

"Feminist Aesthetic of Slow Hope: Transnational Study of Slowness, Labour and Eco-Care in Literary and Digital Texts by Millennial Women (working title)"
by Jinandi Patabandi

Abstract

Mindsets characterised by self-optimisation and accelerated lifestyles shape the lives of many millennial individuals who come of age in neoliberal societies. Not living up to these perceived 'ideals' often results in precarity or disillusionment. Women are specially affected by these circumstances in which they are doubly oppressed under the constant demand of professional advancement, productivity and traditional expectations of femininity, such as marriage and motherhood. Against this background, this PhD project argues that, as a subversive reaction to the above, the productions of literary and digital texts created by millennial women collectively articulate a transnational feminist aesthetic of 'slow hope'. The project extends the current scholarship on hope as it deviates from the popular discourse of hope as future-oriented optimism that caters to individual resilience and, attempts to frame 'slow hope' as a durational practice that operates through temporal deceleration, alternative kinships and eco-attuned practices that reconfigure emotional, domestic, and ecological labour. Thereby, the project contributes to multiple academic discourses including hope, neoliberal feminism and ecofeminism. Taking a theoretical perspective informed by feminist critiques of neoliberalism, labour, ecology, and kinship, this project analyses literary and digital texts by Anglophone millennial female creators that enact slowness through relational, repetitive, and affective practices. In this sense, the analytical and conceptual framework of the project is multimodal, connecting considerations of temporality, relationality and embodiment. Instead of being based on a geographically determined categorisation, this PhD project curates its primary sources through a cross-genre and transnational corpus. Thereby, the primary sources include novels *Beautiful World, Where Are You* (2021) by Sally Rooney, *How Beautiful We Were* (2021) by Imbolo Mbue, and *When I Hit You* (2020) by Meena Kandasamy. The poems considered are Lakshani Willarachchi's "Bherunda" (2022), Hala Aylan's "Step Two: Higher Power" (2019) and Nikita Gill's "Baking Banana Bread as the World Ends" (2020). The three songs selected for the project are "Runaway" (2016) by Aurora, "Ask the Birds in Cairo" (2019) by Felukah, and "Woman" (2021) by Little Simz. In addition, the project engages with essayistic non-fiction, including Cal Flyn's *The Wolf at the Door* (2020) and Jia Tolentino's *Always Be Optimizing* (2019), and Larissa Pham's *Blue* (2021) alongside digital and community-based archives such as "The Nap Ministry", "Slow Travel Co." and "World Pulse". Ultimately, the PhD project aims to reveal that the refusal of normalised efficiency and extraction of the neoliberal social structures is expressed by the millennial women in an anti-capitalist feminist aesthetic of slowness that generates durational hope for survival.

Keywords: Slow Hope, Neoliberal Feminism, Slowness, Affective Worldmaking, Ecofeminism