselves up as both gateway and envelope. We visited the cave in the spring/winter of 2010. Since then, I have continued to return to one specific found-photograph of the cave, attempting to translate it into either drawing (using pastel) or watercolor—trying to represent the atmosphere of the cave, for which the photograph both succeeds at with astonishing veracity and yet, somehow, ultimately falls short in the end. So too my drawings fall short, but the project has changed into the continued attempt rather than the representation [of the cave] itself. Some are better than others.”

13. “And it was in the context of the endless comparisons of the plight of ‘women’ with ‘blacks’ that they revealed their racism. In most cases, this racism was an unconscious, unacknowledged aspect of their thought, suppressed by narcissism—a narcissism which so blinded them that they would not admit two obvious facts: one, that in a capitalist, racist, imperialist state there is no one social status women share as a collective group; and second, that the social status of white women in America has never been like that of black women or men” (hooks 2015, 136).

14. The complete list of video works in order of screening: Kate Gilmore, *Between A Hard Place*, 2008, video, 9 minutes 43 seconds; Genevieve Belleveau, *The Trigger*, 2015, video, 3 minutes 12 seconds; Gabriella Hileman, *hologram machine for the modern cyber femme*, 2013, video, 2 minutes 25 seconds; Adrienne Crossman, *Plant Series 1*, 2015, single-channel video, 6 minutes; Kristin Lucas, *Lo-Fi Green Sigh*,

2004, video, 3 minutes; Hannah Black, *My Bodies*, 2014, digital video, 3 min 31 seconds; Nicole Killian, *Internet Weather Report*, 2013, video, 1 minute 5 seconds; Angela Washko, *And They Wonder Why We're Romantics?*, 2014, HD video, 4 minutes 5 seconds; Ann Hirsch, *Semiotics of the Camwhore*, 2015, digital video, 6 minutes 43 seconds; Legacy Russell, *First Kiss/Last Dance*, 2012, video, 4 minutes 1 second; Sunita Prasad, *Real Girl* from the series *Sunny + Benny Together Forever*, 2009, video, 3 minutes 22 seconds; Divya Mehra, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, 2009, video, 2 minutes 41 seconds; and Jen Liu, *The Pink Detachment*, 2015, HD video, 19 minutes 39 seconds.

15. As Lorraine O'Grady asserts, "The female body in the West is not a unitary sign. Rather, like a coin, it has an obverse and a reverse: on the one side, it is white; on the other, non-white or, prototypically, black. The two bodies cannot be separated, nor can one body be understood in isolation from the other in the West's metaphoric construction of 'woman.' White is what woman is; not-white (and the stereotypes not-white gathers in) is what she had better not be" (O'Grady 1994, 152).

16. As Isabelle Stengers succinctly states in *Thinking with Whitehead: A Free and Wild Creation of Concepts*, "the term 'infection' is there to remind us that there is nothing neutral about 'attributing a role to something.' The role you attribute to me drives me crazy" (Stengers 2011).

17. For example, Laverne Cox, a transgender woman and actress in the television series *Orange Is the New Black*, was featured in a *Time* magazine's cover story, "The Transgender Tipping Point," commenting of the mainstream visibility of transgender men and women. And a recent study found that less than 50% of thirteen- to twenty-year-olds identify as "exclusively straight" (Brathwaite 2016).

18. For example, for the *The Scandalishious Project* (2008–9), she became a YouTube camwhore with over two million video views. More recently, she recreated a teenage cyber love affair with an older man in *Playground* (2013), a two-person performance.

19. The phrase "Tits or GTFO (get the fuck out)" emerged on a 4chan message board in 2006 to (de)limit the scope of female participation on the site and became a widely used phrase on the Internet (Disgruntled Pumpkin 2010).

20. Let me be clear that I am not antipornography. However, I think that the impact that the Internet has had on pornography, making it more atomized and, arguably, more violent, and the unprecedented access young people have had to pornography from a young age is a difference that makes a difference, a change significant enough that it needs to be examined from many angles. Such as what, if any, relationship it has to the epidemic of sexual assault on campus, particularly given that some studies suggest "participants who used more pornography had more positive attitudes toward sexual assault, more negative attitudes toward women" (Maas 2010, 144).

21. The American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee managed to get The Walt Disney Company to change the lyrics of one song in the home-video version of the film. The lyrics were modified from "Oh, I come from a land / From a faraway place / Where the caravan camels roam / Where they cut off your ear / If they don't like your face / It's barbaric, but hey, it's home" to "Oh, I come from a land / From a faraway place / Where the caravan camels roam / Where it's flat and immense / And the heat is intense / It's barbaric, but hey, it's home" ("It's Racist, But Hey, It's Disney" 1993).

22. This is how Ovid tells the story in Book Four of *Metamorphoses*: "He washes his hands, after the victory, in seawater drawn for him, and, so that Medusa's head, covered with its snakes, is not bruised by the harsh sand, he makes the ground soft with leaves, and spreads out plants from below the waves, and places the head of that daughter of Phorcys on them. The fresh plants, still living inside, and absorbent, respond to the influence of the Gorgon's head, and harden at its touch, acquiring a new rigidity in branches

and fronds. And the ocean nymphs try out this wonder on more plants, and are delighted that the same thing happens at its touch, and repeat it by scattering the seeds from the plants through the waves. Even now corals have the same nature, hardening at a touch of air, and what was alive, under the water, above water is turned to stone” (Ovid 2000, Book IV: 706–52).

23. Ovid’s story of Medusa continues: “She was once most beautiful, and the jealous aspiration of many suitors. Of all her beauties none was more admired than her hair: I came across a man who recalled having seen her. They say that Neptune, lord of the seas, violated her in the temple of Minerva. Jupiter’s daughter turned away, and hid her chaste eyes behind her aegis. So that it might not go unpunished, she changed the Gorgon’s hair to foul snakes” (Ovid 2000, Book IV: 753–803).

24. An article in *The Washington Post* recently explored this phenomenon: “Oklahoma State University professor John Foubert, who designed his school’s rape prevention program, asked a group of first-year fraternity brothers in a 2007 study whether they’d ever raped someone. They all said no. Foubert changed the phrasing, however, and 10 percent of first-year brothers reported they’d penetrated a woman against her permission. ‘They don’t see this behavior as rape, perhaps as a way to protect themselves, to not be responsible for their behavior if that happens,’ Foubert said. ‘It’s not just college students. You hear these beliefs in broader society’” (Paquette 2016).

25. O’Grady was a teacher and mentor to Ransick. Indeed, he produced *The Clearing* for O’Grady.

26. “Throughout much of U.S. history, the rape of Black women was widespread and institutionalized through economic and labor systems. Regardless of the perpetrators’ race, the legal system often failed to protect Black women from sexual violence. The Jezebel stereotype, which stigmatized Black women as promiscuous, was created to justify their rape. Black women developed a culture of silence and secrecy to cope with their sexual assault. Black women have a long history of resilience and anti-rape activism, which includes a sense of racial loyalty that encourages them to protect Black men from an unjust legal system” (West and Johnson 2013).

27. As O’Grady asserts in “Olympia’s Maid: Reclaiming Black Female Subjectivity,” “The black female’s body needs less to be rescued from the masculine ‘gaze’ than to be sprung from a historic script surrounding her with signification while at the same time, and not paradoxically, it erases her completely” (O’Grady 1994).

28. The Crossest Library at Bennington College generously offered to source these titles with both books from their collection and newly purchased copies. Thus, even after it ended, part of the project remains at Bennington College. To view the list of titles, please visit <http://www.utopiasnoplacenet/#library>.

29. Contributors to the crowdsourced library include Paige Bartels, Lindsay Benedict, Kitty Brazelton, Heather Bursch, Tobias Carroll, Christen Clifford, Cleopatra’s, Sara Clugage, Liz Deschenes, Abigail DeAtley, Lizzy DeVita, Emily Dunne, Siân Evans, JiaJia Fei, Laura Feinstein, Rachel Fershleiser, Angeline Gragasin, Aminata de Groot, Lauren van Haaften-Schick, Alec Hall, Sarah Harris, Susie Ibarra, Dina Janis, Julia Kaganskiy, Sherry Kramer, Molly Kurzius, Jen Liu, Jordan Lord, Mary Lum, Mary Mattingly, Lauren McCarthy, Melissa Mabey McLaughlin, Joanne McNeil, Catherine Morris, Jenn Northington, Lorraine O’Grady, Christine D’Onofrio, Liz Pelly, Sunita Prasad, Rosie Prata, Kate Purdie, Sue Rees, Isabel Roche, Chloe Rossetti, Zoe Salditch, President Mariko Silver, Meredyth Sparks, Emily Spivack, Ari Spool, Penelope Umbrico, Sam Vernon, Wendy Vogel, Anna Wainwright, Lyndsy Welgos, Liz White, Caroline Woolard, and Marina Zurkow.

30. In an e-mail to the author dated February 16, 2016, Christen Clifford wrote: “*Out From Under—female performance texts—edited by Lenora Champagne [in] 1991...* The first time I read Holly Hughes,

Karen Finley, Jessica Hagedorn. It was the first time I knew I could be angry about having been raped at 15. That I wasn't alone in my sense of the patriarchy being completely fucked up. I carried this book around like a talisman, and continue to hold it read it teach it."

31. Emily Spivak, in an e-mail to the author on March 4, 2016, asked about *Weetzie Bat* series by Francesca Lia Block: "Do you know them? They were pretty formative for me as the weirdo 14-year-old girl growing up in Wilmington, Delaware. I can vividly remember reading them and my head feeling like it was exploding (in the best possible, and hormonally joyous, way)."

32. Artist Caroline Woolard said, in an e-mail to the author dated February 20, 2016: "I choose *The Empowerment Manual: A Guide for Collaborative Groups* because Jen Abrams, co-founder of OurGoods.org with me, and long-time member of WOW Cafe Theater, the oldest women[s] and trans theater in the nation, taught me how we can find our own families in political and artistic community."

33. President of Bennington College, Mariko Silver, wrote in an e-mail to the author dated February 29, 2016: "I selected *The Bluest Eye* both because it is a remarkable book and Toni Morrison a most extraordinary author, but also because it was a watershed reading experience for me. When I was in sixth grade, we were given the first assignment I remember for which we were asked to select the topic. It was an extended book report (an introduction to the idea of writing something akin to the papers we would go on to write in middle and high school) and we were allowed to select a book not only from a designated list (though we were provided some options), but from the entire universe of fiction. I do not remember why I chose *The Bluest Eye*, but I believe I selected it from my parents' bookshelf. I do remember having to make a case with my teachers to be allowed to read it and to report on it—race, class, gender, abuse, rape, incest—almost every trigger warning applies, but none is anywhere near sufficient. When I did read the book, I struggled with it in every dimension. When I re-read the book as an adult I struggled with it, and found so much new in it. The book opened my eyes to a/our system of compounded oppression with women of color at the bottom. It provided my first glimpse of what I would later learn to call intersectionality."

34. The full list of events can be accessed on the project's website at <http://www.utopiaisnoplacenet/#events>.

35. A pop-up module is a three- to seven-week class on a topical subject, for example, "a class based on the attack at Charlie Hebdo, a class based on political organizations in Nepal (pre and post earthquake), a course centered on Gloria Steinem, and one about the Ferguson Report" (D'Arco 2015). The syllabus for our module can be accessed via the project website (<http://www.utopiaisnoplacenet/#praxis>).

36. Documentation of the closing reception party is accessible at <http://www.utopiaisnoplacenet/#closing>.

37. DEEP Aerobics (Death Electric Emo Protest Aerobics) was created by Miguel Gutierrez in 2011. On his website, he describes DEEP Aerobics as "one hour plus of the communal/political/conceptual/imaginational workout experience you always wanted but never could embarrass yourself enough to find or do in public. It is for anyone who has ever had any interest in combining the joie de vivre that is the vigorous bouncing of one's anatomical/spiritual/energetic molecules with the existential absurdity that is living in a world/country/economic system of injustice, war-mongering, and cultural ineptitude" (Gutierrez 2017).



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