



Embodying Asylum

Feminist bodies, places, politics

Feminist Asylum Editorial Collective

ABSTRACT

Introductions to the second issue of Feminist Asylum: A Journal of Critical Interventions

KEYWORDS

White supremacy, academic racism, policing the bodies, women in exile, trespassing, Gülden Özcan



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EMBODYING ASYLUM

It is with joy and sadness that we launch our second issue: The joy is there as we continue with our collective efforts in all the stages of the publication. The sadness is with us as May 11, 2023 is the first anniversary of Gülden Özcan's passing away. As we also noted our excitement and joy about being able to launch this long-dreamed-of journal is bittersweet. Dr. Gülden Özcan (Canada), one of the founders of this journal, passed away on May 11, 2022, due to complications from breast cancer.

Gülden actively participated in the process, from brainstorming about our preliminary ideas to settling on a name for the journal, organizing discussions, recruiting new members, drafting policy papers, and deciding the themes of the first four issues. Gülden was a Kurdish feminist academic and activist and mother of three-year-old Ekim. Although her life on this earth proved to be short, she touched many people's lives. She was one of those rare persons who can align her academic, intellectual work with her activist concerns.

As in the first issue, this issue of *Feminist Asylum*, too, opens with a special section dedicated to Gülden, and because of Gülden's commitments, this section also launches the theme of this issue: Embodying Asylum - Feminist Bodies, Places, Politics. The texts in this section, are from a panel on honoring Dr. Gülden Özcan: Activist and Intellectual Legacies, held on November 14, 2022 within the scope of Women Scholars' Speaker Series 2022-2023 theme: The University and Its Worlds. Except for Simten Coşar's talk in the panel, which was lost to the abyss of computer-related complications, all talks are included in this issue. We will be adding Dr. Coşar's talk if it can be retrieved from the abyss. The texts speak to Gülden Özcan's engaged scholarship in social justice related critical work in sociology. They attest to feminist knowledge as a continuum embodied in experiences that spatially, temporally and bodily correspond to various modes of exile and asylum. As in the first issue, in this issue, too, we write to come to terms with this loss as well as to register Gülden's important contribution to the work of this journal. Şafak Altan, Simten Coşar and Nihan Kuzu translated the texts to Turkish.

After the special section we continue with two original feminist texts that address white supremacy in everyday politics of knowledge production. Our dear Gülden Özcan's succinct analysis of the interrelated workings of racism, colonial extractionism and policing. We would like to thank Dr. Caroline Hodes and Dr. Glenda Tibe Bonifacio, the editors of *Racism in South Alberta and Anti-racist Activism for Change* and AU Press for their generous sharing of this valuable contribution, free of charge. Gülden's contribution is followed by an equally valuable feminist contribution by Caroline Hodes on the intertwined domination patterns among white supremacy, colonialism, ableism and misogyny in North American academic institutions. Hodes contributes to this issue not only as a member of our editorial collective but also as a feminist academic activist/activist academic who puts her own experiences with white supremacy in academic networks into the wider spectrum of feminist knowledge production as a mode of political resistance against racism, ableism, white male supremacist claims. It is our contention that her piece is a modal example for feminist auto-ethnographic intrusions into exclusionary, maleist, dominating forms of knowledge production that claim universality. Simten Coşar translated both texts to Turkish. Nevertheless, as translation is never the work of solely the translator

the editorial collective read and re-read—and hence, re-wrote—the translated versions of the texts.

Our second issue is enriched with voices from the fields of exile in prose, poem and visual forms. Elif Akgün Ateş narrates her exile days as a Kurdish feminist. Umut Güneş shares her powerful account of the road to exile; she does so through the experiences of women with different ethnicities, languages and social backgrounds who coincide on the exile road. Güneş' narration merges prose with poetic instances. Finally, Didem Yıldırım comments on how women's bodies

feature in various forms in exile, embedding photos from spaces of exile. Yıldırım also shares her poem in this issue. Our second issue closes with Elif Miral Oktay's photo from İzmir, Turkey. This photo was taken within the scope of the project titled *Squatter Women's Right to the City: Urbanity, Participation, Experience* carried out by Leyla Bektaş Ata and supported by the Raoul Wallenberg Institute in 2019. It hints at symbolic extensions of exile as lower class women's precarious relations with spaces. That is why we name the photo: As women trespass...

We share our second issue as a welcome to Spring, as the season that embraces differences, transitory and fluid identities, symbolizing rebirth, re-generation and vibrancy. We think this season matches perfectly to our feminist claims to embody asylum in knowledge production as well as all those subjects who, in one way or another, are forced out and/or to the margins. It is our contention that in doing so we dare to trespass, cross borders, manipulate and hopefully, distort them. It is our hope that we translate our experiential knowledge to speak to different and never static identities.

We hope to step into that ambiguous space of what Ruth Behar, in her *Translated Woman: Crossing the Border with Esperanza's Story* (2003, 299-300) points as intersecting biographies of different women: 'Part of the project of feminist ethnography should be, I think, to question the studiously distant translations of women's lives across borders that have been such standard fare in anthropology. Susan Sontag noted years ago, in an essay about Lévi-Strauss that "the anthropologist, as a man, is engaged in saving his own soul." The anthropologist, as a woman, can forget about her soul. For me as a Woman professor engaged in the project of "writing culture" with another woman less privileged than myself, I feel it crucial to challenge how, as a woman, I am scripted into the discipline that gives me permission to script my comadre's translated tongue. To do any less than this, it seems to me, is to become a talking serpent making a revelation that, in the end, does not make any difference.'

REFERENCES

Behar, R. (2003). *Translated woman: Crossing the border with Esperanza's story*. Boston: Beacon Press.

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