



## SPRING 2022

### *Letter from the Director*

**D**ear friends of Chellis House and the GSFS program,

As I sit down to write this editorial, the world as we know it seems to have come to an end. The Russian government has started a war of aggression against Ukraine—a sad testament to where hypermasculinist militarism can lead. What we are witnessing is a blatant disregard for human rights and human life. We often feel powerless in the face of such atrocities. Yet in spite of this feeling of powerlessness, feminist efforts towards peace-making come to mind: the Woman's Peace Party and—in direct descendance—the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, which called for an end to armed conflicts as early as 1914, in response to the ravages of World War I. Opposing the war in Yugoslavia in the 1990s, Women in Black staged vigils against militarism and war. They do this to this day. To join or start a meeting, go to: <https://womeninblack.org/>. Here in Middlebury, the Unitarian Universalist Church has been organizing peace and freedom vigils: <https://www.cvuus.org/>. Solidarity and sovereignty are feminist issues and so is anti-racism, as we witness xenophobic attacks against Black people and people of color who are trying to flee Ukraine.

Even though events overseas feel overwhelming, and the pandemic still hasn't abated, we are still trying to create a feminist community through a curated series of events. In March, Women's History Month, we will continue our Feminist Film

Series at Axinn 232 on Thursdays at 7 p.m. In March, we are also hosting two readings by local writer Leslie Smith on March 10 at 4:30 and by poet Karin Gottshall on March 16 at 12:15. Both will take place in the Abernethy Room. Please check the college calendar for more details. In collaboration with the Anderson Freeman Center, we will also honor the legacy of feminist thinker bell hooks at the Abernethy Room on Thursday, March 31 at 4:30 p.m.

It is my great pleasure to welcome Professor Catharine Wright as the interim chair of the Program in Gender, Sexuality, and Feminist Studies. Professor Wright is an Associate Professor of Writing and Rhetoric as well as in GSFS and has been teaching in our program for many years. This year, her pedagogical focus is on feminist joy. For this purpose, she is bringing embodied movement artist Maree Remalia to campus during the first week of April, in collaboration with the Middlebury College Museum of Art and the Dance Department. In a workshop, the college community will be able to explore the connections between a somatic based healing and pleasure activism based on contemporary queer Black feminists and other forms of feminist scholarship. Feminist interventions will run the gamut from moving our bodies, writing and reflection, and visual art in ways that aim to reclaim and amplify personal and collective pleasure for all bodies.

April is also the month during which the annual Gensler Symposium takes place. This year's theme is reproductive justice.

We will open the symposium with Roslyn Banish's photo exhibit titled "Focus on Abortion" on Monday, April 18 in the atrium of Davis Library. On Thursday, April 21, we will host a virtual conversation between reproductive rights activists Loretta Ross and Carrie N. Baker. Stay tuned for more details!

It is with a heavy heart that we say goodbye to Professor Hemangini Gupta, who has graced us with her presence for the past three years. Even with the pandemic raging, Professor Gupta was able to do so much for our community: together with GSFS major Cat La Roche, she started an online, public resource to share teaching tools developed in Feminist Studies classes (teachingfeminisms.net). Updated by GSFS major Melanie Chow, the website will also feature work from Laurie Essig's and Carly Thomsen's classes. The project draws on student zines, podcasts, timelines, and video essays to elaborate on concepts and events related to GSFS. At Middlebury, Professor Gupta has served on the Humanities Steering Committee and has incorporated Humanities Labs into her teaching of "Gender, Technology, and the Future." The first such lab had a public display at the Davis Family Library in Spring 2021 and was described as follows: "Each piece in this exhibit offers a provocation to rethink a popular contemporary technology

by tracing its often obscured histories and entanglements. How might we see technologies differently if we actively engage their military, corporate, ableist, raced, and gendered foundations?"

Along with Professor Carly Thomsen, Professor Gupta organized a faculty seminar to discuss new directions in feminist and queer theory with colleagues across disciplines in winter 2020. Our collaborative article will be published in the flagship journal of our discipline, *Feminist Studies*. And if that weren't enough, Professor Gupta also received a contract for her book *Startup Capitalism: Indian Experiments in Gendering Life and Labor* from University of California Press. On behalf of all of us, I would like to thank Professor Gupta for her dedication to Middlebury College during a very challenging time!

My best wishes for a productive spring semester,

**Dr. Karin Hanta**

*Director of the Feminist Resource Center at  
Chellis House  
khanta@middlebury.edu*



**Professor Hemangini Gupta**



**Professor Catharine Wright**

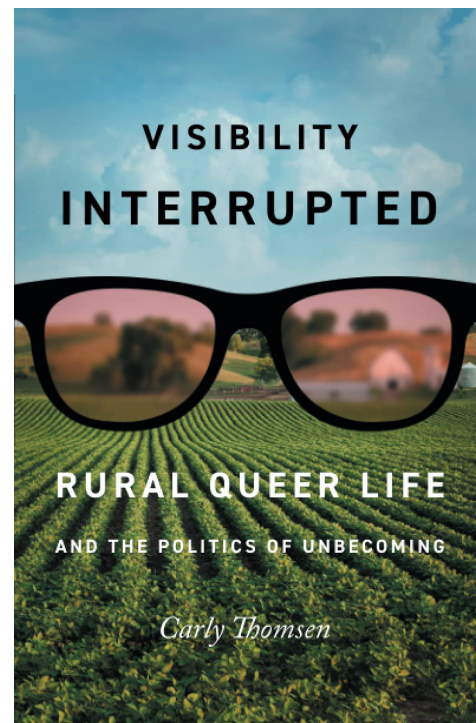
# VISIBILITY INTERRUPTED: GSFS/CHELLIS SUPPORTS LAUNCH OF THOMSEN'S NEW BOOK

By Matt Martignoni '21.5

Students, faculty, staff, and academics from beyond Middlebury joined the GSFS Program on October 5th, 2021 for the launch of Dr. Carly Thomsen's book *Visibility Interrupted: Rural Queer Life and the Politics of Unbecoming*. The event featured acclaimed Queer Studies scholars Martin Manalansan and Rosemary Hennessy who each presented enthusiastic comments on Dr. Thomsen's work. Her book, the presenters affirm, makes several invaluable contributions to the field of Queer Studies. "The book is primarily up to two things," Thomsen writes. "The first is disrupting the positive affects that get attached to visibility, and the second is disrupting the negative affects to get attached to rurality." Through ethnographic work conducted with queer women in rural South Dakota and Minnesota, Thomsen upends the dominant visibility politics of mainstream LGBTQIA+ activism that perpetuates these dangerous equivalencies.

"Thomsen's book is precisely the antidote to this uncritical impulse," noted Manalansan in reflecting on his participation in New York City protests following the murder of Matthew Shephard. "We saw ourselves as cosmopolitan, progressive activists, lifting up the long-suffering denizens of the sometimes romantic but oftentimes harsh, homophobic countryside." Hennessy similarly praises Dr. Thomsen's work affirming that "*Visibility Interrupted* is a must read for anyone, LGBT or otherwise. Whoever thought that being out loud and proud was a good thing."

As the book launch progressed, the two scholars provided informative remarks on Dr. Thomsen's work. "Visibility politics has a geography," explains Hennessy. It is "one that has long been tied to cosmopolitan diversity and sophistication." "LGBTQ studies," Manalansan



Thomsen's book *Visibility Interrupted*

explains, "has often begun with a romanticized caricature of the gay boy farmer or cowboy whose multi-dimensional counter-point and presumed teleological end-point is firmly located in urban space." Thomsen offers a means of world-making. It exists separate from the

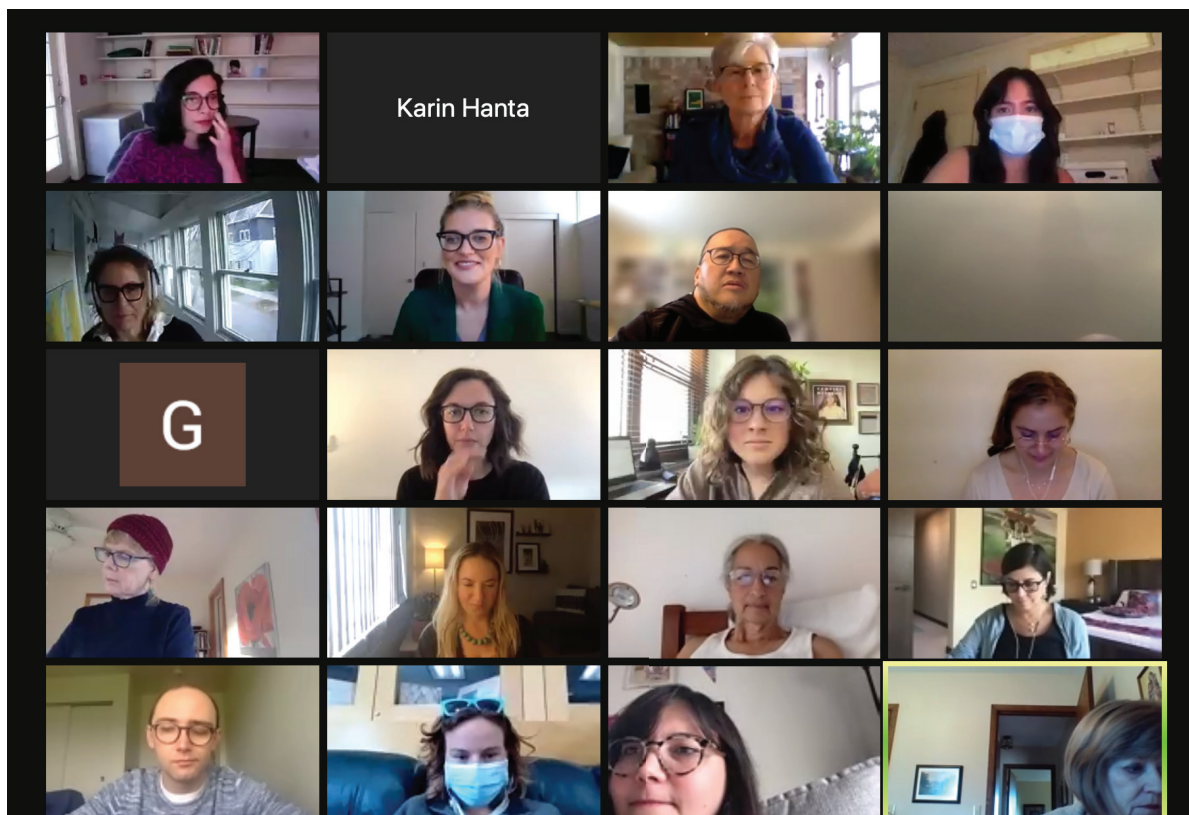


“deliberative redemptive ethos of mainstream LGBT politics, and the so-called new normal of gayborhood, suburban gaydoms, and consumer-focused queerness.” It is world-making through “unbecoming.” This practice is one of refusing a singular identity and the commodification that entails. *Visibility Interrupted* reveals a reality of rural queer life where gay women are active agents shaping their communities. It allows us to move away from the binaries of out-closeted, visible-invisible, and pride-shaming and instead to center other forms of being in relation to one another. According to Hennessy, “one of the most important feminist contributions of this book is the simple but heretofore unmade point, that metonormativity not only disproportionately impacts women, but is itself sexist.” And, importantly, the book highlights that the stories of the lesbian communities in rural South Dakota and Minnesota portrayed in the book offer the opportunity to recalibrate contemporary LGBTQIA+ politics.

Following Manalansan’s and Hennessy’s commentary, Dr. Thomsen emphasized that she was not out to demonize visibility in the abstract. Instead, she highlighted that the concept is “context-specific, that it is valued differently

along geographic and gendered lines, and that its political utility is far less capacious than gay rights groups have suggested.” In this context, we can glimpse this conception of unbecoming. It “is the opposite of becoming, the undoing of becoming,” Thomsen said. “It is something we can think of as the deconstruction of what it means to become, the interrogating of the ideologies upon which this becoming relies.” How, Thomsen asks, “might rethinking dominant ideas regarding what is unbecoming allow us to become differently?”

In reflecting on the event, Thomsen described it as a moving experience. “What a dream to hear scholars I have long admired reflect on my ideas! And to see people from every part of my life there: mentors from undergrad, my Master’s and PhD programs, my time as a Postdoctoral fellow, dear friends and family, activists I’ve worked alongside, and Middlebury colleagues, former students, and Research Assistants. I loved seeing the faces of people who have shaped my life over the course of the past twenty years all in one space. I couldn’t believe 100 people attended! I’m so grateful to GSFS and Chellis for organizing this special event, as well as the related reading group the week prior.”



Screenshot from the event

# Resistance and Lament through Song

By Matt Martignoni '21.5

Alumna Dr. Tabasum Wolayat Niroo '12 presented virtually to the Middlebury community on November 16, 2021.

Her talk was entitled "Afghan Women's Folk Songs: Resistance and Lament." Sponsored by the program in Gender, Sexuality, and Feminist Studies, the Anthropology Department, and the Critical Conversations Series, the talk covered Dr. Wolayat Niroo's anthropological fieldwork on

women's music in northeastern Afghanistan conducted for her master's thesis.

Dr. Wolayat Niroo is currently completing her Ph.D. at Old Dominion University.

Originally from Afghanistan, her journey is remarkable.

Prior to academia, she worked for the BBC as a current affairs reporter in Afghanistan. At the time, she produced and

Studies and Anthropology in 2012 at Middlebury, then moved on to Oxford University where she received a master's

degree in Anthropology. Consequently, she returned home to work for the Afghan Ministry of Rehabilitation where she focused on a program aiming to empower female entrepreneurs in rural Afghanistan. She also worked as Director of Admissions at the American University of Kabul and as

a commissioner to reform civil service and increase female participation in governmental positions.

Most recently, in 2018, she received Fulbright and International Peace Scholarships to pursue a



**Above: Dr. Tabasum Wolayat Niroo '12**

presented the BBC-backed Afghan Women's Weekly Hour while studying in Kabul. After this work, she completed her B.A. in Women and Gender

Ph.D. in higher education at Old Dominion University, where she works now.

Her dissertation was titled “Quality-less: Higher Education, Relationships, and Neocolonialism in International Development.” In 2013, Dr. Wolayat Niroo traveled to Takhar Province where she conducted her study.

“In northern Afghanistan, talented women sing folk songs to entertain each other at female-only gatherings on happy occasions like weddings, circumcisions, and other rituals,” Dr. Wolayat Niroo explained.

The songs are accompanied by a diara or daff, a circular tambourine-like drum made of goat or cow skin with jingling plates around the edges. The folk songs themselves, called chaharbeiti or dubeiti, are typically two or four sentences long, like quatrains, and are occasionally followed by a short refrain. In addition to public performances, women sing in private when engaged in activities such as farming and embroidery. Song themes vary depending on the setting and the women’s age and life experience. Many sing about unhappy marriages, the pain of losing loved

ones, or the impact of wars on the country, she noted. However, they all dealt with issues of womanhood in rural Afghanistan. Ultimately, though, she emphasized that these songs help women imagine an alternative reality distinct from their current situation. “It is through song that women amplify other women’s voices as they perform together,” Dr. Wolayat Niroo added.

In her talk, Dr. Wolayat Niroo explored how the chaharbeiti served different purposes in the lives of women from three different generations. The women of each generation experienced different traumas tied to current events such as internal instability following the British and Soviet presences in the country and the US invasion in 2001. Music was a form of socialization into the complex gender relations for young girls, she explained. For middle-aged women, singing folk songs served as mechanisms to grapple with patriarchy in their specific life circumstances as opposed to a wholesale collective condemnation.

“In a way, they were bargaining with patriarchy in order to maximize their own options,” she explained.

Finally, for the older generation, this music provided a means to express deep-seated pain from years of violence and the loss of loved ones.

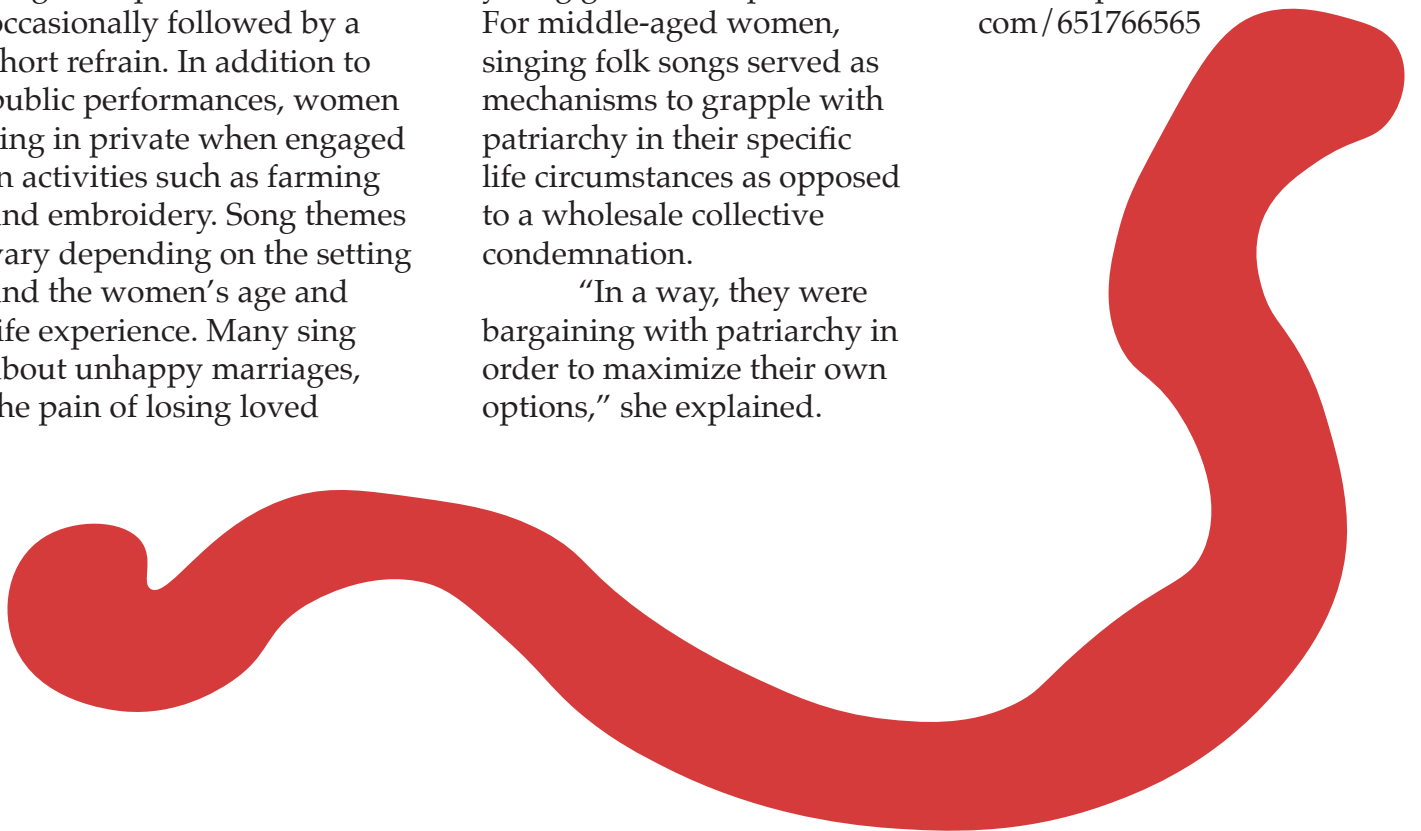
Here is one song:

A car comes from Khost / The watchman guards the military post  
These goddam Germans\* / Separated lovers from their beloved

\* The term German is used to describe all white foreigners more generally.

Under the new Taliban regime, the future of this practice is unclear. Unfortunately, there is yet another tumultuous period that is likely to shape the songs these women sing as they imagine a future distinct from their reality.

Watch the recording here: <https://vimeo.com/651766565>





# Ceremony of Innocence

## a poem about binaries and borders

in response to William Butler Yeats' poem, "The Second Coming"

By Catharine Wright

The ballerina's arms lift Up  
calf muscles Up  
comma arch of her foot  
while Down, the cowboy boots  
strike stones,  
chops growl in memory.

Turning and turning in  
the gyre  
they dance  
a two-step  
two White warriors  
conquering gravity and  
the frontier.

She hails from Russia, Paris,  
"the continent,"  
while he is all-American  
he's a real American.

Turning and turning  
they dance  
in our blood  
we White beasts

we gravity-defying  
population  
heirs to a continental  
America  
K cups and cartons of  
pure milk.

He hails from the continent,  
she is all-American.

Turning and turning  
we dance  
the two-step, we are two  
we're not one, the  
continent on which we

stand  
we salute our health  
our census tells us so.

Against the border we stand  
Up to our neighbors  
chaps growl at the fence,  
against the border  
our foot a mere comma on  
which we stand.

We are two and remember  
the continent  
we are two and not multi we  
remember  
the frontier.

In our two-step we  
strike stones beside the fence  
where we stand.

We are two and not  
afraid  
not afraid of three  
strikes  
two commas  
and two organs behind  
the two-step.

We stand tall  
in our boots  
striking stones,  
boots like commas that  
hang  
in the air when we  
speak.

We are two and never three in  
our organs,  
turning in the step of our heels

we are one at the fence  
one comma, one comma, one  
comma in a waltz.

We are cast into the frontier  
in the gyre of our boots  
turning steps into stones  
holding stones in our  
hands  
holding hands with our  
words.

We're not two or one or three  
not in our chaps standing tall  
not from the continent alone

on the frontier alone  
not alone, nor one  
not we are not, not  
turning in the gyre  
we are being turned.

We are  
being in the gyre,  
not a comma or a boot  
we're in combat with  
our selves  
sifting through stones

we're remembering the beast  
who remembers the beast?

you must remember the beast  
its hour come round at last.



# adrienne maree brown develops *Emergent Strategies*

By Melanie Chow '22 and Halsey Smith '23

Entitled “Radical Implications: Facing the Climate Emergency”, the 2021 Clifford Symposium featured adrienne maree brown as a keynote speaker. On September 23, brown was “brought” to campus virtually to engage with the Middlebury Community and share what she has learned in the face of the climate crisis.

brown is an activist and author of *Emergent Strategy* and *Pleasure Activism*. She uses science and climate fiction to combine her activist goals with her passion for writing. She often cites Octavia Butler’s works as her inspiration because she believes science fiction gives an author the fullest range of possibilities of what to write about.

brown explained how the concept of emergent strategy came to her because she was pondering human beings’ role in the climate crisis. brown

argues that indigenous groups paved a way of existence where human action was compatible with the planet. Due to colonization, many individuals have broken their connection to the earth and must make immense changes to their current lifestyle in



adrienne maree brown

order to foster a relationship of harmony. She also described situations where individuals have already had to deal with climate disasters and experienced moments of learning to move through crises with intention, like

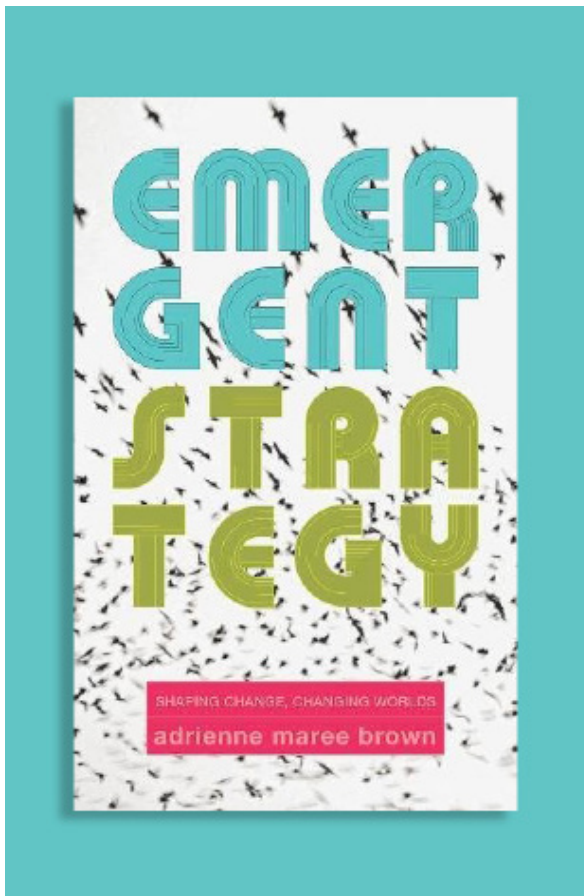


during Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans and Hurricane Maria in Puerto Rico. This speaks to the idea that the “age of consequences” has been ushered in and that the concept of “normal” as something convenient yet inhumane is no longer tenable. Instead, our intention should be to create a balance between our species and the earth and to cease to take relationships, people, and the surrounding Earth for granted.

Another component of brown’s strategy for combating the climate crisis and seeking a

more just world is what she describes as pleasure activism. brown explained that within our society, we so often feel unsatisfied with the work we do. Pleasure activism necessitates making justice the most pleasurable thing we can strive for. It involves working together to protect each other’s humanity, allow people to rest, and be valued for more than just our labor.

The talk can be found [here](#).



**brown’s books: *Emergent Strategy* and *Pleasure Activism***



# *Petit Rat: A Story of Ballet, Trauma, and Healing*

By Halsey Smith '23

On January 27, International Holocaust Remembrance Day, the Feminist Resource Center at Chellis House co-sponsored a conversation with filmmaker Vera Wagman and her sister Deborah Wagman about their documentary film, *Petit Rat*. In this movie, Vera Wagman explores their mother Fernande's experiences during World War II, a time she survived as a child in the French region of Savoy under the Vichy regime, where she sometimes had to go into hiding to avoid Nazi persecution.

Her dreams of becoming a "petit rat"—a ballet trainee at the Paris Opera—were shattered in the process. Fernande was determined that her daughters Deborah and Vera would have a ballet career, which they did, although this step did come with its

share of rivalry between the sisters and body image and mental health issues, masking intergenerational trauma. The documentary allowed the three women to work through this pain and resolve some of the issues that had caused them

ballet performances as children and young adults and interviews in France that Fernande and her husband Edward recorded with French rescuers in the early 1990s. The Chagnon, Thomas, and Thévenard families had either

sheltered Fernande and her family until the end of World War II or warned them of Nazi raids. In the 1990s, Fernande felt the need to trace her story and traveled back to France to reconnect with the people

who had saved her. In 2004, she published her memoir, *The Demarcation Line* (Xlibris Corporation) and, in the process, applied to Yad Vashem, the Israeli Holocaust Memorial, to acknowledge her rescuers, Marie, Placide, and André Chagnon (the Thomas and Thévenard families had already been honored by the Shoa



**Above: Fernande supports her daughters, Deborah and Vera**

pain.

The movie seamlessly interweaves footage of Fernande, Vera, and Deborah choreographing a mother-daughter dance with video recordings from the sisters'

Memorial Museum in Paris.)

Chellis House director Dr. Karin Hanta led a question and answer session with Vera and Deborah Wagman after the documentary was available for view for a week. *Petit Rat* took nine years of filming and editing.

A first version of the documentary centered on Vera and Deborah's relationship with almost no references to their mother or their lives as first and second generation survivors. After working with an editor, Vera completely redesigned the movie, refocusing it on Fernande Wagman.

"It all began with her," Vera said in the interview, "We're talking about the Holocaust, we're talking about our family on a deeply personal level."

Both sisters started attending ballet lessons at a very young age. Deborah went on to perform with the American Ballet Theater and Ballet West in Utah, but stopped professionally at 25 because of her bulimia. Both women opened up to the fact that they both loved and hated

dancing at the time. "Vera and I have always been very close, but there was tension. The rivalry was a one-sided issue, however. I didn't feel like we were rivals," Deborah, the older sister, said.

"There were secrets, and

tension between the sisters and their mother while growing up, yet it was what brought them all together for the documentary. They choreographed a trio at at the Baryshnikov Arts Center where they performed together with their mother for the first

time in their lives.

In this graceful interaction, they at one point lift and carry Fernande. At another point in the dance, Fernande looks at both of them with the utmost tenderness. The interviews, choreography, and overall creative process helped them work through trauma that was once all consuming. This experience was especially empowering because as women, they felt that their voices had often



**Above: Fernande, Deborah, and Vera in their youth**

been silenced. *Petit Rat* became a feminist memory project, one in which healing was accomplished through the act of creating. By allowing themselves to be vulnerable with each other, Fernande, Vera, and Deborah Wagman were able to create a deep and durable sense of connection free of any rancor.

Link available here:  
[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1XIMhORVb83B3btAiE4976wnCVi\\_34xhA/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1XIMhORVb83B3btAiE4976wnCVi_34xhA/view)

Dance was a point of



# LESSONS IN DRAG

## bringing the nightclub to the classroom

By Halsey Smith '23

On Thursday November 11 and Friday November 12, 2021, Middlebury students were able to study drag. This past fall, GSFS Professor Hemangini Gupta invited Professor Kareem Khubchandani, also known as LaWhore Vagistan, to share how she brings the nightclub to the classroom and vice versa.

Professor Khubchandani is the Mellon Bridge Assistant Professor of Theater, Dance, and Performance Studies, and Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at Tufts University. He also authored *Ishtyle: Accenting Gay Indian Nightlife* (University of Michigan Press, 2020) and, together with Kemi Adeyemi and Ramón H. Rivera-Servera, is the co-editor of *Queer Nightlife* (University of Michigan Press, 2021).

At Professor Khubchandani's workshop, participants were invited to create a drag persona and engage in some of the medium's core practices. Attendees chose a drag

name, introduced their drag persona, and joined together



**Above: Dr. LaWhore Vagistan wears one of her many outfits in her performance in November**

in a lip sync exercise. The mood was both playful and contemplative as individuals were encouraged to own their actions.

During the Friday

session, Dr. Vagistan, combined lecture, lipsync, costume changes, audience engagement, and performance to show how drag teaches us to relate to the rest of the world. Beginning with an engaging lip sync performance, Dr. Vagistan interspersed her show with themes of globalization, black feminist theory, diva worship, and reactions to islamophobia. She stages the nightclub as both a site of politics and pleasure. With innumerable costume changes, edited audio recordings, and background video, Dr. Vagistan took the audience through many different experiences. She ended the show with a performance of the song "A Whole New World" from Disney's *Aladdin*, which she turned on its head.

I spoke with Professor Gupta to hear her perspective on organizing the event, her friendship with Professor Khubchandani, and how she brings the lessons learned from drag into her classes at Middlebury.

***Halsey Smith: How did you meet Professor Khubchandani?***

Hemangini Gupta: The first time I met Professor Khubchandani was in the neighborhood in Bangalore where both our mothers live. We had been in touch on Facebook (remember that thing?)

through a common friend who met me at a conference and told me that I should meet him because his research was similar to mine. We miraculously managed to cross a very busy street and ate some dosa and then we went to a nearby mall where we leaned over a railing and watched some kind of prize giveaway that involved spontaneous contests and singing and dancing and very loud music.

***HS: Why did you want to incorporate the performance into your Globalizing Gender class?***

HG: I believe that feminist and queer theory opens space for discussions of embodied

learning and thinking about how bodies and spaces are vital to producing different kinds of theory. Lessons in Drag seemed ideal. Also let's be honest, I hadn't been to a show or a bar in two years and really wanted to remember what it was like to dress up and hear some music and feel like dancing!



**Above: Dr. Vagistan interacts with the audience during her final act**

***HS: Had you seen one of her performances before? Did you know anything about it?***

HG: No. I took a wild chance and was entirely surprised!

***HS: What does it mean to you when students "get" the performance?***

HG: Dr. Vagistan is so well-read and fluent in feminist and queer theory; it was important to her that we would have an audience that would "get" side references to Spivak and Mohanty and want to learn a thing or two about queer theory and globalization!

***HS: How did the performance illustrate theoretical concepts in practice?***

HG: The example my class kept on (and on) discussing was when Dr. V illustrated Jose Munoz' idea of disidentification through a vignette as the Disney princess Jasmine. Jasmine is stereotyped

in so many ways—she could attempt to articulate her resistance as protest or she could inhabit what we imagine her to be (a docile, exoticized beauty) and totally flip that idea on its head, as Dr V did with a raunchy demonstration of all that Jasmine is and can be! I had talked a lot about this with my students in class and it felt like a lot of words until we went to the show!



# NAOMI REPLANSKY READS HER POETRY

*By Melanie Chow '22*



**Naomi Replansky**

On Wednesday October 27, 2021, Naomi Replansky, prolific poet of the 20th century, visited Middlebury for a zoom poetry reading. Replansky spoke to a group of almost 100, and shared brief anecdotes alongside many of her poems.

Replansky was born on May 23, 1918. At the age of 103, she still brings her poetry across in a compelling manner, interspersing life experiences from almost a century of writing and activism in her performance. Replansky was born in the Bronx, New York to a working class Jewish family. In the 1930s and 40s, she was a factory worker in New York City and member of the Communist party. In the 1950s, she spent time in Los Angeles where she translated literary works from German, French, Greek, and Yiddish by renowned writers such as Bertold Brecht and Hugo von Hofmannsthal.

Much of her poetry highlights her life experiences, i.e. elements of Jewish culture and history, and oral and folk traditions. Her poetry also weaves together leftist themes and critiques of capitalism. Philip Levine described Replansky as, “an intensely political poet appalled by the cruelty, greed, and corruption of the masters of nations and corporations.”

Naomi Replansky’s 1952 collection of poetry from the years 1936-1952, *Ring Song*, was a finalist for the National Book Award. Her most recent collection, *Collected Poems* won the Poetry Society of America’s 2013 William Carlos Williams Award and was a finalist for the 2014 Poets’ Prize. Naomi Replansky resides in New York City with her longtime partner Eva Kollisch, one of the co-founders of the discipline of Women’s Studies.

The reading can be found [here](#).



**Replansky's Collected Poems**





A screenshot from the poetry reading

# Ring Song

*By Naomi Replansky*

*... When that joy is gone for good  
I move the arms beneath the blood.*

*When my blood is running wild  
I sew the clothing of a child.*

*When that child is never born,  
I lean my breast against a thorn.*

*When the thorn brings no reprieve  
I rise and live, I rise and live.*

*When I live from hand to hand  
Nude in the marketplace I stand.*

*When I stand and am not sold  
I build a fire against the cold.*

*When the cold does not destroy  
I leap from ambush on my joy...*

1944

# Gray Hairs

*By Naomi Replansky*

*Gray hairs  
crowd out the black.  
Not one of them  
brings me wisdom.*

*Wrinkles  
provide no armor.  
I still quiver  
to anyone's dart.*

1980

# Ceremony

By Naomi Replansky

*Who put the mask of Whiteskin on?*

"I," said the freckled,

"I," said the mottled,

"I," said the pinkcheeked.

"I," said the grayface,

"We put up our hands and we stopped the sun  
And we put the mask of Whiteskin on."

*Here one comes knocking without the mask:*

"Closed," says the textbook,

"Packed," says the jury.

"Don't drink me," the water,

"Don't pass me," the front door,

"Only white dung,"

Cries the sacred outhouse,

"Is a pale hand upon me?"

Asks the mystic machine,

"Boy!" calls a tongue

To dwindle a black man,

"It is death to enter and death to ask

If you come knocking without the mask."

*Who dances this magic of race and face?*

"I," said the hungry,

"Though hunger is skinless."

"I," said the fearful,

"Though fear has no face."

"I," said the safe one,

The loomlord, the landlord,

"Gave hunger a skin,

Gave fear a face.

Now take your place and remember your place  
And dance to this magic of race and face."