

**Access to Equality:
Reproductive Justice in the United States
Book of Abstracts**

“Reclaiming Control: Forms of Resistance in Contemporary Reproductive Dystopias”

Raluca Andreescu (Assistant Professor, University of Bucharest, Romania)

The last few years have witnessed a significant rise in feminist (reproductive) dystopias against the background of intensifying limitations on women's reproductive rights across the world. In the United States, the surge in the production of feminist dystopias was arguably triggered by Donald Trump's election and subsequent term in office, by Mike Pence's prominent conservative stance on the rights of women and sexual minorities, by their administration's appointments to the Supreme Court, and by the dreaded anticipation of the recent decision in *Dobbs v Jackson*, among others. My paper starts from three 'reproductive dystopias' – Jennie Melamed's *Gather the Daughters* (2017), Leni Zumas's *Red Clocks* (2018) and Joanne Ramos's *The Farm* (2019) –, each told from the perspective of several protagonists and each putting forth a broad, inclusive vision of reproductive justice. In all three narratives, women are subjected to various forms of oppression and domination, be it political, religious, economic / capitalist or domestic, meant to regulate and limit their reproductive freedom and choice. Drawing on Michel Foucault's theories of power and particularly on his observation that “there are no relations of power without resistances; the latter are all the more real and effective because they are formed right at the point where relations of power are exercised” (“Truth and Power” 142), my paper examines the ways in which the multiple protagonists in the three novels develop and display individual and communal forms of resistance against patriarchal, political, and economic domination, repression and abuse.

Raluca Andreescu is assistant professor in the Modern Languages Department at the University of Bucharest, Romania. She holds an M.A. in American Studies and a Ph.D. in Philology from the Doctoral School of Literary and Cultural Studies, both with the University of Bucharest. Her main research interests are in the area of American Cultural Studies, American law and literature, Gothic literature and culture, Women's Studies. She is the author of a volume about Female Gothic in the American Century, with a focus on works by Edith Wharton, Shirley Jackson and Joyce Carol Oates, and the co-editor of a volume dedicated to contemporary storytelling across new media and disciplines.

“How Jane Roe became a ‘Pro-Life champion’”

Beatrix Balogh (Faculty, Pázmány Péter Catholic University, Budapest, Hungary)

The results of the 2022 midterm elections suggest that the overturning of *Roe v Wade* was a factor in holding off a prospected 'red wave'. The fear of more widespread social backlash that would turn the clock back fifty years seems to have mobilized young voters, and many independents.

The presentation briefly revisits the original *Roe*, Norma McCorvey and examines the social, cultural, and political pressures that may have triggered her conversion, not only to Christianity but also to become what the FRC claimed commemorating her passing in 2017, a "Pro-Life champion ... and a leading advocate for the unborn." The paper investigates how the anti-ERA campaign and Reagan's alliance with the Religious Right for pragmatic political gains steered society towards re-invigorating the "separate spheres" gender constructions of the 19th century that idealized domesticity, feminine virtues, and the sanctity and power of motherhood to appeal to the educated suburban middle class.

Norma McCorvey embodied none of these. She carried her baby to term while the case was pending; Jane Roe never had the abortion she sought. But McCorvey was not the ideal poster girl for either camp. She slept with both men and women, and became pregnant multiple times without planning to have children. She was also poor. Seen from a different angle, McCorvey represented those marginalized segments of society who were, and are, most exposed to the detrimental effects of depriving women of their rights to make decisions about their own motherhood.

Beatrix Balogh is a faculty member of Pázmány Péter Catholic University in Budapest. She teaches survey courses in US History, the Constitution, and the American political system, and a selection of seminar courses in the English BA and American Studies programs that investigate culture products, explore national myths and institutions of the American past, as well as current controversial social and political questions.

"Affect as an Act of Doing for Rewriting the Binary Distinctions Informing Liberal Conceptualization of 'Human Rights'"

Erzsébet Barát (Associate Professor, University of Szeged, Hungary)

In my talk I examine the relationship between reproductive justice and democracy in the wake of the US Supreme Court's decision to overturn *Roe vs. Wade* (1973) from within the intersection of women and trans* people's access to reproductive rights. I shall argue that the biopolitics of violence enacted by the court's decision is integral to the white supremacist discourse fighting for dominance in contemporary US political communication. It is made in the name of some alleged 'freedom to speak the bear truth', appealing to an unconditioned primacy of the first amendment – ever more loudly since the Trump administration. I would ultimately like to uphold the importance of building a solidarity against the escalation of right-wing populism that systematically tries to undermine the fourteenth amendment. I will argue for the reconceptualization of the 'victim' as well as that of trust, bringing together critical race studies and affect theory by arguing for the intertwined relationship between state action and the citizen's

right to privacy.

Erzsébet Barát is an Associate Professor in the Department of English, University of Szeged and Recurring Visiting Professor in the Department of Gender Studies, Central European University, Vienna since 2000. She is director of the 'Gender through literatures and cultures in English' Specialization in the English Studies MA and founding Editor-in-Chief of the (only) Hungarian (e-)journal in gender studies, *TNTeF: Interdisciplinary Journal of Gender Studies*. Her research interests include feminist critical theory, relational models of identity, the relationship between language, power and ideology, the intersection of feminist and queer theories.

“Reimagining Reproduction and Biotechnology in US-American Environmental Fiction”

Ina Batzke (Post-doctoral researcher and lecturer, University of Augsburg, Germany)

Today, genetically modified food indeed permeates the (U.S.) food market, with most consumers not even aware of their food choices and despite the publication of several clinical studies indicating its potentially harmful effects on the human body—especially the female body, or more precisely, its reproductive functions. Pesticides and agricultural chemicals have long been scrutinized for harming the hormonal and reproductive processes in women, and a similar conjecture was established for genetically modified organisms (GMOs), which are considered as equally hazardous for reproductive processes. As with other recent biotechnological advancements such as embryo transfer technologies, embryo genomics, and the advance of stem cell technology in general, it is thus the female body that is at particular risk of being harmed by new biotechnological tools for enhancing crop productivity—a realization that sparked a number of oppositional responses from mainstream environmentalist activists for reproductive choice, as well as from the realm of autobiography and fiction.

Taking up the perhaps most prominent fictional response to the debate, Ruth Ozeki's *All Over Creation* (2002) about a farmer community in Idaho, I aim to show how the novel succeeds in intertwining broader cultural issues such as sexism, racism, and reproductive justice in order to eventually create a feminist response to both neoliberal biotechnological enhancements and dominant cultural notions of fertility, reproduction, and motherhood. To do so, I will provide a critical reading of both the multivocality and the dystopian/utopian plotline of *All Over Creation*, which fully reveals the novel's ideological complexity and challenges existing scholarship on Ozeki's work.

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Ina Batzke joined the University of Augsburg, Germany as a post-doctoral researcher and lecturer in American Studies in 2018 after she received her PhD from the University of Münster. She is the author of the monograph *Undocumented Migrants in the United States: Life Narratives and Self-*

Representations (Routledge 2019), which summarizes her research in life writing and critical refugee studies, and co-editor of the volumes *Exploring the Fantastic: Genre, Ideology, and Popular Culture* (transcript, 2018), *Storied Citizenship: Imagining the Citizen in American Literature* (special issue of *Amerikastudien* 65.4, 2020), and *Life Writing in the Posthuman Anthropocene* (Palgrave, 2021). Her main areas of research and teaching are life writing and autofiction, border studies, and LatinX studies. In connection with her current book project, she has recently become interested in feminist technoscience, ecocriticism/ecofeminism, and how these concepts play out in contemporary speculative fiction.

“The Road not Taken: The Republican Party before the War on Women”

Françoise Coste (Professor, University of Toulouse)

Opposition to women's rights has become so central in contemporary Republican dogma that it is easy to forget the GOP's more nuanced past on such issues. For instance, the Republican Party proved rather open to the claims of second-wave feminists and it is this overlooked period that this paper will study, through the presidency of Gerald Ford.

Ford may have been an “accidental” president (replacing Nixon upon his resignation), and in office for only a little bit more than 2 years. Yet, this brief period proved crucial in the history of American women, coming in the wake of the adoption of the ERA by Congress, and of the *Roe v. Wade* decision. In these tumultuous times, Ford interestingly adopted a moderate stance, supporting the ratification of the ERA by the states and refusing to embrace a pro-life stance on abortion, despite growing pressure coming from the Republican base. This paper will analyze how Ford and his advisers (male and women) decided to navigate these increasingly polemical tensions, particularly through the 1976 primaries which pitted him against conservative Ronald Reagan: how did Ford justify his support for women's rights when faced with attacks from the Right? Which role did his wife, vocal feminist Betty Ford, play on such issues? How did his team assess the anti-women tsunami which was about to engulf their party? This transition period in the history of the Republican Party deserves more scrutiny than it usually gets, as it shows the road the GOP could have taken and how differently the life of American women could have turned out today.

Françoise Coste is a Professor of American Studies at the University of Toulouse (France). She has published numerous articles and book chapters on the history of the Republican Party, on conservative thought in the United States and on women's rights. Her biography of President Ronald Reagan (*Reagan*, Perrin Publishers) won the award for Best Political Biography of the Year in France in 2015. She is currently working on a history of the Republican Party since 1945 (for Humensis Publishers).

“Protect and Control: Coverture's Logics across Welfare Policy and Abortion Laws”

Clare Daniel (Administrative Associate Professor, Tulane University, New Orleans,

Louisiana, USA) &

Karissa Haugeberg (Associate Professor, Tulane University, New Orleans, Louisiana, USA)

In this paper, we apply the legal doctrine of coverture to understand the contradictions and negative impacts of United States' abortion laws and welfare programs. Coverture, which emerged under British Common Law, subsumed a woman's legal status under her husband's upon marriage. The abolition of women's legal identities was, in most circumstances, justified as a practice that offered women benefit through protection from the strains of decision-making and public life. Since the founding of the US, the state has passed laws and regulations that purport to protect women's health and safety, but in practice, emphasize gendered stereotypes that undermine women's ability to participate as equal citizens. Notably, historians of gender document how coverture impacted poor women and women of color in distinct patterns compared to white, middle-class, and wealthy women (Kerber 1998; Gordon 1994). We extend this analysis in our manuscript to highlight such patterns across abortion and welfare programs.

While the formal structures of coverture, such as laws that restricted women from legally obtaining birth control or from taking out credit in their own names, have been changed, we argue that the logics of coverture continue to inform debates and laws regarding abortion and welfare policy. Utilizing critical discourse analysis, we examine debates surrounding recent abortion regulations and court decisions, as well as debates and policies related to welfare, to show that coverture regulates the lives of people who can become pregnant, affecting low-income women and women of color most profoundly.

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Clare Daniel is an administrative associate professor at Newcomb Institute of Tulane University, where she teaches in the Department of Communication. She received her PhD in American Studies from the University of New Mexico. Her book, *Mediating Morality: The Politics of Teen Pregnancy in the Post-Welfare Era*, charts a shift in the construction of "teen pregnancy" as a social problem in the wake of the welfare reform of 1996. Her work has also appeared in *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, *Present Tense: A Journal of Rhetoric in Society*, *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies*, and elsewhere.

Karissa Haugeberg is an associate professor of history at Tulane University. Her first book, *Women against Abortion: Inside the Largest Moral Reform Movement of the Twentieth Century*, was published by the University of Illinois Press in 2017. Haugeberg co-edits the textbook *Women's America: Refocusing the Past*, which is published by Oxford University Press. She is completing a second book on the history of nursing in the United States since 1964.

“Beyond the Norms: Reproductive Justice and Intersexuality in Select Fiction”

Parvathy Das (Research Scholar, National Institute of Technology Calicut, India) &
Reju George Matthew (Assistant Professor, National Institute of Technology Calicut,
India)

Though sex and gender ideals seem to broaden over the years to accommodate sex and gender-diverse individuals, reproductive ideals are still determined by heteronormative notions. The present paper aims to analyse the denial of reproductive rights to intersex individuals. Intersex refers to individuals who are born with sex characteristics, which are either chromosomal, gonadal, hormonal, or genital, that do not fall into the binary category of male and female. Using select fiction like *None of the Above* (2015) by I. W. Gregorio, *Confessions of Teenage Hermaphrodite* (2012), and *A Proper Young Lady* (2015) by Lianne Simon as primary texts, the paper aims to point out how heteronormative reproductive ideals construct the intersex body and how their right to bodily integrity and reproductive rights are denied consequently. Using select texts as springboards, the paper also traces how intersex individuals are treated in the legal and medical discourses in the U. S. when it comes to reproduction. Through a close reading of the select texts using concepts like repronormativity as discussed by Katherine M. Franke and Nadyne Stritzke and by focusing on reproductive justice, the paper argues that though there is a gradual increase in the recognition of the human rights abuse endured by intersex individuals, there is a lack of adequate discussions on their reproductive rights. It shows that in the wider context, the heteronormative notions around reproduction reinstate dichotomous, binary conceptions of sex and gender, which in turn negate the corporeality of intersex bodies as ‘aberrant’ and ‘unnatural.’

Parvathy Das is a research scholar in the National Institute of Technology Calicut, Kerala, India. She is pursuing her research on the topic, ‘Representation of Intersexuality in Select North American Fiction’. Her areas of interest include women’s studies, gender studies, intersex studies, and cultural studies. She has presented papers in numerous national and international seminars on topics like Dalit feminism, intersex life writings in Kerala and postcolonialism.

Reju George Mathew is an Assistant Professor (English) in the National Institute of Technology Calicut, Kerala, India. He has taught various courses in the domain of English Studies — several on English language and communication and a few on postcolonial literatures and theory. His PhD research (2014) was undertaken in the Department of Comparative Literature in the English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad, where he researched the Dalit engagement with caste, conversions and modernity in Kerala. His research interests include religious studies, colonial modernity, Dalit Christianity and identity formations. He has presented papers at several international conferences in India and abroad and was a DAAD exchange research student for a semester (2011) at Technische Universitat Dresden, Germany.

“[T]he doctor said if I signed this paper they could help me’: Settler Colonialism and Impacts on the Reproductive Freedoms of Indigenous

Women”

Nina De Bettin Padolin (PhD candidate, University of Graz, Austria)

Indigenous women in the US and Canada still suffer from the consequences of “involuntary birth control and sterilization” (Ralstin-Lewis 71) sanctioned by state forces, which has since been acknowledged by the UN as “a form of genocide” (72). Settler colonialism continues to impact and harm Indigenous women, Two-Spirit and non-binary people through intergenerational trauma, the epidemic of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, and environmental violence, amongst others.

In this paper, I examine Mary Kathryn Nagle’s performance “Fairly Traceable” (2021) and Marie Clements’ drama “Tombs of the Vanishing Indian” (2012). The former play addresses environmental violence as a form of genocide, while the latter explores the lives of three women affected by systemic oppression and reproductive violence. Colonial heteropatriarchal structures shape the lives of all characters. The two performances are concerned with how societal pressures and systemic injustices weigh on the female-identifying characters. An added aggravating factor is that they face industry-related environmental violence that causes the loss of their ancestral homelands. Therefore, I question how the two performances convey the reproductive violence experienced by the female characters either ex- or implicitly. Further, I ask how and why the two texts address land sovereignty and establish a strong connection between access to ancestral land and reproductive freedom. Thus, I consider how discourses of democracy and (what constitutes) fundamental human rights are complicated by the extant impacts of settler colonialism on Indigenous women in the United States and Canada.

Nina De Bettin Padolin is a Ph.D. candidate in American literature and project assistant at the Institute of American Studies at the University of Graz. In her dissertation project, she focuses on Indigenous ecological epistemologies, planetarity, and ecocritical drama and theatre in the US and Canada. She graduated from the University of Graz with two master’s degrees (English and American Studies; Interdisciplinary Gender Studies). In November 2021, she was awarded the “Talentförderungsprämie” (a stipend geared towards recognizing young talents) by the state of Upper Austria in the category “cultural studies and the humanities”.

“Women’s Studies, Pregnant Academics, and the Climate of Change at US American Universities of the 1970s”

Abigail Fagan (Assistant Professor, Leibniz Universität Hannover, Germany)

A familiar feminist academic lament is that work within the university erodes the activist potential of feminist labor. Ellen Messer-Davidow suggests, for instance, that the bureaucratic and administrative demands of professorial positions enervate the feminist activism that attracted many people to academic careers in the first place. In the larger project associated with this one, I am critical of the binary between activism and academia on which this argument relies. For one, participants in the Black Freedom Movement, such as Barbara Smith, consistently make clear that

the intellectual labor of philosophers, sociologists, and cultural critics inform and energize activist labor, particularly when academics insist on the centrality of non-academics to campaigns for widespread social justice. Secondly, these arguments suggest that the university itself is not a critical site of feminist appeals for change.

This paper seeks to identify feminist resistance to patriarchal norms regarding pregnancy, parenthood, and employment at universities across the United States. Title IX of the Education Amendments Act of 1972 remains the most pervasive protection of pregnant and parenting students in the United States; pregnant faculty are protected to a certain extent by both Title IX and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. This paper will return to the fervor surrounding the establishment of Women's Studies as an interdiscipline at many universities across the United States in the 1970s to ask to what degree feminist academics welcomed conversations about pregnancy into their activist/academic campaigns. Did university-oriented academics of this period understand pregnancy to be a significant component of their participation in a climate of change? What accommodations for pregnant students and scholars did they discuss? How did they deal with normative and normalizing expectations that ciswomen, in particular, eventually become mothers, especially given the fervor surrounding the Supreme Court's entertainment of and decision in respect to *Roe v. Wade*?

Abigail Fagan is a postdoctoral researcher and instructor at the Leibniz Universität in Hannover. Her current project responds to critical university discourse by asking what social role the university has historically played in processes of settler colonization within and beyond the United States. Her dissertation, *Bloated: Power and the Body in American Temperance Literature*, won the University of Connecticut's CGS/ProQuest Dissertation Award in 2019. Her work has been published in *Amerikastudien/American Studies* and *The International Journal of Žižek Studies*.

“Enlightened under Paternalism?: Negotiations of Non-Chosen Motherhood in Novels by Women of Color”

Atalie Gerhard (PhD candidate, Saarland University, Germany)

This paper analyzes how selected novels by women of color paradoxically represent experiences of non-chosen motherhood as both, oppression and occasions of self-improvement. It takes its cue from U.S. Vice President Kamala Harris' reminder that Black women's reproductive choices have been restricted in distinct ways since slavery. Further, it heeds Eve Tuck's (Unangax) and K. Wayne Yang's insistence that the dominance of white colonial settlers in North America was achieved by legally regulating women's transfers of races and thus statuses to their children. The question will be posed through which aesthetic strategies and with which ideological implications female figures in *Push* (1996) by Sapphire, *The Veins of the Ocean* (2016) by Patricia Engel, and *A Woman Is No Man* (2019) by Etaf Rum even embrace non-chosen pregnancies instead of resisting the paternalistic hierarchies within which these occur. *Push* depicts an African American teenager who emerges as a survivor of the rapes that impregnated her while becoming literate. *The Veins of the Ocean* represents a Colombian-American woman whose unplanned pregnancy fills

the gap that was left by her deceased filicidal brother. *A Woman Is No Man* features a Palestinian immigrant woman in an arranged marriage ripe with coerced pregnancies whose murder inspires her daughter to pursue independence. I argue that the diverse contexts of these representations call for critical readings of the works' investments in the status quo-affirming Enlightenment ideal of individual mothers' self-improvement amid ongoing collective maternal disempowerment by institutions that Nathaniel Hawthorne famously thematized in *The Scarlet Letter* (1850).

Atalie Gerhard (she/her) is an adjunct lecturer at Paderborn University and a PhD candidate at Saarland University where she worked in the International Research Training Group "Diversity: Mediating Difference in Transcultural Spaces". The working title of her thesis is "Diversity and Resistance in North American Women's Containment Narratives from the 21st Century". She is a member of the Emerging Scholars' Forum of the Association for Canadian Studies in German-Speaking Countries. She holds a Master of Arts degree in North American Studies and a Bachelor of Arts degree in English and American Studies and French Studies from the Friedrich-Alexander-University of Erlangen-Nuremberg.

"Never Again: Ms. Magazine and Reproductive Justice"

Nicole Haring (PhD candidate, University of Graz, Austria)

The women's liberation movement, now known as the Second Wave of Feminism, was at full swing in the United States, when in 1972 the first mainstream feminist magazine hit the newsstands: *Ms.* The magazine came of age at a time in the United States that was marked with social unrest and hence was an immediate success. As the publication differed significantly in terms of content, advertisement, and ideology from other women's magazines at the time, it soon became the icon of the movement. *Ms.* magazine functioned as one of the most significant tools to address the pressing issues of the movement in its mass media style. Reproductive justice was on the forefront of these. In the first year, the magazine published a list of 53 women, who publicly declared that they have had abortions, among them many popular figures. A year later, *Ms.* published the devastating photo of Gerri Santano who died after a self-induced abortion titled *Never Again* to visualize the outcry to sustain the right to legal and safe abortions. In 2016 after the election of Donald J. Trump, the magazine published the photo again as a warning for the potential danger to bodily autonomy as a result of this election, which has unfortunately proven to become the reality. Thus, in the aftermath of the overturn of *Roe v. Wade*, this talk will present a historical analysis of *Ms.* magazine's discussion of reproductive justice highlighting also their inclusion of literature in the magazine.

Nicole Haring is a PhD candidate at the Center for Inter-American Studies at the University of Graz, Austria working on gender studies, feminist theory and pedagogy. She holds two master's degrees, one in education (English & Geography) and one in English and American Studies both from the University of Graz. She has finished a Fulbright scholarship at the University of Oklahoma (2019-2020) and was the holder of the Elisabeth-List-Fellowship for Gender Studies at the University of Graz (2020-2021). Currently, she holds the DOC Fellowship from the Austrian

Academy of Science (2021-2024) to work on her dissertation project on intergenerational storytelling in education on gender.

“Abortion Rights in the Social Movements of the 1960s and 1970s: A Divisive Issue”

Christèle Le Bihan-Colleran (Associate Professor, University of Poitiers, France)

One of the demands made within the American second wave of feminism of the 1960s and 1970s was the legalization of abortion. Part of the wider goal of obtaining equal rights for women, whatever their race, ethnicity, or social class, the issue of abortion rights was nevertheless controversial within the National Organization for Women, which was created at the beginning of the second wave. Indeed, it led to debates at its second national conference in 1967 as the legalization of abortion was included in the feminist organization's Bill of Rights. Some feared it would alienate potential supporters of women's rights and others opposed it for religious reasons.[1] Abortion was also a sensitive issue within the Black Power movement, as many Black male activists opposed it, viewing it as a form of genocide[2] in light of the program of forced sterilizations which had started in the 1900s and had notably targeted Black women.[3]

This paper will endeavor to analyze the ambivalent attitude toward abortion rights within the social movements of the 1960s and 1970s. Using an intersectional approach, it will first retrace the roots of this ambivalence, to then assess its impact on these movements and on the interactions among the activists.

Christèle Le Bihan-Colleran is currently an Associate Professor in American Studies at the University of Poitiers (France). She is affiliated to the interdisciplinary research group MIMMOC (Mémoires, Identités, Marginalités dans le Monde Occidental Contemporain) and to the AFEA (Association Française d'Études Américaines). She is the author of a PhD dissertation on the political correctness movement on American campuses. She works on issues related to this movement, and more broadly on multiculturalism and its impact on both higher education and American society, which she analyzed notably in a paper entitled “Multiculturalism in the United States: A *Fait Accompli*?” (in Sami Ludwig, ed., *American Multiculturalism in Context*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017, p. 413-434). She is also interested in the history of feminism in the United States, which she has been teaching for several years, and has recently published a paper entitled “Feminist Linguistic Theories and ‘Political Correctness’: Modifying the Discourse on Women?” (*The Esse Messenger*, vol. 29, n°1, Summer 2020, p. 120-132).

[1] Ruth Rosen, *The World Split Open: How the Modern Women's Movement Changed America*, New York: Penguin Books, 2001, p. 83. The legalization of abortion remained part of the organization's Bill of Rights following a vote.

[2] Representative Shirley Chisholm, “Facing the abortion question,” in Gerda Lerner, ed., *Black Women in White America: A Documentary History*, New York: Vintage Books Edition, 1992, p. 604.

[3] Leslie J. Reagan, "Medicine, Law, and the State: The History of Reproduction," in Nancy A. Hewitt, ed., *A Companion to American Women's History*, Malden (USA): Blackwell Publishing, 2005, p. 353.

"Portrayals of Reproductive Rights Abuses and Embodiment in Contemporary Black, Chicana, and Native American Fiction"

Zsuzsanna Lénárt-Muszka (PhD, Instructor, University of Debrecen, Hungary)

My proposed talk traces the literary figurations of racialized and gendered maternal embodiment within the theoretical frameworks of motherhood studies as well as Black, Chicana, and Native American feminisms in two recent short stories and a novel by contemporary US women. The textual analyses draw on literary and cultural theory and are grounded in the historical and socio-cultural contexts of both the authors and the characters. Since reproductive rights abuses committed under eugenic influence against women of color and Indigenous populations in the US have a long history, my talk will engage with how discourses of medicine, technology, and the law have conceptualized non-white women's bodies vis-à-vis their reproductive capacities. The characters in the stories grapple with the ramifications of white supremacist violences, which heavily influences how they experience their embodiment. The stories under analysis—Louise Erdrich's *Future Home of the Living God* (2018), Caribbean Fragoza's "Mysterious Bodies" (2021), and Nafissa Thompson-Spires's "The Old Doctor's Story" (2021)—thematize women of color's disparate access to reproductive care, their frequent misdiagnosis with conditions such as endometriosis, and struggles with pregnant embodiment as a result of multiple forms of trauma. These stories cast both womanhood and motherhood as conditions overdetermined by pain while also shedding light on imaginative avenues of resistance.

Zsuzsanna Lénárt-Muszka teaches at the North American Department of the Institute of English and American Studies, University of Debrecen, Hungary. She received her doctorate from the University of Debrecen (2021); the title of her dissertation is *Mothers in the Wake of Slavery: The Im/possibility of Motherhood in Post-1980 African American Women's Prose*. Her research interests include the portrayals of maternal bodies and violence against women in contemporary North American literature and visual culture.

"Meridel LeSueur: A Voice for Reproductive Justice of the 1930s"

Roberta Maierhofer (Professor, University of Graz, Austria)

Meridel LeSueur, a blacklisted political activist of the 1930s and as a woman defined by her male communist party members as "lack[ing] revolutionary spirit and direction", believed in the power of the narrative to address the plight of the working class with the goal to create a just society for all. LeSueur's writing specifically addressed the concerns of women caught up in a world without agency and no access to equality. Her writing expresses feminist demands for equality, justice, and rights for all. Her novel *The Girl* (1939) – that was only published in 1978 in the West End Press

– represents the voice of many, as a collage of personal narratives and different oral histories from the workers' alliance writing workshop, thus creating a collective voice of women of the times: women working in speakeasies and as prostitutes, drawn into criminality, unwanted pregnancies, blotched abortions, and a world lacking support. LeSueur believes in the power of the word and the agency of the story, and thus advised young writers to “Carry a notebook. That is the secret of a radical writer. Write it down as it is happening.” However, it is not only writers, but also readers that can have agency in recognizing the potential of stories to – according to the aim of a national proletarian fiction dedicated to a discourse of revolution with the battle-cry of the times – to “Change the World.”

Roberta Maierhofer is Professor of American Studies at the University of Graz, Austria, and Adjunct Professor at Binghamton University, New York. Since 2007, she has been directing the Center for Inter-American Studies of the University of Graz. Her research focuses on (Inter)American Literature and Cultural Studies, Feminist Literature and Research, Gender Studies, Transatlantic Cooperation in Education, and Age/Aging Studies. In her publication *Salty Old Women: Gender, Age, and Identity in American Culture*, she developed a theoretical approach to gender and aging (anocriticism) and was one of the first within the European context to define her work within the field of Cultural/ Narrative Gerontology.

“Four Faces of Reproductive Rights in Leni Zumas’s *Red Clocks*”

Barbara Miceli (Assistant Professor, University of Gdańsk, Poland)

Leni Zumas’s 2018 novel *Red Clocks* describes what—at the time—was a near/dystopian future where women’s reproductive rights in the United States were erased by “The Personhood Amendment”, a legislation that made abortion illegal in all the fifty States, that kept single women from seeking in vitro fertilization—under the slogan of “every child needs two, that gave embryos rights of property, life and liberty, asked women to pay for miscarried fetuses’ funerals, and charged lab technicians who accidentally dropped an embryo with manslaughter. The consequences of the new legislation are seen through the eyes of four women in an Oregon town, four women with generic names: the Biographer, the Mender, the Wife, the Daughter. These women come to represent four faces of denied reproductive rights: a woman over forty should give up her desire to be a mother because she is single, a teenager who got accidentally pregnant cannot abort her child, a woman who helps other women get abortions in secrecy is prosecuted as a criminal, a mother of two is stuck in a patriarchal marriage where everything falls on her shoulders only because she is biologically destined to bear the burden of the entire family. The aim of my contribution is to compare the dystopian world of Zumas’s novel to the actual situation of the United States—in particular after *Roe v Wade* was overturned—showing how this work is not fiction anymore, but descriptive of a society where women’s reproductive rights are being constantly destroyed.

Barbara Miceli is Assistant Professor in American Studies at the University of Gdansk (Poland). She has published a monograph (*A ‘Fourth’ Way to Tell the Story: Fact and Fiction in Three*

Novels by Joyce Carol Oates, Peter Lang, 2021), co-authored a book (*Reading Contemporary TV Series: Aesthetics, Themes, and Reception*, Peter Lang, 2022), and wrote several articles and book chapters on the relationship between fact and fiction and American women writers.

“Drawing (on) Roe vs. Wade: Reproductive Justice in Feminist Underground Comix in the 1970s”

Małgorzata Olsza (Assistant Professor, Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań, Poland)

In my talk, I wish to focus on a particularly interesting and important issue addressed by female underground comix artists in the 1970s in the US, namely the politics of reproduction and reproductive justice, including access to contraception, access to abortion, and other issues related to (prospective) motherhood. Such comix as *Abortion Eve* (1973), *Dynamite Damsels* (1976), and *Mama! Dramas* (1978) were created in a (more or less) direct reaction to the historical legal decision *Roe vs. Wade*. They problematized the question of women's reproductive rights in terms of the individual and the political. Combining accessible visuals, low price (c. 50 cents/\$1), and an empowering message, these works were at the forefront of feminist activism in the 1970s. Lyn Chevely and Joyce Sutton's *Abortion Eve* was conceived of as, as both artists explain, “a discussion about the legality of abortion, what to expect during an abortion, head trips – before and after.” The two stories in *Abortion Eve* (“The Rap” and “A Day”) address different social (teenage pregnancy, the pressure for pregnant women to marry, being a single mother), psychological (the feeling of “guilt”) and medical issues (the procedure itself, anesthesia, recovery) connected with abortion. Roberta Gregory in *Dynamite Damsels*, respectively, envisioned a dystopian world without access to abortion, while *Mama! Dramas*, edited by Trina Robbins, address the highs and the lows of motherhood in its emotional, economic, social, and political dimensions. I shall analyze all three comix, demonstrating how they comment on the political situation in the US in and through visuals.

Małgorzata Olsza (she/ her) is Assistant Professor at the Department of American Literature at AMU. Her Ph.D. thesis was devoted to the poetics of the contemporary American graphic novel (2017). She also holds an M.A. in Art History. She has published on different aspects of American comics in *Polish Journal for American Studies*, *ImageText: Interdisciplinary Comics Studies*, and *Image [&] Narrative*. She has also contributed chapters to the edited collections *Comic Art and Feminism in the Baltic Sea Region* (Routledge, 2021), *Drawing the Past, Volume 2: Comics and the Historical Imagination in the World* (UP of Mississippi, 2022), and *Seeing Comics through Art History: Alternative Approaches to the Form* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2022).

Keynote lecture: “Reproductive Rights as a Site for a New Cold War”

Andrea Petó (Central European University, Vienna)

Are we witnessing a new Cold War between liberal and illiberal forces globally waged on “gender as symbolic glue”? Attacks on reproductive rights fill the headlines and government-sponsored

billboards promoting motherhood and condemning abortion proliferate, while the allegedly mainstream right-wing governments increasingly adopt positions previously espoused only by the far right creating a dangerous void in the center of the political spectrum. Posters of smiling white mothers with cute white babies are covering the expensive billboards advertising motherhood from Hungary to Poland, from Germany to Denmark, from Russia to Serbia. Is the ethnocentric pronatalism of today the same pronatalism as of the interwar period concerning its rhetoric and potential for mobilization? Should the triple – financial, security, and ‘refugee’ – crises of the years following 2008 and/or the COVID-19 pandemic be considered as our era’s trigger moments? This talk tries to give an answer to these troubling questions, using a historical comparative analysis of the different phases of contestations of reproductive rights – abortion policy and promoting righteous motherhood.

Andrea Pető is a historian and a Professor at the Department of Gender Studies at Central European University, Vienna, Austria, a Research Affiliate of the CEU Democracy Institute, Budapest, and a Doctor of Science of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. Her works on gender, politics, Holocaust, and war have been translated into 23 languages. In 2018 she was awarded the 2018 All European Academies (ALLEA) Madame de Staël Prize for Cultural Values and the 2022 University of Oslo Human Rights Award. She is Doctor Honoris Causa of Södertörn University, Stockholm, Sweden. Recent publications include: *The Women of the Arrow Cross Party. Invisible Hungarian Perpetrators in the Second World War*. Palgrave, Macmillan, 2020. And *Forgotten Massacre: Budapest 1944*. DeGruyter, 2021. She writes op-ed pieces for many international and national media about academic freedom and illiberal higher education.

“Legal Aspects of Post Mortem Procreation in the USA and Poland”

Maciej Rzewuski (Associate Professor, University of Warmia and Mazury, Olsztyn, Poland and judge at the District Court in Olsztyn)

The paper concerns the right to succession of children born as a result of posthumous (post-mortem) procreation, i.e., children conceived and born after the death of their genetic parent. Through a synthetic, comparative analysis of legal solutions in force in the American and Polish law, the paper points to the limitations in the sphere of fundamental rights which children born as a result of this form of medically assisted procreation have to face, especially those children who come from “cross-border” relationships. These limitations of rights can be observed with regard to the issue of inheritance, but also with regard to the filiation of the “post-mortem” child. By posing the question whether, in the current legal reality, the time of birth can be regarded as a discriminatory element and whether there are children “born at an inopportune moment,” the paper concludes in the affirmative. Pointing to the lack of coherence in the present-day legal regulations, the paper also signals the need to introduce clear solutions in the Polish and American law, which would explicitly regulate the subject matter under analysis. The publication also identifies practical problems associated with the disposal of reproductive cells and embryos in the event of death.

Maciej Rzewuski is an associate professor at the Department of Civil Procedure and Legal Protection at the Faculty of Law and Administration, the University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn; a judge at the District Court in Olsztyn; a lecturer in attorneys' and legal advisers' training; he authored over 200 scientific publications on civil law and civil procedure; he specializes in inheritance law, family law and private international law; by working in both capacities, i.e., as an academic teacher and a judge, he skillfully combines theory with the practical application of law; adjudicating in the Court of Appeal, he deals with problems related to the topic of the present study on a daily basis.

“A Subjectivity She Can Call Her Own: Law, Order, and the Maternal Experience in Celeste Ng’s *Little Fires Everywhere*”

Fulvia Sarnelli (Assistant Professor, University of Messina, Italy)

Since its conception, Shaker Heights has been presented as the closest thing to a utopian society. The residential planned community is known for its love of order and stringent regulations, from the style and color of buildings to the control of crime, unemployment, and racial tensions. The city is also the principal setting for Celeste Ng’s 2017 book *Little Fires Everywhere*. As the fulfillment of the American Dream, in its fictional rendition that takes place at the end of the Nineties, nothing can unsettle it. Except for the complexity of the maternal subjective experience and decision-making processes. The novel features assisted reproduction, low-class single motherhood, teen abortion, same-sex parenting, and a legal fight over the custody of a Chinese baby girl between a wealthy white couple, who suffers from infertility, and the immigrant biological mother, who left her at a firehouse in the midst of postpartum depression and economic hardship.

In such a regulated environment that offers itself as an ideal microcosmos for the entire nation, the novel, on the one hand, interrogates how laws, policies, and culture have shaped the lives of various groups of women differently and used female fertility to solve social problems (Solinger 2005). On the other hand, it moves beyond the idea that women have always been the victims of their reproductive capacity because they have no choice. In reading the panoply of female voices within the novel, I attempt an intervention into the representational field of female subjectivity that recovers Simone de Beauvoir’s strategy of defamiliarization, which inscribes conflict and difference in the monolithic notion of female qua maternal desire.

Fulvia Sarnelli is Assistant Professor of American Literature at University of Messina (Italy). Her main areas of research are Asian American and Pacific Islander Studies, American literature of the turn of the Twentieth century, especially the interactions between American and East Asian modernist aesthetics, the narrative of Henry James, and graphic narratives. She is also interested in cultural, political, philosophical, and psychoanalytical theories of subjectivity, governmentality, citizenship, and the imagination. She is the author of the monograph *Panda in the Promised Land. Soggettività cinese americana tra multiculturalismo liberale e nuove alleanze* (*Panda in the Promised Land. Chinese American Subjectivity between Liberal Multiculturalism*

and New Alliances).

“Nineteenth-Century Science of Surgery as Cure for the Greatest Curse”

Sigrid Schönfelder (PhD, University of Passau, Germany)

However, strongly I might believe that the death at birth, of all such would be the best for them and humanity, I could never accept the solemn responsibility of taking a human life. (Owens-Adair, Pioneer Doctor's Life 455)

This paper examines the development and advancement of early public health policies that involved the emerging sciences of biology and genetics in the service of healthy human reproduction, aimed at improving and treating disabilities associated with heredity. It will focus on the late nineteenth and early twentieth-century views of the correlation between heredity and degeneration and the misappropriation of eugenics for political and social causes, especially by women reformers such as Dr. Bethenia Owens-Adair, who employed eugenics and the discourse of heredity to reach her goals as part of social reform.

As an early crusader in feminist eugenics, she fervently argued for the mandatory sterilization of the “unfit,” which is profoundly thematized in her book on the subject, *Human Sterilization: It's [sic] Social and Legislative Aspects*. In defense of her beliefs, she piously declares: “This is not an unclean subject. It is God's plan for the creation of human life, the highest and noblest of all creations” (“Human Sterilization Bill” 60). Dr. Owens-Adair's narratives about sterilizing those deemed to be “unfit” not only brought her national recognition but following its presentation to the state legislature, was adopted by her home state of Oregon and passed into law where it remained on the books until 1982.

The significance of her engagement and an understanding of how she and other healthcare reformers/professionals were supported by leading figures, exemplifies the complexities of beliefs and practices employed in the emerging science of genetics, as it appealed to an extraordinary range of political ideologies in late nineteenth-century science and medical narrative discourse.

Sigrid Schönfelder completed her studies at the Technische Universität Dresden, where she majored in North American Studies, focusing on concepts of identity in Native American autobiographies. Her passion-driven research on the transformation of nineteenth-century women's lives and medicine in the American West at the Faculty of Arts and Humanities at the Universität Passau, Germany, culminated in her Ph.D. thesis. Her book *Gold Fever and Women: Transformation in Live, Health Care and Medicine in the 19th Century American West* will be published by Transcript Verlag in Spring 2023.

“Damned If We Do, Damned If We Don't: Narratives of Reproductive Control”

Sandra Tausel (PhD candidate, University of Innsbruck, Austria)

Faced with an unwanted pregnancy, 17-year-old black Nadja Turner in Brit Bennet's *The Mothers* instantly thinks that "one mistake [could rip] her future . . . away from her" (15). Years later, the novel contrasts Nadja's decision to have an abortion with her friend Aubrey's fertility struggles and the social imperative to have a child. While the teenaged Nadja has absorbed that she would be damned if she were to have a baby, Aubrey believes that she, as a black, married woman of childbearing age, would be damned if she did not. Both characters' lives and reproductive choices are pertinently affected by what Nancy Felipe Russo calls "the motherhood mandate" (Russo 144) – the persistent societal belief that all womxn should want children and find fulfillment in motherhood. However, an analysis of literary and cultural texts, such as *The Mothers*, inextricably connects reproductive mandates to issues of race, class, and age. Accordingly, reproductive control in US-American society asserts itself in socio-political efforts to, on the one hand, prevent teenage pregnancy by stigmatizing teenage mothering (Vinson xiv) instead of ensuring comprehensive sex education and low-threshold access to reproductive health care. On the other hand, adult womxn who are childfree by choice are often also confronted with stigmatization and powerful pronatalist discourses (Kaklamanidou 276). Based on these juxtaposing discourses, this paper argues that US-American reproductive control relies on political and juridical decisions, such as the overruling of *Roe v. Wade*, gendered, racialized, and classist norms, but notably also on damning ageist premises that render (fictional) teenage pregnancies shameful while demanding adults and characters' reproduction by stigmatizing childfree womxn.

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Sandra Tausel is a university assistant and Ph.D. candidate in the American Studies Department at the University of Innsbruck, Austria. Her dissertation project titled "*The Loves that Never Have Been Yet?*": *Conceptualizing Literary Representations of Young Love and their Foundational Ambivalences in US-American Culture* aims to negotiate foundational US-American principles in the lives of young adult characters. Her research interests include feminist theory, gender studies, and marginalized literatures. She has published articles in *libri liberorum* (Journal of the Austrian Society for Research on Children's and Youth Literature), in *WiN: The EAAS Women's Network Journal*, and in the Routledge anthology *The Disfigured Face in American Literature, Film, and Television* (edited by Cornelia Klecker and Gudrun Grabher).

“Unsung Heroines: The 14th Amendment at the Intersection of Race, Gender, and History”

Vanessa Vollmann (PhD, University of Passau, Germany)

Section 1 of the 14th Amendment of the Constitution granted formerly enslaved people not only citizenship but also equal protection under the law. In the vein of Nikole Hannah-Jones' 1619 scholarship, it has therefore become a critical starting point for every civil rights struggle: from the fight of African American enslaved people against the institution of slavery, women's suffrage, civil rights in the 1960s, Indigenous rights, disability rights to LGBTQ+ rights, to name just a few. So, when the Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade* in the summer of 2022, it was not overturning any old legal precedent on reproductive rights. This precedent had secured a constitutional right for women in the US for 50 years based on precisely this equal protection reasoning. Overturning it means that the Supreme Court has now taken away a constitutional right from US citizens for the first time – a tremendous paradigm shift.

Understanding how equal protection is undermined in voices and stories that center neither maleness nor Whiteness helps to uncover systemic biases that continue to inform dominant society at the intersections of race, history, and gender – from Moya Bailey's concept of 'misogynoir', to Kate Manne's 'himpathy' and Annette Gordon-Reed's 'double standards in storytelling'. After all, when Sojourner Truth asked “Ain't I a Woman?” she did so as a Black woman, ostracized by the anti-sexist White women's 18th-century movement.

Vanessa Kessen Vollmann is a lecturer at the University of Passau. Her personal, professional, and academic interests have found a common denominator in the specificity of women of Color narratives and their representation and perception in popular culture and in the public discourse. This includes uncovering systemic power structures in US society that lead to the silencing of voices at the intersections of race, gender, and history. She defended her dissertation *A Critical Race Feminist Investigation of the Female Founder Narrative in the Broadway Musical Hamilton* on 24 November 2022.

“Feminist Internationalism and Self-Managed Abortions: A Social Media Analysis”

Katharina Wiedlack (Assistant Professor, University of Vienna, Austria)

Feminist social media started focusing on issues around abortion, bodily autonomy, and reproductive justice as soon as it became known that the Supreme Court had granted certiorari to *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* in May 2021. When the Supreme Court overruled *Roe vs. Wade*, social media accounts started frequently featuring videos, memes and threads that explained self-managed abortions. While it is not surprising that social media plays a big role in the fight for reproductive justice in the U.S. and elsewhere in general, the appearance of information that educates about self-managed abortions seemed novel. In my presentation, I will

analyze some of the social media examples – on TikTok, Instagram, YouTube and Facebook – that feature educational information on self-managed abortion. I will ask how the examples address the topic, how the information is presented visually and discursively, and who the addressees are. A first look into the media shows that most of the information comes from and addresses women of color, Indigenous and Black women. Interestingly, many sources are connected to or come from internationalist feminists rooted in South America, where feminists have (successfully) fought for abortion rights over the last decade, while the topic was rarely touched by U.S. feminists. These networks span between Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Mexico, and the U.S., and connect feminists in the Americas with those in sub-Saharan Africa (Braine 60). I am particularly interested in this international aspect of reproductive justice activism in social media and specifically self-managed abortion education. Maybe the fight for reproductive justice has the potential to create feminist internationalism that does not support western hegemony, but is anti-colonial and anti-racist?

Katharina Wiedlack is Assistant Professor for Anglophone Cultural Studies at the Department of English and American Studies at the University of Vienna. Her research interests are feminist internationalism, transnational American studies, queer and feminist theory, popular culture, decolonial and disability studies. Her monograph *Queer-feminist Punk: an Anti-Social History* was published in 2015. Her most current research project “Rivals of the Past, Children of the Future: Localizing Russia within US National Identity Formation from a Historical Perspective” investigates Russian American encounters, and the mobilization of values and identities.

“Can I train my two-months’ old to soothe himself to sleep?”: Gender, Class and Infant Care in American Cities as Reflected on Facebook Parental Forums”

Justyna Wierchowska (Associate Professor, University of Warsaw, Poland)

“Can I train my two-months’ old to soothe himself to sleep?”: Gender, Class and Infant Care in American Cities as Reflected on Facebook Parental Forums. In my presentation I want to discuss selected posts and comments published in the last twelve months on four American Facebook parental forums. Two of the forums, in a self-proclaimed fashion, are dedicated to mothers. The first one gathers New York mothers who belong to the middle- and upper-middle class. The second is for mothers-academics based in American cities and on university campuses. Both forums have between 10,000-20,000 members and generate over 20 posts a day. Many posts and comments reveal despair, helplessness and a sense coercion when it comes to combining (breast)feeding and infant sleep patterns with professional obligations. At the same time, a completely different narrative is developed on two forums which are targeted towards “Moms, Dads and More” and “Parents.” Here, the contents of the posts and comments is almost completely limited to cool, practical questions concerning the best infant and young children products and schooling opportunities. These two forums generate vastly fewer posts, even though their membership is comparable to the mothers-oriented forums. It thus seems that the category of the “mother” perseveres in defining both the thematic and the intensity of emotional engagement of the forum members. Foremost, I want to argue that the fact that the United States lacks basic legal and

economic support when an infant is born is reflected not only in the practices of care described on the forums, but also in the very ideas that caretakers have concerning the psychology of the child, especially the children's emotional development and coping mechanism.

Justyna Wierchowska is Associate Professor at the Institute of English Studies, University of Warsaw. She has MA degrees in American Studies and Philosophy, and a PhD and *habilitacja* degrees in American Studies. She is the author of *The Absolute and the Cold War: Discourses of Abstract Expressionism* (2011), co-editor of *In Other Words: Dialogizing Postcoloniality, Race, and Ethnicity* (2012), the special issue of *Open Cultural Studies* titled *On Uses of Black Camp* (2018) and of *Texts, Images, Practices: Contemporary Perspectives on American, British and Polish Cultures* (2020). She is currently working on two books: *Related for Life: Mothering in Contemporary Art* and *Self-Writing: Critical Theory after World War II*, both part of the research project *Vulnerable Subjects: Relationality and the Primary Bond in Contemporary Culture and Critical Theory*. Prof. Wierchowska is the recipient of the Fulbright Commission Senior Scholar Award in 2019-20 and the NAWA Bekker Award in 2022-23 at New York University. Her research interests are in motherhood studies, affect theory, psychoanalysis and attachment theory, contemporary visual art, feminist art, socially-engaged and critical art. She teaches courses in Philosophy, History of American art, Feminist art, and Cultural studies.

“Like a Shadow’: Patriarchal Religious Structures and Women’s Health”

Beth Williams Purcell (PhD candidate, Texas Christian University Fort Worth, Texas, USA)

In the wake of the Supreme Court's recent reversal of *Roe v. Wade*, my paper considers the broader impact of conservative religion on women's psychological and physiological health. To be sure, this political triumph for the religious right—the negation of *Roe*, and along with it, a woman's autonomy over her body and health—exposes the undeniable force yielded by conservative Christian politicians and activists to implement legislation in alignment with their religious beliefs.

Recent research conducted by sociologists Patricia Homan and Amy Burdette suggests that while macro-level events (the *Roe* reversal), have significant effects on women's health outcomes, these broader disparities must be understood within “multilevel” contexts. This includes the “interactional settings at the meso level,” such as religious organizations and churches, which demonstrates “how structural sexism within religious congregations shapes women's health.” Just as this research reveals potential outcomes of a conservative religious affiliation on women, so too does the historical record contain an unmined volume of women's stories that underscores the potentiality for harm that patriarchal religious structures can have on women's health.

My research explores the capacity of patriarchal religion to influence the health and well-being of women in negative ways, and seeks to integrate the latest sociological and psychological research on religion, gender, and well-being, with the latent historical accounts of women within patriarchal religious denominations. Additionally, this paper considers the possibility of an active response through the development of new expectations and accountability measures.



**Fifth Biennial Women's Network Symposium
University of Debrecen, Hungary & online
March 31-April 1, 2023**

Beth Williams Purcell has taught in higher education since 2006. She is a doctoral student in the history department at Texas Christian University in Fort Worth, Texas. Her primary research interests include the historical experiences of women in American religion, such as familial and institutional influence, home religious practices, health and well-being, theological encounters, and spirituality.