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IT MATTERS WHAT WORDS MATTER WORLDS

HANNAH NELSON-TEUTSCH

The cluster of texts assembled here were imagined, crafted, and brought together as a collaborative writing project that emerged from the seminar titled *Words Matter Worlds: Activist Scholarship and Literary Praxis*, which I had the privilege to convene over the course of the 2021/22 winter semester as an offering of the American Studies department of the Julius-Maximilians-Universität Würzburg. The purpose of this seminar was to consider how scholarly writing practices in general, and literary and cultural studies in particular, can remake the world. We were guided in this work by Donna Haraway and her insistence that:

It matters what matters we use to think other matters with; it matters what stories we tell to tell other stories with; it matters what knots knot knots, what thoughts think thoughts, what descriptions describe descriptions, what ties tie ties. It matters what stories make worlds, what worlds make stories. (12)

And so, we began with the stories of ourselves. Taking cues from an exercise developed by Eugenia Zurovski, we introduced ourselves by replacing the question “where are you from” with “where do you know from” in order to situate our scholarly selves in bodies that are always already entangled and enmeshed.¹ This kind of storytelling,

1 “Where Do You Know From?: An Exercise in Placing Ourselves Together in the Classroom” developed by Eugenia Zurovski can be accessed online at <https://maifeminism.com/where-do-you-know-from-an-exercise-in-placing-ourselves-together-in-the-classroom/>. I am incredibly grateful for the care and energy that went

Katherine McKittrick suggests, is not simply “an act of disclosure”; it is “a collaborative [way] to enact and engender struggle” (7).

Struggling together, we have moved away from traditional academic reading and writing practices and towards what Fred Moten and Stefano Harney term *study* – “a mode of thinking with others separate from the thinking that the institution requires of you” (Halberstam qtd. in Moten and Harney 11). Academic writing is all-too-often governed by the “the thinking that the institution requires,” and no one form is more representative of the institutional demands of scholarly writing than citation. Undergraduate student writers in particular are obligated to think with specific sources and to cite those sources according to established, discipline-specific dictates. In that the aim of our *study* has been to reconceive of the forms and methods of scholarly writing, each and every one of the texts you will find here works to radically re-imagine citation as the practice of freedom.²

Moving along trails blazed by activist scholars in pursuit of an ethical citational politics, we came to know citation not as a way to validate our arguments or show off our research skills, but as a way of honoring what Sara Ahmed describes as “our debt to those who

into producing this resource, which was so fundamental to shaping our coming together as a seminar group.

2 The idea of citation as “the practice of freedom” originates – as does so much of what is good and true in this introduction – with bell hooks and her writing on education, which pairs beautifully with her writing on love, if you are so inclined.

came before; those who helped us find our way when the way was obscured because we deviated from the paths we were told to follow” (*Living a Feminist Life* 15-16). As a seminar group, we have been guided by many of the authors cited here in this introduction – not only Sara Ahmed and Katherine McKittrick, but also Donna Haraway, Fred Moten, Stefano Harney, bell hooks, and Max Liboiron. You will find these authors and their works recurring throughout this volume alongside the names of more personal influences. To cite these works again and again in different texts and contexts is not only to acknowledge our individual debts to the writers and writing that have helped us to find our way, but also to surface the pathways that knowledge can take, from the syllabus into conversation, onto the page, and then from hand to hand. Citation is always a form of community-building.

The politics of citation are the politics of solidarity, kinship, and community. To situate an author and a text within such vast and entangled networks – to truly honor the connections that emerge by way of citation – is not only a political act, but a poetic one. Citation is, after all, a textual practice, and as it emerges on the page it finds power in its form. Do not be alarmed if you encounter within this volume new and unfamiliar citation styles – or citation styles that do not look like citation styles at all. The riot of forms that emerge here – “not to master knowing and centralize our knowingness, but to share how we know” (McKittrick 17) – reflect the influences of diverse academic disciplines, expansive reading practices, and personal preferences.³ Ultimately, our commitment to ethical citational practices is a commitment to *undisciplining* academic reading and writing. Undisciplining academic reading and writing isn't easy – this is *sweaty* work, in the parlance of Sara Ahmed, in that it is “generated by the practical experience of coming up against a world, or the practical experience of trying to transform a world” (*Living a Feminist Life* 13-14). The work of trying to transform the world through writing inevitably produces writing that looks and feels different than the standard academic essay. Sweaty writing is not rigid and formulaic; sweaty writing is intimate, lively, and raw. This volume is a home for sweaty writing – for undergraduate forays into literary and cultural studies that try to tell what Ahmed describes as the whole story:

The whole story can be a story of crashing through. There is crashing in the story, wave after wave that I can hear, that transmit something, something difficult, painful, traumatic. We might need a space to tell that story, the whole story, the story of a complaint, a space that is safe because we know how it can sound, how we can sound... (*Complaint!* 17).

3 I am guided in my thinking on citational politics not only by Ahmed's *Living a Feminist Life* (2017) and McKittrick's *Dear Science* (2021), but also by the *Citation Practices Challenge* organized by Eve Tuck, K. Wayne Yang, and Rubén Gaztambide-Fernández and the *Cite Black Women Collective* initiated by Christen A. Smith. In bringing citational politics into the classroom, I have been grateful for the open-access resource *Teaching Citational Practice* edited by Diana Newby and Cat Lambert and available online at <https://tcp.library.columbia.edu>.

This introduction is an invitation to the scene of crash; where, in the wreckage of the undisciplining we have undertaken, our sweaty writing emerges as a “lifeline” (Ahmed *Living a Feminist Life* 12). The poetry, essays, photography, paintings, memoirs, and guides you will find here have been crafted for you to take hold of by sixteen students who chose to commit to this collaborative writing project for nearly a full year rather than simply handing in term papers. This book is an act of radical solidarity – of love; this book is the material manifestation of what Max Liboiron calls “an ethic of gratitude, acknowledgement, and reciprocity” (viii). In the spirit of reciprocity, this book is also invitation to make kin with us, as Donna Haraway might say – to share our stories, to read and write your own, and to join us in the work of remaking the world.

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P O E T R Y

SERENA

AGBOKHAN

Serena (*2001) identifies as a black girl/person. She studies English and Ethnomusicology for her bachelor degree at the Julius-Maximilians-Universität Würzburg. Her motivation for nearly anything she does comes from the injustice she sees in the world and the equality she wants to see. Talking to people she does not know well does not come easy to her, but she loves sharing her voice through her writing.

MY VISION, MY VERSION

I
I am
I am writing

Mine
My Mind
Mine
My experience
Mine
My thoughts

I am writing with my mind
I am writing with my experience
I am writing with my thoughts

I
I is
I is Black
I is female
I is

I am writing as a Black female

I am the I
I am the eye
I am the eye through which I see the world
I am the eye who writes this text
I am the eye who reads other texts

We all write with our own minds. Every one of us does that. We all have different experiences. We all have different thoughts. How are we supposed to write without making ourselves visible, when what we write comes from our vision and is our version of reality. Or our version of whatever it is that we are analysing, discussing, or writing about?

I find these are two distinguishing aspects of my identity that come to everything that I do and accompany me to everywhere I go. How should I shed that in a text I am writing?

There is no way to argue with that. Even when you say I am writing as an academic as a scholar, I am still a Black female academic, a Black¹ female scholar.

My vision, my version.

¹ I am writing "Black" with a capital B because it is a self-imposed term and refers to racism experiences. This is something I have seen in books e.g. by Gianni Jovanovic (Jovanovic, Gianni., Alashe, Oyindamola. *Ich, Kind der kleinen Mehrheit*. Berlin: Aufbau Verlage GmbH und Co. KG, 2022) and Alice Hasters and found very useful. It is also explained in a glossary on the German amnesty international web page.

I am here
Physically and mentally working on this
text

I cannot draw myself back

I am

I will always see the world as a Black

Female

Through my mind

Through my experience

Through my thoughts

I cannot extract myself

I am individual

Individually thinking

No one else can see the world through my eye

No one else can be my eye

No one else can be my I

Why should I extract I

The cool thing is, in my minor I am supposed to write myself into my work. It is important who I am because we want to know through which lenses the world is seen in my work. In my opinion, we should always respect that because it also leads us straight to our gazes. It amplifies who is writing and when we start writing about other cultures and the like especially, we see that we may not be the experts and that this is just us writing this. Without the I it seems like a universal truth, with the I, it is, our version of it. As I see it, it makes our work more authentic and gives it a truth that can otherwise not be sustained, because there never is only one way, one version of anything.

DEEP INSIDE

Inserted
Inside me
A pain
Too deep
To understand

I feel that there is a pain rooted inside me coming from all the experiences I had to make

Ubiquitous
The feeling
Something is wrong
With me
I don't belong

I still get this feeling a lot but only in hindsight do I realise that for years this feeling was constantly there. I was more aware of my Blackness and others *whiteness* than I was of anything else. But it was also shown to me on a daily basis, look, you are different, and you do not belong here. I was told almost these exact words.

Everlasting
The fear
What happens
Is my fault
By being different

By "being different" I mean not fitting into the image of what is normal in a *white*¹ society. More precisely, I mean being Black.²

Planted
In a girl
No older
Than six years
Maybe younger

It started when I came to school at the latest. I've experienced racism before, but only in a way that I didn't even identify as racism at first. In school it was different. It was obvious.

Planted
The knowledge
Of difference
Inequality and
Inferiority

I thought hard about using the term inferiority. I am not inferior. But it is how I am and was often seen. So, with the knowledge of inferiority, I rather mean the knowledge that people see me as inferior.

Overshadowing
Every move
Every interaction
A constant awareness
Constant suspicion

Today when I talk to somebody, I go over the conversation over and over again, trying to identify anything racist (or also sexist) that might have been said, just to know how to talk to the person the next time.

1 I am writing the term "*white*" in italics. I have seen authors like Tupoka Ogette and Gianni Jovanovic (18) do it and find it a fitting way to mark that it refers to a dominant and privileged position. I also found this, along with an explanation in a glossary on the amnesty international web page.

2 Again I am writing "Black" with a capital B, see footnote 1, page 6.

Eventually
The realisation
May sink in
It's not her
It's not justice

Later
The truth
May come
To her
And make her fight

But
Damage is done
Never to go away
And she
Will never heal

Untouchable
The trust
Always wary
Forever lost
The levity

That was mind-blowing, honestly. I guess I was somewhere in my teens when I first realised that I was not worthless or worth less than others because of my skin colour.

One of my best friends today said this to me and it took a few years for me to figure out that she was right. Ever since then I am fighting for my own rights and for those of my brothers and sisters.

Nevertheless, I will always carry the experiences with me, I am still having to deal with racism from people I meet now, and it will forever be burned inside me.

This is also why it takes me a long time to warm up to people. I have to know who they are how they are and how they think before I can open up and spilling this all out here is terrifying, because I know it makes me vulnerable. Telling about experiences with racism is painful. And it gets worse, every time I am not heard.³ I carry this all with me, wherever I go, and it makes everything a little harder.

That I am explaining everything here actually also has to do with the very topic I am writing about. Growing up, I learned to always explain exactly what I mean because if people do not understand what I am saying or they understand it differently than I meant it, I could reinforce racist structures and therefore hurt my own brothers and sisters. So, I rather spell it out than take the risk, even if I get an annoyed reaction every now and again.

³ I am thinking about Sara Ahmed's *COMPALINT!* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2021) as I write this. Talking about difficult issues, like experiences with racism are often heard as complaint. Ahmed makes the point that "to be heard as complaining is not to be heard" (1). When we are heard as complaining we are seen as difficult, annoying, or simply not worth the time, while what we really want to do is raise awareness for the problems that concern us all. The knowledge that what we are saying is not heard, that we are not taken seriously reinforces the pain, that was implanted in the first place.

C O L L A B O R A T I O N

ANNA
SANDIG

Anna (she/her) is a student of English and American Studies & Political and Social Studies at the Julius-Maximilians-Universität Würzburg with a special interest in Literary and Political Studies.

COMMUNAL WRITING PROJECT

Anna (she/her) and Cathrin (she/her)

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The syllabus for this seminar ("Worlds Matter Worlds: Activist Scholarship and Literary Praxis") and the document titled "Where do you know from?" by Hannah Nelson-Teutsch (she/her) helped me structure my ideas and made the purpose of our reading and writing clearer. The handout especially prompted me to compile this very section "Bibliography & Other Sources" in this fashion, and to use footnotes for citations, which here I use to provide more extensive information on the process of writing (see Liboiron, idea of referring to Liboiron's use of footnotes adopted from Cathrin Lüderitz's writing project on Notion). This way, the handout gave insights into what activist writing can look like. I also cite my personal experiences of reading and writing as I am inspired by talks and discussions in our seminar group and with friends and family, who also kept my spirits up during this semester. Moreover, my fellow students' rich and diverse writing, shared via the platform *Notion*, encouraged me to develop my writing. I am especially grateful for the collaborative writing I did with Cathrin Lüderitz (she/her), who I thank for taking the time to contribute to and continue my text in such a meaningful way. I also appreciate and draw inspiration from the group meetings on *Zoom*, and I received great help from my friend Amalia (she/her), who has been living with me during the writing process, and gave me feedback and ideas. I am deeply appreciative of her attentiveness to giving me time and space for writing in our shared room.

BRAINSTORMING FOR WRITING PROJECT (03 APR. 2022, ROME)¹

WRITING

Discomfort, excitement, inspiration, control, loss, ways, potential, fresh, bleak, cool, bold, drawn, pulled, ghosted, bragging, blunt, rash, fine, nights, wrongs.

READING

Comfort, warmth, company, space, intimacy, closeness, memories, discomfort, pulled in
(Cathrin, she/her)

Calm, bright, bed, feet, touch, eyes, strain, yawns, dry, smart, alone, vintage, transcend, keep, closed, lines, nice, loose, leave, distract, fantasize, reign, long, warm.

INITIAL DRAFT

Comfortable I lie in bed
My feet up on the pregnancy pillow
The hardcover stands erect on my lap
With visible letters, large and steady
Reading is easy
It goes without saying that reading like that is pleasure
For me it is not hard to read like that
Even though eyes strain and the pain stings
The same spot between neck and shoulder, on the left, but I read on

¹ These are our associations with personal experiences of writing and reading that I wrote down to collect ideas before starting to write the first draft of the poem, with Cathrin sending me hers via e-mail when finalizing our work.

And come back to the stories that are so fresh and make forget the pain
Of my swollen wrinkly feet
I need a shower but not yet because I need time to finish
The thought
Before I must return to my own writing
Which I don't crave, I'd rather stay here
Comfortably within the writing of someone else.

FINAL DRAFT

Reading, located, felt²

My feet ~~hang~~³ dangle loosely ~~over~~ above the floor
In the reading club room
The chair is too high and with my spine bent
My body takes on the form of a lamp
With each time I put my face close to the slippery book
My shadow ~~lies on~~ ~~drowns~~ stretches out on the page and I tighten
my sweaty grip on it
With editorial ~~paranoid~~ eyes⁴ targeting
the 'right', "right", « right », *right* quote⁵
But browsing
I get hinged on a different word and circle it
Cancelling out the noise of debate
~~Hold~~ Moving unsteadily the thin giveaway pen
As my fingernails ~~do~~ dig into my own skin

² Thank you, Cathrin, for this thoughtful title (E-Mail communication with Cathrin, 19 Apr. 2022).

³ Based on Cathrin's positive response on keeping my changes within the poem, specifically her feedback that this makes the writing more "vulnerable" and "intimate" (Cathrin, Notion, 12 Apr. 2022), I decided to leave those changes of my poem visible.

⁴ The term and concept of 'paranoid reading' from Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's writing *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (2003) inspired my word choice here and my associations with this term, I believe, are reflected in this poem more generally.

⁵ In keeping traces of the alterations I made, I also ended up including experiences of insecurity when citing works correctly in an academic context, which was also a central topic of our seminar discussions I have been thinking about.

I am scribbling in the margins with fading ink and sometimes finishing
the word
Accidentally
On a different page.

Time to finish
The thought
Before I must return to my own writing
Which I don't crave, I'd rather stay here
Comfortably within the writing of someone else.⁷

I have read sitting in bed next to love,
his mind on a text different from mine
both of us sustaining the silence
dwelling in the presence of each other's body
finding comfort outside of pages
for an afternoon in-between schedules.

By Cathrin (she/her) & Anna (she/her)
Garamond, 12 pt., 520 words (excluding footnotes)

One morning snuck in through the window in grey light,
woke me permanently and had me half-sit against the wall,
uncomfortably angled, the covers too warm and the room too cold,
one hand in his hair and one in Audre Lorde's words
for hours.

Comfortable, I lie in bed
My feet up on the pregnancy pillow
The hardcover stands erect on my lap
With visible letters, large and steady
Reading is easy
It goes without saying that reading like that is pleasure
For me it is not hard to read like that
Even though eyes strain and the pain⁶ stings
The same spot between neck and shoulder, on the left, but I read on
And come back to the stories that are so fresh and ~~make~~ *help* forget
the pain
Of my swollen wrinkly feet
~~I need a shower but~~ Not yet getting up because
I need.

6 The reading of Trevis Chi Wing Lau's text "The Crip Poetics of Pain" (2020) within the context of this seminar inspired me to include the topic of pain in this poem.

7 Thanks to the positive feedback by Cathrin and Amalia, who both said they related to those last lines, I chose to swap the first and last part of the poem to finish off with this ending.

P O E T R Y

THEA

H A A S

Thea Haas is studying for a teaching position at the Julius-Maximilians-Universität Würzburg with a focus on Middle School Didactics, History, German, and Music and Educational Sciences.

i sometimes think who

do i want to be i want

to be like the people

i like

i like people who

know themselves

challenge the status quo

smile at babies on planes

practice patience

give extra long hugs

do hard things

feel comfortable doing nothing

help people carry their groceries

are unafraid of cancellation

find joy in simple pleasures

love despite hate

forgive

call their grandparents

give without discrimination

allow grace

fight for the voiceless

speak their truth



ask questions

admit when they are wrong

relish being open minded and open hearted

know when to stand firm and when to let go

E S S A Y

FRANCESCA

VALENTIN

Francesca Valentin is a young wannabe journalist, studying for a bachelors degree at the Julius-Maximilians-Universität Würzburg with a focus on Social and Cultural Studies, especially popular culture and social inequality.

On Active In- tolerance, or How Shame Can Change the world

“You mustn’t take it all so seriously”, my friend says, while taking a sip of her coffee. I just told her about an incident at work. At that time, I worked at a grocery shop and sometimes a nice lady would come in and buy food for her cats. We always chatted a little bit about the weather, about her job and were friendly with one another. One day she came as usual around 4 pm to pay her groceries, and while looking for change, she said “Give me a second, I might have some Red Indians left”. At first, I was confused since I had never heard the loaded term “Red Indian” in connection with money. But then it hit me – she calls the change that, because of their bronze color. That lady was one of the people, who are upholding everyday racism, probably without even realizing it. She used that racist term based on phenotypical stereotypes and thus is part in perpetuating discrimination. You know the feeling, when you get really mad at something, and all the anger accumulates in a lump in your throat, and you can’t speak? In that moment, I felt that. My hands were shaking, and suddenly I got so angry. I couldn’t believe that such a nice little women would be so naively discriminating! Honestly, I was disappointed. It made me realize again, that awareness on discriminating language is something that seems to be restricted to my community, to my “bubble.”¹ It is still something that too many people don’t understand. You never know who is practicing everyday racism, some without even knowing. I wanted to explain to the woman why this saying was racist, discriminating and sustains wrong stereotypes, so I told her. She just shrugged and said “I don’t see why this is racist. People just say that. Doesn’t mean I hate Red Indians.” And then she left the shop, and me speechless. For the rest of the shift, I was internally furious and thought about what I could have said differently, to make her understand the problem underlying this “phrase people just say”. What I could have said to make her at least reflect on her words. The world we live in is constructed upon language; it is shaped by language. The power of it should never be underestimated. By upholding racist sayings like the woman at my workplace did, or making jokes about minorities, having questionable speech patterns or by not questioning discriminating terms in general, we tolerate the values beneath our language. We sustain the system that brought this language into our use, and with people engaging in such language discourses in the everyday, discrimination and othering is being normalized as an integral part of our society, and thus becomes even harder to fight. I believe that if people would be more aware about the language they use and of what their words mean, we could redefine the social world we live in into a more diverse and open space for everyone, where everybody feels comfortable and heard. Often, people don’t realize that their words are hurting others or representing patriarchal and racist values. There have been numerous situations in which small but very loaded sentences or jokes have been made and just slipped through, even though it made me or other people I know uncomfortable. It is our right to come out and stand against it. To tell that person that such

¹ I hate that word. It makes it seem like there is only a small number of people with sane minds in our society. But people would not hate the “bubble” so much, if it didn’t have a certain force behind it, so...

things are not to be tolerated anymore. Why? Because our society is changing, and so does our language.

"Some people will never get it – they don't want to. Don't waste your energy", my friend said. But I want people to get it – it's not that hard to reflect on the words I am using, so why can't other people do it as well?² If we just accept that some people are willing to not learn and reflect at any cost, we have lost the opportunity to grow as a whole.

I hate to see anonymous people on social media sustain everyday racial and gendered discrimination, I hate to see people discussing whether political correctness is really needed or not. I cannot hear a word about gendered language anymore, I am just sick of it. I don't see social justice happening without educating individuals on intolerating behavior, and lecturing them on why certain speech patterns, jokes, sayings, and actions are not to be tolerated anymore. There is no social justice if we don't recognize our roles in this rigged patriarchal and racist system. Social justice, for me, begins with the individual. That means being aware of the power of language, being aware of one's own values and seeing the moral importance in solidarity.

To be fair, my friend was right about one thing; lecturing people about discriminatory behavior can at times feel like a waste of time, especially on the internet. Some people just want to be mad at the world and screaming it into an anonymous void at strangers might help them but hurts many more. The hurt, though, is anonymous as well, and with patriarchy being the system that rules our society, the people who are in charge, the people who could actually change something, are not listening to the minorities being discriminated and attacked. Solidarity is a foreign term, it seems.

But in real life, people aren't anonymous. There is power within face-to-face interaction. When I am talking to somebody, I can see their faces, their eyes, I can hear their voice, acknowledge their movements – we are literally exposed to one another. Words become even more significant when they are coming at you directly. I learned that very early in my life, just when I was starting to figure out who I want to be as a person. Me and my friends were at a baseball game, and a girl my age walked by and looked what white men would call "a hot sweep". I was kind of jealous of her looks and made a deeply misogynistic statement about her. As soon as the words were out, I knew I had gone too far, and got roasted for it immediately. I remember feeling ashamed of myself. Not only did I embarrass myself in public since strangers sitting around me commented on my language. But also, and that is way more important, I was unfair to someone I didn't know, based on values I didn't even know I inherited. And then I started to look inside and see if there have been more situations in which I was being hateful towards women, without having a reason other than the instructed need to "compare, contrast, abject" – a function, that is burned firmly into our brains, as patriarchy wants us to. I was

² It is a generational, societal, and educational thing - I know that. Still, I'm annoyed by it.

ashamed of what this case of misogyny could say about me as a person, as well as about my values. But this shame was also an important lesson for me. It made me realize not only my wrongdoing and the questionable values within myself, but it also showed me firsthand that words really do have power. My words had the power to create a reality I didn't even like, and the words of my friends and strangers around me motivated me to change my behavior. I needed to be more aware of influential force of language and reflect the possible outcomes of my actions.

Our society is burdened with many toxic values and norms that are based on othering, on creating a world in which some people are categorized as foreign, and some are not. All those who are not white and preferably male and heterosexual face challenges every day and are exposed to discrimination of all kinds: racism, sexism, ableism, transphobia, and so on. We are obligated to confront such behavior – in others as well as in ourselves. I am convinced, that if we don't become aware of discriminating behavior within ourselves first, we will always be part of the problem.

The key word that I am speaking of here is agency. As I am the agent of my actions³ everyone else is responsible for their actions and outcomes as well. In general, we are accountable for constructing our social life, and with that, the social rules, and norms we (un)consciously follow. Why not actively appeal to the agency of the people around me, then? And I am not only speaking of family members or friends. I am talking of strangers on the street, professors, colleagues, customers, doctors – simply everyone. By confronting someone and telling them that their behavior or language upholds racist, sexist, transphobic values and norms, I am expressing agency. I consider us⁴ responsible for showing people that certain behaviors and ways of thinking are no longer to be tolerated. In my opinion, we thereby contribute to the education of the individual in some way, even if the person then leaves the conversation shaking his or her head – we have shown this person a barrier that he or she may not have perceived before or did not want to see. Every time we make a wave, some person is touched, no matter how strong or weak the wave reaches them. And ideally, after that, the person thinks about why a stranger would call them sexist on the open street and changes their behavior. Or at least thinks about why someone might react the way I do in such situations. But in every way, we can be sure that this person is embarrassed of being confronted and feels ashamed in some way or another.

Many queer theoretical studies have focused on shame as a central

³ And we learned that our individual actions can change the social spaces around us...

⁴ "us" in terms of "everyone who is affected by discrimination, everyone who is against social injustice and for equality, everyone who is an ally, and everyone that just sees the rigidity of this world and has had enough of it", which should be everyone living in our society but sadly that isn't the case, so we have to be especially loud.

factor in othering and subjugating practices (e.g., Judith Butler 1997) while some – such as Eve K. Sedgwick – insist that it would be mistaken to simply regard shame as a ‘toxic’ and ideally divested part of identity. Sedgwick argues that rather than distancing itself from shame, queer theory should aim for “recognizing shame as ‘integral to and residual in the process by which identity itself is formed” (Sedgwick 2003, p. 63-64). She and her colleagues suggest that shame holds anti-normative potential for political solidarity and protest, as it marks the position of exclusion and insist on shame’s potential for reminding us of our obligation to ethical responsibility (see Halperin and Traub 2009).

For example, taking a stand against racists online seems less effective and rather divides the fronts, because the effect of shame does not work online. If I am being bombarded with hateful comments on social media about a specific action of mine by anonymous users, I would get angry and possibly hurt – but not necessarily ashamed, nor would I feel the need to change. I could just turn off my cell phone, my laptop, my TV and keep the haters away. I could also easily join a different online community that matches my opinions, and thus keeping myself from reflection and possibly change. Online discrimination and hating are easier because no one sees your face while doing it. Because no one knows who you really are, and your reputation is not necessarily damaged in real life. But if I am reprimanded for my behavior in real life, on the street, at work, or at school, the anonymity falls away and I am mercilessly exposed to the person towards me. Shame is much more likely to occur here, because one can no longer hide behind the anonymous I. At first, this feeling of shame as motivation to think about one’s behavior may not be of moral origin, but simply because the individual feels the need to belong to a crowd. Criticism that is said directly to one’s face with words hurts much more and really stimulates the fear of exclusion, and consequently shame. Just like I felt ashamed at the baseball game that people might think worse of me, that others might point the finger at me and actively condemn me for my behavior, I would have changed my behavior simply to fit in with the crowd again, even if I hadn’t had no moral conscience. Shame holds the fear of exclusion, of standing out and alone, and if the right people⁵ are actively intolerant of patriarchal and colonial racist values and their manifestations for the right reasons,⁶ you can trigger shame in even the whitest and oldest of men, and in the best cases achieve solidarity, or at least some form of moral reflection. At worst, a racist has been called to account on the open street, and the very attention this brings to passersby sends a message: discriminatory behavior is being actively intolerated. The experience of shame highlights the subject as dependent upon recognition from others and therefore as vulnerable to the threat of social expulsion (Sedgwick 2003, p.35-37). As such, shame is connected to the individual’s sense of

dignity and integrity. It reminds us of our relationality. Shame holds the potential for establishing solidarity with other shamed subjects and for thinking of identity in terms of becoming and transformation. Or as psychologist Silvan Tomkins (1995) put it:

The moment of shame is a moment of self-reflection through the social gaze. Shame marks the complex experience of the discomfort of the excluding gaze of others and the fear of the disappearance of the social gaze altogether: that is, the experience of becoming so radically an Other that there is no longer a gaze to meet.

Pointing out the wrong, in people and in society, making someone uncomfortable or making them reflect their actions for me is activism in the everyday. When I see something that is not right, hear a racist joke or see someone acting on toxic beliefs – I tell them, I call them out, I point my finger and explain why it needs to stop. This makes me be perceived as an annoying bitch sometimes, but that means I am stepping on someone’s toes – which is necessary, otherwise they might not realize that they’re dance is outdated. Sometimes one needs to complain, to be loud, to be annoying, to be the problem in order to make people see their wrongdoing in the first place. My friend group mocks me for being a “social justice warrior” sometimes – Sara Ahmed calls it “Feminist Killjoy”. Her figure of the killjoy emerges as a contrast to the expected affective scripts imposed on society by oppressive social and political norms. By giving the feminist killjoy within us the space to grow stronger and louder, I am firmly convinced that we can make other people see the oppressive and toxic values underlying our social norms and habits, and sometime change this society for a better.

Activism is different for everyone. Cultivating shame in others by actively intolerating behavior based on toxic values that have shaped our society and minds for too long, is one form of it. By being aware and courageous, by being open and upfront, we are standing in for ourselves, and the rights of people that are not being defended politically. It is our generation, our “bubble” that has the power to change. Don’t be afraid to speak up, don’t be afraid to be an ally, don’t be afraid to be the feminist killjoy that shakes up the family dinner. Social change happens within society, and society begins with the individual. We are the feminist killjoys of today, fighting for a better tomorrow. Practicing agency, awareness and active intolerance against oppressive norms and values need to start here – within us, within you.

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Halperin, David, and Traub, Valerie. [eds.]. *Gay Shame*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009.

5 aware people, open people, tolerant people, solidary people, etc.

6 reasons like social justice, equality, fairness, ending patriarchy, pursuing a society that is aware of their problems and underlying norms

P O E T R Y
P H O T O G R A P H Y
E S S A Y

ANNIKA
GASTEIGER
&
ANNA
VON KELLER

Annika Gasteiger is studying to become a primary school teacher at the JMU Würzburg with a major in English, and German, Mathematics and Music as minors. She is interested in the art of photography and loves to read poems.

Anna v. Keller studies primary school teaching at the JMU Würzburg. She focuses on teaching English in primary schools alongside German, Maths, and Physical Education. Although she prefers to work practically in schools, literature is a passion.

PEOPLE CONNECT TO PEOPLE: HOW FRIENDSHIP SUPPORTS THE RELATIONS PEOPLE HAVE WITH EACH OTHER

Annika Gasteiger & Anna von Keller

Le Guin (2014) praises “the art of words” and Haraway (2016) states that “it matters what stories make worlds, what worlds make stories”. Combining both, this writing project centers the socially valued topic of friendship by using words in different ways.

As Haraway (2016) claims that “we must change the story; the story must change”, friendship can be understood as the story that plays a role in people’s everyday life. The statement centers the convertibility of friendship and hence, how changes in it can alter its value. Many relationships can be called “friendship” in some kind of ways: there are lifelong ones but also shorter ones, maybe just over a couple of months or just for an evening. Friendships can be worth everything but can also disappoint in hurtful ways. It goes hand in hand with the belief that friendship cannot be taken for granted.

In order to create a change – and hence, be an activist scholarship – we produced some writing that includes an important message in a more informal setting. The poems and monologue presented are forms of creative writing, which are far away from rules and guidelines that are set by academic institutions. Our belief is that creative writing practices rise more attention to the public than purely academic writings do. The result of our creative writing process extends the views on friendship by a more personal view.

Our writing process was accompanied by Rupi Kaur’s poems in her book *Milk and Honey* (2015). We were impressed by the way she presents her poems. She uses sketches drawn with only a few black lines, a very simple font, and doesn’t regard grammatical rules. She breaks up sentences and thoughts in a way that the reader reflects on her work in a complex way.

We also liked the way she writes about relationships – presumably love relations – and how she expresses her feelings and past experiences in a very personal way. We especially liked the poem that talks about apologizing for judging people because of their appearance, in which she then goes on to appreciating their inner values. We felt like it is really about an epiphany moment in the author's life as she realizes how important it is to accept and love people for who they are. Our second companion text is a poem in which she speaks about her relationship with herself. Rupi Kaur thinks about how she

wants to take time to be on her own and enjoy these moments with herself, as she's always evolving. The fact that she reinforces that we also keep a relationship to ourselves made this poem a text we wanted to use for our project.

Hence, the layout of Kaur's work has been implemented into our project "People connect to People: How friendship supports the relations people have with each other", and the content of Annika's poems has shifted towards a more friendship orientated direction.

POETRY AND PHOTOGRAPHY

Annika Gasteiger



never felt so longing for
diving away to forget
to forgive all pain
and be the moment in it whole

when faces meet in streets of rush
to swap and build new memories
troubled to talk and wind to go
for all of it be shortly still



we will encounter changes
doesn't matter when
don't care where you are and what
you have
as long as we'll find back together



it goes away too fast
fractions of a lifetime
filling you in with all my love
to give you the best of things
that I never had





simply pause to bother and ponder
mind me listening to you
for all the time you need
cause i care more than you could
ever know



finding time to spend together
in this world of pressure and haste
forget about it all with me
recharge and fill your energy



tough times
rough times
sometimes there's no one around
leaving me to myself-
but it doesn't scare me
cause i am comfortable
being on my own

you're my partner
you're my partner in crime
in love and in sad times
in dreariness and ease
you're my all
and everything



where it will find us is unsure
certain is the feeling when it's there
but a question on my mind-
will it end or will it stay?



finding our way through life
since tiny feet and tiny hands
minds led by creativity and
curiosity
best friends come and go-
still you are my family





meeting you again
meeting you again after all these
years
gone different paths
different circle of friends
didn't speak for months
but still feels like we've never been
apart



isn't it precious?
worth it or not
to hold on together
in a blister of life



being young and free of fear
still caged and being instructed
can i not begin to live
so that i am free to be myself?

MERGING THOUGHTS AND QUOTES ON FRIENDSHIP

Anna von Keller

This writing is a mixture of personal thoughts and quotes that derive from different authors. When putting down my own thoughts, I found it affirming to connect to other people's work. As you read through my writing, the numbers in brackets refer to the corresponding quote on pages 28-29.

Sometimes I take friendships as self-evident. I just think that it is normal to have friends around me to whom I can talk to and ask for help whenever I need it. It feels like something everyone has (1). Thinking about this topic any further, I realize that it is definitely not self-evident (2). It is not enough to just be friendly to other people, a friend is someone I have a special connection with (3).

I did have the situation in the past where I thought I made friends with a new person. We met on a party, had a great time and I had a feeling that there is a special connection. We had similar beliefs, laughed about the same things and were happy to have meet each other (4). Sometimes we were looking at the same things and didn't have to say anything to each other, but still thought the same (5). We always had a great time together, even spent a holiday together. We had the best time ever and made so many good memories (6). A few months later, I had to leave the town because I was off to university. She stayed behind. During the first weeks, we phoned each other lots and all over sudden, we lost contact somehow. The time periods of catching up with each other got longer and longer and at some point, I didn't know where she was, how she was and what she was up to. I was sad, tried to reach her but she didn't reply. It took ages to hear from her. After trying over and over again, I had to give up. I normally don't give up, but I realized that it obviously must only be me who wants to fight for this friendship. I asked myself a lot of questions: What happened to our friendship? Is she still a friend? Was I a bad friend? I never got answer to the questions. But that's alright. As time passes, I'm getting over it. Because I made new friends (7).

To be forced to make new friends is arduous. I was very fortunate to not be forced. Nearly the same thing happened as I experienced with my old friend (I'm not sure if I should still call her a friend, but I'll just go with it.). At university, I meet a new friend. It didn't take much time until we realized that we have a special connection. Although

being through lots of ups and downs, we always supported each other (8). Most importantly, we made each other grow. We accepted each other's aspirations. The support to each other was unlimited. It is great to have someone who accepts you as the person you are and helps you to achieve your goals. There is nothing we couldn't get through together and I knew, when being together, we are unstoppable (9). And that feels so good.

I came across the following quote recently:

I was always discomfited whenever I accompanied friends to hospitals, or emergency rooms, at having to answer the question of the doctor, "Who are you?" with the words, "A friend." It sounded so flimsy—so infinitely weaker than "His brother," "His cousin," "His brother-in-law." It sounded like a euphemism; a word that did not, could not, convey what our bond really was. (Holleran 1996)

Thinking about the girl I have a special friendship with, this quote made me think a lot. What does friendship mean? What value does it have? How would I feel in such situation?

I imagined myself at a hospital with my friend, her being injured. When arriving at the hospital, I would have to hand my injured friend over to the doctors. I would be worried, scared, screwed. And at some point, they will ask me, whether I am a relative or not. I am not, I am just a friend. Should I really say that? Just a friend? We're not just friends. Our friendship is a lot more than she will ever have with her real relatives. This thought made me worry. It showed me that the value of friendship must be restricted. I thought there was no restriction to our friendship. Nothing that can break our connection. Nothing but the law. At the hospital, I therefore wouldn't get any news on my friend's health condition. Although this makes me worry even more, I personally know that there is nothing that can break our relationship. We've made lots of memories, have plans for the future and are loyal companions to one another (10).

1) "People are social beings. They need friendship: People who empathize, listen, or have fun together." (Chester 2015)

2) "Friendship takes time and energy if it's going to work. You can luck into something great, but it doesn't last if you don't give it proper appreciation. Friendship can be so comfortable, but nurture it – don't take it for granted." (White 2012)

3) "It's not enough to be friendly. You have to be a friend." (Palacio 2014)

4) "Friendship... is born at the moment one man says to another "What! You too? I thought that no one but myself..." (Lewis 2012)

5) "Not a word passes between us, not because we have nothing to say, but because we don't have to say anything." (Hosseini 2013)

"The language of Friendship is not words, but meanings."
(Thoreu 2018)

6) "It is love and friendship, the sanctity and celebration of our relationships, that not only support a good life, but create one. Through friendships, we spark and inspire one another's ambitions."
(Stegner 1987)

7) "Wherever life takes us, at times we find ourselves without a support system and needing to make friends all over again. Some of us are in recovery and realize we really need to form new, healthier friendships." (Green 2009)

8) "Letting your friends know you take their problems and concerns seriously and being willing to open up to them as well is important. Nothing demonstrates trustworthiness more than trusting someone else." (Garfield 2016)

9) "Friendship is unnecessary, like philosophy, like art.... It has no survival value; rather it is one of those things which give value to survival." (Lewis 2012)

10) "A good friend is a connection to life – a tie to the past, a road to the future, the key to sanity in a totally insane world." (Wyse 1995)

POEMS AS A REPLY

Anna von Keller

"I feel that my friendships have become more complex and more demanding the older I become. I love that your topic considers friendship to others as well as yourself, because I believe these two are very much linked. I am still figuring out who I am in my friendships, and friendships, to me, are important for self-reflection and personal growth. Today, I believe that I expect more from my friends, but also from myself as a friend. I used to think of friendship in terms of

how close you are with someone, i.e., how many times a week you see each other, but I have come to realize that deep friendships are also about dealing with boundaries and finding a good balance between giving and receiving. A good friendship for me is one where we also mutually respect and value each other and are also considerate of each other's time, even when we need something.

On the other hand, I have come to see my friends in a more holistic light and in their different roles, not just the "friend-part" that relates to me, which is often interesting and has been really inspiring. I can admire my friends for how great they do at their new job, how kindly they speak to others, how they deal with conflicts in their relationship or how they stand up for themselves. There are so many ways you can learn from friendships if you are open to really getting to know someone." – Anna Sandig

friendship
to me and to others
always honest
never constrained

giving and receiving
balanced
fun and severity
combined

appreciating and supporting
companion
expectations allowed
disappointment forbidden

"This afternoon I have met a friend of mine who I have not seen in while even though we both live in Würzburg. For like the first hour we talked about what happened the last months but it was no easy conversation where you feel like you want to share a lot and do not even know where to start. It was rather exhausting not to let silence arise. It was not funny, interesting or pleasant but rather slow and shallow and all the reactions to each other's stories merely empty phrases as

we both were thinking about the awkwardness of the situation at the same time. We talked about how people and some close friendships have changed lately and agreed, that it is okay to grow apart but than returned to gossip (which we know that both do not feel comfortable with) to keep our chat going. Suddenly she interrupted me to ask, what my intention behind our meeting was. If I want to keep this friendship or if it is just meeting each other to stay friends as a term but not in reality. For a long time I have thought that a friendship either exists or does not, but there is not too much to influence, similar to my view of romantic love. But with our then suddenly arousing honest and authentic conversation about our friendship and how we both missed each others company before we met but struggled to feel comfortable in the first hour I understood that behind every relationship there is a decision. Sometimes it is easy to be befriended and it does not feel like work, I mean if friendship feels like work - is it really worth it? But sometimes you have to work for it to come back together, out of the corona-quarantine-comfort zone, to feel this ease again. In the moment she raised the point we both had in our heads before, it felt easy again and funny, interesting, pleasant and authentic. I felt like myself again and we both felt comfortable. I have learned and I am very thankful to came to acceptance of this, that sometimes people grow apart. It is okay if it does not feel right anymore and it might feel better to let the friendship 'run out', because it is not necessary to have potential friends. But I have also learned that sometimes it is just a honest conversation about the friendship itself which could revive it again. I could add on to this because I have a lot of thoughts on my mind concerning friendship especially in 'our' age, but I am running out of time as I will meet some friends now. Maybe you can relate to my experience of today, maybe you can add on telling about situations in which you realized that sometimes even true friendship or relationships require 'work' and that it is not unnatural than, but 'paying off". – Fiona Friedmann

Silence

but forced to meet

out of decency
dishonest

intention unknown
decision taken
honest and authentic
back to comfort

honesty
fun joy excitement
comfortable
friendship

REFLECTION OF OUR PROJECT

Anna von Keller

"It is challenging to maintain friendships while doing business. Either you take care of one or the other, it is close to impossible to have both." – Casapu 2021

Although I can imagine that there can be difficulties when working together in an academic context, my experience of working together cannot acknowledge Casapu's statement. This combined project with Annika gave me the chance to talk about the topic of friendship intensively and be able to reflect my thoughts and beliefs.

By looking at friendship through different kinds of media, the variety that friendship has became even more clear to us. Although working together as friends is only one part of a successful friendship, it is an important one. Being able to work together, follow our aims, spark of new ideas and support each other is what friendship is about. And this is exactly what Casapu states: taking care of each other while working.

Merging quotes and individual thoughts on friendship gave me the chance to express my own experiences while connecting those to literary work by other authors. The quotes, which are presented in footnotes, support my views and beliefs on friendship and also gave me the feeling of being understood. I realized that there are other people who, although in different contexts, expressed the same and therefore are able to retrace the experiences I have made with my friends. Because replying to the other's comments with a poem, the process of reading through Anna Sandig's and Fiona Friedmann's answers was more intense. The way in which Anna and Fiona put their words together was very personal to me, so I tried to find the most important words or summarize their experiences in the first poem. The second poem traces the course that friendships sometimes take – just like

the process of friendships that Annika centers in her photographs – or puts together the things that are important to make a friendship successful.

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FIONA
FRIEDMANN

My name is Fiona and I can not stop thinking about existence and society, dilemmas resulting from it and my place in these worlds as an individual that wants to feel free and safe. My name is Fiona and for me, the process of writing is hard but helpful, as a way of self-development to grasp and strengthen my own identity. My name is Fiona and with my words I don't mean to cause any harm. I wish to contribute to the raise of awareness, show understanding, promote honesty and encourage authenticity, the expression of a personal emotional situation despite and because of society. My name is Fiona and I am about to share some of those thoughts floating in my mind, wishing to be considered. My name is Fiona and I feel overwhelmed and indecisive.

ABOUT THE NATURE OF WRITING, PERSONALITY, AND SOCIETY

These are notes to my younger self, a documentation of my current thinking, and reminders to future-me initiated by our collaborative working project within the seminar about activist scholarship and literary praxis.

INTRODUCTION

I want to share my experiences with writing for university reasons and how they resemble struggles I have in everyday life situations and generally see in culture and society. The main parts emerged when I was about to take some quick notes and suddenly, more and more sentences followed automatically. Thus, I speak to you in the form of my journal entries.

Before you start reading, I would like to draw attention to the usage of footnotes. Here they do not (primarily) include bibliographic references, but rather further explanations, personal side notes and links to other passages. Admittedly, I used to be somehow intimidated by essays full of footnotes so that I tended to ignore them, both as a reader and writer. However, as I had made use of them willingly in a way that felt more natural to me, I became friends with that tool. So, especially if you can refer to my footnote-discomfort I want to encourage you to consider them with extra care in the following. Not only because these words probably are specifically meaningful and represent the intertwined worlds inside my head best, but also to give yourself a therapeutic reading session in this matter. Moreover,

speaking of references, I chose parenthetical citation. Nevertheless, I should mention that in most cases the parentheses enclose additional thoughts. Lastly, I would like to emphasize the complexity of some topics covered here and that I only touch on them from my very personal perspective now.

ABOUT THE FEAR OF ACTIVE PARTICIPATION

On Saturday, March 5, 2022, after the first day of a block seminar.

The words of my fellow students matter my world. The words of others fascinate me. I am impressed by everybody who pipes up in a (big) lecture. I see their braveness and it intimidates me, how they are so self-conscious, how they pack their thoughts into words so clearly, that I can identify myself with. Why doesn't it rather encourage me?¹

¹ It is a lot about me. Worrying what they might say about me distracts me from getting my things done, when in fact it is not about me at all: It is all about them in their heads, too. Either as they are stuck in the same daunting circle of internal and external pressure, or as they have already overcome such toxic thinking and are busy with focusing on their self-development and fulfilment now. Let's strive for the latter state of mind, become busy with what takes our minds off such worries and find what makes us as an individual feel alive. To break this habit and to live with self-reflexion as a tool to experience joy and fulfilment instead of self-sabotage and intimidation.

Paradoxically it does not make it easier for me to raise my voice even though I must be in a similar mental space if I can relate so well to a statement made. The fact that I truly understand these words implies that I am speaking the same language (not only officially. It means that I am not only able to translate those words into another language but to mediate the worlds behind from my personal point of view in the same way. Since words are arbitrary, I believe there are different levels of speaking the same language). Nevertheless, I fear to be either misunderstood or to say something irrelevant if I speak up. With time, texts, and materials provided by lecturers, I have learned that there is no need to be ashamed of sharing my opinion concerning culture, society, and human beings since the expression of individuals is exactly what makes a discipline like cultural studies exist. Yet I am afraid to be judged by fellows. More precisely I fear to be misjudged.

Being Judged vs. Being Misjudged

I have experienced that it is not painful for me to be judged as being somebody I stand for. I welcome to be known, to be categorized as a feminist person for example, even though and especially because it is still connotated negatively in too many minds (where feminism is feared as a thread to their privileged lives and habituation (what it actually is), as every mindset that includes solidarity). As long as it is connotated, it matters, it interrupts people's habituation. I am wearing this *name* given by others because I gave it to myself first (important realisation that has made the controversial issue of political correctness less complicated for me: it does always make a big difference who used which term first and for what, for themselves or somebody else, whether it is appropriate language use or not).

In figuring out the concrete reason why being misjudged terrifies me, I have realized that it seems so dreadful when there is no chance for *further* communication. In a lecture for instance, if I am actively taking part in a debate and fellow students secretly take what I contributed another way than I meant it but form their picture of me based on their interpretation of this statement (which is wrong to me, that means, absolutely different to what I and the people that profoundly know me think of me) it is only possible to modify that picture when they take action as well. It is necessary to dig deeper in discussion to gain certainty about *my* statement, so I actually want what I was afraid of at first (before participating actively in class): questioning. If other participants criticise what I said, or ask me to further explain of my opinion, I should not feel attacked (and let my braveness for participating another time shrink) but rather be grateful for the chance to qualify (their perception of) my personality and to point out how the world in my head looks more precisely.

I can remain calm. The scenarios that could appear through criticism might be: 1. That I would explain, and the picture other people do paint in their heads² would become more colourful and complex

² It is a lot about others and how they see me. I know that it does not matter what others think of me, but I am not there yet. I am not completely free of what I believe they think of me at this

and what people misinterpreted or (from my view, if I would know) misjudged me for would be 'corrected', or 2. I could be questioned in my own thinking based on others' critical arguments that broaden my horizon and teach me how I can improve both, living in a society and with myself (maybe feelings arouse that never did before). Thus, I will only benefit from this further interaction.

As Lifelong Learning is Appreciated, Changing One's Mind Should Be, Too

To achieve these benefits, it is important to internalize how normal and important it is, to change my opinion about something if it feels right to, as long as it comes with my own thinking and conviction. It is alright to change my mind when new information from other people, their and my experiences, interactions, emotions, and situations occur. It is not weak but strong, to be open for this modification – or better: assimilation – because it means that I have learned something new and took the effort to process it actively and successfully. It shows that I care, and care is crucial in society, a system originally created to ensure the own welfare through ensuring everybody else's welfare as well.

The thing is, my fear of speaking my mind, participating in situations where people do not know me quite well so that what I say will be the base for their opinion about me, can only be reduced by doing it. Only if I speak people can answer back. Only if we interact and take time for this, we can make it subjectively right. Only if we give people a little bit where they can build upon their perception of us, they will get to know us better and can take our individual feelings, our thoughts, our world into account.

- Changing my opinion based on new knowledge is normal, strong and important. Let's contribute to its *normalization*:³
- Acknowledge when you are uninformed and admit mistakes⁴ be open to new ideas and appreciate that people share their perspectives and insights with you, reflect upon your attitudes critically but stand for yourself and stick to your opinion whenever it feels right.
- What stops you is the anxiety to be excluded from a social⁵ group. However, even if it puts you in an uncomfortable situation

point of time, but I am on my way. So here I am deconstructing this dependency by constructing mechanisms to handle it and to encourage myself.

³ "Some things aren't normal, they have been normalized. There's a difference." (Givens 146) It is not of human nature to be omniscient, and it is not normal to have interest in every subject. It is just normalized to aspire this conception of perfection. As normalization is a tool of society, we are the ones accountable. We must change our attitudes to unnormalize what gives us the feeling of pressure.

⁴ I love this quote of Confucius: "To know what you know and what you do not know, that is true knowledge".

⁵ I contribute to this oppressive circuit. I am society.

initially, in the end you will encourage others to be honest and truthful about their expertise too. This will help to expose groundless fear, fake news, outdated constructs, and misjudgements

- Good words won't cost a thing but pay off. Set yourself free and consolidate your own identity,⁶ comfort your interlocuters and empower your fellow humans with sentences like "I didn't know that before", "I have learned from my experience that ...", "I haven't looked at this from your perspective", "Thank you for sharing your experience", "Thank you for sharing your knowledge with me", "I see your point", and so on.
- Express yourself truly (with one limit only: do not touch someone else's freedom of expression), it is the key to emancipation.
- People will always paint a mental picture of me, it can only become more true and less based on stereotypes when I interact with them.
- The fear of society is the fear of individuals who are afraid of this society. Peer-pressure can only be dismantled when we share our feelings, identify the omnipresence, and talk about it.

Our words matter worlds in every form, even though it does not (immediately) become visible. It is a process, always.

ABOUT HOW WRITING IS DELIBERATING

on March 5, following the previous entry and Thursday, March 17, 2022

The emergence of the last entry which happened relatively fast and naturally is why I should skip extensive planning before I start writing. For sure, it is helpful to organize my thoughts⁷ as well as to create a more readable text. Nevertheless, when I start off with a free writing

⁶ When I started to acknowledge my ignorance more often in situations in which I thought I must be informed or interested in and thus pretend to be so, I experienced relief instead of disdain. It is so exhausting to discuss without any passion for the issue and it feels as bad as lying if you pretend to have knowledge of a topic you don't know any facts about. If it does not feel right and I do not like to identify myself with this behaviour it can only be of a strong character to open up about such uncertainty. Speaking your truth shows a strong sense of identity to others but above all to yourself (what is quite soothing as we are all constantly on our search for identity). Furthermore, it dissolves the fear to be vulnerable due to lack of knowledge because nothing can be exposed anymore.

⁷ While typing my handwritten draft I have realized that a better structure of my thoughts might have been helpful. I am not sure whether it is enjoyable now to read my text if there is no clear instruction that states my intention for each chapter, no clearly defined main part with a line of arguments, nor conclusion that rounds everything off. Nevertheless, I am happy to have this kind of regret now because next time I have to write a formal essay I will not only stick to formal rules and academic procedures if I structure it that way. I will advise myself to think of an instruction, an argumentative route, an end, and I will appreciate this procedure. How deliberating, it will not be a prescription but my own decision then.

practise instead, I overcome my biggest boundary to a writing flow: concentration on one thing.

It is easier to concentrate on things when it comes naturally. Of course because the harder you must force yourself to focus on one activity, the more you are busy with something else (forcing yourself) and distracted. Natural concentration emerges when it does not feel too hard to interact with the activity you have to. I think this happens when you like what you are doing and there is pleasure involved. However, just to do what automatically comes will not help me growing. Firstly, learning always makes effort. My habituation is interrupted when I experience new situations (in which autopilot fails) which require information processing and lead to knowledge building. Secondly, I will only know the feeling of pleasure when I have experienced the opposite. For me, this is one of the most fundamental principles in life: ups need downs to be identified. As nature confirms: You love the sun because you can enjoy other things than when it rains, but flowers need both to grow, the light and the water.⁸ So, to concentrate faster and lose myself in an activity (like writing) pleasure must and can be triggered, to gain motivation, satisfaction, and gratification for what I spend my time with and on (and is not this what we are seeking for in life?). Gratification can be the product, like a well-rounded story that is waiting to be read or a painting ready to be put up at the wall. For me I have learned that it is especially rewarding, thus motivating, when I see my productivity instantly. When I see changes and feel that I am creative it is easier for me to dive into every task.

To sum up: it sets me free to ditch a perfect plan and get right into the process of creating. Therefore, I recommend to begin with ten minutes freewriting about anything that occurs on your mind without interruption. I have experienced that the texts resulting from this practise are the most authentic ones and uncomplicated to read as I am not constantly trying to improve my style through eloquent words and synonyms that are not part of my personal vocabulary, thus world (yet).

Freewriting Exercise⁹ and Other Personal Suggestions to Increase Your Writing Flow

- I would recommend to set a timer for 10 minutes and write down without stopping. I have experienced that the boundary to write more than one sentence will be overcome because you can exactly describe this process of inner conflict in your head for instance,

⁸ As how we are and what we do emerges from nature, I strongly believe that the most fundamental rules to life are to be found there. Mother earth is the best teacher I can think of and how I explain the way the natural ecosystem works to myself (with help of scientists, family, friends, and academia) is the biggest inspiration to my philosophy. Literally, nature is meaningful and matters my world.

⁹ The freewriting exercise was a helpful advice by my lecturer Hannah Nelson-Teutsch.

so there will definitely be something on your mind that can be written down.

- Ditch the computer and handwrite. It is easier to stick to a sentence if the effort to erase it is bigger than to end it. For me it is always important how my working space looks like, not only in terms of a tidy workplace, but especially regarding the document or sheet. Even though it might be invisible, it is easier to mess around secretly on a digital than on a paper document.
- So, make your OCD¹⁰ helpful to prevent yourself from constant correction. When you fear strikethrough texts on your documents for example, as I do, use this obsession to end a sentence the way it initially came to your mind when you have started writing. You will see an outcome, gain motivation, achieve a state of concentration, and come into the flow that brings joy faster.
- Anticipation is the greatest pleasure. When I remind myself that next time when I have to write for university for instance, I will surely experience joy even faster since I am learning and exercising the process of (scholarly) writing in that very moment, I give my doing (writing these lines) another purpose¹¹ and create joyful anticipation that reduces my fear of writing in university context. I want to study. Therefore, it is my own decision to be in (more) situations in which I am asked to create something in a specified time that will be assessed and graded by somebody based on their criteria. So, it is only helpful to become comfortable in such situations (at least more comfortable than I am now) while keeping in mind that:
- The beginning is always the hardest, but process will take place as long as I am doing something that involves changes.

Between Decision-Making and Authenticity

The most authentic texts are written when I put my thoughts into those words that came to my mind first. As well as in other contexts I believe it is wise to choose the first intuition: it facilitates decision-making in a world in which I am in the privileged position to have access to countless possibilities (at least theoretically) on the one hand but on the other hand I feel pressured by these potential offers. Their existence imply that we constantly must make decisions and move forward.

Do yourself a favour and stick to you first thought to create a base on which you can build upon by and by. Going with the first idea does not mean to leave things as they appear in the first moment. As with opinions about others they are built up on first impressions but

10 The National Health Service in UK says: "[O]bsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) is a common mental health condition where a person has obsessive thoughts and compulsive behaviours".

11 Sense is the motor. Think of what makes you feel alive – these activities give your being sense. If something feels good, it makes sense (feels right) and the situation fits in your life like no one else in this very moment.

modified, consolidated, or replaced. Thereby every further amendment represents both another decision for, and a new, more concrete shape of the initial idea.

In this way you will save a lot of energy and time for improvements on your complete text **afterwards**.

The bigger the change will be, the easier I believe the decision to modify the passage can be taken. It may sound paradox as a bigger loss is involved by replacing a whole sentence instead of one word for example. However, I have experienced that it is especially hard to become convinced by one alternative, when they are very similar to each other. If the options are distinctive and the evaluated criteria are specific for each, the chance to feel intuitively drawn to one is bigger and the final decision will be reasoned. Therefore, when you revise your text and struggle with one thought:

- Take your time to create distinctive alternatives to form a synthesis which is authentic and meaningful. For example, it has helped me with decision-making to write down two complete sentences for one thought and then weigh them up against each other carefully based on their specific values. On the other hand
- Allow yourself to stay with one style even though you have a lot of ideas in your mind. The reader will be amazed by your words either way and probably your inner conflict will disappear when you move on in your text. If it does not, it is a sign for you that it might be worth it to take some time and reconsider that passage.
- Observe when and that you are stuck in an endless decision-making process, interrupt it consciously and move on with something else (for me highlighting the sentence I am dissatisfied with helps close this matter, at least for the moment, to carry on). In doing so you will prevent the emergence of paralyzing frustration. Furthermore, I am sure that if you have made progress on that decision, you will return automatically. And if not, the right decision has already been taken.

ABOUT ACADEMIC GUIDELINES, OTHER CONSTRUCTS, AND MY ROOM TO (HELP TO) MOVE FORWARD

On Tuesday, March 29, 2022, after an inspiring Zoom meeting with my lecturer Hannah Nelson-Teutsch.

Besides structural guidelines concerning both, the writing process (nEvEr StArT wItHoUt A wRiTInG PlAn) and the text itself (instruction, main part, conclusion) there are other formal advices, and stylistic devices we have internalized along our academic pathways. These rules exist because they have survived as the most practical ones, haven't they? For example, 12 point as standard font size. Have you ever questioned it?

Of Layout and Sceptis

Sometime when people started to write on the computer, they probably decided independently from each other that font size > 10 point would be the best compromise between readability and handiness (not too small to read but still space-saving when the document is printed). People have learned from this experience and passed it on to younger generations to save effort and time. Like in school where 12 point is demanded on the worksheet when pupils are asked to produce their first typed texts. They do not think about why they take and why they have to take this specific size. They regard it as a fixed rule instead of a recommendation from older generations to ensure readability for the average potential reader.

However, the actual reader might not fit the average – generally or anymore. The generation setting the standards may not be equivalent to the main readership of your text. At first it might sound exaggerated when I ask teachers to either explain students why 12 point is recommended or leave the font size-choice open to the pupils, but it matters. Even though some practices have continued for ages and seem wise and unproblematic, it is important to initiate that people think about the purpose of their behaviour whenever you are in the position to do so in an implicit, not reproachful manner.

- It is important to make them realize how profound the effects of socialisation are and that most of their habits are adapted.
- It is important that people figure out why they adapt, to whom they adapt.
- It is important to make them question the timeliness and completeness of those recommendations.
- Above all, it is important to replace “people” in the last passage with “I or me” to start with myself first.¹²

¹² Generally, start with yourself more often. Not in a selfish, solidarity-lacking way, but in terms of 1. blaming other people for their behaviour on the one hand, and 2. your own well-being on the other hand. For instance, 1. it does not help anything to complain about the former professional skier who promotes veganism now after he has practised an environmentally unfriendly profession for years. My grandma did so today and even if she were a vegan person herself, it would be unnecessary to deprecate other people's attempt to do better. But especially as she is not working on her process towards a more sustainable lifestyle it is inappropriate to disrespect such personal improvements. Such kind of words are not helpful at all. 2. Focusing on your own process will save you a lot of energy and time for joyful and meaningful things that make your life worth living in a careful way. Imagine a world full of relaxed individuals that are free from such resentment and full of appreciating words – doesn't this seem peaceful and at the same time progressive to you?

- Comment on other people's changes only when you are asked for it, when it is meaningful i.e., constructive criticism or empowering appreciation
- Nice words do not cost anything
- If somebody tries to improve their behaviour for example to reduce their impact on the nature, it is always helpful, not only for this person but for my life as well! It is just self-defeating and counter-productive to criticize this. No matter how small the steps might be, they are a start (and we all know how hard beginnings can be).

It may prove useful to listen to my lecturer and use font size 12 point for my term paper, since they will be my readers in the first place. However, in other cases it might be nonsense to apply habits of people other than me or the audience.

Of Layout and Self-Determination

A lot of what I do, think and like is adopted from the culture I grew up with and live in. On the one hand it has been of great value to inherit cultural constructs that ease information processing, organize, and regulate social life, and thus save effort. On the other hand, it is of high risk that the culture I live in and out is not constructed by my coevals and me in the first place: with adopting and adapting we uphold certain ideas of nature¹⁵ that have not been reflected upon, chosen, and legitimated by us.

As culture creates identities and gives meaning for many people it is especially important that the cultural system is equally established by the ones concerned. This is not a proposal to change anything in the first place, but a big reminder to question cultural practices.

In order to either

- Consciously decide for it, or
- Change it, with the intention to
- Improve the situation for each individual living in and learning from this culture.¹⁴

We have (the chance) to take agency and explain this procedure to our emerging generations. I am sure that such arising self-determination would make social and thus individual life happier and easier, as vice versa.

Again, the same principle applies to formal advices. Including a table of contents into my term paper feels less laborious when I am aware that it will provide improved access to my text, my words, my worlds for some readers without bringing any disadvantage for the rest. Furthermore, a table of contents that resembles the chronological order of my thinking process for instance, how my arguments evolved and how I structured my thoughts on the topic, adds a specific personal touch to the whole term paper. Having this potential of a contents list in mind, I begin to enjoy creating it. Moreover, when I consider making room for a structure at the beginning of the document as a way of paying tribute to my brain, it becomes even more fun. If it makes fun, it is more likely to give sense, and what has started off as task fulfilment turns into a fulfilling task.

Sidenote: I am aware that I have just criticized someone else (my grandma).

¹³ For example, binarity of female and male gender.

¹⁴ Talking about change, this is fundamental: whatever action we take, it must be subordinate to the premise that it puts nobody at a worse position in terms of safety and livelihood than before. As long as this condition is fulfilled, every opportunity that improves the life (other) individuals (especially regarding safety and livelihood) is worth to be seized.

Of Academic Guidelines and Responsibility

Of course, arguing that way means that alternative ideas to enhance readability must be welcomed too. To enable the production of a term paper to become a very personal, joyful, and yet scholarly experience, (more or less) regardless of the topic, it requires the corrector's awareness of the reason behind many conventional formalities. I have the impression that this is not always the case, but I am optimistic that most scientific staff would be open to more, yet unconventional approaches if we explain our reasoning behind it well. Such openness in academia – as well as in other fields – is up to our behaviour as its components – as society, and it is not (only) helpful to criticize other's unthoughtful behaviour nor to blame the system like university if we ourselves do nothing that initiates or contributes to change. It is my responsibility as I have the chance for example to talk to lecturers about how I did choose which form or why I did not.

- As I exist, I have an impact (on the ecosystem). As long as I live, I will contribute to society. In forms of different roles and positions I influence man-made systems, their continuation or transformation.
- As I am a student, I impinge on other parts of university like scientific staff who and thereby, the behaviour of this institution.
- To help with creating an inclusive and diverse environment in which everybody feels comfortable, I have to make use of these positions consciously.

Until now I have written everything by hand, and it was my plan to contribute my text contribution in hand-written form as it seems more personal and authentic to me. However, I reconsidered and decided to do a typewritten exemplar as it is surely more readable for many people that way.

OF QUOTATION, REFERENCE, AND EMPOWERMENT

On Wednesday, March 30, 2022, when I was still ill with covid and on day eleven of my quarantine.

Looking back, I feel like I was blindfolded when it comes to references before my seminar on activist scholarship and literary praxis by Hannah Nelson-Teutsch. To me quotations and citations were terrifying academic guidelines I had to stick to in order not to fail the course, not a chance to facilitate my writing process.

First of all, a quick reminder for myself:

- Citation – (information about) paraphrasing of quotation
- Quotation – direct speech of another author (Jamie's ESL

resources)

- Reference – (information about) your sources¹⁵

I have underestimated the potential of references and referencing and probably still do so as I have never really thought about the original purpose behind it when writing a paper. To me it was always a complicated matter of obligatory character, associated with big effort and frustration, although it makes perfectly sense to refer to the current state of research and thus mention its researchers when you attempt to extend, criticize, comment on it and – appreciate it.

Above all the latter gained in significance for me. I wrote a lot about the urgency of critical analysis of elder generations and culture. Thereby it is at least as meaningful to value for instance their achievements like generally, the effort of other people. Especially when you profit from it in any way. Quoting is a way to give an author¹⁶ credit for the contribution of their thoughts, for sharing their personal experience, and for taking action to improve (not only) their environment. It is important to thank their works and to repeat those words which shaped the world and still matter worlds. Quotation, citation, and a proper list of references is more than just a tool to integrate substantial information into my paper without (re-)formulating it on my own. I have learned that its key benefit is not to reduce my (typing) work but to enrich my text with the help of other personalities and my interaction with their both problematic, and inspiring thoughts. As promoted before, I must ask myself how it comes that one of my lecturers claims that the instruction of a scientific paper would be deficient if it did not include an amount, of quotes from a big scientific journal about that topic.

How I Benefit From References

So, why does he say so? For one thing he might want to be sure that I think of reliable information and become familiar with scientists that did a great job in research regarding the particular issue and thus, influenced maybe our daily life or at least that particular world. For another thing, he might want both my working and writing process to be eased by suggesting very accessible information and clear ideas (assumed that famous journals have for example a free online edition (or at least university library offers such) and provide fundamental knowledge) on which I build up my assumptions. True, maybe I come across a statement I find problematic so that its negation becomes my hypothesis. Perhaps I can slide into my writing flow more easily by starting with my interpretation of another author's arguments. I can benefit of someone else's words even without agreeing on them. With this in mind it seems just logical to me and as the only thing appropriate to create space for their names in my work – a list of references. Not only to provide my readers with the necessary details

¹⁵ I find it lovely to arrange lists alphabetically whenever there is no set order. Shout-out to the alphabet, it has become a great decision-making aid to me.

¹⁶ This includes everyone who prepares and shares their knowledge to an audience, if via podcasts, film, or books and so on.

to read more from those writers and their remarkable works but also to give my dialogue partner (as they become such for me when I refer to their words) their actual voice. Even if I disagree¹⁷ with some of my references, I owe them my acknowledgment for their braveness to speak up, for sharing their ideas and thus providing me with food for thought.

How Others Suffer from References

However, especially with the intention to credit **brave** words it is problematic to refer to big journals only. As it is very likely that they publish first and foremost famous authors, statements (like the one I have mentioned above) imply that reliable information is exclusive to them. Surely, such factors as scientific editing or a large readership that includes other experts may assure professionalism. Nevertheless, popularity is neither a guarantee for reliability, nor relevance¹⁸ and vice versa. It primarily guarantees conformity with the existing order, the prevailing opinion, the established standards in academic research and writing, and the ruling players¹⁹ within this field. In our capitalist society the size of the audience depends largely on financial means and powerful relationships for a successful promotion. Therefore, even if the predominant players within the academic field disseminate outdated information and ableist, misogynist and racist words they will not be replaced unless we stop to reward their works by buying their books or quoting their works. To reference the same established publishers makes them even wealthier and more powerful and mutes those who deviate from the prevailing system.

The resultant vicious circle is harmful, especially to social minorities who are left unheard in the (academic) world despite everything they say. When words matter worlds, it is obviously very hard to feel comfortable in a world that is shaped by words which are neither yours nor spoken by someone who represents you, shares your traumas, your family situation, your cultural background, your optical characteristics and traits, your preferences and anxieties, and your way of thinking. Furthermore, it is even harder to make a change in a world where the well-positioned, powerful people feel particularly well precisely through this unequal representation. Especially, if the potential readership, emerging generation, and the so-called academic elite of tomorrow continues to invest in this corrupt and unauthentic system.

17 I want to feel safe myself, when I express my feelings, thoughts, and individuality in our pluralistic world, therefore it is crucial to welcome other individual opinions with appreciation as well, both in writing and personal encounters

18 Acknowledging that what is relevant differs situationally and subjectively.

19 And the ruling ones are who? The ones with power do. And power is what in our system? It is money. And money is easiest earned by whom? By the ruling ones who control the accesses in their favour according to their custom to secure their conformity with this circuit.

How to Make the Best of References

So, without collaborative effort against persisting inequality it will remain almost impossible for academic newcomers, authors of marginalized and vulnerable groups, and other **brave** voices that continue writing and publishing despite the lack of acknowledgement and success to get the attention they deserve and need. In my privileged situation, and as a student at university, I have means to contribute to the change towards a diversity of knowledge and a true and fair representation of the world (not only) inside the scientific field.

- When writing an essay or scientific term paper I will henceforth decide more carefully which people I want to cite and whom I do not want to offer a platform nor (financially) support.
- When buying a book, I will not only consider the blurb, the layout, the price, and the reviews but especially have a look at the author's background.
- Because in the future I want to read and hear more of individuals that I do not share the same cultural background, childhood experiences, body, or sexual orientation (etc.),
- To respect as many perspectives as possible when making use of words, to and thereby contribute to a safer world.

About My References and Process

The seminar on activist scholarship and literary praxis has strengthened my mindfulness towards my fellow humans and myself, as I have engaged with diverse authors. At this point I want to appreciate **Florence Given** whose book *Woman Don't Owe You Pretty* accompanied me during my writing process. Furthermore, I have to mention **Sara Ahmed**, reading her book reawakened my desire to read for my own pleasure wherefore I am very thankful. Besides, her words encouraged me to write from my personal point of view and helped me to realize that texts can be scholarly even if they are somehow intimate. So did **Audre Lorde**, who gave me the inspiration to leave my thoughts in form of diary entries. Furthermore, I got inspired by **Travis Chi Wing Lau** to play with language, words, and form for authentic reasons, as I tried in the poem that I wrote in the first seminar meeting. His approaches specifically broadened my mind as I have never thought of physical health and a healthy body as a construct, similar to other concepts that we as society consider as naturally given. Most of all I want to express my gratitude to our lecturer **Hannah Nelson-Teutsch** for making me acquainted with the thoughts of those personalities, for creating such an enriching and positive experience, and for embodying care and support like I have never experienced it in university before.

CONCLUSION

Finally, thank you for reading this. I appreciate your time and effort, as I am sure it was not always easy to stick to the lines and follow my

thoughts. It is quite demanding for me to describe them in English words as I attach great importance to explicit wording. I have the impression that sometimes my attempt to find the correct word to describe my feelings best made the text difficult to be read fluently. I apologize for long sentences and unusual collocations, and I welcome any suggestions for improvement. Furthermore, some repetitions might have appeared unnecessary to you, however they were wanted and therefore meaningful, not least because they represent my writing process, and way of thinking. There are so many contexts recognized and concepts considered in my head, maybe you can identify with some of them. Even if not, I still hope you take some inspiration (perhaps even to take issue with me), new insights (that help developing your empathy for others) or something else from my personal view about how words matter worlds. With these words I would love to encourage you to use your great mind and express yourself in any way it feels true for you, because your words matter, too.

It took me a while to typewrite these entries in April 2022.

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P O E T R Y

REBECCA

WICHT

Rebecca Wicht is studying for a teaching position at the Julius-Maximilians-Universität Würzburg with a focus on Elementary School Didactics, German, Mathematics, Art, and Educational Sciences.

My written work

In a way, I use poetry to self-reflect and sort out the emotional chaos my body must hold every day. Every single one of us is made of stories and the beauty of life is that some of us share the same path at least for a little while.

So, I write down all the feelings that I experience in order to get the overwhelming ones out of my mind. To acknowledge them without letting them take over my life.

Most of my written works are about love.

They are about the sensational feeling you get when you meet a new partner and deeper feelings arise from sympathy.

But the poems are also about the love for myself, or more accurately, the self-love I am trying to develop. Seeing as most of the time we are too hard on ourselves, have more understanding for other people and attribute more value to them than to ourselves. At least that is something I struggle with.

In some way my words serve a self-reflection that is supposed to help me grow into the person I am destined to be.

I am made of sea glass.

Formed by previous choices I made and my childhood trauma.
I drift away into my thoughts like a piece of glass is swallowed by the ocean.
Formed by what felt like massive waves of sorrow and gratitude.
I was raised to be quiet and content.
To “be thankful for what you have”.

I am like sea glass - a piece of work

Even with the most insignificant object, you can make a piece of art.
If you're willing to see it in a different light.

I am an entire ocean.

Filled with emotions taking over me without a warning. Overtaking me.
Waves and waves are swallowing.
I have been hiding myself away for so long
Not even I remember the essence of my being.
I have been floating in an ocean of uncertainty for too long.

I am the beauty that is me.

I am an entire ocean filled with the most beautiful seashells.
I am a power of nature in need of only myself.
I am an ocean filled with magnificent emotions
And I finally see that I matter.
And when I put others first and forget about what I need.
I simultaneously teach them that I come last.
And no one deserves to be overlooked.

I am made of sea glass.

Not quite see-through but beautiful, nonetheless.
Worthy of being valued enough to be made into a piece of art.
Mend me into whatever you need and wear me as close to your heart as possible.
Let me fill your life with beautiful emotions and a variety of colors.



A little something

I bought you a houseplant.

I did not want to be too romantic for fear of showing you how I feel without knowing if you feel the same way.

What kind of plant do you buy for someone when you want to declare: "I am about to fall in love with you, but no pressure" .

It turned out to be a rubber tree.

A houseplant that cannot be killed.

Not even by the most substantial disregard and neglect.

Just like a rubber tree, you're underrated.

Even Google says a rubber tree enhances any home.

And just like that I found that your mere presence makes me happier than I would like to admit.

That leaves me here,
standing in front of your door
with a rubber tree in my arms
and a whole lot of love in my heart.
So please let me in.



Rare heart

People have told you all your life
How the capacity of emotions you hold in your heart is a flaw
While others get on with their lives
You are carried away by waves of emotions
Powerful enough to crush you
Tiny little things trigger your anxiety
Resulting in emotions so deep your heart cannot bear them
“Don’t take everything so personal” they say.

And with that frustration building up
Cruel thoughts creep inside your head.
Honey lay down your weapons.
Do not be at war with yourself.

For feeling everything so deeply is not only a liability.
Whilst others may never feel the depth of pain you have.
They might as well never know how magnificent it feels
to love so deeply.

How with every ounce of your being
You can love someone unconditionally
And the power this love can hold.

So, the next time your head is filled with intrusive thoughts
Please remember that you are doing the best you can
And that is enough.

Remember all the beautiful emotions your rare heart experiences
and let them fill you with nothing but pride.



T O O L K I T

NINA

WINTERMEYER

Nina Wintermeyer (she/her/hers) is a student of English-Speaking Cultures (M.A.) at the Julius-Maximilians-Universität Würzburg. She focuses primarily on Literary and Cultural Studies, usually employing an intersectional feminist lens. She is interested in contemporary poetry, post-colonial studies, and trans- and interdisciplinary works and formats.

A FEMINIST SCHOLARSHIP TOOLKIT

Dear Reader,

This toolkit is a collection, a snapshot of my work and being as a feminist activist, scholar in the making, woman, person amid the challenges of our time. I borrow the concept from Sara Ahmed and her wonderful *Living a Feminist Life* (2017), in which she offers a toolkit for feminist killjoys. My toolkit is less specific in its being as a collection of writing on academic and non-academic, the personal and the collective thought, experiences, and practices. It is difficult to draw the line between these categories, seeing how much they influence and rely on one another. Accordingly, I will not draw the line but let my writing oscillate, allowing myself and you, dear reader, to draw the line wherever you want it to be drawn, to move it over and over again, leave gaps, make it wonky, or even refuse to draw it at all.

I learned how to write 'properly' at university. Answering exam questions, writing short essays, term papers, response papers, you name it. For me, writing equals coming up with answers, arguments, questions, finding (re)sources, naming (re)sources, desperately rummaging through databases to back up my argument. The writing in this toolkit is unavoidably informed by this practice, but I have forced myself to change the rules a bit. When I cite, I do not necessarily do it to offer something to back me up or to validate my words, but to give

credit, to show what influences me, what made me think, frown, nod in agreement, challenge opinions I was so sure of. Here too, the line between the academic and non-academic will not be drawn, given the plentitude of thought, knowledge, and answers I gain from sources beyond the academic.

When I set out to create this toolkit, I was anxious about its flexible format, so I decided to make it more rigid to meet my needs. Let it be known that I thrive on structure, that I love order, that I create both wherever I can. Accordingly, this toolkit will be separated into three sections, it will look simple and clean in form and layout, it will not stray very far from what I know for the most part. It will set out from *practices*, move through *circumstances*, and will end with a (partially) annotated bibliography. There will be a few footnotes to tell you more, to tell you why, to tell you about the thoughts' origins. Please read them. With all of these rules and structures mentioned, I want you to know that this toolkit still allows, even encourages you to read it differently, mix it up, change its order. It is as much yours as it is mine.

What is left to say is this: be gentle with my words, but do not hold back. The following chapters are dedicated to you, to me, to everyone working with and for feminist issues in academia. I hope to hear from you!

PART ONE – PRACTICES

Knowing, Collecting, Caring, Sharing

A toolkit should be there for you to open it and pick out the things you need. This is what this first section on *practices* is offering you. Take what you need, tweak and twist it, change it, throw it back in, use another. These tools can be both rigid and yielding. I hope you can find the best way for you to use them.

Knowing

Knowledge is a tricky little beast. I always feel like I lack most of it, like I need to ground it in something, refer to its proof. I tend to forget that I have been gathering knowledge for 24 years as a person; that I have been a university student for almost 5 years. Just recently I discovered the topic of feminist epistemology, and it was one of these relieving instances in which I have finally been given the words to say what I have been suspecting, feeling deep in my bones: *Knowledge is subject to economies*. So, I think “*knowledge is subject to economies*” to myself regularly now. These economies allow me to see what feels like a thorn in my side whenever I’m trying to assess my knowledge, when I find myself thinking ‘how do I argue for/prove/justify this?’. But I am moving too fast. Remember (feminist) epistemology and said economies and let us start at a different place.

I consider myself a cis woman. Almost as basically adherent to the prototype ‘woman’ in biology and gender identity as they come. I think the part where I became a raging feminist might have pushed me slightly towards the edges of the definition. Nonetheless, I reside in the somewhat comfortable position of an able bodied, white, cis-gendered woman in her mid-twenties. With this being said, I want to look at the knowledge I gain from this position. I know things that I know exactly because I am said woman. I know about sexualization, about the fear of walking the streets alone, about being taught to dislike yourself and your body, I know about not being heard, about being ridiculed, I know so much more. I know these things. Not because I heard of or read about them. I know these things because I have felt them, because I have experienced them, because I am sure to (re) experience them at some point. But what makes the whole knowledge partially useless, is something else I know: the fact that this knowledge is likely to be ignored or harshly questioned.

I wrote my B.A. thesis on trauma caused by sexual violence, expressed in contemporary (performance) poetry by Blythe Baird and Rupi Kaur. I did a lot of reading on sexual and gendered violence in preparation for this thesis, and I kept coming back to the frustrating comments or elaborations on the refusal to believe and listen to women when they speak about their experiences. While I am tempted to write more about this, this is not the space for it. Have a look at the bibliography, however. You will find writing about these things there.¹ It is

the knowledge that I (just recently) found on the reality of disbelief and the entailed resolutions I had that I want to write about here. It is the topic of epistemologies, yes, the plural!

It was the seminar from which I set out to write this toolkit that introduced me to the broader meanings of epistemology. Previously, I had placed the term somewhere in the back of my mind, not knowing for sure what it meant or what to do with it. I kept it sealed in a little box that said ‘lofty, complex, philosophical stuff that you do not understand (yet)’ and ignored it. The conversations we had about ‘where do I get my knowledge from?’ and ‘how do I know’, sparked my interest in it. I suddenly recognized that the discomfort I felt when writing papers, making claims, grew out of the assumption that I needed a ‘proper’ source to back up my arguments. Hearing the other participants speak about similar experiences, reminded me of the endless hours I had spent scouring the depths of several databases for sources that would back up my case, my reading, my voice. I felt the stinging dissonance of me standing in front of the first semester students in my tutorial, exclaiming brightly: ‘Be bold! Stand by your word! Your arguments are valuable! You did the work, so say what you have to say!’ in the afternoon and rubbing my tired eyes after skimming essay after essay to find a source I could use, later that day. I had fallen prey to the gap between what I think is right and the fear of doing academia wrong and being presumptuous. Honestly speaking I do not deal well with feeling and understanding that I did something the wrong way or that I was mistaken. It makes me unbearably tense, pondering angrily and silently on how I can make it look like I have been doing it right the whole time. This did not happen when I finally understood what had happened with my search for sources and ‘proof’. I am not sure whether it was the relief of seeing that I could ‘actually’ rely on myself and act according to the little speech I regularly give to first semester students, or the collective experience we all seemed to share. Maybe it was both. What happened was that I let go of the strenuous hunt for sources and started to use my voice more boldly in my writing. I began to say what I wanted to say, to disagree more boldly with sources (no matter how ‘acclaimed’), relied on my readings, on my previously acquired knowledge. I backed up my claims with the material that inspired them and nothing more where nothing more was needed. I became part of the type of academic discourse that I had argued for, the one that I had placed somewhere on the higher shelves to reach once I might become one of the ‘real’ academics. Letting go of that was freeing, empowering almost. I had always enjoyed the processes of writing papers, the thinking of the thesis, the preparatory reading, to then, finally, put my thoughts into words. It was nothing I dreaded, but it was slightly held back by the insecurities that inhibited me. Do not get me wrong, I struggle still. But it has become easier, more enjoyable, pleasurable, and rewarding even. Having found this new connection to knowing and implementing knowledge, I started to see it everywhere. I experienced the Baader-Meinhof phenomenon. Epistemology is now lurking everywhere. It became a concept

nonetheless tangible descriptions of experiences of being silences, see Nunez, Plath, Rhys, Winterson (*Oranges*). For further references on (feminist) trauma studies, feel free to reach out.

¹ See Baird, Brown, Fricker, Solnit. For less explicit but

that allows me to understand feminist issues differently, to place difficulties in a different framework. Accordingly, I decided to use it for another class, preparing a short presentation on feminist epistemologies as means to prevent and learn about sexual harassment. I started reading up on feminist epistemology,² on epistemic injustice³ (Fricker), on orality in this context. There is a lot more to discover and I will look for it. I will read more about it, ask people about it, look for alternative/specific epistemologies.

Trusting myself to *know* and to know well enough to argue for it became the first tool I wanted to include in this toolkit. I am convinced that it is vital for my (and maybe also your) work as a feminist, as a scholar, as an activist in any sphere. *Knowing* is thus listed as the first and most fundamental technique. It is interwoven with trusting and believing (in) myself, tied to doing the scary thing and assessing what I know, where and whom I know it from. The following tools will be working less on the inside, fitting the description of 'technique' more easily, but they will all rely in some small way on knowledge and trust. Try to find it, look for it, question it even.

Sharing

I stand strongly by the idea of a community as a source of strength, a place to recharge, a place where it is okay to lose posture and face, to be dependent, a place to grow. These communities can take any shape; they can be friends, family, work, online-spaces, sports, a group of strangers who are simply there, imagined communities connected through shared likings, really anything. What I want to pick out from these communities, is the practice of sharing. Sharing too will reoccur often. It is strongly intertwined with *knowing* and the *circumstances* section. Right now, however, I want to say a few things about sharing in the context of sharing knowledge, sharing material, sharing space, sharing resources.

I live with six other people. I share a lot, so to speak. We share bathrooms, a kitchen, certain foods and materials, but we also share experiences, knowledge, space, laughter, vacations even. It is a place I grow from, learn from, retreat from and to, my daily life is partially structured by the presence of these six people.⁴ Additionally, I have wonderful friendships, a loving relationship to my parents, and a lively university life. There is a constant flux of information, of thought, questions, of life. These communities and what I share with them help me in many ways, personally, but they are also a vital part of my work, my thinking. Specifically, questions of feminism and academia are shared with many of the people surrounding me. We share thoughts, struggles, disagreement and agreement, work, text, (re)sources, time. It helps to gain and broaden perspective, to find answers, to offer

help and resources. What begins as an anecdote, might turn into a lengthy conversation about the experience. Often the words 'Wait! I have a book that you might enjoy' or 'I'll forward you something on this' follow these conversations. Knowledge circulates, ideas are thought through, support is offered, help is provided. While this all sounds like I am living in a restless think-tank, it is a rather subtle process. It is in the *quotidienne*, in the ordinary, where these processes happen. Thoughts are shared while cooking, eating, cleaning, hanging laundry, just passing by, going for walks, drinking wine, sharing content on *Instagram*, *Twitter*, you name it.

Sharing, thus, is the next technique I want to offer to you. For my feminist practice, it allows for checking for shared experience, for shared outrage,⁵ pain, laughter. I have received numerous wonderful references, bittersweet jokes, rectifications, and impulses through the practice of *Sharing* and being shared with. Keep a mental tab on *sharing* open, it will return in the sections on *Circumstances*.

Collecting

Collecting ties right in with *knowing* and *sharing*. It happens unconsciously and consciously when acquiring, assorting, recalling knowledge. We collect experiences, our own and others' stories, questions, material to return to. These collections might stay with us, remaining personal, but they are often passed on to others, either by the spatial and temporal frames in which we acquire them, or by deliberately forwarding, circulating, speaking, our collections become shared ones. The practice of *collecting* is one that I practice meticulously in parts and extremely loosely in others. I keep track of which books I read, have multiple folders on my laptop where I collect ideas, writing, sources, there are notes on my phone, scribbles in my calendar, my notebook(s), on loose slips of paper on my desk. This array of notes, ideas, questions, tasks, sources, knowledge nourishes me and my work as a student, a scholar in the making, a feminist, a human, essentially. Apart from this array of physical or digital collections there is the large mass of memories, references, anecdotes which reside within me and surface when called for. I consider the practice of archiving to be very tightly connected to these collections. Though the options of how to use, implement, or structure archives are numerous, three specific functions are extremely dear to me. I will call them *The Constant Flow*, *The Rearview*, and *The Touch-To-Remember*. They are informed by experience as well as writing I have come across.

The Constant Flow

The constant flow is inspired by Katherine McKittrick, who, in her recent publication, *Dear Science and Other Stories* (2021), describes her practice of having a file with photos to which she constantly adds more. This idea of a continuously flowing, more or less unordered locus for memories, references, hints, struck me as a wonderful practice to visualize the constant flow of knowledge, experience, material

² See Code, Adkins.

³ See Fricker.

⁴ Dear current and former members of our beloved *Pfannenmühle*, this will always be a little love letter to the last years with you! Should any of you ignore the acknowledgements, I ask you to return to them with a well-meaning 'Und Ab!'.

⁵ See Chamaly

acquired without actually classifying it as 'newly gained knowledge, please remember'. Archiving and collecting in this way, for example, can thus materialize something we might sleep on or forget otherwise.

The Rearview

This function of archiving is the one that I return to most often, the one I cling to in difficult moments, the one I cherish the most. What I mean by 'rearview', is the perspective that archiving and collecting can offer us when looking back. Returning to previously archived/collected materials allows to see the vast distance that lies between now and then. What can surely cause nostalgia, can equally snap me out of moments of distress. It is the 'look how far I/we have come!', the 'wow, I/we accomplished all that!' that is therapeutic when I feel stuck, struggle, despair. In the smallest, this can mean re-reading/-thinking old term papers and seeing how much more I know and understand now to ease doubts about my knowledgeability and (academic) progress. In a larger frame, it often means smiling at how I moved into a strange city, built my own life, and work consistently on what I enjoy to recognize how I grew (and still grow) into what we call adulthood. On an even larger scale, it can mean looking at the marches I attended, the times I spoke up, the conversations I had about feminism, the conflicts and disagreements, the growth resulting from it. *The rearview*, thus, becomes a characteristic of collecting/archiving that frames and visualizes progress, change, energy put into a case made and still in the making. I consider it a vital technique when dealing with exhaustion and frustration in my activist, academic, and everyday endeavors.

The Touch-to-Remember

This one is a very different capacity and form of using archives. It resides in the bodily less than in the material and is one that is very emotionally charged. In *Winter Journal*, Paul Auster writes a memoir that comes partially into existence through the body. The idea of telling and remembering a life through body parts, scars, birthmarks, is one that fascinates me, but it comes with bittersweet realities. While it can be beautifully moving to recognize a birthmark that a lover used to kiss or a dance move that is exclusively danced with a certain person, it can be equally painful to remember through the body. The connection to traumatic memory of assault is near here and while it is an extremely important aspect of living with trauma, at this point, I want to use the topic of physical remembrance in the context of using it as a resource, staying close to the topic of assault nevertheless. The experience of unwanted touch, of violence, of witnessing it or being threatened by it resides in the body too. It might be the remembered feeling of the touch, the feeling of a heart beating heavily, of the tension. This physical memory informs the fight against harassment, against assault as much as the understanding of it being wrong does. It functions as a way to understand, for example, the anger that another woman* feels when speaking about an experience of harassment. When I hear a story of catcalling, I, too, immediately grow tense and

feel the very distinct fear and rage that floods my whole body on similar occasions. I use these physical memories as a source for anger, drive, stamina to support my activism.⁶

Collecting, can be an informative, supporting, even nourishing practice of gathering, placing, remembering materialistic and non-materialistic goods. For me it is a resource of all kinds intellectual, emotional, factual. I offer it to you, dear reader, to explore its capacities, forms, and to decide whether you can make use of it or not. Before turning towards the section on *Circumstances*, I want to offer one last practice to you. It is one that is less specifically about activist work and knowledge and more about the personal, human aspects of activist work and scholarship.

Caring

The acts and implications that come with practices of care, are often feminized. Care work is 'women's work', it is connected to our supposedly heightened emotionality, our capability to tend to the old, the sick, children more empathetically. The topic of care and care-work has been discussed extensively and from different angles. Be it a call for turning care-work into paid work, the connection of toxic masculinity and the feminization of emotional and empathetic care, or the topic of communities of care, it is obvious that *caring* is a complex thing to do, analyze, to understand. While said discussions are highly important and fascinating, for my toolkit, I want to access *caring* from a position that looks more towards the care for the self than that for others. The practice of *self-care* seems to be omnipresent in certain social-media spheres or lifestyle concepts. While I am glad that the topic has emerged and the self is cast as something that deserves to be cared for and taken care of, I often find myself frowning at practices of self-care that are displayed on social media. Especially, the currently inescapable 'that girl'/'clean girl' aesthetic partially unsettles me because it stylizes self-care and distills it to green juice, hair-care products, workouts, journaling, and having one's life 'in order'. Those who know me might think 'that's rich, coming from you, missy' right now, and they are right to do so. I enjoy going to the gym and doing Pilates, I feel like I have my life in order (in most ways), and regularly declare loudly that 'if I cannot live in Southern California right now, I'll at least eat like I am living in Southern California!' while I mix a green smoothie or dig into a kale salad. Why the criticism, then? Let me explain: It is by no means aimed at these practices as a way of caring for the self but merely at the way they are cast as the ultimate form of self-care, suggesting that self-care is not really something individual, applying pressure to adhere and thereby defying the aim of self-care entirely. The care for the self that I want to offer to you in this toolkit is less specific, less pointed, less aimed at improving the

⁶ While it is the case with all writing here, I feel the need with this section, especially, to say what is written, experienced, and practiced is highly subjective and by no means meant to be universal in any way. (Physical) experience of harassment and violence is delicate and wide-ranging in impact. I therefore cannot even as much as suggest a general applicability of my experiences and coping.

self to maximize productivity. It is a practice of listening to the body, the mind, the people around us. Activist work and (feminist) scholarship is hard work. It is work that is personal, emotional, and often met with loads of counter-pressure. It wears me down often. It can take a toll on our bodies and minds as much as it can be rewarding. It is because of this strenuous quality my work, our work, can have that I want to introduce *caring* before turning to the *circumstances* section. To acknowledge that resting, leaving things be, detaching myself from my work, is important care I can offer myself. I have to admit that I am not really good at it. I tend to drown myself in more work when I feel overwhelmed, to clench my teeth when I get exhausted, to find myself unable to rest for longer periods of time, to frantically strive for good and final results. Caring for myself and letting go of things for the purpose of doing so is not my favorite thing to do. But it has to be done. I know that.⁷ Because I am still learning how to do this, and assuming that I am not the only one who struggles slightly, I ask you to keep the practice of *Caring*, and with it that of tending to something, in mind now that I will turn to the section on *Circumstances*.

PART TWO – CIRCUMSTANCES

Anger, Corporeality, Ecstasy, Exhaustion, Fear, Recognition

In this second part, my aim is less to offer you some practices for your work as an activist, academic, feminist. In this section, I want to offer and formulate an insight into potentially shared experiences. I recently read Daniel Sherrell's *Warmth: Coming of Age at the End of Our World*, in which he manages to brilliantly grasp and formulate the feelings and struggles that come with climate activism, awareness, and simply the fact that we find ourselves located in current times. In his book I found a very specific solace; a wording for my own anxieties, a place to put them and find them at the same time, a voice that tells me 'I feel it too, believe me, you're not alone. Maybe this is a way to handle it...'. This is what I want to accomplish in this section, too. The writing on the circumstances that I/we find myself/ourselves in, is an inventory of myself, an act of collecting and ordering, as well as an offer for you to maybe resonate with and find a sense of community, a sense of not being alone with what you experience. While the last section was structured along the interconnectedness of the practices, this section is ordered alphabetically. There are two reasons for this: I do not want to create a seeming hierarchy by placing one aspect before the other and, for me, personally, an alphabetic order is a way to pleasingly rattle a hierarchy without creating too much disorder.

Anger

I do not get angry easily. Though I get annoyed somewhat quickly, it

⁷ Luckily, I have Cathrin Lüderitz to lovingly scold me or remind me to take breaks. Cathrin, I am sure you will be reading this at some point so I want to say 'Thank You! I love you' real quick.

takes some time for me to really become irritated. My anger is reserved for a few things that really upset me because they touch upon what I am most emotionally engaged with. I do not mean this in the heroic way that I will let rage rule when someone insults my loved ones (though this of course rattles me), but that the easiest way to make me angry is to let my mom do it. While this refers to the smallest personal and interfamilial level, there are instances in my work and being as a feminist activist and academic that spark anger too. It is less an emotional, almost blind rage, than an angry frustration. I hear about this a lot from women* around me. It is the constant discomfort of the glass ceiling, the being spoken to but not spoken with, the exhaustion of constantly needing to explain oneself and be on the watch, the feeling of treading water against a strong current, and the fear that I will discuss later in this section. It manifests in conversations that go like 'I am so mad about this happening again/about them behaving like this/about having to say this over and over again'. It is not every day that I/we can muster up the strength to be angry about these things but when it happens there is always a good chance of my/our anger to be met with annoyance, of being belittled, of being taken less seriously for it. It is because of this that it feels almost soothing when my anger is met with understanding and support. To be clear, I speak of anger as a productive force, not as blind, destructive rage. Anger can be a driving force, an indicator of feeling the wrongness of something, it can propel us towards change and action, allow us to understand what exactly is upsetting us. This is the understanding of anger that I hold on to. It makes the experience of it less frustrating. However, anger is not merely a productive force that can be used to do good. It can grind us down, tire us out, and, frankly, I do not think we should be experiencing it as much as we are. We need to be aware of this too. Return to the section of *caring*, or think of this when you read the section *exhaustion*, they are tightly interlaced with the topic of *anger*.

(For more reading on anger, look for Brontë, Chemaly, and Baird in the bibliography)

Corporeality

The body I reside in is part of the source for my activism. It connects me to the topics of harassment of women, reproductive agency, or the gender-data gap differently than mere interest or empathy for these things would do. They are my lived reality. My body makes me feel the changes, pains, anxieties of being a woman* and being treated as such. As described, regarding the practice of *knowing*, I draw part of my knowledge from my body. But it is also affected by my work. It is the aching back after sitting at my desk, the tired eyes, the cracked voice, the numb legs. It is exhaustion and ecstasy, the physical pain and mental haze of heartbreak, of grief. I need to acknowledge, feel, and sometimes understand it. It all affects my work and being. This, too, is something I feel might be understood to be more of a hindrance than a resource and treasure. Maybe we should rethink and reevaluate this and ask where this perception stems from. I ask you, once more, to recall the topic of care before moving on.

Ecstasy

This chapter is going to be very short. It describes a very specific and rare feeling. I mean the untamable joy when a policy is changed, a complaint heard and taken seriously, the feeling that rushes through you at a rally when someone speaks truthfully and the whole crowd cheers or chants, the feeling of being part of progress, change, purpose. I actively choose not to use the term 'triumph' to describe this feeling because it runs deeper. You can feel it humming in your bones, making you tense with excitement. It is rare, it is exhausting but it is also rewarding. In a way, it refreshes my sense of purpose, it momentarily outweighs the difficulties of (feminist) activist work. I try my best to recognize it and hold on to its afterglow, feeding from it.

Exhaustion

Throughout the previous chapter, exhaustion has been mentioned many times, explicitly and implicitly. Here it will be addressed, not as a side effect, but as something to tend to.

Let me be clear: Being a feminist can be exhausting, being an activist can be exhausting, being a scholar can be exhausting, noticing the world around us can be exhausting, and quite frankly, *being* can be exhausting. This strain needs to be acknowledged but not glorified. It should not mean that we drag ourselves through endless rallies, meetings, papers, being unable to sleep because we worry so much that we cannot do so properly. I do not think that everything can, or should, be without any struggle or strain ever, but there is a limit to our strength and abilities that needs to be respected. Sometimes we can avoid meeting these limits, sometimes we cannot. It is almost impossible to steer free of the stress and impact of discrimination and the hardship of academic and activist work is barely avoidable. Being tired of it is no sign of weakness! It is a shared experience, I would argue. We can do our best to remedy some of it by taking care of ourselves and the ones around us. They, too, experience some sort of tiring, I am sure. Of course, I could redirect you to the section on *caring* here, yet I will offer the idea of returning to the section on *sharing*.

Fear

The fear I am referring to in this chapter, is a very specific one, a very gendered one. Feminist activism advocates safety for women in public as well as in private and intimate relationships. This safety from violence, harassment, discrimination, and humiliation would not only grant us a freer, less meticulously planned life, it would also spare us from the fear of experiencing any of said looming threats. The fear of being harassed or assaulted is stifling and it accompanies us everywhere. I am sure that it is similar for a lot of us, but for now I will speak of my own experiences to not overstep any boundaries or insinuate anything.

This specific fear is a constant and familiar companion on every walk home alone in the evening or at night, it is right by my side whenever I

am alone at the gym and it is late already, whenever I tell a drunk man at a bar/club to leave me alone, whenever I ride a crammed subway, wedged in between other people's bodies, whenever I ride an empty subway, whenever I wait for the subway/bus alone, whenever I sleep in a shared hostel dorm. This is the material insidious trauma⁸ is made of. And all of it is troubling me in a country in which many people claim that we 'do not need feminism anymore', that 'women* are not discriminated against', that it 'could be a lot worse'. Yes, it could be a lot worse, and I know and see how it could be or become. It is part of the fear. Whenever I hear of new abortion laws being passed in Texas or Poland, or of the obstacles women* face to have access to birth control and reproductive health services in general, whenever I hear about women being denied education, about them, us being murdered, I shiver. I shiver because it feels horrible to know these women* have to endure this, but I also shiver because I fear for myself. I fear that I, too, will wake up one day and *The Handmaid's Tale* has become reality overnight.

Often this fear is met with dismissal, gaslighting, or a lack of understanding of its depth. A certain helplessness sometimes overcomes me when speaking to someone who has not experienced this fear ever, and the only thing I can think of in these situations is to say is 'I wish you could feel it once, the fear I feel when walking home alone'. This is not entirely fair. Nobody should have to feel this fear. But sometimes I find myself thinking that it might be the only way to actually understand the sheer terror. How it chills me to my bones, how I feel my breath become shallow, my heart beating, how my whole body tingles, how I feel my blood rush through my veins when I make it home safely and the tension is gone after one last look at whether someone followed me into the building. Speaking about this fear is not easy; often this is where the anger sets in. I feel, however, that it can be less of a heavy load to carry when you share it, discuss it, trust the people around you to help you to find ways to deal with it.

Recognition

Imagine this: you speak about an experience or feeling that you are unable to place, understand, name, and the person you are talking to nods and says: 'I understand, I have felt/experienced the same'. You might feel relieved, or closer to the person, less alone with what you feel and question. I label this experience recognition, not only because it allows to recognize that we are barely ever really alone with something, but also because it falls into a category of experiences: Finding the other unapologetic feminist in the room, reading a book and entirely resonating with one of the characters, locking eyes with the woman* across the room who had to hear their date babble about crypto-currency for what feels like hours,⁹ laughing together after having a mini-breakdown, hearing and understanding it when someone says 'this is not your fault, they should not have done this

8 A form of trauma evoked by the constant fear and knowledge of the risk of being assaulted or experiencing violence or discrimination.

9 This one is for you, Cathrin.

to you', finding the words for what you (have) experience(d), reading theory and finally finding the concept, the explanation, the phrasing you have been looking for for so long, recognizing you are part of a whole, powerful, relentless movement that fights for your place in this world. This is where I hope you find yourself more often than not!

PART THREE – BIBLIOGRAPHY

Dear Reader, welcome to the last part of this toolkit; the *Bibliography*. I have decided to categorize it as follows: The first section will be a list of comfort-texts that I return to ever so often or want to share with you because they might resonate with you, too. The second section holds texts that I would classify as resources for varying topics. Some entries will feature annotations, some will not. Nevertheless, they will appear in alphabetical order. Please feel free to add, remove, or comment further.

With love,
Nina X

COMFORT

Alderton, Dolly. *Everything I Know About Love*. Penguin, 2019.

I add this book to the list because it surprised me. Alderton's *Everything I Know About Love* reads less like a little sermon on the turbulences of romantic love and more like a memoir that highlights the value and beauty of friendship. It illustrates and reflects different kinds of love in all their gore, absurdity, and glory.

Alcott May, Luisa. *Little Women (1868)*. Penguin Classics, 2017.

Austen, Jane. *Pride and Prejudice (1813)*. Penguin Classics, 2012.

Baldwin, James. *Giovanni's Room. (1956)*. Penguin, 2007.

Baldwin describes the short lived, yet intense affair between David and Giovanni in delicate detail. It is moving beyond the tragedy of failed relationships and heartbreak, drawing highly complex characters.

Bartlett, Neil *Ready to Catch Him Should He Fall (1990)*. Serpent's Tail, 2017.

Brontë, Charlotte. *Jane Eyre (1847)*. Penguin Classics, 1994.

I have two things to say about this:

1. A gripping read because so much happens and so much can be drawn from it
2. An ode to the willful girls and women
(*Connected to; Rhys & Ahmed*)

Kay, Sarah. *No Matter the Wreckage*. Write Bloody Publishing, 2014.

Kichloo, Akif. *Falling Through Love*. Andrews McMeel Publishing, 2019.

Myers, Benjamin. *The Offing*. Bloomsbury 2020.

This book works wonderfully on many levels. It is a story of love, a story of grief, a story of dealing with loss, a *Bildungsroman*, a liminal story. It is an 'easy' book, telling a story beautifully and with depth.

Rooney, Sally. *Beautiful World Where Are You*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2021.

--. *Normal People*. Faber & Faber, 2019.

Siken, Richard. *Crush*. Yale University Press, 2005.

Richard Siken's *Crush* is my favorite collection of poetry. The poems are raw, violent, guided by terror and fear. What does not really sound promising or very enjoyable, holds a power that is difficult to name. I invite you to search for Siken's poem "Saying Your Names" online, maybe you will like it as much as I do.

Strayed, Cheryl. *Wild: From Lost to Found on the Pacific Crest Trail*. Knopf, 2012.

Wild offers beautiful accounts of the Pacific Crest Trail, the power that lies in making one's own way, and does not hold back on describing the harshness of life and wilderness.

Welch, Florence. *Useless Magic*. Fig Tree, 2018.

RESOURCES

Adkins, Karen C. "The Real Dirt: Gossip and Feminist Epistemology." *Social Epistemology*, vol. 16, no. 3, 2002, pp. 215-232. [potentially accessible for you through Taylor & Francis Online]

Ahmed, Sara. *Living A Feminist Life*. Duke University Press, 2017.

Atwood, Margaret. *The Handmaid's Tale (1985)*. Anchor, 1998.

Auster, Paul. *Winter Journal (2012)*. Faber & Faber, 2013.

Baird, Blythe. *If My Body Could Speak: Poems*. Button Poetry, 2019.

Baird's poems are best consumed in their performance. She writes about assault, trauma, recovery, and voices a productive, resisting anger.

Brown, Laura S. "Not Outside the Range: One Feminist Perspective on Psychic Trauma." *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, edited by Cathy Caruth, The John Hopkins Universtiy Press, 1995, pp. 100- 112.

Chemaly, Soroya. *Rage Becomes Her: The Power of Women's Anger*. Simon & Schuster UK, 2018.

- Evaristo, Bernadine. *Girl, Woman, Other*. Penguin, 2020.
Evaristo's novel complexly and artfully weaves the stories of multiple women. It is insightful, moving, simply superb storytelling. My advice for this book is to read it somewhat swiftly or to make notes, the connections might get lost or difficult to trace otherwise.
- Code, Lorraine. *Rhetorical Spaces: Essays on Gendered Locations*. Routledge, 1995.
- Díaz, Junot. "MFA Vs. POC." *The New Yorker*, 2014.
Junot Díaz makes a wonderful and strong case for the structural disparities PoC have to face in MFA programs. It is a good source to understand the gatekeeping that is at play in the culture and community of creative writing.
- Didion, Joan. *The Year of Magical Thinking (2005)*. Harper, 2006.
- Hemken, Kai-Uwe ed. *Kritische Szenografie: Die Kunstaussstellung im 21. Jahrhundert*. transcript, 2015.
- Felski, Rita. *Uses of Literature*. Blackwell Publishing 2008.
- Fricker, Miranda. *Epistemic Injustice: Power & the Ethics of Knowing*. Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Gay, Roxane. *Bad Feminist: Essays*. Harper Peennial, 2014.
The essays in this collection range from witty and partially humorous to bitterly serious assessments of culture, feminism, gender, race, and media. With this collection you will have a book that will allow for you to grind your teeth with righteous anger and laugh out about Gay's comment on *Fifty Shades of Grey*.
--. *Hunger*. Harper Collins, 2017.
- Griesser, Martina et al. *Curating as Anti-Racist Practice*. Aalto University Press, 2018
- Lorde, Audre. "Poetry Is Not a Luxury" (1985) *Your Silence Will Not Protect You*, Silver Press, 2017, pp. 7-11.
I may have listed "Poetry Is Not a Luxury" here because is the essay by Lorde I return to most often, but please read more. Read *Your Silence Will Not Protect You*, read *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name: A Biomythography* (1982), read *The Cancer Journals* (1980). Maybe you, too, can cherish her writing and thought as much as I do.
- McKittrick, Katherine. *Dear Science and Other Stories*. Duke University Press, 2021.
- Matthews, Kristin L. "'Woke' and Reading: Social Media, Reception, and Contemporary Black Feminism." *Participations: Journal of Audience & Reception Studies*, vol. 16, no. 1, 2019, pp. 390-411.
- Morgan, Robin. *Sisterhood is Forever: The Women's Anthology for a New Millenium*. Washington Square Press, 2005.
An extensive and rather contemporary source of feminist writing. Lacks in some parts but is nevertheless a wonderful work to find introductory writing on more specific and inter sectional feminist work. Paired with the *Routledge Feminist Theory Reader: Local and Global Perspectives* (2020), you will have a contemporary and comprehensive resources to draw and reach further from.
- Nunez, Elizabeth. *Prospero's Daughter*. Ballatine Books, 2006.
Prospero's Daughter is a postcolonial re-writing of William Shakespeare's play, *The Tempest*. Not only is it successfully and beautifully done but it also grants Miranda more voice, humanizes Caliban, and shows how a story can profit from changing the perspective(s). Read it with a rough knowledge on *The Tempest*, it will open many doors in this adaptation.
- Plath, Sylvia. *The Bell Jar (1963)*. Faber & Faber, 2013.
- Rich, Adrienne. "When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision." *College English*, vol. 34, 1972, pp. 18-30, [potentially accessible for you through JSTOR].
--. *The Dream of a Common Language: Poems 1974-1977*. W.W. Norton Company, 2013.
- Rhys, Jean. *Wide Sargasso Sea (1966)*. Penguin Books, 1997.
In this prequel to *Jane Eyre*, we get to know and hear Antoinette Cosway, the first Mrs. Rochester, who is often referred to as 'the madwoman in the attic'. Rhys writes a powerful postcolonial answer to the silenced and supposedly 'crazy' depiction of Antoinette in Brontë's novel. It is rich in writing and plot and, as it is the case with *Prospero's Daughter*, shows the power of a shift in perspective and granting of voice.
- Sherrell, David Warmth. *Coming of Age at the End of Our World*. Penguin, 2021.
- Solnit, Rebecca. *Men Explain Things to Me*. Haymarket Books, 2014.
- Walker, Alice. *The Color Purple (1982)*. The Women's Press Ltd. 1983.
- Winterson, Jeanette. *Written on the Body (1992)*. Vintage International 1994.
--. *Oranges Are not the Only Fruit (1985)*. Vintage, 2014.

Woolf, Virginia *A Room of One's Own* (1929). Penguin Classics, 2014.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I want to thank the people surrounding me closely first. You are the essence of my progress!

Cathrin Lüderitz, Andromachi Evita Poulou, and Julia Gerum, without you my work would not be the same. You make me think harder, further, differently, and do so without failing to support me.

I owe heartfelt thanks to my parents for loving me deeply and allowing me to be whoever I want to be, for supporting me in any way and allowing me to make them proud. I love you, deeply!

I thank my current and former roommates for being who they are, for being my home and my heart, for all the love and laughter, all the tears, the wine, the beer, the dancing. You make life what it is. Andromachi Evita Poulou, Felix Breitenbach, Jonas Hinderer, Leander Nehring, Luisa Krutyholowa, Magdalena Claas, Maximilian Heelein, Michael Hosch, and, as an extension of this circle, Cathrin Lüderitz, this one is for you!

I send love to Nele Schott, Janne Binder, and Philipp Herbst for being my anchor back home. Knowing you for most of my life is a gift. I cannot wait to grow old with you and your laughter.

I thank Tilman Rüdiger Englert for challenging me and pushing me further. No one makes me laugh and frown as much as you do. I promise I will call more often!

I thank Julia Gerum and Michael Mann for offering me homes away from home.

I want to thank MaryAnn Snyder-Körber, Jennifer Leetsch, and Hannah Nelson-Teutsch for proving that university life and teaching can be what I want it to be. Thank you, for teaching as you do, for trusting me, and offering me more opportunities than I ever would have allowed myself to dream of.

Antonia Schwier, David Oberg, Leander Fesser, Nassim Elsner, Sophie Bert, this is for you, too.

B O O K L E T

ANNA-LENA

HOFMANN

Anna-Lena Hofmann is studying for a teaching position at the Julius-Maximilians-Universität Würzburg with a focus on Elementary School Didactics, German, Mathematics, Music, and Educational Sciences.

Introduction

Restrictions on women's access to education were not uncommon in the past. Women were frequently denied the right to publish scholarly publications. They were supposed to mature into decent spouses and mothers while their husbands supported them. Many people believed that women were not as intelligent as males. These ladies in this book had to overcome preconceptions in order to pursue their desired vocations. They defied the rules, published behind aliases, and worked only for the sake of learning. They had to trust in themselves while others doubted their ability.

When women finally gained more access to higher education, there was always a catch. Frequently, they would be given no working space, no budget, and no acknowledgment. Lisa Meitner conducted her radiochemistry experiments in a gloomy basement since she was not permitted to enter the university building. Marie Curie handled dangerous radioactive materials in a cramped, dusty shed due to a lack of money for a lab. Creativity, perseverance, and a will to learn were the most valuable assets these women possessed.

Marie Curie is already a household name, but there have been many other remarkable and influential women in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics throughout history. Many were forgotten because they did not receive the recognition they deserved at the time.

Many women have risked all in the service of science throughout history. These chapters relate the story of several of these scientists who, when confronted with a "No", said, "Try to stop me".

The next chapters are for all the fighters, feminists, dreamers, women and anyone who is losing hope and needs new motivation to keep fighting!



***WON
TWO
NOBEL
PRIZES***

***DISCOVERED TWO
ELEMENTS: POLONIUM AND
RADIUM***

***PIONEERED
RESEARCH ON
RADIOACTIVITY***

***“I was taught that the way of progress is
neither swift nor easy.” – Marie Curie***

Marie Curie

1867 – 1934

Physicist and Chemist

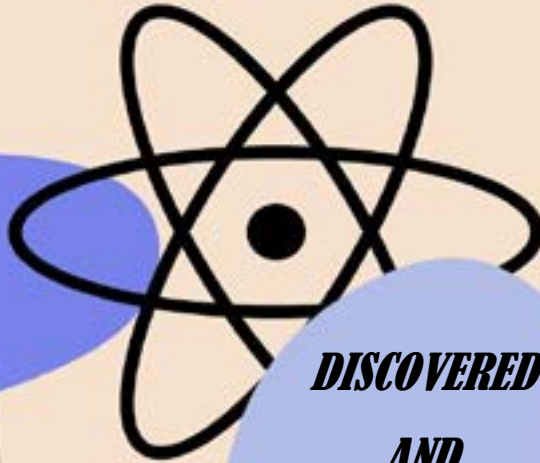
Marie Curie was born in 1867 in Warsaw, Poland. She proceeded to the Sorbonne to study, where she met Pierre Curie, a fellow scientist and her true love.

Henri Becquerel, a scientist, had found a peculiar light emanating from uranium salts. Marie was captivated by the light and was curious as to what it was and why it was occurring. Pierre and she went to work in a stifling shed. Marie studied “glowing” compounds with Pierre’s electrometer and she was determined that the energy was created by the uranium atom itself. She began referring to the phenomenon as “radioactivity”. To locate the source, Marie and Pierre crushed up and sifted additional radioactive materials, discovering two new elements: polonium and radium in the process. In 1903, the Curies were awarded the Nobel Prize in Physics for their discovery of radiation. Marie was awarded the Nobel Prize in Chemistry in 1911 for her discovery and study into polonium and radium.

Unfortunately, the radiation from their tests was causing Pierre and Marie to become ill. Their long-term exposure left them fatigued and achy; we now know that the symptoms of radiation poisoning are fatal. Pierre was killed in a horse-carriage accident in 1906. Despite her anguish, Marie persisted in her studies and found that radium might be used to cure cancer. She spent hours collecting radon for hospitals despite feeling dizzy.

Additionally, France was attacked during the First World War. Marie and her daughter formed a unit of X-ray trucks, which they drove to battlefields to assist wounded soldiers.

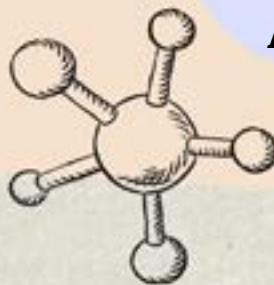
Marie worked in science because she enjoyed it, and in risk because the world needed it. Her life and accomplishments continue to inspire scientists to this day.



***DISCOVERED
AND
EXPLAINED THE
WORKINGS OF
NUCLEAR FISSION***

***DISCOVERED THE ELEMENT
PROTACTINIUM WITH HER LAB
PARTNER OTTO HAHN***

***SHOULD
HAVE
RECEIVED
A NOBEL
PRIZE***



***“Life need not be easy, provided only it was
not empty.” – Lise Meitner***

Lise Meitner

1878 – 1968
Physicist

Lise Meitner was born in 1878 in Vienna, Austria. She was interested in science but realized that as a girl, she would have to struggle for her education. In 1907, Lise went to work at the Chemistry Institute in Berlin after receiving her PhD. There she met Otto Hahn, who would become her long-term partner. She was not compensated and was not permitted to use the labs or even the toilets because she was a woman. She completed all of her radiochemistry studies in a dark cellar until the authorities allowed women to attend university. Lise and Otto were attempting to generate new elements by colliding neutrons with uranium. They did not realize it at the time, but they were on the verge of making a significant discovery.

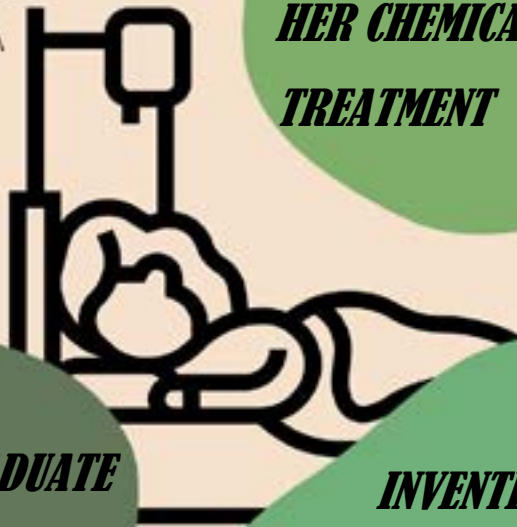
The emergence of the Nazis put a halt to Lise's studies. Lise needed to go since she was Jewish. With a broken heart, she moved to Sweden in 1938, while Otto resumed their job in Germany.

She and Otto exchanged letters discussing their studies in private. He was perplexed by the outcomes of their experiments. Lise realized they were not generating a new element, but rather stretching the nucleus of one atom apart and releasing energy. Lise detected nuclear fission – the reaction that releases nuclear energy – from afar.

Lise was unable to return to Germany, and Otto was given the 1944 Nobel Peace Prize for their work — despite her absence. Despite the fact that Lise did not get the Nobel Prize, her bright intellect revolutionized physics forever.



***HELPED TO CURE
LEPROSY WITH
HER CHEMICAL
TREATMENT***



***FIRST AFRICAN-AMERICAN
AND FIRST WOMAN TO GRADUATE
FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF
HAWAII***

***INVENTED THE
BALL METHOD***



“Men dominated higher education in 1915, and Alice Ball was admitted against the odd.” – Miss Jackson, University of Hawaii Professor and Dean Emeritus

8

Alice Ball

1892 – 1916
Chemist

Alice Ball was born in 1892 in Seattle, Washington, USA. Her grandpa was a photographer, and in his darkroom, Alice was introduced to the mysteries of chemistry. She was the first African-American and first woman to graduate from the University of Hawaii in 1915.

There was a public health problem in the early 1900s: leprosy, now known as Hansen's disease, was spreading. It causes numbness, skin lesions, and nerve and ocular damage. Although we now know that TB is not highly contagious, authorities detained the sick and isolated them in a leper colony on the Hawaiian island of Molokai at the time.

There was just one source of relief for leprosy at the time: the sticky oil of the chaulmoogra tree's seeds. However, mixing the oil with water to create a viable therapy that could be injected proved difficult. Alice, at the age of 23, invented a novel method of treating the thick chaulmoogra oil. She discovered that the oil could be combined with water for injection after separating the ethyl esters in its fatty acids.

This therapy, which became known as the "Ball technique", aided the leprosy colony. The ill no longer needed to be segregated since they were no longer contagious. Patients were able to see their family by 1918, and new patients were no longer thrown into exile.

Alice died far too young, in 1916, while working in a laboratory, possibly as a result of inadvertently inhaling chlorine gas. She is known for discovering a treatment for a seemingly hopeless illness.



***CHANGED
THE WAY
WE UNDERSTAND
EVOLUTION
AND BOTANY***

***STUDIED HOW
CHROMOSOMES CHANGE
DURING REPRODUCTION***

***PIONEER IN
CORN GENETICS***

***“When you have that joy, you do the right experiments.
you let the material tell you where to go, and it tells you
at every step what the next has to be...” – Barbara ¹⁰
McClintock***

Barbara McClintock

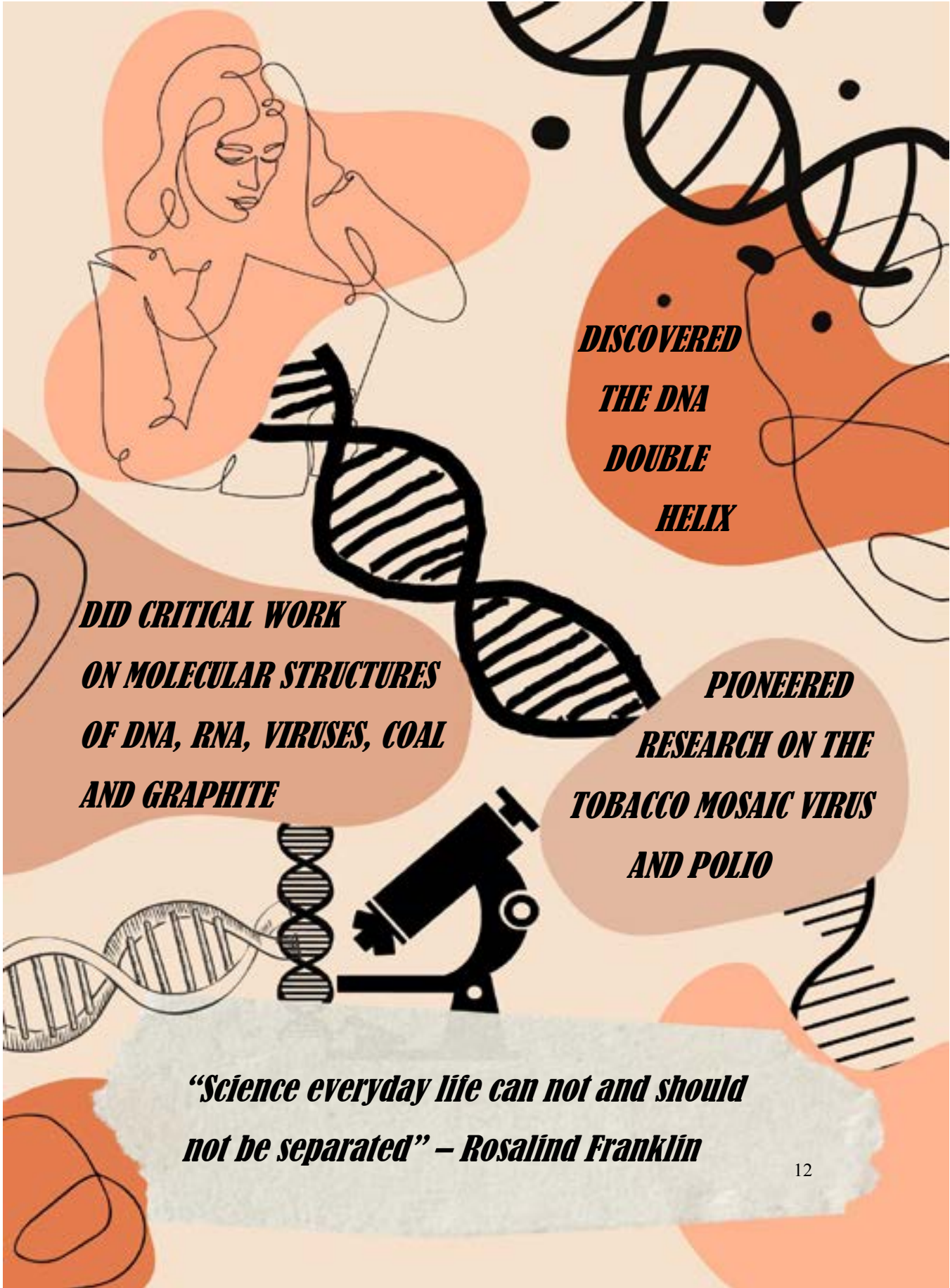
1902 – 1992
Cytogeneticist

Barbara McClintock was born in Connecticut in 1902 and raised in New York City. She earned a PhD in botany from Cornell University, against her mother's desires but with her father's backing.

She began researching in genetics at the University of Missouri in 1936. She was feisty, forthright, and far smarter than many of her male classmates, which made them frightened. If she married or if her male research partner left the institution, the dean threatened to terminate her. That is why Barbara chose to leave the University of Missouri in order to pursue her dream career.

She got down to business at a Cold Spring Harbor research facility. Barbara recognized maize was an ideal instrument for studying genetics since she was captivated by corn kernels of varied colours growing on the same plant. She planted a field of corn and spent hours peering through a microscope at corn cells. She observed that various coloured kernels have the same genes, but they are in different orders. This meant that a gene might "jump" to another portion of a chromosome and switch on and off. The research clarified how animals, humans, and plants adapt to respond to their surroundings.

Barbara gave a lecture in 1951, ecstatic about her finding, but no one believed her. She did not mind because, as she put it, "you do not care when you know you're right". She eventually gained the attention she deserved when she was given the Nobel Prize more than 30 years later.



***DISCOVERED
THE DNA
DOUBLE
HELIX***

***DID CRITICAL WORK
ON MOLECULAR STRUCTURES
OF DNA, RNA, VIRUSES, COAL
AND GRAPHITE***

***PIONEERED
RESEARCH ON THE
TOBACCO MOSAIC VIRUS
AND POLIO***

***“Science everyday life can not and should
not be separated” – Rosalind Franklin***

Rosalind Franklin

1920 – 1958 Chemist and X-Ray Crystallographer

Rosalind Franklin was born in London in 1920. Her father was against women attending university, yet she went on to receive a PhD in physical chemistry from Cambridge.

“What is the shape of DNA?” was the great question of the day. Scientists knew DNA was the building block of the body, but they had no clue what it looked like. Rosalind Franklin, a student at King’s College, was assigned to the case.

She spent hours using an X-ray on the tiny DNA fibres, getting a famous photograph confirming DNA is a double helix. Meanwhile, two other scientists, James Watson and Francis Crick, were attempting to decipher the structure of DNA. They spied on Rosalind’s work without her consent and utilized her results to publish their own work without crediting her. Rosalind fled King’s College’s hostile work atmosphere to continue her study. She advanced to a top research lab and began studying the tobacco mosaic and polio viruses.

Rosalind died of cancer in 1958, at the age of 37. Watson and Crick, on the other hand, were awarded the Nobel Prize four years later. In Watson’s book *The Double Helix*, he made disparaging remarks about Rosalind, while simultaneously acknowledging that he had looked at her data. People began to figure out what had happened, and Rosalind is recognized as a lady who deserved to win the Nobel Prize. Now that we know her story, we can rejoice in everything she has done!

R E S O U R C E S

ALEXANDER LIEBICH

Alexander Liebich is studying for a teaching position at the Julius-Maximilians-Universität Würzburg with a focus on English, Sports, History, and Educational Sciences.

WHO DO I LEARN FROM?

“Who do I learn from?” This question sounded strange to me at first. I think of myself as a competent adult and whatever topic I come across, I have plenty methods of reading up on it. It was only after some time, that I recognized this question as the opportunity it is. A way to thank and appreciate all those who have helped me on my way and recommend them to others.

My favourite way of knowledge acquisition is through videos, as such, most of the resources I am going to recommend are channels on YouTube. I will do my best to categorize them as clearly as possible, but with many fields overlapping and varying content this is hardly possible. The recommendations themselves are bold, with some additional explanation around them, where I find it useful or interesting.

STEM SCIENCE

minutephysics – physics

minutearth - biology

numberphile – math

3Blue1Brown - math

Those channels produce videos that generally only take a few minutes to watch and consist of animation that helps understanding the topic.

Veritasium – physics

SciShow – biology, chemistry and physics

Their videos tend to be longer and focus on the host instead of animation.

SOCIAL SCIENCES & HISTORY

CrashCourse – social science and history

TED-Ed – social science, history and riddles

TED - presentations to various topics

OverSimplified – history

History Matters - history

I have two special mentions for the science category. Both do not fit well into any category, but they are great regardless.

Vsauce is a special mention because their videos are somewhat of a surprise box. It might start with an innocent question like “Why do we have two nostrils?” but you never know where that question might lead to.

CPG Gray is the other special mention. CPG Gray also makes “sciency” videos but those are often more opinion based and less scientific fact. Still, he has an amazing ability to answer seemingly boring questions in an interesting fashion.

POLITICS

LastWeekTonight regularly uploads episodes of the late-night talk show of the same name. Here the host John Oliver tackles a different topic each week. Usually, it is centred around an issue of US society. The show starts by introducing the problem, showing how it is problematic, explaining how it came to be that way and finishing with some thoughts about what can be done about it.

Jung & Naiv is a German channel about politics focused on making politics more known and transparent. They try to attract those disinterested in or disenchanted by politics. They do this by attending and streaming government press conferences, sometimes asking unorthodox questions which might interest the public. They also have an interview series where they extensively talk with all kinds of politicians and personalities.

PUBLIC SERVICE BROADCASTING

I have had my issues with this German government financed service. The amounts they pay for football streaming licenses, the bureaucracy with which they collected their funding and freak incidents, like them demanding back payments from formerly homeless people gave plenty of points for criticism.

Since then, the legislation behind the funding has changed, shrinking the bureaucracy behind it and preventing more questionable and expensive incidents from occurring. The service has diversified and now I am happy to pay my part for independent journalism and education. They provide high quality content that they either sponsor or produce themselves and which is easily accessible on YouTube.

maiLab, Dinge erklärt – Kurzgesagt, and Kurzgesagt – In a Nutshell, are YouTube channels that post educational content. They were deemed good and important in playing a role in education and because of that get funding through the German government. This helps them to focus on their work of producing educational videos and prevents them from worrying too much about money, as a career with YouTube

usually is very unstable and demanding. It also keeps them honest and prevents the need or possibility of third parties inserting advertisements or paying for certain opinions or topics to be shown.

Tagesschau, ARTEde and ZDFheute Nachrichten are channels through which the German national broadcast uploads its content to YouTube.

Tagesschau is a great go-to to get a quick ten minute overview (if you cut sports and weather short) of the news of the day.

ARTEde uploads many different documentaries, multiple times a week and features the format “Mit offenen Karten” which beautifully explains different geographic or geopolitical topics.

ZDFheute Nachrichten contains many different news outlets, talk shows, reports... but the reason I come to this channel is their series “13 Fragen”. In each show a different disputed claim is argued by three people in favour and against it. Those guests are not necessarily the most informed people on the subject, but they often are affected by the issue in some way and provide a sense of how the general public thinks about those issues.

My last YouTube recommendation is not a channel but a playlist. The PBS Idea Channel's playlist **The Guide to Common Fallacies** which consists of nine videos, each focusing on one fallacy. Not only does knowledge about those fallacies increase the quality of discourse one might engage with, it also increases resistance against populist rhetoric and arguments made in bad faith.

I close this segment with a disclaimer. Some of the channels I recommend here didn't withstand the test of time all too well. They might not produce the quality content I know and love them for, but I still recommend them, as they have valuable knowledge within them. You just might have to go back a few years (in their upload history).

BLOG

Der Graslutscher, loosely translates to “grass-sucker”, and might as well be a derogatory term for vegans if it weren't used as a self-description and to make fun of insults and prejudice he encountered. Jan Hegenberg started his blog so he could dispute arguments against a vegan lifestyle simply by linking to his blog instead of repeating himself many times over in online discussion, but the blog became much more.

Nowadays it mostly deals with topics related to the environment. It is well researched and usually comments on badly written or plain misleading articles, explains how biased research might skew calculations

to get the results they want to publish or just contains arguments against some thought or thinking prevalent in society.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Reddit is a website that functions as a tool to create forums within it, so called sub-reddits or subs.

There are many different subs from r/aww, that is dedicated to “Things that make you go AWW! Like puppies, bunnies, babies, and so on.. A place for really cute pictures and videos” to r/TooAfraidToAsk, which is the place to ask “Anything and everything you've ever been TooAfraidToAsk”.

In the frame of learning, I want to focus on two different uses for this website.

1. There are plenty of subreddits dedicated to news, politics, technology, history and so on. Joining those communities will certainly lead to you learning something new every day.

2. There are plenty of subreddits dedicated to a certain political orientation, worldview, or stance. Joining all kinds of communities, especially those you might not align with, can teach you about how those people see the world, argue, and think. I want to name some subs to give you an idea of the communities you could join, r/proguns, r/libertarian, r/prolife, r/antinatalism, r/conservative, r/muslim, r/christianity...

Basically every major political orientation, religion or philosophical stance is represented.

Some caution is advised as such subs tend to be echo chambers and through their censorship of critic and dissenting voices, they create an environment that is prone to radicalize the susceptible, the unknowing and anyone spending too much time there.

BOOK

The Gulag Archipelago: An Experiment in Literary Investigation by Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn is a highly unusual book which is difficult to read. It contains stories, context and experiences the author made and encountered during his eleven-year spanning imprisonment in Soviet forced labour camps. It is not only a historical document, but a study on the nature of man. It gives a voice to those oppressed, unheard and killed, and gives insight into the system causing this and into the humans that created and kept this system going.

CLOSING

There was so much more I wanted to write about and recommend. I wanted a whole other chapter, starting with how learning isn't only about knowledge, but also about values, attitudes, and morals. A chapter, in which I go over the various media that shaped myself and my worldview, but I had to cut all those ambitious plans and reduce my work to the resources you find here. Resources that convey tangible knowledge that I think might be interesting or helpful to you. I want to finish with an honourable mention. An important source of knowledge to me is my father. Nowadays we often differ in opinion, and I would not call him an expert on many things, but even now he is a valuable source of knowledge and one I can always turn to. But especially in my childhood he would explain the world to me and encourage me to have an open and inquisitive mind.

E S S A Y

SOPHIE BÖRDLEIN

Sophie Bördlein is studying for a teaching position at the Julius-Maximilians-Universität Würzburg with a focus on English, Geography, and Educational Sciences.

NOW IT'S HER TIME TO ROLL¹? WOMEN IN DUNGEONS AND DRAGONS

¹ A personal song tip to set the mood: "Your Turn to Roll" by Critical Role (Spotify: <https://open.spotify.com/track/40N0Mpxe-9gPmyxVQ5Zt0Mu?si=705c40da4a234ef9>)

What you are about to read is something very out of the box for me. I want to invite you to dive into one of my favourite hobbies, Dungeons & Dragons. Specifically, watching exceptional actors play Dungeons & Dragons. But since I don't want to make anyone read pages and pages of very niche knowledge on this topic, I have picked a very specific theme that I think fits in very well with this communal writing project: the role of women in D&D streams and the difficulties they face. A little disclaimer before we dive into the topic: This is not a scientific publication. I consciously chose to write based on the personal research I did on this topic long before turning it into a project for this contribution. Thus, there are no academic sources. Instead, you will find my thoughts mixed with videos and social media posts by others. I wanted to use this space to explore a way of knowledge building that is very different from what we are used to at academic institutions.

PEN & PAPER? I BARELY KNOW HER! – A SHORT INTRODUCTION TO TTRPGS¹

I want to give those of you that have never come in touch with the wide field of TTRPGs (Dungeons & Dragons is just one game in this broader genre) a short explanation. Basically, it's a collaborative role-playing game where players act as characters and try to tell a story together. If you have no idea what that could look like, I suggest watching this video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BgvHNlg-mKro&ab_channel=TheDungeoncast. It briefly explains everything

¹ Tabletop Role Playing Games

you might want to know within the first minute, but maybe you find yourself interested and watch a bit further. There are 3 important points that you might want to remember for this paper:

1. D&D is extremely collaborative. The players are *not playing against each other, nor against the DM.*
2. There is no winning condition. The goal is to *collaboratively tell an epic story.*
3. The players don't play as themselves. They create characters and act *as their characters would.*
4. There is no board or set, the players are (usually) not in costume. Everything is narrated and happens in the minds of the players.

While playing D&D is immensely fun and a great pastime I can highly recommend, I did not want to base my contribution here on the games I play myself. First, they are really difficult to describe to someone not involved. Second, they feel weirdly intimate, and writing about them feels almost like betraying the friends I play with.

Instead, I will focus on something that has become immensely popular over the past decade: D&D streams. Basically, what that is is a group of friends playing D&D, filming themselves and streaming this on the internet. And while that sounds quite boring in the beginning, it apparently has a huge appeal to a lot of people. Successful channels have millions of weekly viewers.

Critical Role is one of those extremely successful channels. What started seven years ago as a group of voice actor friends streaming their weekly D&D game is now its own company, with a charity foundation, multiple shows, and the latest project, an animated series based on their D&D game.²

However, the weekly game of D&D is still at the core of the project. What sets Critical Role apart from other streams is a) that their campaigns³ are very long and fleshed out and b) that all of the cast members are professional (voice) actors. This leads to a very immersive experience where you stay with the characters and a setting quite consistently for a long time. This apparently results in a lot of fans forming quite strong connections to the stories and the characters, the sheer amount of cosplays, appreciation posts, fan edits, and fan art is amazing.

² By the way, a little disclaimer: I am in no way involved or affiliated with Critical Role, I am just a huge fan. So while I would always recommend watching their content, please don't view this as an ad!

³ A campaign is a finished story in D&D. One campaign might consist of various storylines the characters go through. Critical Role's first campaign lasted for about 2.5 years, the second one lasted about 3.5.

However, because apparently, we can't just have nice things, with the immense success there also comes hate. And while this is a phenomenon that – sadly – just about every content creator on the internet is familiar with, it takes on an interesting form when it comes to Critical Role: just one of the eight cast members seems to get the absolute brunt of the hate comments and messages.

I only realised this when I watched a TikTok addressing the issue. I was unaware of it, but the video piqued my interest for two reasons: One, I had only ever witnessed admiration and appreciation for all the members, but never hate comments, and two, the player in question was one of my favourites – and a woman.

FLOODED WITH HATE FOR “REASONS”?

The cast member in question is Marisha Ray, professional voice actress, host, producer, and creative director of Critical Role. She has been with the group from the beginning and has had a huge part in shaping both the stream and the company as a whole. But while the whole fan community of Critical Role seems to love every single other cast member, a small but very vocal part of it absolutely despises Marisha.



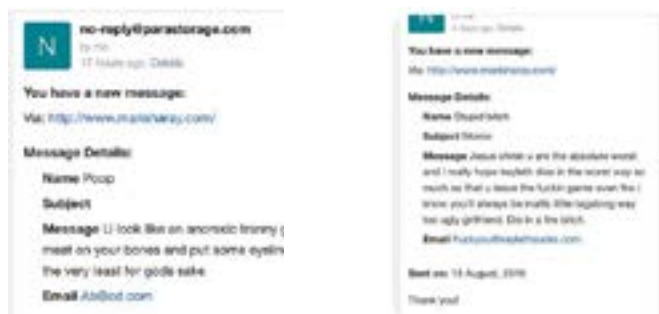
As Matthew Mercer (Critical Role's DM and Marisha Ray's husband) points out in this tweet, hate almost inevitably comes with being in the public eye. And Marisha adds that while people hate her for "reasons", she has come to realise that the hate has nothing to do with her. And I agree. As far as I can see, Marisha presents herself as a perfectly agreeable person, and does nothing that warrants heaps and heaps of hate comments. But then, what are these reasons?

Many fans of Marisha's seem to agree that the root of all the hate thrown against her is sexism. If you are interested in watching some TikTok videos supporting this claim, these QR codes will lead you to

some I find interesting or amusing.



And I have to say, I agree. When diving deeper into it, it becomes quite apparent that the women of Critical Role receive more hateful comments than their male colleagues. While this is something not too uncommon (I think a lot of you will agree that sexism and misogyny still run rampant in frighteningly large parts of our lives) it feels even more prevalent within certain spaces. Despite the recent surge in popularity and its cultural impact, D&D is still very much an epitome of “nerdy” and as such quite a male-dominated hobby. Women are still having a hard time being accepted into many games and are often held to higher standards than their male counterparts. So, unfortunately, no surprises so far. However, the comments Marisha gets are particularly vile. In an attempt to raise awareness for what she is going through, she published two messages she received by anonymous senders in a tweet.



I think we will all agree that these messages⁴ are extremely vile. I could probably fill half a book just dissecting the many, many things that are so wrong with these messages. But I don't really want to give those people that much space. Instead, I want to use these messages to identify a few main points of “criticism” (read: unjustified hate) people might have for Marisha.

1. Her physical appearance
2. Being Matthew Mercer's spouse

⁴ Besides the classic sexist stuff (including a death threat for good measure), we find transphobia and hate against mental illness. Also, I find it immensely weird that someone takes the time out of their day to create an entire email account with the express purpose of harassing one person (the Keyleth the message on the right uses in their email address is the character Marisha plays in Campaign 1). This could probably tell us a lot about that person. But again, I don't really want to pay them any more mind.

Well, I think neither of those are valid criticism. But I still want to quickly write about what I take from this. First, apparently some people feel very entitled to deciding over women's bodies. This is a phenomenon we have been witnessing for decades and decades. Women are expected to dress a certain way, to have a certain physique, and to wear a certain type of makeup.⁵ Sadly, I think that this doesn't come as a shock to anyone, I would probably bet good money on the assumption that every single woman reading this has at least at one time been told to change something about her appearance. Second, some people will find just about any excuse for discrediting women. Marisha and Matt are not the only married couple on the Critical Role team. And yet, I have never seen anyone claim that the husbands are only in the game because of their wives, it always seems to be the other way around. This is something we also find in a lot of other fields. It seems to be very hard to imagine that women have made their own way into certain jobs or spaces. I have heard a lot of stories of women being asked what field their husband did his PhD in when she is the one holding the doctorate. Or of female military members that are accused of abusing their husband's ranks when they introduce themselves by their military rank. Or of female doctors being called nurse. This ties in with another point that comes up very often. Some people take extreme offence when Marisha misinterprets one of the game's rules or simply forgets one, while they happily let slide these same mistakes when they happen to one of the male cast members. Again, I am sure that a lot of women working in male-dominated fields will agree that they feel pressure to be absolutely perfect at their job because they are under so much more scrutiny than their male colleagues. In conclusion, so far, the messages we have seen (and tons of others like them) are disgusting, mean, and horrifying, but nothing new really. Then what makes this case so interesting to me? Well, it's the fact that Marisha is not only receiving all this hate for being herself, but also for her characters.

DON'T HATE THE PLAYER, HATE THE ... CHARACTER?

Remember what I told you sets Critical Role apart from other streams? They are all professional (voice) actors with a lot of experience under their belt. During their sessions – that are about four hours long each – they stay in character for almost the entire time and really embody them. This often leads to them being visibly very connected with their characters. They feel with them, be it joy, pain, anxiety, or

⁵ And I don't even want to start with bodily autonomy when it comes to intimacy, sex, pregnancy, and childbirth. While these are tremendously important issues, I feel like they do not belong in this space here.

grief. It also makes for a very intriguing watching experience. While we are used to seeing characters being played by actors in TV shows and movies, they are always in costumes, in film sets, in makeup and fully embody their characters. Thus, people mostly are aware of the fact that character and actor are different people with different personalities and flaws. Here, however, we do not have this clear distinction. While the actors are role-playing as their characters, we as viewers just see them sitting around a table, wearing their usual clothes, wearing their usual makeup (if they do). Additionally, the players sometimes choose to step out of character, be it to make a meta joke, as a quick relief after an emotionally tense scene, or just because they need to tell their friends something out of character.

I argue that this makes it difficult for some people to distinguish between the characters and the actors, resulting in character traits or flaws being projected onto the actress. Again, this phenomenon predominantly hits Marisha. One reason I read in a reddit post is that while the others chose characters that were somewhat close to their own personalities, Marisha made her character quite the opposite, at least for the first campaign. Furthermore, she was unafraid to lean into the more flawed sides of her characters. The choices she made were often made with the character in mind and not necessarily what would be a clever strategy for the game. This led to people calling Marisha stupid and playing the game wrong. Apparently, they did just not get that she was embodying a character and leaned into the role-playing part of the game more than the mechanics – something she is praised for by her many fans.

But other than not making optimal game choices, what made her characters so offensive to some people? Well, let's circle back to where we started: Sexism. Marisha's characters are both young women seeking their place in the world. And both aren't exactly characterised by excessively feminine traits. Both are deeply insecure and trying to cope with this in different ways. Her first character, Keyleth, is often quite naïve, socially inept, and prone to impulsiveness. Her second character, Beau, hides her insecurities behind a rough exterior, not letting people near her, cursing a lot, acting like nothing could ever bother her. Additionally, both characters are finding their voice throughout their respective campaigns, taking on leadership roles within their communities, and are overall very fleshed out, three dimensional characters. However, this small but loud part of the community reduces both characters down to being annoying, dramatic, and stupid (Keyleth) or annoying, dramatic, and arrogant (Beau). A lot of them even go so far as to reduce Marisha to those things because again, apparently the concept of acting evades them when watching Marisha.⁶

⁶ Funnily enough, the (male) player of a (male) character whose central character trait was arrogance was praised for exactly that. Because apparently, arrogance in a man makes for an interest-

All of this leads me to one conclusion: There is a part of the D&D community that is of the opinion that if they absolutely must permit women to join the community, they have to adhere to very specific standards of femininity and they have to be absolutely perfect in every regard. And if we think about this, the very same is true for our society as a whole.

A SILVER LINING

While this conclusion might seem quite depressing, I want to leave you with a more positive vibe. Remember those messages I showed you earlier? Here's the full tweet and some replies:



And this is not where the support ends. Remember those TikTok videos from the beginning? There are tons of them, speaking out against the hate, showing love, showing appreciation.

This makes me incredibly hopeful. For every rude, hateful person out there, there are so many more willing to protect others, willing to show up, to love, to support others. And I think it's beautiful that these voices are so much louder and so much more visible than those other voices.

I want to finish this up by reflecting on the central topic of our project: How do we construct knowledge, and how do all different forms of writing form our societies?

Well, over the course of my project I realised a few things. One, we don't always need scientific sources in order to learn something. On the contrary, for some matters, the raw, unfiltered, emotional posts on social media might be the perfect way to acquire knowledge about a topic of personal relevance to us. Two, in order to create a positive experience for every member of any community, the encouraging

ting character, whereas arrogance in a woman is inexcusable.

and nurturing voices need to speak up. It is not enough to simply not engage in negative behaviour, positive influences need to be loud and clear. Thus, I have made it my personal goal to use my voice – both in writing and in speaking – to have a positive impact. I am challenging myself to actively express my appreciation and support whenever I come across something I enjoy and to actively counter hate should I witness some. Three, it is important to surround ourselves with these helpful voices. Another contribution to this project deals with friendship. Reflecting about this, I realised that my personal surroundings – friends and family – are these positive voices. I am certain that every single one of them would stand up for me if I ever encountered any hate. And for that, I am very thankful. Four, as we have seen countless times over the course of our seminar, how, what, and where we write matters. So, while some people choose to spend their writing time creating hateful and harmful messages, so many more people dedicate their writing to more positive outcomes. The same is true for reading. While some people linger on harmful texts, others focus on reading positive ones.

Looking at the central theme of our seminar, writing, this is the thought I want to leave you with. What and how we write and read matters. Choosing carefully where we want our energy and mind to go is essential. Not only does it influence us and our outlook on life, but also whoever might be reading what we write. So, I invite you to join me in taking a more mindful approach to our personal writing and reading.

WHERE I LEARNT FROM

To finish up, I want to list all the sources I used for this project. I have not used scientific quotation for two reasons. One, this was expressly written to be more in the style of an essay/a blog post, and not a scientific publication. Two, I have been engaging with this topic for quite some time now and I can not always pinpoint where my thought started and others began. Thus, here is a collection of the texts I used:

<https://your-turn-to-role.tumblr.com/post/613768179638009856/highintlowwis-for-sure-yeah-but-honestly-I> (*An extensive Tumblr post covering why user your-turn-to-role thinks Marisha is often at the centre of hate comments*)

https://twitter.com/marisha_ray/status/974720961160265729?lang=de

https://twitter.com/marisha_ray/status/1340353310025367554

https://twitter.com/Marisha_Ray/status/768289843033976832

(*Marisha's tweets*)

<https://criticalsoul.tumblr.com/post/174459954822/the-amount-of-marisha-hate-i-saw-tonight-really>

https://criticalsoul.tumblr.com/post/174060684554/biwitchofthewest-i-mean-we-all-rave-about-how?is_related_post=1
<https://luckthebard.tumblr.com/post/179348411379/one-of-the-most-obnoxious-things-that-always-pops> (*Tumblr posts appreciating Marisha*)

<https://fairgrovenews.com/5336/opinion/the-unfortunate-treatment-of-women-in-dd/> (*opinion piece talking about women in D&D*)

E S S A Y

CATHRIN LÜDERITZ

Cathrin (*1997, she/her) lives in the in-between of two cultures and is invested in intersectional feminism and anti-racism. She has a teaching degree but is currently pursuing her B.A. in English Studies and Philosophy in Würzburg; her interests lie in Postcolonial Studies, Gender Studies, and critiques of capitalism. Cathrin is fond of any type of art, listens to Indie and Hip Hop, and feels a lot of things.

"ALL OF MY FRIENDS ARE DISAPPOINTED IN THE SYSTEM" AND OTHER THOUGHTS ON TEACHING

A note on the text: To make my thought process and knowledge acquisition visible (because none of it is ever as neat and tidy as the final writing may appear), this essay will have layers and continue to be in conversation with readers via footnotes, a practice I first encountered in Max Liboiron's *Pollution is Colonialism* (2021). The first part of this essay's title is a translated line from Ulysses' song *Alltag* featuring Megaloh. I am thankful to Anna Sandig, whose comments and observations on first drafts of this essay helped me shape its structure, and to Amelie Nordmeyer, whose feedback encouraged me to keep writing. A note on positions because it is important to know where someone is speaking from. The spatial 'where' here indicates the embodied lived experience which shapes and colours one's worldview. I am an able-bodied cis-woman and read as white, which means that I benefit from white, cis, and able-bodied privileges in all areas of life. I was born and have been socialised in Germany, though I am Greek-German. This liminality feels most true to me as neither one nor the other figures as a space of total belonging. I do not have my Greek grandmother's last name (the patriarchy took that when she married my German grandfather), I know that my lived experiences would be

different if I did. Even with a last name that is read as German I do, however, experience othering.

I never wanted to go into teaching. In fact, I had once done an internship at a primary school and afterwards decided it would not be for me. Roughly three years later, I moved states with a 40L backpack and started studying primary school teaching in Würzburg on a whim.¹ I stuck with it mainly because learning new things in a variety of subjects made me curious and later on internships kept me invested. I am to start the next phase of my teacher training, the

¹ This sounds more adventurous than it was. I'd already enrolled for a double major in English Studies and philosophy in Frankfurt when I received a late acceptance from JMU for primary school teaching. My father had convinced me to apply and wanted me to try it out. I remember despairing over the choice (I'm not good with change) and calling my late grandfather for advice, who told me I could always switch subjects and he'd be glad if I didn't move too far. He passed away before I started studying, grief was heavy, and my small hometown began to look unappealing.

mystified Referendariat, in autumn this year. This essay is about my relationship with teaching. Calling it love-hate would be hyperbolic, but this is an attempt at untangling all the feelings I have about it.

Who I Learn From, or Who Teaches Me

In a first reading, I learned from teachers at school, I learn² from instructors at university. At school, my teachers were white, able-bodied, presumably straight and, with very few exceptions, older. In my education-focused subjects, instructors were mostly white, able-bodied, older cis-women. In English Studies, there is some more diversity by comparison. In philosophy, I have had all white and male instructors, with two white women being the exceptions.³ I am pointing this out because it points to who is missing from the teaching body. It also points to the position of those who choose the knowledge we are taught. It is a position of power, one that should be occupied care-fully.⁴ Knowledge is not good or bad per se, but it is never neutral (Castro-Varela & Heinemann, 38f.), it always tells a story. Only telling a single story is not only insufficient, but also dangerous (see Adichie).

My classes on (primary school) education rarely gave me the tools needed to learn, plan, and account for a diversity of students. Every pedagogical and didactical textbook screams 'the body of students is heterogenic!', but besides learner level differentiation there is little imparting of knowledge on how to teach all students.⁵ There is, in my

2 I suppose I could use the past tense here, but I don't want to prematurely view my university days as gone. I look at learning with Sara Ahmed, as a lifelong experience and task (not in the capitalist 'you always have to self-improve' type of way!).

3 I was lucky to choose a seminar on Kant by Dr. Julia Jonas as my first philosophy class at university. Even though the subject matter was not approached critically (and there is lots to criticise about the 'Geistesvater of European racism'), it was formative to witness a woman teach this class. I took more of her classes because the way she taught enabled me to move through the thicket of densely German texts, honeycombed with terminology I was yet to decipher the meaning of. A tenured male professor later told me that it would be good for my studies to diversify, i.e., take classes by other professors too. He did not see the irony. I have experienced most philosophy classes that were not explicitly marked as open for teaching students as very male - both in teaching staff and attending students. I once took a class on Husserl and besides the lecturer I was the only woman in a room full of young men eager to one-up each other philosophically. It was tiring.

4 For me, Johanna Hedva coined this word in their essay "Sick Woman Theory", care-full: with care.

5 In primary schools, this literally means all students because they have not been allocated to the different German school types yet. Learning disabilities or neurodivergence in students are often first diagnosed during primary school because it is one of the first more rigid systems that children are squeezed into. I also specifically mean students that identify as e.g. Black students or

experience, a subject-specific void concerning anti-racist, bias-aware, discrimination-critical pedagogy, which works at the expense of everyone, but especially that of Black students and students of Colour. Recently, writers and educators like Josephine Apraku and Prof. Dr. Karim Fereidooni have published brilliant books on these exact issues in German. Yet the experiences of those affected by racism and other intersectional forms of oppression existed in written and spoken form long before and could have been included in teaching courses. Not representing certain perspectives, embodied experiences, and people in any type of canon or curriculum is more than an individual oversight – it is an institutional blind white spot⁶ that requires systematic changes and conscious, constant individual effort to unlearn. I am beyond thankful for instructors of English Studies who have opened my mind up to authors like Audre Lorde, bell hooks, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o and Sara Ahmed, to postcolonial, antiracist, and intersectional feminist theories.⁷ I am also thankful for the seminars on critical whiteness, intercultural communication, and otherness I could attend via JMU's G.S.I.K. project,⁸ the attendance of which is not obligatory for teaching students and rarely encouraged by instructors of regular modules.⁹

A note on knowledge itself¹⁰: The overwhelming majority of knowledge I have acquired on antiracism and intersectional feminism has been written, spoken, and lived into existence by Black and Indigenous People of Colour, very often women, queer, and non-binary folks. I am pointing this out because it affirms the experience of those affected by racism and other intersections that behind every 'woke' white and cis-gender, straight person is the (often unpaid!) labour of BIPOCs and the LGBTQIA+ community. Three people I have learned a lot from and whose labour has helped me unlearn a lot of things are Rachel Elizabeth Cargle, Latifah Cecilia Ama Cengel, and @teach-rofcolour_ on Instagram.¹¹

students of Colour.

6 I initially wrote 'blind spot' but changed it to avoid potentially ableist phrasing. I am also making use of the title of Mohamed Amjahid's recently published book *Der Weiße Fleck* to shift the focus to those who are in positions of power – white people.

7 Two instructors at JMU who have sustainably shaped the way I think and learn with their input, methods, and the knowledge they chose to share with students are Dr. Jennifer Leetsch and Hannah Nelson-Teutsch.

8 The seminar on otherness (Ich und das Fremde) taught by Melanie Kreuzer in 2019 kicked off my G.S.I.K. journey. It was also one of the first seminars that did not make my social anxiety peak, thanks to her methods. Being able to learn in an environment that does not constantly induce anxiety makes all the difference.

9 Notice a pattern here? I do.

10 Because those who teach me in a first reading are not the only ones, because the knowledge sometimes stems from other embodied experiences than theirs.

11 In an attempt to make their labour and knowledge more

Contrary to what an astonishing number of teachers seem to think, learning does not solely take place in classrooms. Writing about who teaches me would be incomplete without considering all the friends who have been open and critical enough to not take everything as a given, and who have included me in their thought processes or shared their lived experiences. This knowledge is valid. Friendships are crucial in so many foundational ways, but especially for experiencing spaces of solidarity.¹² I am sharing some of mine here to honour that feeling.

Toni Schwier was one of the first close friends I made at university and has introduced me to so many defining theories, writers, and songs. Proofreading her papers was always a pleasure because they taught me what good criticism coming from a queer, feminist perspective, written with postcolonial and disabled studies can do. Devi Bühler, also a first semester friend, has continued to have meaningful conversations about family, culture, politics, and racism in Germany with me. One of the first times I met Nina Wintermeyer, before a night out, she gave me a book to read that really moved me. She has continued to do that, share her witty, snappy writing, her flatmates, and her Persian carpet (the basis for many good conversations) with me. It was at one of Nina's evenings that I met Rebecca Bück, who has shared so much of her embodied intersectional experience, whom I continue to have feminist snaps¹⁵ and conversations on anti-racism and white fragility with. I am thankful for friends like Amelie Nordmeyer, who has been a rock inside and outside of teaching and remains a great person to have angry feminist rants with, and Mona Kunz, best described as a supportive sister in mind. B. O. N. K., who was a friend who understood first, and then trusting enough to be vulnerable about his lived experiences as a Black man in Germany. I am grateful for Andromachi Poulou's feminism and her ways of gently making me feel included in a culture I call mine but barely grew up with. I have shared more meaningful, comforting conversations and tea with Barış Yüksel than I can count and appreciate his mind, work, and kind feedback on poetry endlessly.¹⁴

visible, I am consciously moving these people out of the footnotes. Reading Rachel Cargle's words was my doorway to intersectional feminism and opened up a world of anti-racist thought. I continue to learn from them all.

12 I mean this in terms of (un)learning, affirming each other and recharging. Being a raging feminist is exhausting when you also experience this world as someone oppressed by the patriarchy. Being antiracist is not just posting a black square on your Instagram feed once, it is showing up for the uncomfortable conversations and confrontations every day. Dismantling is heavy and slow work. It is good to feel community.

13 Sara Ahmed's term, I first read it in *Living A Feminist Life*.

14 I have gone over this paragraph multiple times and worried that it is too long, that readers will get bored with reading about people they don't know, that my point will get lost. The point is that knowledge outside of education systems is relevant,

To complete this second reading of who teaches me, or who I learn from, the focus needs to be shifted to the children, the students. The theoretical background knowledge I was taught at university was interesting, but it would not have been enough to keep me interested in teaching as an actual occupation. Teaching is not an easy task, not an easy job.¹⁵ By that I do not only mean the technical acts of teaching, I also mean the surroundings of it – the conflict solving, dealing with excluding classroom dynamics like bullying or racism, knowing that some children come to school every day without a packed lunch, sometimes without breakfast, being told by a child that they do not like the way their body feels when they take their prescribed Ritalin, being told by a P.E. teacher that a child is showing signs of abuse, knowing that some children are traumatised from having to flee a war. I have witnessed every single thing on this list in my internships. These students have taught me that every single child comes into a classroom with a mind and body full of experiences so far from what a lesson plan expects or accounts for. The least a teacher can do (besides intervening and offering support when needed) is allow their students to be human without being punished for it: tired, distracted, anxious, quiet or very talkative, hungry, thirsty.

Children have taught me to never underestimate them. Yes, they are small and might just have learned how to add and subtract in the range of numbers up to 100, but that does not mean that they do not already have an embodied experience or knowledge to speak and ask from.¹⁶ As bell hooks puts it, "any radical pedagogy must insist that everyone's presence is acknowledged. That insistence cannot be simply stated. It has to be demonstrated through pedagogical practices. To begin, the professor [or teacher] must genuinely value everyone's presence. There must be an ongoing recognition that everyone influences the classroom dynamic, that everyone contributes. These contributions are resources." (8).

valid, important and solidarity in friendships is crucial, this is not acknowledged enough in my opinion. So, bear with me.

15 Anyone who has done some teaching in schools or has gained insight into the preparation and follow-up that it requires knows that it is much more work than it seems to be. A friend who is in special needs education recently told me about studies claiming that teachers make up to 200 micro decisions and have to solve about 15 conflicts per lesson (see e.g. Jackson, 1968).

16 If you're in teaching but not doing primary school teaching, feel free to adjust to your (future) students' age. During my first university internship at a primary school, a refugee student sparked a conversation on identity, origin, and Heimat with me that I will never forget.

Who I Learn For, or Who I Will Teach

The short answer to this title is: all of the kids.¹⁷ There, done. The slightly longer answer is that different people have different needs and experiences, stories. So do the children I will teach. I learn for them, to be better than some of the teachers I have had. I learn so that I will not make them feel unrepresented, unseen, unheard, or unsafe. I have briefly grazed upon the fact that primary schools in Germany have to teach pretty much all children because the vast majority has not been allocated to other German school types yet, children with disabilities sometimes represent an exception as parents may choose to send them to schools better equipped and staffed to teach special needs students. This majority of students enrolled in primary schools can include children with ‘undiscovered’ undiagnosed special needs or learning disabilities, children on the neurodivergent spectrum, children with trauma. Studying teaching for a regular school type has not prepared me to properly support and teach these children. In theory, we are told, this is a task for special education teachers or social workers who can support regular teachers in school. In practice, there is a massive lack of financial resources and oftentimes staff – the much-needed cooperation in schools or co-teaching of classes remains somewhat of a lucky exception to the rule.

Yet, there are things regular school teachers can do to create an environment that is, to a degree, safer for these students than the deeply ableist¹⁸ school system dictates. These acts include allowing students to use the bathroom when needed, to drink or eat when they are thirsty or hungry,¹⁹ using methods that do not expose, embarrass, or shame students, being respectful of personal boundaries, not using ableist language, using material that is inclusive and representative of people with disabilities, BIPOC students.

17 Not in the ‘I love children so much’ way. If this is you, I admire you. I like some children; I know there are children whom I will not like just as I don’t like all adults. But I can recognize that all children are deserving of a safer space to learn and grow up in. Safer as in “the school system is racist and ableist and cannot be safe, but I can make my classroom somewhat safer through my practice.”

18 Examples for this: children being forced to sit upright in the same exact position during lessons. Children being allowed to eat, drink, and go to the bathroom only during official breaks. These rules do not teach children patience and discipline, they teach them that their physical needs and instincts are not worthy of tending to. Twitter user @frostaofsnows also mentions “forced physical education, forcing students to speak in front of the class, points taken off of presentations/reading passages for stuttering or fidgeting. Being punished for having meltdowns/”disrupting the class” during class. Lowering marks for not having eye contact in presentations. Not having ramps/elevators”.

19 All of this can be done in a quiet way that does not disturb others, children understand the concept of respect if you set an example in the way you treat them.

Germany has been an immigration country for decades, not just since the government officially called it that in 1998 (Terkessidis, 7). Assuming that classes will only have white-German students without any history of migration is naive at best, problematic at worst.²⁰ Teachers are tasked with educating students, but also with raising, nurturing them. An environment that is unaware of differences or negates them²¹ cannot at the same time be an environment that is critically aware of and sensitive to discrimination. But this awareness and (self-)criticism is what is needed in educational spaces. No one learns well or thrives in fear-inducing spaces. bell hooks writes about her first experiences in desegregated white schools: “School was still a political place, since we were always having to counter white racist assumptions that we were genetically inferior, never as capable as white peers, even unable to learn. Yet, the politics were no longer counter-hegemonic. We were always and only responding and reacting to white folks.” (4). Not addressing racism and issues surrounding it in the classroom does not mean that they do not exist and wreak havoc.²² Rather, this silence confirms what a racist socialization tells white children, that their biases are truthful and need not be questioned, deconstructed. Jeff Kwasi Klein writes that, in a society coined by racism, it seems impossible to isolate children from the effects of privilege and discrimination since non-white children start experiencing racism in early childhood, when white children start learning that their whiteness is the norm and everything else is a divergence from that (8). I want to keep in mind words attributed to Desmond Tutu here: “If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor.”

Anyone who is somehow in touch with, but especially anyone who works with children, has an educational mandate (be it government issued or self-imposed). In an episode of the podcast *Kleine Pause*, the collective We A.R.E. said that anti-racist and discrimination-sensitive

20 If this sounds angry, it is because I am. Society is only going to become more diverse in all manners in the future and getting used to that fact may be hard for some people. Teachers shouldn’t be in that group. Rachel Cargle has taught me the priceless lesson that feeling discomfort when confronted with something new or your own biases is normal, it is what you do with this discomfort, where you choose to go from there, that matters. Professor Edwidge Crevecoeur Bryant has made a similar point in conversations, namely that discomfort can serve as an important learning momentum.

White-German is my translation of Mohamed Amjahid’s “weiß-Deutsch”, a term that names those who like to remain unnamed yet continue to name everyone else.

21 Along the lines of „All children are the same, I don’t see colour/race and anyway, they are too young to have biases”

22 The phrase “love and light will not make white supremacy go away”, which circulates through antiracist social media, comes to mind

education is not a question of good will, it is a duty²³ and that is ground-breaking in some ways: shifting the focus from a discourse that is accused to be about “oversensitive feelings and political correctness only” to facts and legal frameworks changes the dynamic of discussions around it (Schweiß & Schreck, 2021). It suddenly becomes more difficult to argue that anti-racism and discrimination-sensitivity are not needed in education, not obligatory. Anti-racist education of children is about imparting consciousness, encouraging the development of their own (solidary) conduct and enabling the accompanying acceptance of responsibility (Klein, 9). These are values and skills that teachers should be able to get behind.

I like to view the school system, or in a wider sense the educational system, as part of the capitalist society we live in.²⁴ A system that operates on the assumption that it prepares children, students, to at least work a 9-5 one day, implements capitalism into its own structures. It focuses on products instead of creation, outcomes instead of processes, numbers instead of individuals. It also instructs teachers to teach subject matter, so that students can be evaluated on how well they have memorized it (bell hooks, 5). I recently read an educator’s post somewhere, probably on Instagram, saying that the focus should be shifted to the students. At the end of the day teaching should not be about what you teach, but about who you teach. This means that you can very well go ahead and insist on teaching relative clauses or similarly riveting material to a class of twenty-nine tired, distracted students, but it will not do any good. “As a classroom community, our capacity to generate excitement is deeply affected by our interest in one another, in hearing one another’s voices, in recognizing one another’s presence,” writes bell hooks (8). If you teach, it is important to remember that you are teaching humans, not just subject matter. “Seeing the classroom always as a communal place enhances the likelihood of collective effort in creating and sustaining a learning community.” (hooks, 8).

On Systems, Existing and Working Within Them

I have mentioned in passing that dismantling is slow, hard, exhausting work. That observation was mainly made on the system I know best from personal experiences, the patriarchy. It applies to all acts of dismantling, deconstructing, but with added gravity for those

²³ Think of the antidiscrimination law in Germany, the encouragement of democratic values that schools are tasked with, respecting children’s legal rights, protecting children of any form of violence – which should include racism.

²⁴ Not because it brings me pleasure. I have to name-drop Adorno here because his thoughts on late capitalism have not left me since I first read *Minima Moralia* and Dr. Jonas untangled its syntactic and semantic webs for our class.

structures one is personally affected by. This is why community is so important – “but community must not mean a shedding of our differences, nor the pathetic pretence [sic!] that these differences do not exist.” (Lorde, 91). “In our world, divide and conquer must become define and empower” (Lorde, 92), solidarity has to be intersectional, just as feminism does! I am keeping Audre Lorde’s words close once more for the crucial observation that “the master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house [...] they will never enable us to bring about genuine change.” (91). This line of thought then allows me to circle back to Theodor Adorno’s aphorism 18, in which he writes “Es gibt kein richtiges Leben im falschen.” (43) I agree with both of them. What does this mean for teaching though?

These two thinkers have taken up space in my mind time and time again, throughout the past years of my studies. With Adorno, I know that acting rightfully is not really possible in a system that is wrong. However, he also taught me that precisely because capitalism has permeated every area of life, including the education system, there is no way for us to escape it. A fellow student in my philosophy class said something quite demonstrative for this: that falling prey to capitalism is as easy as ordering capitalism critique online, and there it is – the system’s got you. Importantly though, Adorno wrote the aforementioned sentence to underline the difference between the concepts of right and wrong. It is part of his negative dialectic to look at what a concept should mean and then unveil what meaning a term takes on in reality, to exemplify the discrepancy between. The closing line of aphorism 18 is meant to remind us how vital it is not to lose our sense for what is right. That is something to keep, too. Johanna Hedva’s essay *Sick Woman Theory* (2020) is one more piece of writing to hold close, to put up on walls, to re-read until you can breathe again. This part they wrote on resistance especially:

“The most anti-capitalist protest is to care for another and to care for yourself. To take on the historically feminized and therefore invisible practice of nursing, nurturing, caring. To take seriously each other’s vulnerability and fragility and precarity, and to support it, honor it, empower it. To protect each other, to enact and practice community. A radical kinship, an interdependent sociality, a politics of care.” (§6)

With Lorde, I know that no one working within the educational system can dismantle it with its own tools. It is the education system’s tools that perpetuate racism and ableism and I know that working within that system means I cannot fully escape its structures. I will be forced to grade students, to teach a curriculum that is not actively antiracist, to work with colleagues that do not agree with antiracist pedagogy, do not see its relevance and perhaps even make it harder to work against racism and other forms of discrimination within the school. With Angela Y. Davis I know that it is not enough not to be

racist (which would not apply to the education system anyhow), we need to be actively antiracist.

I have had several conversations about the 'brokenness' wrongness of the system(s) with friends. A recurring topic I have discussed with Barış is whether it makes sense to work in a wrong system when working in said system perpetuates and upholds its structures. There is no satisfactory answer here. Yes, a single teacher who changes the way they think and work can have a large impact on a number of children. Frustration and disappointment, anger remains in the answer that it is also important to have people who want change, who think differently, want to disrupt existing structures, work 'on the inside.' Structural change is what is needed, Audre Lorde reminds us. For the personal-political, I find reinforcement in the words of Apsilon: "Bleib' immer unbequem" (2021) and promise myself to sit with all the uncomfortable moments of disruption, while we continue to demand structural change.

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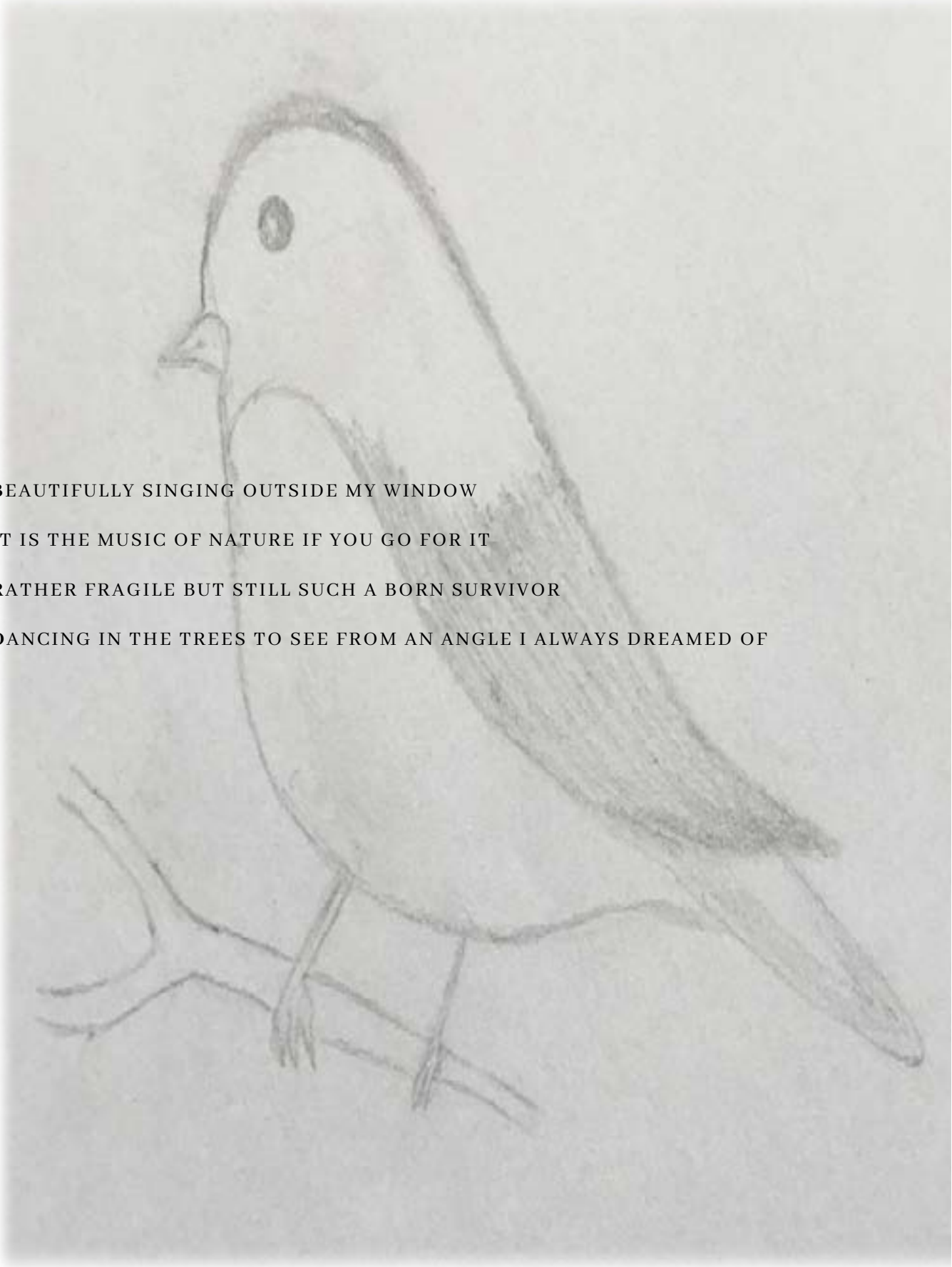
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P O E T R Y

SONJA

PHILIPP

I am studying to become a teacher with the subjects Biology and English at the Julius-Maximilians-Universität Würzburg. In my leisure time I like to ride my bike and I always like to do something creative.



BEAUTIFULLY SINGING OUTSIDE MY WINDOW
IT IS THE MUSIC OF NATURE IF YOU GO FOR IT
RATHER FRAGILE BUT STILL SUCH A BORN SURVIVOR
DANCING IN THE TREES TO SEE FROM AN ANGLE I ALWAYS DREAMED OF



Inner chaos

by Sonja Philipp

Thinking is individual

Helps me to make decisions

Often associated with feelings

Uniqueness of human beings

Generates stress in my body

Hidden information nobody has access to

Tempts me to digress

Stops me from sleeping



Only one drop

by Sonja Philipp

Only one drop

tells so many stories,
good or bad, happy or sad.

Only one drop

seems sometimes so exaggerated
but there is that loss of control
when it streams out in a flow.

Only one drop

can be like an explosion of emotions in your head
until it's gone back.

Only one drop

can be a nightmare or a surprise
depending on the perspective you analyse.

Only one drop

some can understand and hold your hand
others unfortunately can't.
Some cannot allow them to drop
others can't stop.

Only one drop

sparkles in the sunlight so bright
like the sapphire in the daylight.

Only one drop

makes your vision blurry
like fog in a winter night.

As chaotic this poem might seem
it only describes the *feeling* I mean
good or bad, happy or sad!



When do you smile?

by Sonja Philipp

When do you smile?

When you read a good joke

or *when* you see an old friend?

When you listen to music

or *when* you relax on a bench?

When you are on vacation

or *when* you are at home?

When you are with your loved ones

or *when* you are alone?

There are so many reasons to **smile** at least once.

So do not miss the chance!



E S S A Y

ANNE

WATERMANN

Hello, I'm Anne, a 24-year-old student teacher who lives in a small cow village in the beautiful Allgäu. On the one hand, I love spending time in nature. Especially a hike in the Alps with my sweet mongrel dog Ylvie gives me a great feeling of freedom. On the other hand, I am also a real bookworm - so it sometimes happens that I read a thick book within one day.

SURVIVAL GUIDE FOR WRITING AN ACADEMIC PAPER

Almost every student has been confronted with the task of writing a term paper in the course of their studies. Quite a few complain about the heavy workload, lack of support and unsatisfactory grades. Often, students procrastinate diligently before handing in the paper, and just before the deadline, they realise how much work actually still needs to be done in a very short time. This usually results in great stress and days of extra shifts, which can only be survived with the help of countless energy drinks. Especially if you underestimate the amount of work involved in researching the literature, you quickly reach the limit of your endurance, and it is not uncommon for the project of writing a term paper to fail.

In order to get an insight into writing a term paper, to know what tasks you have to do in the course of the work process and to avoid getting into a time crunch, do not hesitate to read this article.

WHAT IS A TERMPAPER ANYWAY?

In a term paper, students should show that they have understood the material of a module and can deal with it independently and

scientifically. A distinction is made between theoretical and empirical approaches. (<https://www.khi.uni-bonn.de/de/textdokumente/leitfaeden-vorlagen/faqshausarbeitreferat.pdf>)

Whereas in a theoretical paper one uses already existing sources to prepare a topic which requires a lot of time and effort. Empirical work, on the other hand, requires that you conduct your own research on an object of study or a specific topic and document these results in writing. (https://welfens.wiwi.uni-wuppertal.de/fileadmin/welfens/daten/Aktuelles/Regeln_f_r_Hausarbeiten_01.pdf)

Experience shows, however, that an empirical term paper is often preceded by basic theoretical assumptions, which must of course be based on selected literature and not simply drawn from thin air. Speaking of literature, not every text is suitable as a theoretical basis for academic work. One should resort to specialist literature, which can usually only be found in libraries or their online index. It is also important to cite every source referred to in your work, otherwise you are committing plagiarism. This inevitably leads to failing the exam and can even be punished by being exmatriculated. The end of a term

paper consists always of a concluding summary in which the central results of the work should be recorded. However, it is also important not to include any new information and to list possible weak points or aspects that have not been dealt with. This is followed by a bibliography or list of figures, in which all sources are written down in detail, as well as a list of appendices, in which all corpora and other materials used in the paper can be found. On the last page of a completed term paper, there is always a declaration of independence, in which you affirm that you have only used the stated sources and that you have marked foreign ideas accordingly.

As you can see, writing a term paper is really no walk in the park. Funny. I'm thinking about writing this blog post as an exam paper. So, I'm sort of writing about how to write a term paper in my term paper. Paradox.

Anyway, in the next section I'd also like to show you how other students feel about writing term papers. Maybe the whole thing sounds much worse than it really is.

MY PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

Unfortunately, my personal experiences with assignments have not always been the best since my 12th grade. It started with the fact that I definitely had the wrong supervising teacher at the time, which meant that I felt completely let down just in the search for a topic. The beginning was already difficult, but believe me, what followed became even more challenging. The supervisors were rarely willing to answer questions conclusively and even when a lecturer at a university confirmed that the topic was far too extensive for a seminar paper from the upper secondary school, they refused to change the topic slightly. (Whereas someone else, at a later date, was able to change his topic immediately and without any problems). In the end, the grade was not very satisfactory and the assessment was simply incomprehensible. The argument that my German was bad basically only turned me against the teachers, as I had consistently achieved top marks in this subject since primary school. As a result of this, my first experiences with term papers were not exactly pleasant. Accordingly, I was nervous when I had to write a paper for the first time at university. I have to say that I benefited from the time when I had to work and research entirely on my own at university. Since the availability of the lecturers at the university is not always guaranteed, which of course is not possible at all, as they have to supervise far more people than for example a seminar teacher in the upper school. Here, however, we students were at least offered help in the form of writing tutorials, which really helped with problematic things like finding a topic, structuring and the formalities of a term paper. However, it

also happened in the past that the reward (i.e. credit points and the final grade) was not in proportion to what had to be achieved in the course of the seminar. If you think about a seminar that ends with an exam at the end of the semester, you know that you can quickly achieve good grades through regular participation and a little learning effort. Furthermore, you know relatively early on whether an exam went well or badly and can thus estimate quite well what grade you will get in the end.

Seminars that have to be completed with a term paper require much more effort in comparison. As a student, you don't just have to attend regularly and study for a few weeks at the end. You have to give presentations, find a topic and, of course, write a 10–15-page term paper that takes a good 1-4 weeks. If this amount of work were the guarantee that at least a good to very good grade would come out of it, then I suppose I wouldn't think so badly of term papers. Unfortunately, it has also happened that the final grade was not satisfactory, even though you did your best to produce a good piece of work. Of course, not every piece of work CAN be perfect, but nevertheless, one is annoyed when the grade does not correspond to the amount of work and one's own assessment.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasise that most of my seminars, which had a written paper as a requirement, remain positive in my memory, even if I will always prefer a written exam to the effort of a written submission.

OTHER STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES

In the course of my work process, I thought I should perhaps gather more opinions on this topic in order to be able to determine whether term papers really do have rather negative connotations, or whether this is merely my personal attitude towards this issue. Therefore, I shared a survey with my fellow students to find out exactly what they think about this topic. Primarily, it was found that the majority had a rather negative attitude towards term papers, which was explained by the fact that it was too much work or that people were not comfortable with scientific work. Most of the respondents would also prefer a written exam or a portfolio to the classic term paper, as the awarding of grades is more transparent here. They also have the feeling that they acquire more knowledge through an exam. Furthermore, a written assignment is simply too tedious for many and the fact that one usually only has to study for a few days or a week at a time for an exam also deters many from writing a homework. More than a half felt inadequately prepared by the teachers and little help was offered when choosing a topic. During the writing process itself, however, the availability of teachers was basically divided. One half always had the opportunity to clarify questions, whereas the other half felt

rather left alone during the writing process, which lasted on average one month. Finally, it should be noted that the grade achieved was satisfactory for 50% of the respondents, whereas the other students would have wished for better.

So, we see that most students have a negative attitude towards homework for various reasons and would therefore prefer to write an exam. However, no clear trend can be observed with regard to support from teachers. This can only be explained by the fact that lecturers are only human, and everyone has different requirements. While one lecturer might simply want to give students a lot of freedom, another might have precise ideas about what the written work should look like. And in the same way, every student feels differently. One person likes to just do their thing without much intervention from other authorities, whereas others need clear guidelines and structure. The same applies to the awarding of grades, which, especially in the case of written work, depends on the personal taste of the supervisor. While a written piece of work is well received by person A, it is more likely to meet with rejection from person B.

ULTIMATE TIPS FOR YOUR WRITTEN ASSIGNMENT

Even though you may have the same attitude towards written assignments as many students, you won't be able to avoid writing one or two during your studies. So that the whole thing doesn't degenerate into maximum stress, and you don't go crazy despite everything, I have a few tips for you on how to get through this phase well (gained through my own experience).

- Start your literature research in good time. If you do it just before the deadline, important books may already be borrowed. In addition, this phase is the one which consumes most of your time, so be prepared to spend a lot of your spare time in libraries or online archives.
- Take part in writing tutorials. Believe me, you will get help here. Especially when you have to write an academic paper for the first time, the tutors will help you find a topic, develop some guiding questions and deal with the formalities.
- Talk to other students from your course. As the saying goes: "A problem shared is a problem halved." You are all in the same position, so support each other and feel free to ask for feedback on any writing you have already done.
- Don't put off your writing process for too long. Believe me: You don't WANT to write a 15-page term paper and create a table of contents and a list of figures within 3 days. It's better to be ready a few days before the actual submission date, because then you

have time for my next tip.

- Let uninvolved people read your work. Especially people who have nothing to do with your topic should also understand what your term paper is about. Only then can you be sure that all the facts have been presented clearly and understandably.
- It is really not advisable to work for more than one hour at a time. On the one hand, your concentration will diminish after a while, and on the other hand, you are a person with social needs. After an hour, take a short break of about 15 minutes and after another hour you should switch off. So go outside with your friends or to a restaurant, have a drink, read a book or cuddle your pet. THEN you can start concentrating again.
- Double and triple save your results. How annoying would it be if several days' work suddenly disappeared because your PC crashed or you accidentally quit your writing programme?
- DON'T PANIC! Many before you have managed to get through this phase reasonably stress-free and even if the grades don't always live up to your subjective perception, that feeling of liberation when the work is sent off is well worth it.
- Find a supervisor who suits you! It is better to work on a topic that you do not find ideal than to have to spend half a year interacting with a lecturer with whom the chemistry is not really right.

SUMMARY

I would like to emphasise once again that it depends very much on you as a person whether you can cope with writing term papers. Likewise, a lot stands and falls with the lecturer and his or her requirements. Are you someone who needs little support from others and prefers to do your own thing? Then look for a supervisor who offers you exactly that. But don't be disappointed if you have to find a topic and do your own literature research. Do you need structure and a lot of guidelines to be able to work well? Then it is advisable to find a teacher who sets strict rules for homework. However, you should not expect to be able to realise ALL of your ideas, because not ALL impressions can be included in a given framework.

Take your time when preparing written work and allow yourself enough breaks; I myself have already had to complete two submissions in such a short amount of time that there was not even time to proofread everything. THAT is not a good feeling – trust me.

And finally: Be understanding with your lecturers. They are only people with limited time and have other things to do than answer hundreds of emails a day. It is also a fact that tastes differ. So don't be too disappointed if a paper that you would give a 1* is graded lower.

E S S A Y &
P O E T R Y

ANNA HERCHER

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AS BAD AS I THINK

I don't know when it started but I've come to mourn the person I was in the past. As a child, the smallest things make you happy. Quite insignificant things really. And as you get older you don't even think about them anymore. Seeing a white-covered world after the first snow in winter, getting a red fire truck toy for Christmas, getting sung to on your birthday, playing in the puddles after a rainstorm. You're excited about life. Always on the hunt for your next adventure. I was like that too once upon a time. Too naïve to recognize the world for what it really is.

And now. Now everything seems bleak and hopeless.

I don't understand why we try so hard to build a worthy life for ourselves if we're just going to die anyway. And what in God's name is a 'worthy life'? A life in which we measure our value on our achievements rather than living for contentment? Some people aren't meant to do great things and they don't have to, to be considered a success for the human race. But we're stuck in these social confinements. And in the end, they don't help us. They destroy us one after another. Maybe they helped a while back, but not anymore.

When I was younger, I always wanted to be grown-up, be an adult. Because I wanted the wisdom every older person seemed to have. Now I wish I could turn back time. I want my old carefree life back. Because sometimes living an ignorant life is the greatest mercy life can give you. Oh, to live another second in this bubble of youthful naiveté. What a dream! But one can't get that back. Everywhere I look I see all the bad in the world. Hate, violence, and prejudice are all around. It's easy to get sucked into this rabbit hole of wrongdoings against all kinds of people. All because they don't look the same as you, they don't believe in the same things as you, they don't have society's preferred gender, because they love who they want to love without paying attention if it's acceptable in our world. That's not fair. Who are those intolerant people to judge millions of strangers for the way they live their lives?

Women get harassed and assaulted on the street, in clubs, in school, at work, in the supermarket, at the gym, and even at home. Everywhere they go they're potentially in danger. And if something happens, nobody believes them. It gets swept under the carpet. They have disadvantages in almost every aspect of life. Job inequalities and negligence

in medical care for women are prevalent. And that's only a small part... Minority groups get ostracized from society. They have to live with racism similarly to how women have to deal with sexism and the patriarchy. Online, with the family of friends and loved ones, on their way to work, at their job they have to face xenophobia and bigotry and even the law works against them in some countries. But not only obvious situations of hostility based on skin colour and origin are an experience all those people have to deal with. Everyday racism like the question 'Where are you REALLY from?' or people who don't even try to pronounce foreign names the right way or the imprudent use of discriminatory language is omnipresent for People of Colour. All that just because they don't fit the Eurocentric standards of western society. And that's only a small part...

The LGBTQIA+-Community has to fight against narrow-mindedness and intolerance on a daily basis. Being assaulted, sexualized, and outlawed from society is only a small part of their reality. 'Abnormal and unnatural'. That's how they get insulted in the middle of the street while doing nothing to provoke anybody. Some establishments refuse service for same-sex couples, but two friends of the same gender are no problem for them. And that's only a small part...

Something you don't understand doesn't mean it's bad or dangerous. It simply means it's new to you and that does not justify you being evil and malicious to the people who don't fit your 'normal'. You could inform yourself and after that, if you still don't get it, the least you could do is accept people for who they are and for how they choose to live their lives. They don't hurt anybody, and you shouldn't either. So, tell me how can somebody who doesn't know about those wrongs, who isn't sensitized to the ubiquity of those offenses, care about them? They can't. You don't get invested in the lives of other people. You don't feel helpless when you realize you can't do anything about it. Because you don't notice. You simply don't know any better. And the people that do know... bear the greatest burden of all humankind. You see what's wrong and what needs fixing in the world, but you can't change it. It's not that you're incompetent, you just can't modify how the world works. But that's exactly it. It doesn't work. I mean at least for most people it doesn't. Those who could help, who have the means and the power to help. Well, they choose not to. It doesn't matter to them because they profit from this broken world. They build their lives and success on the crumbling pieces of this earth and don't even care. As long as it works for them the world doesn't need changing. But what about everybody else who's suffering, who's barely surviving. Living in a corporate world with far too many jobs that only pay minimum wage. Running in the rat's wheel of 9 to 5 jobs, not going anywhere. Working from lease to lease and uncertain how to feed themselves and their families. Until you die. As I said...Surviving not living.

There's so much wrong in this world and every problem is connected to another. Talk about intersectionality. It's a tightly woven system and it seems like if you want to better one wrong you also have to improve the other ones. You basically have to change the world. And who can do that? Nobody. It's impossible.

That's why I grieve my former self. With my knowledge which is still very limited, I don't think I can be truly happy someday - maybe awareness is more fitting than knowledge. How can I when there's so much suffering and injustice? It seems like an unreachable goal to erase all of the wrongs. And maybe that's not even the end goal because as cheesy as it sounds 'without darkness there can be no light'.

Also, if I'm being honest, I don't think I want to be happy. I want to be content. Because happiness is a fleeting emotion, a reaction to events but being content is a state of being. Admittedly with ups and downs but that's the exciting part. You'll never know what...

A loud honking snaps me out of my thoughts. I wince. I'm still sitting on the park bench where I sat down earlier. I look to my right in the direction of the road and see a red fire truck winding its way through the narrow street. That's surely where the booming noise came from. My gaze glides back to the park in front of me and lingers on a couple. They're having a picnic about ten meters to my right. They look so unconditionally in love and infatuated with one another that even I as a stranger get happy for them. Oh, to share the little insignificant things with somebody. One has their arm wrapped around the other and gives them little kisses between feeding them snacks. Suddenly a dog runs through my line of sight. Chasing a toy thrown by its owner. After bringing it back, the dog jumps joyfully up and down anticipating the next round. Behind the big open space is a fenced-in playground. Between the fence boards, I can see a little girl comforting a boy who has fallen off the swing. She awkwardly pats his back.

I close my eyes and breathe in and out. Somewhere above me, I hear the twittering of birds. I wonder what they're singing about. A woman is talking on the phone to my left. '...I'll be back soon, darling. Okay yes...love you, bye.' The sweet smell of coffee tickles my nose. It's the cup I bought a quarter of an hour ago at Café Rosalin at the corner of my apartment complex. It's still warm in my slightly cold hands. I keep my eyes closed for another moment and enjoy the warm spring sun on my face. The corners of my mouth pull up into a smile and I take another deep breath in and out.

Maybe the world isn't so bad after all.

DUPLICITY

I wish I wasn't living in a world where
"you fight like a girl" is used to say someone's weak, and
"you've got balls" is a way to describe courage, where
"Boys will be boys" is used to relieve BOYS of responsibility for their
own actions and justify bad behaviour, whereas
"Girls just mature faster" is a way to deny GIRLS the same leniency.

I wish I wasn't living in a world where
a female breech baby is described as stubborn and a handful whereas
a male baby is just cosy and doesn't want to leave the comfort of the
mother's womb, where
baby clothes for boys say "Little Man Big Ideas" whereas clothes for
girls say "Little Girl Big Smiles", where
a lot of sexual partners make HER a slut and HIM a ladies' man.

I wish I wasn't living in a world, where
a man can be angry, but a WOMAN can only be crazy, where
when a man does something he's strategic while a woman who does
the same thing is calculated, where
a MAN is allowed to react, but a woman can only overreact where
a man can be firm, and a woman can only be stubborn.

I wish I was living in a world...

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**THIS PROJECT WAS SUPPORTED AND MADE POSSIBLE BY MARYANN SNYDER-KÖRBER AND
THE DEPARTMENT OF AMERICAN STUDIES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF WÜRZBURG**

ISBN 978-3-945459-44-7 | DOI 10.25972/OPUS-31700



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