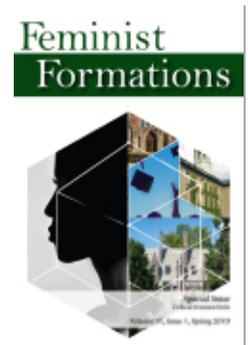Introduction: Critical Mobilities in the Neoliberal University

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Introduction: Critical Mobilities in the Neoliberal University

Marta Maria Maldonado and Katja M. Guenther

This special issue of *Feminist Formations* centers on the politics of the movement of feminist scholars within, across, and out of academic institutions, or what Patti Duncan (2014, 56) has called "academic migrations." Too often, feminist scholars relocate or are relocated as a response to discrimination, bullying, harassment, and/or hostile work environments. Such relocations may involve changing departments/units or institutions, or leaving academia altogether. Contributors to this special issue ask how and why feminist scholars circulate within, across, and sometimes out of academic institutions, what factors drive these movements, and what the meanings and consequences of their movements are at various scales. We seek to address the continued need for critical reflection on the experiences of scholars "from the margins" in academia, and of critical mobilities, specifically exits and reroutings.

Our collaboration on this topic originated at the annual meeting of the Pacific Sociological Association (PSA) in Portland, Oregon, in 2017. Anchored in the work of PSA President Karen Pyke, the theme of the meeting was "Institutional Betrayal: Inequity, Discrimination, Bullying, and Retaliation in Academia." We were there to take part in a panel discussion Katja had organized about the exit of feminist sociologists from "traditional" sociology departments, and the "lateral" move into (presumably) critical interdisciplinary units such as women's and gender studies and ethnic studies. The room was full. The audience included graduate students and faculty members at different stages of their careers. One of the contributors to the pathbreaking volume *Presumed Incompetent* (Gutierrez y Muhs 2012) was present in the audience. Panelists and panel attendees engaged in animated conversation. There were more questions than answers, and so much more to say than what could be included in one conference panel. In fact, we realized that a whole conference was not enough space.

We can now speak of a growing literature that centers the experiences of women of color and other marginalized groups in academia and calls for institutional and structural analysis and transformation as necessary responses (see, for example, Ahmed 2012; De Welde and Stepnick 2014; Chaterjee and

Maira 2014). The day before our PSA panel, another well-attended panel had revolved around discussion of how *Presumed Incompetent* developed, and why it had been so well received. As Kieu-Linh Caroline Valverde (2014) wrote in *The Feminist Wire*, "Few texts in recent years have had such a rippling effect in the non-self-reflective world of academia, and the book has inspired a tsunami of support for change within the system." The popularity and prominence of published works on the challenges women of color and other marginalized groups face in academia is no accident. They have resonated because they reflect the lived experiences of many. They have provided tools for women of color and other historically marginalized groups within academia across fields, academic institutions, regions of the United States, and internationally, to connect the dots across what might have initially seemed disparate individual experiences and to begin examining patterns of shared experience.

One thing that became clear through our panel exchange is that academic exits by critical feminist scholars in connection or in response to institutional betrayals are a recognizable and perhaps all-too-common experience, especially for women of color. The conversations held in Portland around exits and institutional betrayals felt both urgent and unfinished. A key premise that motivates this special issue is that there are particular institutional and structural constraints and conditions that impel the moves and exits of critical scholars, especially of those who occupy marginalized social locations through their embodiment of nondominant ethnoracial and gendered characteristics, identities, and histories. This focus thus differentiates this special issue from the broader body of work known as QuitLit, through which scholars share their stories of leaving academia, often for personal reasons or due to the impossibility of securing a tenure-track position after completion of their graduate training. Also, the consequences of moves and exits are likely to be different for critical scholars from marginalized social locations than for "mainstream" scholars occupying dominant social locations, who may move across institutions to increase their status and/or compensation, or who might leave academia for more lucrative work in the private sector. Although the movements of mainstream scholars are often celebrated as evidence of their marketability, administrators and colleagues routinely code the exits of critical feminist scholars negatively, as evidence of personal failure of those who exit, or even as confirmation of presumed deficiencies that dominant ideologies of race, sexuality, gender, and ability ascribe to entire groups.

Neoliberalism and the Mobilities and Exits of Critical Feminist Scholars

It is impossible to speak of critical exits within and outside of academia without noting that colleges and universities in the United States have become institutions that both reflect and reinforce neoliberal principles such as consumerism and the commodification of public goods (Seal 2018). The analysis we center

here is especially relevant at this historical juncture in which we witness the embrace of neoliberalism in the US (and many other) academic contexts. We start from the premise—supported by the work of the authors in this volume—that neoliberal policies and practices, including the rise of academic capitalism, routinely push certain bodies—individually and collectively—to either conform to or exit academic contexts. Many faculty and students have been displaced through the closure of entire programs of study that administrators have deemed unprofitable and/or too contentious, or face problematic work conditions as university administrators disinvest in or withdraw support altogether from programs they do not see as pulling their weight in terms of campus profitability and/or marketability. Austerity measures instituted during the Recession of 2008 have yet to be fully lifted and/or have become the new normal, while institutions of higher education continue to demand more and more tuition from students, feeding a ballooning student debt crisis while also validating students' conceptualization of themselves as consumers of an education that is a product/commodity that should lead to their future financial security.

Through the neoliberalization of higher education, colleges and universities have moved away from an emphasis on the public good and toward marketization, profitability, and an individual consumer model (Brown 2011). This includes the unapologetic push to monetize both knowledge production and learning, often at the expense of critical undertakings. These market-centered rubrics have come to replace earlier knowledge claims used to keep some kinds of scholars outside of academia. That is, while historically many colleges and universities resisted the establishment of critical departments like ethnic studies and women's and gender studies based on purported concerns about the intellectual merit of those departments, today, administrators and even other faculty routinely criticize such departments for their lack of "market value." In addition, all too often, the existence of such departments/disciplines is taken to mean that work on issues of inclusion and social justice is already taken care of or no longer needed; critical frameworks are siloed within universities and otherwise ignored, while minoritized subjects are absorbed/assimilated into dominant structures (see Ferguson 2012). Furthermore, these same academic units that foster critical analysis of the broader sociocultural context are more likely than other units on campus to engage a critique of capitalism and of the corporatized practices of universities directly and explicitly. This too enables the characterization of critical units as "problem units" unwilling to follow the agenda that the corporatized university seeks to advance.

These shifts and challenges affect many scholars, staff, and students, and critical scholars are particularly vulnerable. Overwhelmingly, those programs that administrators target for cuts, or allow to atrophy through deliberate disinvestment, are critical and humanistic in orientation, and are highly likely to be comprised of faculty who are critical scholars and from underrepresented groups. Faculty in these programs are also most likely to experience increased

workloads as staff support shrinks, and as they often provide vital mentoring and support to queer, feminist, and nonwhite students, resulting in what Meghan Krausch (in this volume) refers to as *critical feminist exhaustion*. Being subjected to chronic devaluation of their academic and service labor, as well as the belittling of their fields of study, contributes to increased work stress and, for some, early departures from their institutions, or from academia altogether.

Although tenure-track jobs remain coveted, the working conditions for critical scholars continue to deteriorate with no end in sight even as movements like #BlackLivesMatter and #MeToo demonstrate the continued importance of and need for critical scholarship on class, race, gender, sexuality, and (dis) ability. In a recent article published on Alternet, Shannon Weber (2017) notes,

> Some of the most cutting-edge and politically engaged scholars of our age are leaving higher education or being pushed out. Young academics who graduated from one of the growing numbers of PhD programs in women's and gender studies, ethnic studies, and other interdisciplinary programs—programs that typically trace their histories back to social movements for marginalized populations and which explicitly state their commitment to advancing social justice—are finding their futures in the academy untenable.

Importantly, the challenges of neoliberalism are not limited only to scholars in critical disciplines, but also to scholars within "mainstream" disciplines who push their disciplines in more critical directions, whether through their scholarship and/or simply by being who they are. It is precisely these scholars who are routinely marginalized within their fields of study. In response, administrators sometimes move (or push) faculty to departments and programs such as ethnic studies or women's and gender studies, from which colleges and universities often divest. In other cases, faculty themselves initiate or request relocation to escape hostile work environments and/or to join programs that better match their critical orientation (this was both coeditors' experience as they moved from sociology to ethnic studies and to gender and sexuality studies, respectively).

Neoliberalism produces campuses as segregated spaces in which material contrasts and investments and disinvestments are marked and visible. Concomitantly, hierarchies of academic fields are (re)produced along the lines of profitability. Administrators tend to concentrate resources on departments that are most profitable by virtue of industry partnerships and/or that have access to more and larger grants (usually STEM), to the detriment of less profitable departments and programs, such as the humanities and some social sciences. Further, too often, the less profitable departments are put at the service of the most profitable, being charged with providing students in wealthier departments with "diversity" courses that are often treated as marginal requirements and detours or distractions from "real" research and scholarship. STEM students are sent over to the departments that "do social justice" and then return to fields that remain resistant to embracing social justice issues as pertinent or integral

to their substantive work. In this way, an artificial separation between STEM work and critical engagement with race, gender, and other social relations of power is routinely created, maintained, and taught.

The hierarchical organizing and routine practices of segregation of disciplines and knowledges within the university has consequences for the experiences of critical scholars, and potentially impels various types of departures. In STEM fields, those who seek to center critical perspectives are subject to ostracism and harassment; to exercise critical consciousness requires working in a sort of disciplinary exile, as described by Donna Riley in her contribution to this volume, "Pipelines, Persistence and Perfidy: Institutional Unknowing and Betrayal Trauma in Engineering." She writes,

> (E)ngineering as a disciplinary site . . . routinely and categorically expunges critical feminist scholars and thought, in a broader context of violence and its insistent denial. Engineering does this so absolutely, in fact, that on an epistemic level it does not and cannot recognize critical scholarship (that is, if it does so, it ceases to be viewed as engineering). When reflection and critique are rendered impossible or inconceivable within engineering, that leaves no room for feminist existence or thought within. To engage in feminist reflection and critique of engineering is by definition to stand outside its bounds, that is, to exit.

Knowledge rooted in the experiences and perspectives of marginalized groups is deemed as peripheral or unimportant, and the work of faculty and academic units that center such knowledge is effectively devalued. Natasha Behl, in her contribution to this volume, similarly reflects on how the discipline of political science routinely fails to acknowledge or accept the work of critical scholars who attempt to shift ways of knowing and of writing in the field. Her scholarship, too, is a type of exit from the discipline, because the discipline refuses to acknowledge the kinds of work she and other critical scholars do *as* political science.

Julia Jordan-Zachery (in this volume) speaks of a type of exile she experienced as a Black woman in academic spaces, one which troublingly reveals the persistence of racial inequalities in academia, in spite of universities' purported commitments to diversity.

> Citizenship in the university is by invitation only and some of us remain "undocumented" regardless of the degrees we accumulate. . . . Being the "other" in academia has afforded me opportunities to gaze back at academia in a way that allows me to see the legacies that make this an often hostile place for Black women who seek to produce knowledge, especially knowledge focusing on Black women.

Although exclusion impels critical feminist exits, under the ubiquitous influence of capital, individual exits and collective exits—or exoduses—are explained away in terms that Eduardo Bonilla-Silva has characterized as

"abstract liberalism" (Bonilla-Silva 2001; 2018). Narratives about critical feminist exits ignore the various forms of systemic and interpersonal violence these scholars endure in favor of explaining them away as the "natural" result of market dynamics of supply and demand (e.g., certain units just do not attract enough majors) or by mobilizing individualistic explanations (e.g., an individual faculty member had a negative personality, was not productive enough, was a bad fit for the department, etc.). Colorblind/racist, sexist, heteronormative, and ableist ideologies thus dissipate the heat generated by the movements of critical scholars.

While it is feasible that some moves and/or exits by some academics might result from individual faculty's personality issues or lack of productivity or fit, the tendency to use individualistic or psychological explanations alone to explain reroutings and exits entails a type of analytical laziness that leaves unexamined institutional and systemic factors. Individualizing explanations typically let institutional actors and practices off the hook, rather than problematizing what institutions and their power holders could or should do differently (see Duncan 2014). The papers in this special issue illustrate critical exits as an outgrowth of institutional and structural practices, while situating them within theoretical and empirical frames that acknowledge the preeminence and centrality of race and gender as structuring forces shaping both academic institutions and knowledge production processes. Because of the various ways in which these exits occur and the diverse consequences they have for individual faculty, we refer to them as exits. "Exit" captures the possibility of agency, the sense of movement, and the act of leaving behind, while also invoking an important form of protest (see Pfaff 2006).

Anti-Intellectualism and Regressive Politics
(Part and Parcel of Neoliberalism)

Scholars within critical departments are devalued often to the point of being completely ignored. This is particularly problematic at a time when these same scholars are targets for online and in-person harassment from alt-right actors and organizations, another form of violence that is disproportionately directed at critical feminist scholars. In the present climate of regressive politics, when "alternative facts" often circulate freely and unchecked, right-wing groups scale up their attacks on higher education. It has become common to hear news of progressive scholars facing scrutiny, harassment, and even physical threats for making political statements (or empirical statements about how power works in society), or simply for their work focused on social justice (Ferber 2018; Kerr 2018; see also Riley in this volume). In the past, faculty who are women, people of color, queer, or trans have mostly worried about disrespect from students or from colleagues in dominant social locations. With the advent of new social media platforms and the mainstreaming of the alt-right—a movement of far-right

activists including white supremacists and neo-Nazis who rely heavily on online platforms—feminist and race-critical, anti-imperialist faculty increasingly find themselves targeted by so-called Internet attackers who post hostile or even violent material. Alt-right bloggers and "journalists" share stories mocking and belittling the intellectual work done by critical faculty while also using hate speech against them.

Beyond the very serious concerns for personal safety, this newer issue is deeply troubling as a matter of academic freedom, since the increasingly hostile public climate to critical knowledge may stifle some scholars from speaking out about their work, and may even shape entire research agendas. Online harassment is a powerful strategy for limiting academic freedom and public scholarship through threat and intimidation. Critical scholars often have an explicit commitment to public scholarship and to scholarship that is reflective of and responsive to the marginalized. Attacks on scholars by the far right can specifically interfere with the dissemination of work that is particularly relevant to marginalized communities. Among those scholars who depend on federal funding, being targeted by the alt-right may place their work in financial peril at a time in which funding opportunities for critical research and scholarship are already few and far between.

Equally troubling is that colleges and universities have often done little to protect or defend their own students and faculty from such attacks. In effect, some faculty have been terminated from their positions or unhired after making public statements or have faced the threat of termination. Even as colleges and universities pressure faculty and programs to work on "branding" themselves more effectively to attract students, donations, and corporate partnerships, they may do little to stand between cyberattackers and the faculty who are their targets. As Abby Ferber (2018) reports, a majority of faculty whose experiences with public targeted online harassment she documented believe their institutions were primarily concerned with lawsuits and unwanted public attention, and offered, at best, haphazard responses to their own faculty members being harassed. The consequences of being targeted in this way are severe; Ferber recounts the responses of faculty who have endured public targeted online harassment:

> We all felt betrayed, violated, shocked, and vulnerable. We had words and materials pulled out of context and shared with the world. We all felt both mental and physical trauma. One woman reflected that it took her two months to move away from the physical manifestations. Some found it difficult to do anything for the first couple of days due to the shock, trauma, and flood of e-mails. Some faculty felt their entire semester became a disaster and found it hard to focus on work. One person explained that for weeks afterwards they were just "trying to recover from having been laid out on the line." Someone else described it as "physically revolting, I still feel that physical

response. When something triggers that experience, my mind goes to that place." (Ferber 2018, 309)

The absence of a coordinated response on the part of colleges and universities heightens the feeling of vulnerability and leaves some faculty feeling abandoned by their institution. The lack of appropriate and proactive institutional response, a type of institutional betrayal, is also a silencing mechanism—who would risk another online attack, knowing that no one will defend them? We may also increasingly see exits in response to such attacks, particularly if universities continue to fail to stand up for faculty who are attacked.

Silences, Silencing, and Critical Exits

The process of putting together this issue was revealing in both expected and unexpected ways. We sought to be inclusive across a variety of contexts and experiences, inviting submissions from scholars across disciplinary and interdisciplinary spaces, as well as scholars with different types of relationships to higher education (e.g., graduate students, adjunct faculty, researchers, tenure-stream faculty, administrators, those in community colleges and four-year institutions). Ultimately, however, our volume disproportionately represents the voices of tenure-track and tenured women scholars from the humanities and social sciences in four-year universities. We believe that these scholars were perhaps best positioned to respond to our call: they are likely located in disciplines that recognize and reward this sort of publication as meaningful and in fields or units that have furnished them with a vocabulary for analyzing critical feminist exits.

Dissemination of the call for papers for this special issue among scholars in the sciences elicited no submissions. While we cannot speak categorically about the reasons for this silence, we cannot help wondering if it is, at least partly, symptomatic of a system of rewards within STEM disciplines that does not count or value critical examination of the racialized and gendered politics within (see also Riley, this volume). We suspect that science scholars who might have had something to say about critical exits and reroutings might have felt that a contribution to this issue would just take time away from the work they are expected to do, and that is recognized and rewarded within their discipline, or may even have felt trepidation knowing that publishing in this volume could prove injurious to them in their department, discipline, university, or even in cyberspace. Admittedly, in recent decades, STEM fields have shown increasing concern with questions of diversity and inclusion, as illustrated, for example, by a number of National Science Foundation ADVANCE initiatives in college campuses across the nation. These initiatives have helped institutions work on strategies for increasing the representation (numbers) of women and people of color and address issues related to the institutional climate facing women and racially minoritized students and faculty in STEM. However, deep and

continued engagement with the question of how STEM disciplines and scientific knowledge are routinely racialized and gendered remains an unrealized and elusive goal (Morimoto et al. 2013).

We suspect the low rate of submissions from nontenure-stream faculty reflects some overlapping issues. Adjunct faculty may see little reward from, and in fact may even be penalized for, writing a piece that focuses on their critical exits. These faculty are especially vulnerable to criticism and attack from students, colleagues, and outsiders, and are probably the least likely to be protected by the institutions they work for, which may also have contributed to reticence to reflect on critical feminist exits in an open forum like this special issue.

We learned from the extensive inquiries we received from prospective authors about impediments to submission that have resulted in important silences in our volume. We feel that it is important to address these silencing factors and to at least start to give voice to those who experienced them here. Several scholars contacted us to express their support for the volume and, in some cases, to share their personal stories of critical feminist exiting with us, but did not submit papers for consideration because they had signed nondisclosure agreements as part of financial settlements with colleges and universities that had employed them. While we understand why individuals consent to sign such agreements, as they have become a legal norm in the United States and elsewhere, we are deeply troubled by employers' widespread demand for nondisclosure agreements in settlements pertaining specifically to workplace harassment, bullying, hostile work environment, and exclusion. Their use ensures that the experiences of victims/survivors remain hidden, making it difficult, if not impossible, for peers, colleagues, and institutions to respond to allegations in ways that could improve working conditions for current and future employees. Further, the entire history of the problem is functionally erased, allowing colleges and universities to deny the ongoing presence of problems. The practice of nondisclosure agreements undercuts transparency and re-silences victims/survivors through the assertion of legal-institutional power (Prasad 2018).

Another source of quiet in bringing the issue of critical feminist exits into view is trauma. Critical feminist exits may be liberatory for some scholars, but for others, they constitute a powerful trauma, particularly when they are in response to harassment, bullying, exclusion, and/or involve institutional betrayal. These forms of violence in academia have serious repercussions for those who are victimized: their hard-earned professional standing and reputation may be damaged, they may lose or be forced out of jobs, and they may face any number of personal threats, including threat of legal action, harassment online or in person, and stalking. Each and all of these can result in emotional reactions and psychological effects, including fear, anxiety, sleep disturbances, fatigue, attention issues, and more.

Because the perpetrators in academia are also often people who the victim/survivor initially trusts, such as academic colleagues and administrators, the

sense of betrayal may be particularly acute, which can escalate the experience of trauma (Smith and Freyd 2013). As Smith and Freyd (2014, 576) note, "[I]nstitutions (e.g., workplaces, schools, religious organizations) have the potential to either worsen posttraumatic outcomes or become sources of justice, support, and healing." Likely most critical scholars who end up exiting experience some form of institutional betrayal, or institutional responses to trauma that increase traumatic effects (Smith and Freyd 2013, 2014). It is then not surprising that we heard from a number of prospective authors who felt they were not yet in a place to talk about their traumatic exit, or who felt that writing and trying to analyze their experiences would be too upsetting, but who wanted us to know about their support of the volume. Clearly, institutional and individual violence are all too common experiences for critical feminist scholars. We want the voices of critical feminist scholars who were not yet in a place to submit to this volume also to be heard. We hope they find resonance in the volume's several pieces, including those by Riley, Krausch, Heineman, Behl, and Jordan-Zachery, that engage with exits as an outcome of the many manifestations of everyday violence to which women of color, queer, and other marginalized scholars (and people more broadly) are subjected.

Another set of voices absent from the volume are those left behind. When critical feminist scholars leave their departments or disciplines, the ramifications extend well beyond themselves as individuals. While we were not expecting to hear from those left behind, we also want to acknowledge the harm done to those departments and disciplines who lose critical scholars here. When critical feminists exit, individuals and institutions experience repercussions. For colleagues and students, critical feminist exits can mean the loss of valued collaborators, allies, teachers, and/or mentors. The absence of their voices may facilitate the continuation of problematic practices. Without critical feminist scholars, the production of knowledge will continue to skew toward accepted, dominant methods and theories. The ruptures created by their departure may make it more difficult for a department or university to recruit and retain feminist and race-critical scholars in the future. For disciplines, the implications are just as serious and problematic: when critical feminist scholars reorient their work from mainstream disciplines to ghettoized disciplines, the influence of their thinking and knowledge is likely to be diminished within the mainstream disciplines. The venues in which they publish, the conferences they attend, the students they mentor, and the intellectual and advocacy projects to which they commit may shift, moving them further from the mainstream discipline, which then loses the benefits of their contributions.

Mapping the Volume

The seven articles in this special issue illuminate the varied mechanisms of critical feminist exclusion and place those mechanisms within broader institutional

and structural contexts. We begin the volume with Donna Riley's "Pipelines, Persistence, and Perfidy: Institutional Unknowing and Betrayal Trauma in Engineering," in which she analyzes her experiences as a queer feminist engineering faculty member by attending to how institutional ignorance and betrayal operate simultaneously. Riley's analysis also centers the politics of knowledge production; her work as a feminist engineer and her efforts to use engineering for social justice have been ignored or rejected by some colleagues, and even subjected to online attacks from the alt-right. Riley discusses how some colleagues ceased to see her as a "real" engineer as she continued to advocate for different ways of thinking about core concepts, like rigor (Riley 2017).

Meghan Krausch, a nonbinary feminist sociologist, interrogates their experiences as an assistant professor in a public institution where, as across institution types, critical feminists are subjected to what they call critical feminist exhaustion. This exhaustion emerges from significant investments of time, energy, and emotion in feminist pedagogy, mentoring, service, and scholarship, investments that reap few rewards in academia and that often are even subject to penalty. Like Riley, Krausch experienced institutional betrayal when they became the victim of violence. They identify the many ways in which their experiences as a scholar, teacher, and victim/survivor reflect the current problems within higher education as support for critical scholarship erodes.

Jenny Heineman argues that sex workers occupy a unique position from which to disrupt dominant dichotomies in academia, and calls upon them and their allies to engage in disobedience. Her contribution to this volume, "Pussy Patrols in Academia: Towards a Disobedient, Sex Worker Inclusive Feminist Praxis," problematizes how institutions of higher education rely on Cartesian dualism in positioning sex work as exploitative and education as empowering. She draws on the experiences of thirteen sex worker academics to illuminate how sex working academics are marginalized and rerouted away from studying sex work.

Julia Jordan-Zachery's essay "Licking Salt: A Black Woman's Tale of Betrayal and Survival" discusses her experiences of existing *in the margins* of academia, as certain histories, perspectives, and epistemologies are routinely exiled or expunged from the academic enterprise with emotional and intellectual consequences, including the ever-looming threat of "soul murder" for marginalized scholars. Jordan-Zachery locates her own sources of resilience and strength for navigating and surviving race-gender trauma and institutional betrayal in academia within Black feminist praxis. Her articulation of Black feminist praxis connects the work of critical scholars to the everyday wisdom rooted in "Black womanness" that she learned from her grandmother, long before she entered academia. In this way, she interrupts dominant notions of what constitutes legitimate knowledge, and bridges the artificial gap between home and academic space, between scholars and the broader communities in which they are rooted.

The exploration of scholarship from and in the margins continues in Natasha Behl's piece, "Mapping Movements and Motivations." Behl uses auto-ethnography to trace multiple epistemological and methodological choices she has made, which challenge dominant paradigms and normative expectations in political science. She envisions these disciplinary departures as a form of critical exit that can possibly, hopefully, function as a rerouting of political science itself. She identifies an experience of racial violence her family encountered post–September 11, 2001, as a personally revealing moment that motivated a set of questions and commitments for her, specifically a concern with understanding the racialized and gendered politics of violence in the US and around the world. Her discussion, like Jordan-Zachery's, interrogates an entrenched resistance in the disciplinary context of Political Science to engage certain questions of power and to consider connections between the personal and the political.

Mildred Boveda's article, "An Afro-Latina's Navigation of the Academy: Tracings of Audacious Departures, Re-Routings, and Intersectional Consciousness," discusses the sustaining and marginalizing forces that have motivated her various critical academic migrations. She connects de/colonizing trajectories in academia to broader de/colonizing struggles and contexts. One historical premise anchors her reflections of her own presence and experiences within the US academy: the exploitation of Indigenous people and the transatlantic enslavement of Africans financed the establishment of institutions of higher education (IHEs) throughout stolen lands, the westernization of universities around the globe, and the privileging within academia of epistemologies from the Global North. Like Jordan-Zachery, Boveda draws parallels and highlights intersections between feminist epistemologies and practices at "home," specifically, her mother's exits (and corresponding rationales) within and outside the Dominican Republic, and her own navigations within westernized academia. She thus tracks the origins of her own critical feminist consciousness both in and out of the confines of formal academic spaces.

Finally, Michael Eng's contribution to this volume, "Diversity Work and the Narcissisms of Affective Exits," explores the use of affect by faculty of color and female- and LGBTQ-identified faculty as a means to exit from the contemporary neoliberal University. He argues that there is an impulse among faculty to make students into narcissistic objects in order to compensate for the injury of affective depletions inflicted by the University. He theorizes and encourages us to reflect on this as a mode of affective exit encouraged by the neoliberal University that helps perpetuate institutional misogyny and racism.

The book reviews in this special issue explore the ways in which the neoliberal university shapes the experiences of critical scholars and the ways in which scholars, in turn, seek to resist and continue advancing feminist, antiracist, queer knowledges and potentials. April Lidinsky reviews *Power, Knowledge, and Feminist Scholarship: An Ethnography of Academia* by Maria do Mar Pereira (2017). She highlights Pereira's point that those who already have a

foothold in academe are the ones who need to do the culture-shifting work on behalf of those who labor on the margins. Stephanie Rivera Berruz offers us her reading of *Feeling Academic in the Neoliberal University: Feminist Flights, Fights, and Failures*, edited by Yvette Taylor and Kinneret Lahad (2018). She discusses the volume's focus on the ways in which "neoliberal economic practices have come to shape, contort, and impact what it means to be an academic, and more important, what it feels like to be in the academy." Natchee Barnd provides a review of *The Equity Myth: Racialization and Indigeneity at Canadian Universities*, by Henry et al. (2018), in which he finds "valuable lessons for those wanting to understand the complex relationship between equity and difference, as well as the ways that progress in social practices and policies are neither linear nor ever complete." Kali Furman reviews *Beyond Gender: An Advanced Introduction to Futures of Feminist and Sexuality Studies*, edited by Olson et al. (2018), which she tells us "provides (readers with) rich interdisciplinary perspectives on the history of feminist and sexuality studies and practical applications of future directions in the field." The poetry by Melissa Tennyson connects and expands several themes in this volume: collective experiences of silencing and marginalization, but also of resilience, the material realities faced by the most vulnerable classes of academic workers in neoliberal times, adjunct and part-time instructors, and the impossibility of being a critical scholar and disengaging from the broader everyday realities of racialized, gendered, classed struggles and injustice. As we reflect on our presence and critical work within an academia that often resists our histories, our ways of being in the world, and its own transformation, may Tennyson's words hold true:

> May courage weave its strong web
> over our wounds
>
> may joy surprise us as we shake off sleep
> in the morning light
>
> may we find each other, and the path to
> the home we never knew
>
> may we paint our lives in the colors
> of laughter
>
> may we know that
>
>> our survival is our blessing.

Future Directions

The movements of critical scholars within and without academia are symptomatic of everyday institutional practices and structural processes that routinely work to expel or destabilize critical work. Exits are often, though not always,

deployed as a form of a resistance. Sometimes exits are simply a survival strategy. Much is yet to be learned about the mobilities and immobilites of scholars from groups that have been historically marginalized. For example, while for some, mobility (changing directions, making lateral moves/rerouting, exiting) is a possibility, what happens to those who are unable to move, who experience immobility? What are the consequences of immobility for critical scholars? Sara Ahmed (2013) speaks of feelings of depletion; Jordan-Zachery (in this volume) talks about "soul murder." What are the collective implications of the emotional depletion and death of the souls of critical scholars?

Holding academic institutions to task on questions of inclusion and social transformation necessitates an ongoing commitment from scholars to produce empirical research and analyses of the everyday workings of academic institutional contexts. We need work that reveals the ways in which ideologies of class, race, gender, sexuality, and ability continue to operate on a day-to-day basis, in an academia that touts a purported commitment to diversity. Within this broader agenda, we see a need for institutional ethnographies that document the narratives mobilized by various institutional actors, such as peers, supervisors, administrators, those in "sending units," and those in "receiving units" (to mirror language from migration scholarship) following the exits and movements of critical scholars. Through examination of such narratives, we would be able to dissect ideological content and institutionalized mechanisms that maintain the status quo, as well as fissures that offer opportunities for institutional transformation.

While we recognize the serious challenges associated with redirecting higher education away from the neoliberal model and toward real and meaningful engagement with feminist and antiracist praxis and with broader questions of democracy and social justice, the work included in this volume highlights the many reasons why we must take on the political and intellectual project of exposing the workings of power within academia and how inclusions and exclusions are produced and reproduced. At a time when neoliberal and neoconservative interests seem to have gained unprecedented ground in both political and academic discourses, obfuscating the historical and material realities of those in the margins, nothing but unabashed resistance will do. The articles in this volume provide a range of powerful examples of spaces and forms of resistance, including resistance to disciplinary conventions, paradigms, and methodologies rooted in colonial, patriarchal, and racist worldviews. Critical feminist scholars reject the separation of academic/scholarly knowledges from the knowledges that exist in our communities, and, like Jenny Heineman in this volume, call for epistemic disobedience to break down dominant dichotomies and the structures of power they help uphold.

Of continued importance is work on critical feminist exits with a focus on interrogating the narratives of administrators and calling for congruence between stated commitments to diversity and actual practices (and

demonstrating, speaking and writing, denouncing forcefully the lack of congruence where it exists). We call for proactive, rather than reactive, approaches to issues within departments and disciplines, particularly through emphasis on cultivating collaborative and desegregated academic cultures within which understanding social relations of power is integral to all fields.

One immediate step that can be taken to open up space for these narratives is demanding that universities no longer ask for nondisclosure agreements when settling legal cases with faculty, staff, and/or students who have made allegations of harassment, bullying, or a hostile work environment. Faculty unions and associations could be among those to lead this call for change. The argument against such agreements should be particularly compelling for public colleges and universities given broader expectations of public accountability; however, private institutions should also willingly lift the cloud of secrecy around these settlements and end the practice of silencing survivors of harassment, bullying, and hostile work environments.

The study of critical exits remains integral to the project of an antiracist, antisexist, antiheteronormative university. These efforts require self-reflection about our own responses to neoliberal pressures and the push to conform. Most academics have been intensely socialized to participate in neoliberal higher education, endorse competition, celebrate "celebrity" scholars, and embrace higher education's self-created myth of equal opportunity and intellectual freedom. Many have experienced significant rewards for their participation in this system, and for their participation in other structures of privilege. We need to move away from the pretension that academic spaces are above the processes that happen in other institutional settings.

Accomplishing this will require raising consciousness. The narratives of critical feminist scholars can prove central in this endeavor. This is where we see the importance of telling our stories from the margins, and denouncing in thoughtful detail with nuanced documentation and analysis the forms of institutional betrayal we have experienced and the impacts these have had on us as individuals and on members of our families and our broader communities. In the words of Meghan Morris (quoted by Giroux 2002, 457), "Things are too urgent now to be giving up on our imagination."

Note

1. The preparation and revision of this introduction and the special issue was highly collaborative and reflects equal contributions from both editors.

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