



## Toward an Affective Repertoire of Feminine Feelers

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I am, therefore, a political militant for the impossible, which is not to say a utopian.  
Rather, I want what is yet to be as the only possibility of a future.

Luce Irigaray, *I Love to You* (1996, 10)

Emotion and affect have long been equated with the feminine. Particular manifestations of emotion and affect have been understood to be more or less feminine and feminist. This special issue of *Feral Feminisms* called out to “feminine feelers” to use bodily experience to question the positioning of the feminine and the feminist. The feminine feeler cultivates sensory awareness as a strategy to decipher cultural and emotional hegemonies. The feminine feeler is an affective misfit who dodges and gathers affects to tune in to what is going on within and around them. The contributors to this issue each reflect and draw upon their own positions and limits to welcome, protect, or rebuff. If we understand a repertoire as an evolving archive, then works curated under the umbrella of feminine feelers offer an affective repertoire of feminine gestures, figures, styles, and strategies.

The affective repertoire of feminine feelers can be likened to the feminine genealogy of Luce Irigaray. Irigaray serves as a godmother figure who is either mentioned in or influential to many of the works in this issue. Irigaray’s work calls for an engagement with the feminine and the development of a feminine genealogy of figures who are not defined in terms of their masculine-other but rather of their own manifestation. As Alison Martin notes, “Although the feminine is given within patriarchy, the dominant masculine model cannot return that feminine to herself on her own terms—it cannot ‘reflect’ her back to herself—since the feminine role is to support the reflection of his identity” (2000, 137). Feminine feelers express feminine experience in feminine terms.

Feminine feelers cultivate self-affection as a starting point. Cultivating self-affection returns us to our bodies and helps us to “[be faithful to ourselves] and to respect the other in their singularity, reciprocity in desire and love—more generally, in humanity” (Irigaray 2013, 162). For Irigaray, “self-affection is the basis and the first condition of human dignity” (2013, 61). Having cultivated a relationship to ourselves from within our bodies, we lean in the direction of what pulls, of gravity.

Together, these feminine feelers open avenues for future feminine and feminist inquiry into the changing of affective relations. Feminine feelers do not simply reveal how affect moves—they reconsider the movements which bring us together or apart. The descriptive headings are temporary orientations, not anchors, for the current curator to organize these works. The feminine feelers repertoire is a humble beginning that motions toward a future of thinking, feeling, and being in the feminine.

The feminine feeler recalls and acknowledges the struggles of their ancestors and the inheritance of their way-finding. **Jodie Childers** draws upon Irigaray's work on the need for a feminine divinity in order for women to have their own subjectivity. Childers' images and poem narrow the gap between the divine and the human, neither restoring the presence of the divine in everyone nor the humanity of the divine. Childers ultimately locates a contemporary mode of feminine power: choice. Obliquely, **Celia Vara's** work returns to the presence of feminine divinity in the form of the angel with *violeta esperanza* (violet hope). Between the rocks and the water, the woman is a beached domestic angel, shoring up others with her endless care and tending, the threads of which tangle her movements and drag behind her. Both Vara and Jenkins feature knitting as an embodied skill shared between women. **Catherine Jenkins** adapts the style of a knitting pattern to accommodate two voices. Jenkins takes up the issue of inheritance from our mothers and the affective knots that complicate our relations and, when let go, expand our horizons. Equating haunting and affect, **Daniella Sanader's** reading of AA Bronson and Peter Hobbs' queer séance invokes the playful spirits of feminine feelers now past.

The feminine feeler skills herself at honing her sensations with a body attuned to its own vibration, deciphering meaning with and against common-sense understandings of the body. **Corinne Teed's** *Negotiations* illustrates the visible indistinction, the difficulty of understanding what goes on, in intimate acts such as nuzzling and wrestling. Marina Abramovic and female mystics are exemplars of the separation between the experience and the socio-cultural meaning of sensation. **Katherine Guinness and Grant Bollmer** study Marina Abramovic's handling of bodily sensation, particularly pain. Abramovic teaches techniques for training and enduring at her Institute, which, Guinness and Bollmer argue, cultivates a kind of *panaffection*, an internalized mode of removing perceptual boundaries to the world. **Sarah Clairmont** observes the bodily practices of female mystics for whom the eroticization of the body was a way to achieve communion with the divine. Clairmont draws upon mystics such as Marguerite Porete and Hadewijch of Antwerp, who mortify their flesh, making their bodies raw, not out of cruelty, but of a love inflected with carnality.

The feminine feeler repositions herself to relate in all her manifestations, not as an inspirational story or a mere intersection of adjectives. The feminine feeler continually reflects on the construction and positioning of subjectivity. **Angelica Stathopolis** guides us through the work of Luce Irigaray to open other potentials for feminine experience and subjectivity. Exploring styles intended to shift relations, Stathopolis feels through feminine expression and formulations of being. **Alexa Athelstan** articulates and recognizes the frustration of intersections that include black, crip, femme, etc. Athelstan examines the movement, gravitation, and expulsion that affect propels within and without the political tensions of various positionalities.

The feminine feeler circumnavigates the emotional landscape erected by socio-cultural forces to remap terrains and establish new vistas. The fat-acceptance bloggers, who are the focus of **Carolyn Bronstein's** piece, steer the rocky paths of

fat women living in a hegemony of thinness to locate an orbit of positive affects in the fatosphere. Bronstein argues that the happiness of the fat female depends not only her own self-love, but also the empathy of the feelers around her to embrace all bodies without judgment.

The feminine feeler challenges and continues to challenge social orders, following her own compass. The feminine feeler sometimes fails. Angered by the continual violence against women and the limitations of previous avant-gardes to revolutionize life, Valerie Solanas took matters into her own hands. **Marit Bugge** carefully scopes the archive of Valerie Solanas to plot the tensions between art and violence. Bugge's own writing exemplifies the haunting of violence and how fraught with feelings a feminine archive can be.

Although several voices, representations, affects, caresses, traces, and tracks are not included in this collection, please consider these works as an invitation or incantation toward feeling a feral feminine future. *The curation of a feminine future is in our care.*

### Works Cited

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