Security Unbound: Spectres of Feminism in Trump-Time

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Preface: Incredulity in Trump-Time

Truth, it is often remarked, can be stranger than fiction; and a strange truth that materialized as outrageous, unbelievable and incomprehensible for many, was the election of Donald Trump to the position of President of the United States of America in 2016. He took office in 2017. A persistent question that punctuated that 'time' and since is 'how could *that* (have) happen(ed)'? Perhaps not coincidentally, *What Happened* (2017) is the title (no question mark) of Hillary Clinton's book in the aftermath of the election in which she won the popular vote. Reverberating surges of incredulity have continued to mark the last couple of years, certainly in westernized psyches. Such a surprise, really a shock, not least given the pulsating trails of misogyny and racism which heavily saturate Trump's thinking and behaviours. A slew of 'women's marches' were in evidence consequent to his election, and the levels of incredulity made their aghast rounds in what are probably millions of posts on social media and varied blog sites as well as more traditional media outputs. More intimate email exchanges occurred also as we – Anne and Marysia - struggled to make hopeful feminist sense of what was happening or, to offer a temporal resonance, as Mary Shelley wrote two centuries ago in *Frankenstein* (1818/1992), what was 'not to be expected in a country of eternal light' (18), as perhaps the US has thought of itself.

> *Dear Anne,*
>
> *I can't believe it – I really can't. How did that happen!? Awful! What were people thinking ..? What a nightmare – doesn't it matter all those things he said?*

Those misogynist hateful things … how can all that be ok …? How does it happen so easily? We have reams of knowledge about gender, sexism and racism – and equality policies and legislations coming out of our ears! Though why I'm so surprised I don't know … Marysia

Dear Marysia

It's crazy here, but some solace in all the marches and resistances. But it seems despite and maybe because of all our study of how at least talk of gender equality was becoming depoliticized, instrumentalized, and normalized in halls of power that we couldn't imagine it actually blowing up in the form of outright misogyny, racism, and xenophobia … Anne

But as we pondered our own incredulity, we were reminded that '[W]hat queers know, like migrants know, like anybody with a womb will know, is how easily freedoms can disappear' (Baker 2017, 111).

Introduction: Spectres of Misogyny and Racism Unbound

We have opened with a personal touch, a vernacular feel, and a nod toward fiction, in part because we think that some of the best, most searing works of fiction are the ones which tell (a) truth. We also work from the intertextual understanding that texts are not 'self-contained systems' but rather are 'traces and tracings of otherness, as they are shaped by repetition and transformation of other textual structures' (Alfaro 1996, 268). Thus, our snippets from emails opening our discussion also genuflect to the structure of a story that recently had its 200th anniversary, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818/1992). A powerful and ever-popular story, it is one which tells a multi-layered tale of imagination, science, reproduction, sex, violence,

control, loss, humanity and gender. Narratively stitched together with letters between Victor Frankenstein and his beloved sister Elizabeth, the story of *Frankenstein* reeked of unhinged madness of sorts as a monster was born not of woman, but from a man's hubris. The real monster is Frankenstein, masculinely unbound from assumed natural orders and modern behaviours and codes and unleashing an abomination.

The monstrous effects of this white male hubris are not dissimilar to a work of twentieth century fiction, one that (re)emerged simultaneously with the gendered and racist horrors of what we call Trump-time, a time of unbridled re-securing of virulent white patriarchy in the US and beyond of the type many thought dead and gone and unleashing heightened insecurities on a global scale. That work is Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*. First published in 1985, it has been re-presented as a highly popular TV series. The resurrection of this tale in popular culture has been summoned by the revival of the ghosts of white supremacist patriarchy in Trump-time, leading us to work with concept of the spectral that makes visible how the seeming past continues to haunt the present and future. While we discuss the spectral in more detail in this section, we first revisit *The Handmaid's Tale.* In this resurrected and revised tale in which the US has become the Republic of Gilead, women who still have reproductive capacities in the wake of a war and an ecological catastrophe serve as reproductive slaves (medievally referred to as Handmaids) for their white Christian fundamentalist masters (known as commanders) and their sterile wives. Other non-reproductive, lower class women, known as Aunts (Handmaid trainers) and Marthas (domestic servants), become henchwomen to the regime, severely disciplining the Handmaids (in the case of Aunts) to accept their fate for the good of the Republic.

As Atwood had said of her book, all that was in it had happened in some form, somewhere in the world. The cruelties were not fictional -- a small list of which would include sanctioned rapes, reproductive slavery, the herding of people into coded categories, and arbitrary killings. Though which bodies these non-fictional violences have been so often visited upon emerge starkly differently from Atwood's tale in which the main protagonists are white, middle class women. Indeed, feminists of colour (Kent 2018, Kai 2017, and Cottle 2017) have taken Atwood to task for appropriating the real experiences of enslaved Black women in the US, namely becoming chattel known only under the names of their male owners, forbidden to read, and subject to rape and forced reproduction. But it seems only when extreme insecurity and explicit violence are envisioned as happening to white, educated women that the violence begins to emerge as 'impactful enough to serve as a universal wake-up call' (Cottle 2017).

Yet in its twenty-first century re-packaging, viewers are offered new horrors and new ways to imagine, to envisage 'what might happen' in a world where white patriarchy has absolute power. Victims in this new rendering appear more racially diverse, though a white woman remains at its centre, emphasizing gender over race oppression and pushing mostly off-stage in the first season, the special horrors for people of colour who are banished to what Atwood called the presumably apartheid-like 'National Homeland One.' This contemporary visualization of primarily misogynistic horror, unbelievable one might have imagined or hoped given 'how far we have come …', at least when it comes to the success stories of more privileged women and what had become ubiquitous global governance campaigns to combat gender inequality the world over, has spawned new protest imagery and activities in Trump-time. The red and white uniform of the Handmaid became a familiar sight in anti-Trump

protests throughout 2017 and most recently appearing outside the Alabama State House in May 2019.[i]

Over two years into Trump-time, we have witnessed, with dizzying speed, a host of misogynistic, racist, anti-labour, anti-environment, and xenophobic actions, some as a result of Republican-dominated Congressional laws and Supreme Court rulings, but many from the stroke of Trump's pen, such as the particularly draconian Global Gag Rule, which blocks US funds to any organisation involved in abortion advice and care overseas and sentences millions of women and girls to death.[ii] In the swirl of all of this, there remains an increasing, if bizarrely simultaneously dulled, sense of 'What is going on'? Did 'we' get knocked off course when 'we' weren't 'looking'? Were 'we' too secure in our assumptions that this couldn't happen? It is against the ongoing and problematic backdrop of continued incredulity (at least among white people in the Global North who identify as progressives and feminists) that we investigate here, and how some seeming feminist and critical 'givens' have been devastatingly insecured in Trump-time. We view this insecuring as a moment for interrupting all sorts of imaginaries about security (global, state, human) and the progress narratives they evoke, not to participate in all the handwringing about the end of the liberal order as various Trump-like figures litter the helms of national governments in North and South and on the global stage, but to ponder what has always haunted that order, moving in and out of visibility but always there.

Most crucially we are concerned with what this means for where feminist thought and action, informed by critical, queer, and race scholarship, 'goes' from 'here'-- a time of being 'knocked off course' in the grubby vortex of Trump-time, a course which had seemed littered with gender/sex 'righteous' achievement. A comfortable 'sureness' of gender/sex wins in

legislation, policies, political rhetoric and institutional and educative practices seemed to arise from assurances by neoliberal global elites that gender equality was/is central to their agendas. But these now appear to be hollow. Our project is not oriented to feminist concerns about the hollowing out of feminism by neoliberalism, making feminism neoliberalism's handmaiden, as raised by Fraser (2014) and others that we have addressed and critiqued in the past (see Zalewski and Runyan 2013). Rather we are concerned with how feminisms past are always present, just as misogynies and other hatreds are also always here. The hauntings of the former help us to expect the hauntings of the latter and move us not to a nostalgia for feminism lost, but to a feminism unbound from temporal, bodily, governance, and other securing attachments that keep us from seeing the continuing capacities of feminism to insecure and insecure itself from deadly and deadening knowledge and practices. So we start from what seems to be a badly destabilizing (long and lingering) moment, though such a moment, as Sara Ahmed tells us, can be a gift or 'a site of trauma, anxiety, or stress about the loss of an imagined future' (2007, 19) -- perhaps we might imagine it as all of these. '#MeToo' and '#TimesUp' notwithstanding, assumptions of a white-laced secure(d) feminist future, particularly in its governance form, though also intellectual, have been sorely disrupted.

We have already hinted that the cautionary 'fictional' tales of Frankenstein and the Handmaid, far from being past horrors that are dead and buried, are in the 'here and now' living and breathing among and within us. This sense that ghosts of seemingly past, overt, and brutal misogynies are all around us is what attracts us to the theoretical and epistemological work of the spectral, which we expound on in the next section. Attending to ghosts helps to remind us of the 'narrativity of history' (Weinstock 2013, 63) and the powerful arbitrariness of the truths and stories which emerge as preeminent, indeed

'obvious.' We aim to work with the spectral to help us think through why Trump-time has been met with such shock and incredulity especially by those who cast their lot in the havens of allegedly 'safe' and 'happy' feminisms, which are particularly white, Western ones (*equality policies coming out of our ears …*). We also work with ghosts as a way to re-imagine what appears as apparitions of banished and de-formed feminisms. The former begins to disrupt the promise(s) and vision(s) of a secured feminist future as a decidedly post-feminist, but more significantly, anti-feminist past and present is unleashed; the latter eschews fantasies of secured feminism. In doing so it resists security fetishes, not only those of white patriarchy and its apparatuses below, above, and at the level of the state so manifestly mobilized in Trump-time to control gendered and racialized bodies, but also those feminist ones that rest upon the illusory securing of the bodies and subjectivities of women.

After explicating our use of the spectral as a theoretical and methodological guide, we offer three ghost(ly) stories or configurations to signal some of the spectres of overt hatreds and oppressions associated with reinvigorated masculinities and racisms many thought dead being given new life.

Our ghost(ly) stories each focus on a configuration of a 'body' through which pasts, presents and futures morph in ways not reliably methodologically trackable. The first ghost-body is the central character of Offred in *The Handmaid's Tale* -- in this story we explore how banishments of the haunting figures of 'feminists past' are deployed to justify the violent securing of 'vulnerable' women, albeit only obedient (white) ones. Moving next to the ghost(ly) story of Hillary Clinton, in part from the pages of her book *What Happened* (2017), we reveal her as a spectral repository of the dreams and nightmares of globalised governance feminism bent on securing (white) feminist-inspired progress. Materialising as the ghostly

figure of the seemingly transparent progress of white, Western feminism upon which much hate made manifest in Trump and Trump-time is directed, Clinton reveals the chimeric nature of secure governance and intellectual feminism. Trump is the third ghost we visit. As a figure of transparent (hyper) masculinity and white supremacy, he reminds us that ghosts of white patriarchy are always present -- when they shape-shift out of sight, they create the illusion that they have been permanently relegated to the distant past, yet they can (and have) come back with a vengeance. But in this time of these always looming spectres made overtly manifest, and the hate, fears, and disorientations they propagate, we urge resistance to rushing to re-secure feminism as if we could or should go back to the comforting notion that its triumph is assured. Instead, we look to 'killjoy' and troubling feminist spirits, which gesture toward insecuring/unbinding feminist thinking, mindful that the struggle is never over and abandoning our incredulity that such unleashed hate and uber-oppression could happen (again). In our conclusion, we argue that staying in this destabilizing moment theoretically helps to challenge 'happy' nostrums of feminism that lull/dull us into a (false) sense of security, which never extended to the vast majority of 'women' (and 'men') made most abject, and which has held the more privileged hostage to an imaginary that it is not that bad and it can't get worse. It is in this moment, this Trump-time, that killjoy and troubling spirits can come to the fore to unbind security fetishes of white patriarchy and fantasies of secure(d) feminism.

Spectral Theorizing – A Disordering Methodology

The hangings, the beatings, the mutilation, the state-sanctioned rape all hurt too. But they still feel far away. What keeps me up at night is the strange normality in the face

of powerlessness, the feeling that every bit of breaking news is all building up to something Wrong (Victoria McNally nerdlist.com posted May 11 2017).

Working with the spectral has a long genealogy in literature and academic thought. There was something of a 'turn' in cultural theory toward the ghostly, with Derrida's *Specters of Marx* (1994) being especially luminescent in this genre. In feminist scholarship notable uses of the spectral include Avery Gordon's *Ghostly Matters* (2001) and Wendy Brown's *Politics out of History* (2001). The spectral, ghosts, and hauntology are also found increasingly in feminist International Relations (IR) scholarship (Zalewski 2005, Auchter 2014, Welland 2015, Clark 2018, and McLeod 2019). For the work in this piece we are especially inspired by Gordon's textually and methodologically eclectic approach and also by recent work in critical IR and security studies which experiments with and combines varying methodologies and narrative styles (e.g., Ling 2014). Gordon's profound theoretical observation that 'life is complicated' is particularly prescient here, it is a captivatingly simple statement yet it opens the way to a richer and more layered range of ways to 'make sense' of that we find incredulous, yet seem to touch us so closely. This is principally the case as Gordon's statement is not followed up by a move to stifle the complication, but instead to follow it, even expand it.

We conjoin Gordon's invitation with our own and other critical feminist approaches which, for us, in part, works to insecure safe boundaries around knowledge construction in security studies including feminist knowledge, or perhaps rather to illustrate how the illusions of secure or safe knowledge cuts right to the core of theorizing and does not just sit atop at the level of the empirical. This is evidentially insecuring work to do for feminists given the long and ongoing struggle to have this work be fully audible, fully credible and fully authoritative

not least within IR and Security Studies. Yet it is precisely the presence of this ongoing legibility challenge right in the midst of the ongoing incredulity of Trump-time and the now growing global incidences of 'anti-genderism' that impels us to be more audacious in our work, even if this might present as precarious. Hence we draw eclectically on the 'world we know and feel' – personal communications and lives, literary sources and devices, poetry and sensations or feelings which seem very present but conventionally methodologically unreachable. We work in the midst of all this to create our 'spectral methodology' to help push towards different sense making of the incredulity of which we and others speak. This also works to keep drawing us (as writers/readers), or nudging us in different thinking directions to keep shifting away from the seductive touch of conventional thinking fields.

We are further keen to work with ghosts, a 'core component' of every spectral framework (Clark 2018, 607) as they simultaneously *conjure, offer* and *represent* fruitful ways to think about incoherence, fluidity, boundary breakdown and blurring. Recall our introductory discussion about the swathes of incredulity about the 'time we are in' (how could that happen?). There may be an understandable rush, by academics, politicians, activists, people in general, to explain the craziness - the 'that' - though this can hurtle us toward political or theoretical panic (Walker et al. 2018). We suggest that it is important not to rush to speedy closure and secure grasping of that which we cannot swiftly comprehend. What might we inadvertently capture in the rush to knowledge and closure; in vampiric fashion, what might we invite over the threshold into the 'secured' home of 'safe' knowledge? As Haraway ventures, 'in urgent times, many of us are tempted to address trouble in terms of making an imagined future safe, of stopping something from happening that looms in the future, of clearing away the present and the past in order to make futures for coming generations' (2016, 1). We realise there is an unnerving even unearthly liminality associated with the

ghostly and this kind of spectral/dispersed/troubling thinking, may bring with it unwanted ambiguity and disorientation and indeed fearfulness – though we think this is necessary to keep the methodological shifting alive.

Thus we think of haunting as performing 'theoretical work' (del Pilar Blanco and Peeren 2013, 11) which we understand to mean directing us to different avenues of meaning about any particular event or happening, to better expose the many layerings making up what might, could or doesn't become 'truth'. This theoretical work we judge will aid us in unearthing, unpacking and 'un-rethinking' some of the violences that vex and disturb, yet are so difficult to 'grasp' or comprehend even with our plethora of comfortable and familiar feminist and critical concepts and vocabularies (Stern and Zalewski 2009).

> The ghost is that which interrupts the presentness of the present, and its haunting indicates that, beneath the surface of received history, there lurks another narrative, an untold story that calls into question the veracity of the authorized version of events (Weinstock 2013, 63).

This kind of work involves disinterring searing presences in the mire of their suffocating absences often sparked by a sense, a feeling, or a note of disjuncture. We work here with our noticing that there is the stealth violence creeping around in the 'free world' and through the body of the leader of that world – 'vice assumes a new body' (Shelley 1818/1992: xiii). Such deep rivulets of hate are emanating from this state of 'eternal light', such as Trump's vitriol about 'shit-hole countries'[iii] and the shameless denials in the midst of a febrile sea of sexual abuse scandals. With the latter there have been some 'fall guys' (e.g., Harvey Weinstein), yet the time still seems 'out of joint' – summoning Hamlet's lament and a muse for Derrida's

Specters of Marx. Some wheels of justice still seem to be 'working' and there has been much resistance and protest. But in neo-liberalised manically over-busy lives, what real time is there to jam the machine – including the 'theoretical machine' (Irigaray 1985)? We think that the theoretical work of haunting helps to nudge us to re-narrativise/re-frame and re-feel, not least given its work in disordering time and space and thought.

Though Trump-time has spear-headed its own time of fear, we do not want to solidify this fear in too much of a rush to 'know' and to return too swiftly to more familiar and comfortable methodologies. The ready absorption of the already too solid violences woven neatly back into foundational structures can make injustices seem inexorable, inevitably to inhabit the present … *boys will be boys; black people will die …* patriarchal and racist zealots once again marauding the landscape in bloated entitlement. Thus we are drawn to thinking about spectrality and the idea (and presence) of ghosts given the potential for working with them as theoretical and thinking mechanisms to help illuminate other portals of thought however liminally or briefly, even if like a feather floating by your face momentarily touching. Moments matter -- the moment of pause or calm might be the very thing that stalls a deluge of pain. Tracking through, with and beside ghosts may help to better think and write about the indelible instability of binaries and boundaries given their real/not real, there/not there qualities. Seeing through/with ghosts hopefully forces more into the realm of visibility-- even if temporarily – important new questions that might emerge from this ethereal trail.

And while Trump-time seems awash in dizzying, ungraspable, and unbelievable spectres of overt hate assumed long-buried by the march of time and linear progress, represented in part by sureties about the upward trajectory of global gender equality regimes, as we take up in our conclusion, categories of subjectification like gender, sexuality, and race can themselves

be conceived as spectral, spinning around us so quickly we mostly fail to notice. The boundaries between normative and non-normative subject positions, despite being heavily policed, are not necessarily immediately perceptible, producing a pervasive anxiety that things may not be as they seem (del Pilar Blanco and Peeren 2013, 310). What/where are we missing? We use spectral thinking to assist in suspending incredulity that Trump-time could happen and offer time to stay in this destabilizing moment as a way to help unbind feminism from what became too comfortable assumptions and too secure(d) moorings in the subjectivity classification of 'woman.' Understanding that a 'spectre does not only cause séance tables to turn, but sets heads spinning' (Derrida 1994) -- in this case heads spinning about white patriarchal security unleashed and secured feminism unhinged, we now move to speak to and with ghosts, first to Offred, then to Hillary Clinton, and back to Trump.

Ghost 1: Offred

> Haunting brings together the personal and subjective with discourse that dis/empowers …
> racism, sexism … braiding together the threads which reflect the construction of social life
> (Clark 2018: 607).

We present the ghosts encountered here as social figures which 'represent past tragedy and injustice' (Gordon 2001, 21); but not only 'past tragedy.' The crucial spectral work to do here is to recognise, confront and stay with the merging of past, present and future instigated by these figures and the confusions that this conjures. Handmaid Offred in Atwood's tale -- the reproductive slave 'of Fred' -- is a fictional character of the future, yet the life she is forced to live is violently riddled with gendered degradations that simultaneously belong to the past and a future feared. But more than this, Offred appears to speak piercingly to women in the

present. Apparitions of women wearing the red and white uniform of the handmaid continue to mark contemporary protests against the nagging and significant erosion of rights thought secured.

As a gateway to understanding, feminism is important here. In Atwood's original tale, subscribing to feminism is banished in Gilead, though in order to eradicate it, it must be retained as a frightening spectre, a cautionary tale in itself. The Aunts who prepare and discipline the Handmaids for their breeding and domesticated roles inundate them with 'Unwoman' documentaries from a 'radical' feminist past. Handmaid Offred recognizes her mother in one of them.

> She's in a group of other women, dressed in the same fashion; she's holding a stick, no it's part of a banner, the handle. The camera pans up and we see the writing, in paint on what must have been a bedsheet. TAKE BACK THE NIGHT. This hasn't been blacked out, even though we are not supposed to be reading … Or is this a thing we are intended to see, to remind us of the old days of no safety? (Atwood 1985, 129).

Feminism functions here as a ghostly figure of a violently failed attempt to provide security for women from violence, ironically contrasted with the protection the uber-patriarchal regime supposedly delivers to white women who know their places and are under constant surveillance and threat of violence to stay in them. The rebelliousness of the 1970s and that of largely white radical feminists are especially singled out as 'unwomanly,' not surprisingly as Atwood (a Canadian) wrote this in the early 1980s at the dawn of the Reagan Administration in the US and its anti-reproductive rights agenda. Offred remembers her mother's strident discourse and actions for abortion on demand, affordable day care, male-

performed housework, and her disdain for men – 'A man is just a woman's strategy for making other women' (Atwood 1985: 131). She also remembers how she chafed at her mother's insistence that she not forget or take lightly 'how many women's lives, how many women's *bodies*, the tanks had to roll over just …' to get to where women were prior to their enslavement in Gilead. Offred saw her post-feminist desires for marriage, family, and home as a rebellion against her mother's radical feminism – 'I didn't want to be her model offspring' (132). But as a Handmaid in Gilead, she is haunted by her prior dismissiveness – 'I want her back. I want everything back, the way it was. But, there is no point to it, this wanting' (132).

How to get back what should not have gone away….? Or what has never gone away?
We read the ghosts of Offred and her mother speaking to us in the present as not a trafficking in (hopeless) nostalgia, but as a cautionary tale about the suturing of feminism and the hatreds it confronts to the temporal as eschatology. It is not as if Gilead-time (or Trump-time) had no past that was effectively put away. The struggles, more overt for Offred's mother and more covert for Offred, against its brutal assemblages, made only more and more widely manifest at times, reminds us that there is no 'safe' space or time and that seeking it can blind us to what is always there and bind us to security rackets that promise safety through violence from the very sources of that violence. Moreover, there are deadly consequences for imagining such violence is the fault of feminism for compromising women's safety by daring to take them outside of patriarchy's tight embrace and then becoming too unvigilant and compromised to break free from patriarchy's vengeances. The linear temporality of such a narrative, a teleological unfolding of the rise and demise of feminism ends up 'eradicating indeterminancy, historical invention, and creativity' (Agathangeou and Killian 2016, 3) in past, present, and future feminisms.

Fast forward to the second season of the TV series moves beyond Atwood's original novel with new stories, new plots and new horrors. Atwood appears as an Aunt in the series -- slapping a Handmaid to get her to 'pay attention' and to 'wake up,' metaphorically telling us all to wake up to the horrors already (and always) afoot in real life. In one episode we are taken via a flashback to the 'time before' the time of things going off the edge' (which is 'now') when Serena Joy, the soon-to-be commander's wife is heckled as a 'Nazi cunt' for her attempted speech on 'A Woman's Place' at a university campus after which the future commander hunts down and mercilessly shoots and bludgeons to death male and female protesters.

This contemporary re-telling in a time in which the handmaid resurfaces as a symbol of protest, not defeat, urges getting 'woke' to an understanding that there is no future clean of the resurrection of past and always present vile ghosts and the bodies that pile up under and in resistance to them, thereby interrupting the incredulity with which Trump-time has been met. If we resist a reading of time 'with peace [and order] as its end,' an inexorable march from barbarity to the civility of (neo)liberal governance in which gender equality is assumed to be secured, then we will no longer be shocked by 'the persistence in the present' of a violent past (Agathangelou and Killian 2016, 2). And this might also enable us to see how people invent meaningful approaches, such as the re-membering of the handmaid to resist Trump-time(s), 'that do not turn their lives fatal amidst multiple violences they inhabit' (Agathangelou and Killian, 16). It also urges a revisiting of the contested ground of 'a woman's place' as the bloody site of many playback loops. 'A woman's place' is what haunts the ghostly configuration of Hillary Clinton as a quintessential governance feminist to which we now turn.

Ghost 2: Hillary

Offred and Hillary – a morphed woman. Think of Hillary when Trump loomed behind her in the second Presidential debate, 'literally breathing down' her neck and making her 'skin crawl'. She asks, 'Do you stay calm, keep smiling, and carry on as if he weren't repeatedly invading your space?' or 'do you turn, look him in the eye, and say loudly and clearly, 'Back up you creep, get away from me, I know you love to intimidate women but you can't intimidate me, so *back up*!'(Clinton 2017, 136). But she doesn't say this; she can't. What might we make of this, a woman on the cusp of being the most powerful woman -- actually person -- in the world?

What Happened (2017) is full of the indignities Hillary suffered as a candidate, not unique to most women candidates for most offices, and certainly nothing compared to the daily assaults on ordinary women past and present, as she repeatedly observes. Still, as she notes in her book, she knew that Russian operators were in full swing organizing and funding 'Lock Her Up' rallies and Facebook bots. She, however, admits (as an apologetic feminist?) she 'overlearned the lesson of staying calm -- biting my tongue, digging my fingernails in a clenched fist, smiling all the while, determined to present a composed face to the world,' but wonders if it would have made any difference (Clinton 2017, 136-137). She then finds herself at the Trump inauguration, haunting the event out of duty, haunted by her loss, and exchanging the question with Michelle Obama, 'Can you believe this?' (Clinton 2017, 6).

Like her womanly-cramped response to Trump, Hillary Clinton's time is significantly compressed and contained. Although one of the most powerful architects of global governance feminism as US Secretary of State, instituting national and global policies that

connected the advancement of women with 'smart' security and development (Hudson and Leidl 2015),[iv] she seems never allowed to 'arrive' or to wholly materialize. Always stuck in the wrong time zone for her kind of 'woman-ness', even when the most anachronistic bully turns up – his time-space is still shaped as preferable.

The grotesque monstrousness of Clinton's woman-space invoked a resurrection of a bizarrely familiar female form from the mythical 'past' -- Medusa, 'cursed with a head full of snakes' by Athena for 'laying with' Poseidon and then slain by Perseus. This typical reading of her story has channelled its way right through into the twenty-first century. The most recent mediatized reincarnation of this image has Donald Trump in the place of Perseus and Hillary Clinton as the severed head of Medusa (Beard 2017). Yet as Mary Beard (2017), Susan Bowers (1990), and Zalewski (2017) articulate, different stories might have held imaginations and had subsequent philosophical and epistemological import, one in which Poseidon had raped Medusa and Athena's 'punishment' was rather to save Medusa from ever being violated again. Or another that Athena simply did punish her for her rape; female figures are never secure as women's protectors. Fiona Benson's 21st century poetry materializes this well (2019, 26).

[not-Zeus: Medusa 1]
Poseidon the sea god

raped Medusa

where she prayed

in the temple of Athena

and Athena

cursed the girl

with a head full

of snakes

I came to understand

rape is cultural,

pervasive;

that in this world

the woman is blamed.

But the traditional story of Medusa, as the spectral figure of woman-hood on which Clinton is

grafted, is re-enacted in Trump-time, enabling the (re)materialisation and unfettered traction

to let loose the most extreme white patriarchal security fetishes and apparatuses that rest on

vanquishing 'womanly' ways and sequestering or excising threats to the white, male,

Christian, and predatory capitalist order -- an order that never went away, but is now

constructed as an imperilled ghost of its former self that must be made ruthlessly manifest

once again.

Ghost 3: Trump

Trump seemed to arrive on the scene like Frankenstein's 'monster' that appears out the mist

in Mary Shelley's original story. And like Prometheus, the mythic subject who made man out

clay, his unbounded hubris brought 'fire and fury,' the title of the Michael Wolff's (2018)

unflattering account of the chaos and nihilism in the White House with a small-minded,

deranged, 'post-literate' at its epicentre. In that account, Trump appears much more like the

popularised cinematic Frankenstein monster -- brain-damaged, destructive, and lacking any empathy.

Trump's bursting on the scene in the midst of the sureties about the unshakeable foothold feminism had achieved in halls of power and in everyday life, has not only ratcheted up actual violence, but also filled us with unrelenting dread of what more is to come. Thinking spectrally also reckons with the arrival of assemblages of the unknown, but yet (strangely) familiar. Taking the time to sense the 'known strangers' who arrive to frequent us (Frecerro 2013, 337), like the rabid bunch of misogynist actors and actions who feel very familiar, yet at the same time uncanny given their stern banishment through legislation, polices, reason and justice. They appear to have vengefully returned in a bizarre inversion of the seen/unseen with Trump arguably materializing as the biggest ghost of them all in his audacious whiteness and hypermasculinity. It is as if the transparency of masculinity and whiteness drifts in and out – always seen, yet a pretence that is has been decimated, dissolved into … the past? As del Pilar Blanco and Esther Peren suggest, '… the normative position (of masculinity, heterosexuality, whiteness) is ghostly in that it remains un(re)marked, transparent in its self-evidentiality' (2013, 310).

So far Trump is surviving and oddly thriving in the chaos and cruelty he seems to revel in. There are intense contradictions in a world which gives us the spectacle/wonders of 'empowered women' along with the rise of the Alt Right and Donald Trump -- a sexist leering figure of a man from, some thought, another era yet accepted/acceptable at the highest levels of the Republican party and the lowest levels of its base, both forgiven and forgivable. In this sense, time seems to have shape-shifted to accommodate and 'allow' such a man. The curious 'space-time' around forgiveness/tolerance of 'whitemanwrongdoing' appears so

much more expansive and more malleable than 'whitewomanwrongdoing', evidenced by continued efforts to slay Hillary Clinton as the modern-day Medusa. And is massively more capacious than 'allotherswrongdoing' as the rights and lives of racialized and non-normative others are trampled only more overtly and rapidly in Trump-time. Trump has become emblematic of a spectral and ethereal time-space zone. To be sure other white men are not quite as well placed in time-expansiveness, but to the degree that white male violence is treated as aberrant, like Trump himself, we will not take the power of ghosts and their always already there visitations seriously.

We now turn to another way that spectral thinking can help us to re-think, re-frame, and re-narrate feminism so as not to be as available for the hate-mongering and (white woman) protection rackets that Trump-time is laying bare.

Feminism: Forever receding …?

> When the happiness seal is broken, when violence has intruded into scenes of bliss, we begin to hear the ghosts of feminists past. The feminist ghosts clamour around us, they surround us, we listen. . . To break the seal is allow the past into the present (Ahmed 2017, location 1294).

Feminism in Ahmed's ghostly reading also becomes the 'open wound' because it 'won't let things heal' (2017, location 5246) to cover over injustice or in the name of inclusion into an unjust system, nasty women/feminists who keep insisting/persisting. In this sense, lived experiences of embodied vulnerability and precarity 'are not the opposite of agency and power, but rather enactments of resistance that presuppose vulnerability of a specific kind, and opposes precarity' (Butler 2016, 15). Such an understanding of vulnerability as

resistance, however, is the opposite of the 'marking' and 'reification' of 'vulnerable' groups in international human and women's rights regimes of global governance which 'fix' them as powerless and dependent on such regimes to provide paternalistic 'protection' (Butler 2016, 24). Or (wo)manly protection.

Offred's nostalgia for uppity women and a no-holds barred feminism and the sense of incredulity and even hopelessness that all is gone is resonant in contemporary Trump-time. Though 'of course, we don't divide women into classes of Marthas, Handmaids, and Wives; we call them 'the help', surrogates, the working class, and the one percent. … Trump's pussy-grabbing presidency has given cover to the sort of blatant misogyny many thought consigned to the past' (Jones 2017). But the fetishization of 'pro-woman(hood)' by the men and women of the religious and nationalist right argue that it is to 'protect' the 'value' of women that they can't 'preach, or get abortions if they didn't want to be pregnant, or fall in love with another woman' (Jones 2017). This is the here and now and possible future of the secured woman on which Trump-time depends. 'They sell it to you by telling you its feminism, - or 'empowerment' or 'choice,' if the f-word feels a bit too threatening. They promise you it'll fix your problems and the world's too. Like any authoritarian ideology, it expects you to tire of fighting' (Jones 2017).

Has feminism materialized as a weary ghost of its seemingly former self? Some feminist critics of feminism as such, and in the immediate wake of Hillary Clinton's loss lay the blame on 'prominent, mediagenic feminists,' from 'leaning in' corporate executives and celebrity women sporting feminism as a fashion that reduces feminist discourses to the pursuit of 'self-esteem' and 'self-empowerment' (Crispin 2017b: 16-17).

Seemingly forgotten or rather banished is the array of radical and energising concepts which theorized 'patriarchy as inextricably entwined with capitalism' and sought the 'overthrow' of the entire system of 'greed, competition, and power' (Crispin 2017a, 17). But the 'slow and thankless work' of resisting right-wing assaults on reproductive rights and neoliberal assaults on welfare and the working class 'has been eclipsed by the more prominent voices of mainstream feminism' better seen as a 'pro-woman' exercise to gain 'equal access to the system of oppression' (Crispin 2017a, 17).

Some hold white feminism's banishment of the so-called radical voices responsible for making feminism so palatable as to be meaningless or worse in service to capitalist patriarchy (Crispin 2017b, 39). 'Self'-induced violence of many kinds consequently materialises -- 'digging your nails into your clenched fists' so as to appear calm and reasonable or 'ladylike' in another era -- back in the here-and-now. Long reduced to scruffy 'man-haters,' the revelations proffered by 'less palatable' feminists for doing feminist violence to every structure and interpersonal relationship that feeds oppression had seemingly been relegated to the dustbin of history, no longer read or simply dismissed in their entirety as going too far (Crispin 2017b: 40); so mad as to be madness, even monstrous. Yet, *The Handmaid's Tale*, which signals prescience about the patriarchal capitalist conflagration that came or is to come and always was, is being enlisted by contemporary activists in Trump-time. Even a number of new Democratic Congresswomen of colour and female Democratic contenders for President are eschewing Clinton's cramped demeanour and politics to resist being 'Hillary-ed,' calling out the 'war on women' and calling for bold and sweeping environmental, social justice, and even socialist new deals.

The 'blast from the past' evokes a call to not peddle in the politics or rhetoric of respectability in which neoliberal governance feminism or individualistic 'choice' or 'empowerment' feminism traffics. This is not a 'happy' and secure/safe feminism. Indeed, Ahmed (2017) argues that feminist manifestos – philosophies, strategies - must be 'killjoy' manifestos suspicious of the will to happiness that sentences feminists to eternal accommodation and mainstream accessorization.

According to Ahmed (2017), in Valerie Solanos we hear the voice of 'murderous' feminism/woman, 'calling for the end of the subject of the 'white man' because of the necessity to bring 'an end to an institution that makes white men' (location 5042). Solanos – notorious for shooting Andy Warhol - is eternally conjured as 'a woman 'eaten by history, reduced to [this] single act' (Laing 2016: 78) insistently spat out in apparitional perpetuity. What if Donald Trump were reduced to a 'single act'? Which one of his violent acts might we choose? In Shulamith Firestone we hear the call for a 'smile strike' that is 'necessary to announce our disagreement, our unhappiness,' with this system, and in Audre Lorde, we hear refusals on the part of those 'who were never meant to survive' to succumb (Ahmed 2017, locations 6529 and 4724). And Ahmed herself, who brings the past to present in her own Killjoy Manifesto, proclaims 'I AM NOT WILLING TO GET OVER HISTORIES THAT ARE NOT OVER' (2017, location 5246), whether it be enslavement, colonization, or patriarchy, made only more visible in Trump-time.

Thus such voices are never actually gone as feminism, which as least conceptually aims to do violence to the norms, normativities, and present (re)normalizations of white patriarchy, is always shape-shifting and capacious—capable of making room for hosts of killjoy spirits, past, present, and future. But this capaciousness over time and space is limited by the

suturing of feminism to its feminization through persistent attachments to the bounded cisfemale body and its woman-hood. Doing violence to feminism's feminization to unbind it from securing women and to keep it open to hauntings which help resist being lulled into false senses of security about feminism's inexorable progress and being surprised about white patriarchy's (re)appearances is how we conclude.

… Feminism Unbound: Spectres of Security in Trump-time

Drawing attention to the radical violent energies of critical feminist work -- especially those not imagined to be banished into a mythical past wasteland – is more important than ever. Moreover, imagining feminism as always (or ever) peaceful continues to toil in layers of feminized colonial pretences and patriarchal approval. The intentions of feminist work are neither therapeutic, nor are they tranquil, notwithstanding the political and educative indigestibility of this (Zalewski 2017). It is illusory to think or hope that ignoring or entombing the inevitably necessary dirty work of feminism will make feminist work more effective; quite the opposite we argue. Persistently and rowdily surfacing the political and destabilising work of feminism makes it 'less available to command and use to intervene in security assemblages' (Gentry, Shepherd and Sjoberg 2019) – 'feminism unbound', a spectral escapee from fleetingly bound feminist forms.

Yet the surface rhetoric of the security fetishes of white patriarchy, including protecting the 'homeland', or 'our' way of life and 'our' values, draw much of their energies from the securitized packages we come to know as (minimally) gender, sex, sexuality and race. These packages which we come to think of as 'subjects' are constantly chasing 'them/selves'/'our/selves', sprinting, scampering and sometimes purposefully dawdling or refusing to catch up with the 'right' form (of gender/race/class ….) though never quite

making the ephemeral grail. Though heavily policed, bounded and banded, there remains an imperceptibility to them; a spectral spirit. We feel and sense this so clearly in the moment of 'not knowing' (which gender, race, sex …..), so viscerally experienced, for example, by many a 'masculinized' woman using the 'women's' restroom/toilet. Trans-phobia is another regular carnal occurrence reminding of sex/gender spectralities. What is fearfully secured here? What is to be kept in or out? Though it is always too easy to deploy the 'other' as the ready illustration of such spectral gendering/sexing/othering, as we noted earlier, the egregious, (un)re(marked) transparency and 'forgetfulness' of white male masculinity in the figure of Donald Trump is a significant one on which to ponder. What do his white supremacist behaviours work so hard to keep in/out? But how will this help us to think further about the work of feminism unbound? And how to better understand and resist the incredulity in the lament we began with – how did <u>that</u> happen?

Haunting reshapes history by disrupting its conventional structure of chronology (Derrida, 1994).

As stated in our introduction, part of our exploration here is about how to navigate the current political and intellectual landscape, one which so confusingly and complexly appears to adore the work and interventions of (some) feminist theory (*equality policies coming out of our ears …),* yet simultaneously refuses this work and its deeper implications until it appears to be almost too late in the swarm of re-animated hate- and fear-mongers. In the face of the incredulity about this re-animation and in the spirit of resisting a re-secured feminism, the form of feminism for us is a multiplicity which persists in learning to refuse the 'taint of one identity', and a feminism(s) which refuses to ignore the contradictions of the contemporary spectacles of 'empowered women' and 'angry white (strong)men.'

These spectacles/spectres are particularly prominent in in the context of the relationships between security, feminism and global politics and we best be alert to how the secured woman, whether in configurations of Offred, Hillary Clinton, or globalised governance feminism, is the ground for security fetishes of white male patriarchy (in the US and elsewhere), re-materializing with a vengeance in Trump-time. How might 'staying with the trouble' in this destabilizing moment of security run wild enable thinking about unbinding feminism from 'woman' and insecuring its availability for the use of all the unresolved violences that act to hollow it out or leave it behind? How can it be a killjoy to security and the violences it represents? A feminism which is 'out of joint', an offspring that is unfaithful to its 'origins' but thrives in its insistences to do violence to norms that uphold violence?

As we have learned from our gestures to (science) fiction and myth are 'always about now'.[v] As significant sources for spectral thinking they direct us to incoherence, fluidity, boundary breakdown and blurring, which on the one hand, alerts us to the always present virulent ghosts of security unbound and the always present animating sprits of feminism unbound.

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[i] The Alabama State Senate passed a near total ban on abortion on 14 May 2019. See https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2019/may/14/abortion-bill-alabama-passes-ban-six-weeks-us-no-exemptions-vote-latest As of 17 May 2019, severe abortion restrictions had been signed into law in eight Republican-ruled states seeking an overturn of abortion rights by the now majority right-wing US Supreme Court. See https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/us/abortion-laws-states.html.

[ii] See https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2017/feb/14/bill-and-melinda-gates-trumps-global-gag-rule-endangers-millions-women-girls-us-funding.

[iii] See https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2018/jan/11/trump-pans-immigration-proposal-as-bringing-people-from-shithole-countries

[iv] However she has simultaneously been charged with being a 'faux feminist' for her hawkish foreign policy, neoliberal corporate connections, and complicity with racist carceral policies (Featherstone 2016).

[v] See https://www.theguardian.com/theguardian/guardianreview/2018/may/19/all