

**W S Q**

CALL FOR PAPERS

**UNBEARABLE BEING(S)****SPECIAL ISSUE  
FALL 2024****GUEST EDITORS:**

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**PRIORITY SUBMISSION DEADLINE: OCTOBER 13, 2023**

This special issue of *Women's Studies Quarterly* invites submissions that explore the literary, theoretical, and cultural lifeworlds created by and about unbearable being(s).

"Unbearable being(s)" functions on multiple valences. "Unbearable being" is an affective state of being and becoming that indexes the intolerableness of existence within the normative. On the other hand, "unbearable beings" are the subjects who inhabit abject and/or revolutionary positions in relation to the socio-political apparatus and offer alternate possibilities of living and being in this world.

This special issue explores the unbearableness of that which cannot be contained within the category of what Sylvia Wynter defines as the "Man-as-human." Infrastructures of oppression—the nation-state and its borders, citizenship, the unequal distribution of material resources deemed essential for survival such as healthcare, housing, education, and other human rights—police the borders of the category of the "Man-as-human" and cast out Black, Indigenous, people of color, impoverished, disabled, and LGBTQIA+ people differently. The COVID-19 pandemic and accelerating climate change have further dismantled the fictions of liberal humanism and laid bare the exploitative and extractive designs of capitalist white supremacy that create the category of "Man-as-human." Treated as the refuse of urban renewal and gentrification, and/or displaced by environmental crises, wars, and ongoing legacies of settler colonialism and capitalist exploitation, marginalized subjects have, however, effected enormous sociopolitical changes over time, and have fostered socialities in spaces deemed unhomey and unclean. Such abject spaces include prisons, hospitals, segregated housing projects, war-torn zones, disaster sites, nightclubs,

single room occupancy hotels, digital spaces, and other similar sites.

There have been a growing number of studies published on abject socialities and aesthetics in the fields of affect, feminist, queer/trans, environmental, and disability studies and their intersections with Black, Indigenous, and ethnic studies. Examples include José Esteban Muñoz's *Disidentifications* (University of Minnesota Press, 1999), Katherine McKittrick's *Demonic Grounds* (University of Minnesota Press, 2006), Darieck Scott's *Extravagant Abjection* (New York University Press, 2010), Alison Kafer's *Feminist, Queer, Crip* (Indiana University Press, 2013), Lauren Berlant and Lee Edelman's *Sex, or the Unbearable* (Duke University Press, 2014), Alexander G. Weheliye's *Habeas Viscus* (Duke University Press, 2014), Donna J. Haraway's *Staying with the Trouble* (Duke University Press, 2016), and C. Riley Snorton's *Black on Both Sides* (University of Minnesota Press, 2017). Building on this existing scholarship, we seek submissions that focus specifically on cultural expressions produced in abject spaces within various nation-states both in the Global North and Global South. We are interested in submissions that explore abject spaces shaped by white settler colonial domestic/international policies and multinational corporations. More specifically, submissions should explore how these cultural expressions push against/embrace/reject the unbearableness of being(s) and offer unknown possibilities of our freedom and creativity as a species.

Paper topics might include:

- The unbearable and Black, affect, feminist, queer, and disability studies
- Cyborg studies, animal studies, posthumanism, and the concept of "Man-as-human"

- Horror and the unbearable
- Speculative/weird/climate fictions and possibilities of being and becoming
- The “praxis of being human” in spaces marked by confinement, regulation, and surveillance
- Representations of Black, queer, and other marginalized socialities in spaces of exception, such as nightclubs, cruising grounds, hospitals, prisons, and other carceral spaces
- Possibilities of joy, pleasure, and resistance in spaces of tumult
- Unhomely and unclean spaces and the possibilities of communities, intimacies, and mutual aid
- Unbearableness of the settler colonial nation-state

- Medical racism and homophobia/transphobia
- Community building through disability and chronic illness
- Radical care practices
- Criminalization of unbearable being(s)

We welcome contributions that examine a wide array of literary and popular texts, films, performance, music, and other artistic expressions by and about marginalized “humans” who engage with histories of negative inheritances. Especially encouraged to submit are scholars, artists, creative writers, and activists who themselves experience various forms of marginalization within nation-states in the Global North and Global South.

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## SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

- Scholarly articles should be submitted to [WSQ.submittable.com](http://WSQ.submittable.com). Send complete articles, not abstracts. **Remove all identifying authorial information from the file uploaded to Submittable.** We will give priority consideration to submissions received by **October 13, 2023**. Scholarly submissions must not exceed 6,000 words (including un-embedded notes and works cited) and must comply with formatting guidelines at <https://www.feministpress.org/submission-guidelines>. For questions, email the guest issue editors at [WSQEditorial@gmail.com](mailto:WSQEditorial@gmail.com).
- Artistic works (whose content relates clearly to the issue theme) such as creative prose (fiction, essay, memoir, and translation submissions between 2,000 and 2,500 words), poetry, and other forms of visual or documentation of performative artistry should be submitted to [WSQ.submittable.com](http://WSQ.submittable.com). Before submitting, please review previous issues of *WSQ* to see what type of creative submissions we prefer. Note that creative submissions may be held for six months or longer. We do not accept work that has been previously published. (Simultaneous submissions are acceptable if the editors are notified immediately of acceptance elsewhere.) For questions related to creative prose submissions, email [WSQCreativeProse@gmail.com](mailto:WSQCreativeProse@gmail.com). For questions related to poetry submissions, email the *WSQ*'s poetry editor at [WSQpoetry@gmail.com](mailto:WSQpoetry@gmail.com). For questions regarding other forms of artistic or creative work, email the visual arts editor at [WSQvisualart@gmail.com](mailto:WSQvisualart@gmail.com).

### ABOUT *WSQ*

Since 1972, *WSQ* has been an interdisciplinary forum for the exchange of emerging perspectives on women, gender, and sexuality. Its peer-reviewed interdisciplinary thematic issues focus on such topics as *Black Love*, *Solidão*, *Asian Diasporas*, *Protest*, *Beauty*, *Precarious Work*, *At Sea*, *Solidarity*, *Queer Methods*, *Activisms*, *The Global and the Intimate*, *Trans-*, *The Sexual Body*, and *Mother*, combining legal, queer, cultural, technological, and historical work to present the most exciting new scholarship, fiction, creative nonfiction, poetry, book reviews, and visual arts on ideas that engage popular and academic readers alike. *WSQ* is edited by Red Washburn (Kingsborough Community College and The Graduate Center, CUNY), Dána-Ain Davis (The Graduate Center, CUNY), and Kendra Sullivan (The Center for Humanities, CUNY), and published by the Feminist Press at the City University of New York. Visit <http://www.feministpress.org/wsqa> and [womensstudiesquarterly.com](http://womensstudiesquarterly.com).

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