

We Go Around in the Night and Are Consumed By Fire.

The "Lesbian Gaze" and feminist politics of (in-)visibility using the example of Jules Grant's novel „We Go Around in the Night and Are Consumed by Fire“

Autonomous Seminar at Goethe University Frankfurt a part of the curation of the queer-feminist festival Nocturnal Unrest, based on a contribution by Eva von Redecker and Lucy Duggan

*What is a lesbian?
A lesbian is the rage of all women condensed to the point of explosion.*
- Radicalesbians, 1970

*The energy required to keep going
when you keep coming up against these structures
is how we build things, sometimes,
often, from the shattered pieces.
Lesbian feminism can bring feminism back to life.*
- Sara Ahmed, 2017: 41.

Contact: Caro Zieringer and Helene Röhnsch | info@nocturnal-unrest.de

This AT pursues two goals: Methodically following feminist traditions in the widest sense, we combine (pop-cultural) literature and social theory/politics. Based on the book "We Go Around in the Night and Are Consumed by Fire", which we will read together in the AT, as well as various primary and secondary texts, we will deal with the politics of (in)visibility, especially in current queer-feminist discourses, considering lesbian feminism in particular. The texts in this reading list are to be understood as suggestions that give structure to the seminar. Both at the beginning and over the course of the semester we can discuss where your respective interests lie and select additional/other texts to read together.

To begin with, we will deal with historical and current texts that thematize and/or outline discussions and positions on politics of (in)visibility in (lesbian) feminism. Special focus lies not only on the history of lesbian feminism, but on the writings of Black Lesbian Feminist Audre Lorde, who has been of extraordinary importance for several strands of the pluralist feminist movement of the 20th century (and arguably the 21st, too). These texts also serve as a point of orientation for the joint reading of Jules Grant's novel "We Go Around in the Night And Are Consumed by Fire", whose plot is located in places of twilight, invisibility, and darkness. The narrative unfolds as readers follow the lesbian protagonist Donna, "gangster" and driver of a cleaning van. She lets us see the world through her eyes. Is it lesbian seeing? Is there something like a lesbian gaze, we ask ourselves with Eva v. Redecker's like-named text which is based on Grant's novel and inspired this seminar. Lucy Duggan's response to Eva von Redecker from a bisexual perspective further stimulates the discussion about visibility. We are concerned with gaze regimes and the question of how we experience the world differently, mediated by our gaze - and that of others. What does it mean for a society and for intersectional feminism if we do not all see the same world? Can "different" ways of seeing be learned? How is seeing "othered"? Is it possible to write "lesbian gazes"? Eva von Redecker and Lucy Duggan will join us for this discussion in February.

Towards the end, we shift focus once again by turning to the meaning of the night and darkness in the novel and as well as a cultural association of invisibility: What is the meaning - literally and metaphorically - of the night? What kind of transgressive potentials lie in darkness, if at all? On the one hand, the aim is to ask "what it means that the night is always depicted as a female body", as Elisabeth Bronfen (2008: 20) puts it [our translation]. In how far is invisibility gendered? That said, we deepen

the intersectional focus of the seminar, asking further questions about the entanglements of gazes, (in-)visibility, gender and darkness.

Therefore, we conclude by questioning the racist connotations and racializing functions of night, darkness and invisibility in literature, that function to stabilize whiteness, through Toni Morrison's book "Playing in the Dark". At the end, we're left with the (open) question as to the impossibility/possibility of returning the gaze, something we'll discuss together with bell hooks' "The Oppositional View". Collectively, we'll wrap up and take a look back at our joint seminar.

All of the texts deal with different relations of power and violence in our society. In case certain forms of violence, such as transphobia or racism, are treated in explicit detail (i.e when recounting the trans-exclusionary history of parts of the feminist movement) in specific texts, or if arguments of the ideologies associated with them are paraphrased we have added a corresponding content note, so readers can be prepared for potentially distressing reading experiences.

Please feel free to contact us by e-mail at any time if, related to the seminar, there occur any problems or if you would like to talk to someone (even if this person should be someone other than the seminar organisers).

Novel

Grant, Jules (2016): We Go Around in the Night and Are Consumed By Fire. Myriad Editions.

15. Nov., 14:00-15:00	Preliminary Meeting
1	<p>Herstories of Lesbian Feminism: Lesbian Feminism in the 20th century</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Radicalesbians (1970): The Woman-Identified Woman. https://www.historyisaweapon.com/defcon1/radicalesbianswoman.html - Banerjea, N./Browne, K./Ferreira, E./Olasik, M./Podmore, J. (2019): Introduction: transnational ruminations on lesbian feminisms. In: Dies. (Eds.) Lesbian Feminism. Essays Opposing Global Heteropatriarchies. London: ZED Books, 1-20. → Note: This texts speaks about transphobia, transmisogynie, and homophobia. - Winter, B. (2016): Radical Lesbianism. In: The Wiley Blackwell Encyclopedia of Gender and Sexuality Studies. Wiley. → Note: This text speaks about transphobia, transmisogynie - Grahn, J. (1971): Gedicht 'A history of Lesbianism'. https://allyourprettywords.tumblr.com/post/132892457798/a-history-of-lesbianism-judy-grahn <p>Additional Material: Historical outline of the "Sex Wars" addressed in the texts above surrounding questions of pornography, sex work, power relations in the Western feminist movement of the second half of the 20th century, complete with a power-analytical critique: Allen, A. (2001): Pornography and Power. In: <i>Journal of Social Philosophy</i>, 31(4), 512–531.</p> <p>Film ‚Lesbian Avengers Eat Fire Too‘ by Janet Baus and Su Friedrich: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o4o0tZPETAc</p>

<p>2</p>	<p>Anger, Power, Eros: Audre Lorde on the Power of Black Lesbian Feminism</p> <p>Chapter 1-10 from „We Go Around in the Night“</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lorde, A. (2009): I am your Sister. Black Women Organizing Across Sexualities. In: Byrd, R.P./Betsch Cole, J./Guy-Sheftall, B. (Hrsg.) I am Your Sister. Collected and Unpublished Writings of Audre Lorde. Oxford University Press, 57-63. - Lorde, A. (1984): The Uses of Anger. Women Responding to Racism. In: Dies. Sister Outsider, Crossing Press. → Note: The text speaks explicitly about experiences of racism. - Lorde, A. (1984): On the Uses of the Erotic. The Erotic as Power. In: Dies. Sister Outsider. Crossing Press. <p>Additional Material: Film: 'Audre Lorde. The Berlin Years' by Dagmar Schulz. For rent on: https://vimeo.com/ondemand/audrelorde</p> <p>Lorde, A. (2009): Turning the Beat Around. Lesbian Parenting 1986. In: Dies. I am Your Sister. In: Byrd, R.P./Betsch Cole, J./Guy-Sheftall, B. (Eds.) I am Your Sister. Collected and Unpublished Writings of Audre Lorde. Oxford University Press, 73-80.</p> <p>Ginzberg, R. (1992): Audre Lorde's (Nonessentialist) Lesbian Eros. In: <i>Hypatia</i>, 7(4), 73-90</p>
<p>3</p>	<p>Lesbian Feminism Today (anglo-american world and Germany)</p> <p>Chapter 11-20 from „We Go Around in the Night“</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ahmed, S. (2018): Lesbian Feminism. In: Dies. Living a Feminist Life. Duke University Press, 213-234. Optional: Intro 1-18 and Killjoy Survival Kit 235-250. - Kuhnen, S. (2007): Schrödingers Lesbe. In: Lesben Raus! Für mehr lesbische Sichtbarkeit. Berlin: Querverlag, 11-17. [this text is only available in German] <p>Additional Material: Talk only available in German: Linkerhand, Koschka (2019): Warum ist feministisches Streiten so schwer? Vortrag vom 16.08.2020. Abrufbar unter: https://www.geschlechtergerechtejugendhilfe.de/20200816_Warum-ist-feministisches-Streiten-so-schwierig.mp3?fbclid=IwAR3aSc3HgOw-jG4qHwAjEc2b83ABgjWgBAdk0Kqs6ciCjVGpfdemPWaadA</p>

4	<p>Lesbian Seeing and the Second Face: Lucy Duggan and Eva von Redecker visit</p> <p>Chapter 21-30 from „We Go Around in the Night“</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Redecker, Eva von (2020): Lesbian Seeing. www.nocturnal-unrest.de/2020/11/02/lesbian-seeing/ - Duggan, Lucy (2020): Translator’s note. Second Sight / das zweite Gesicht. www.nocturnal-unrest.de/2020/11/02/second-sight-das-zweite-gesicht-translators-note-on-lesbian-seeing/ <p>Backgroundtext: A classic on the topics of gazes and optical regimes, written by film scholar Laura Mulvey who addresses the interrelations of gazes, (inter-)subjectivity, the visual and (female) bodies. Mulvey, Laura (1975): Visual Pleasure and narrative Cinema. In: <i>Screen</i>, 16 (3), 6–18.</p>
5	<p>Is Invisibility like Darkness? Gender and Race at Night</p> <p>Chapter 31-40 from „We Go Around in the Night“</p> <p>Either</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bronfen, E. (2008): Sexuality and the City at Night. In: Urs Stahel (Ed.) <i>Darkside I. Photographic Desire and Sexuality Photographed</i>. Fotomuseum Steidl, 106-111. (engl. Version in the second half of the .pdf) <p>Or</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bronfen, E. (2008): Verkörperungen der Nacht. Nyx und ihre kulturellen Nachtbilder. In: Beat Wyss, Markus Buschhaus (Hrsg.) <i>Den Körper im Blick</i>, 19-33. [Only available in German] - Morrison, Toni (1933): <i>Playing in the Dark. Whiteness and the Literary Imagination</i>. London: Random House. → we’ll decide on the exact chapter(s) later on → Content Note: The text treats racism and racialization explicitly.
6	<p>Returning the Gaze: Oppositional Gazes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - hooks, b. (1994): Der oppositionelle Blick. Schwarze Frauen als Zuschauerinnen. In: Dies: <i>Black Looks. Popkultur - Medien - Rassismus</i>. Berlin, 145-166. [still need to look for the English version] <p>Wrapping Up Together</p>