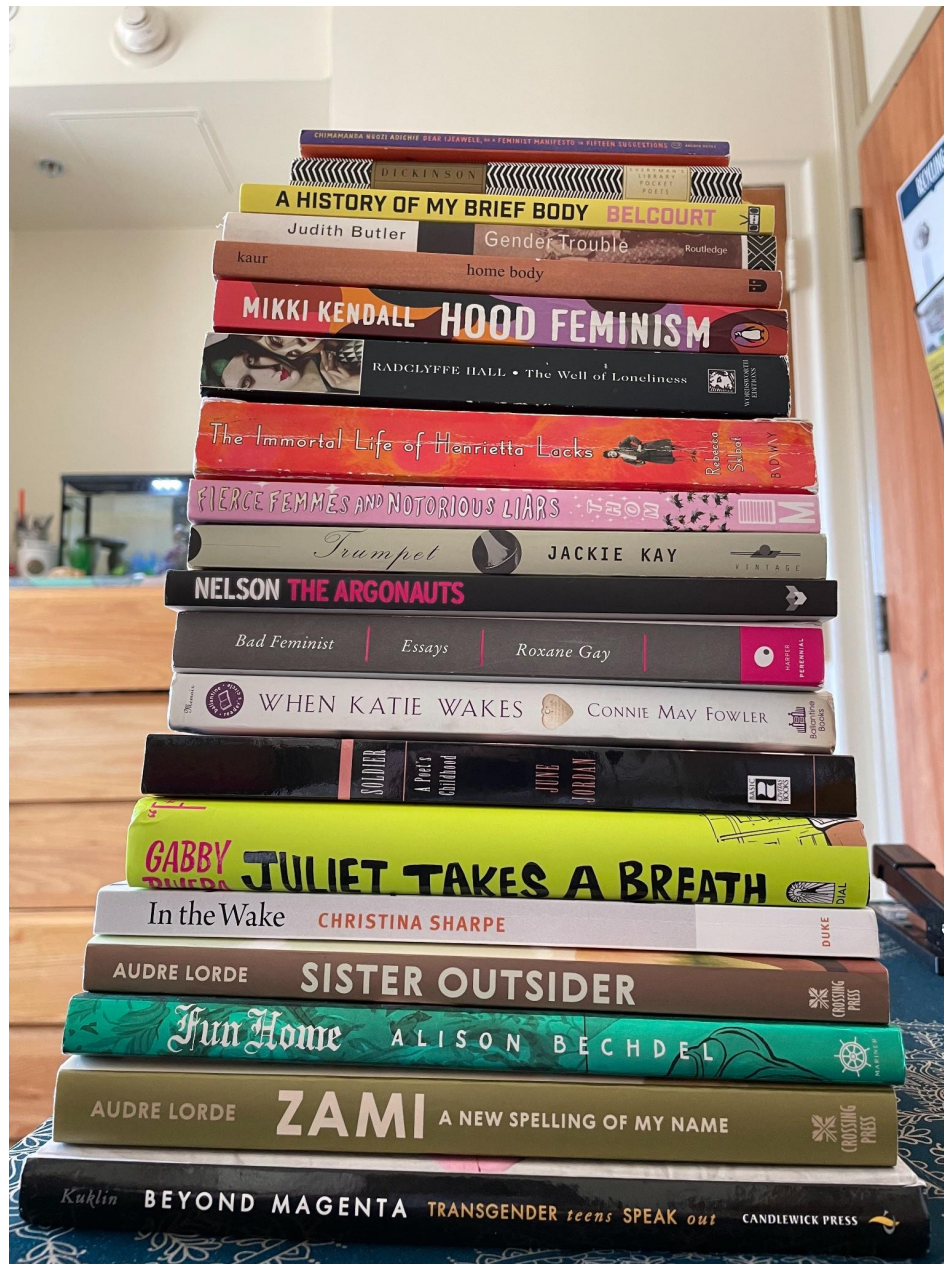


Student Book Collecting Contest
Applestein-Sweren Book Collecting Prize

The Creative Lives Of Bad Feminists



Introduction: What is a bad Feminist

If you read the title of this book collection, you may be asking yourself, what is a bad feminist? For starters, I like to think of myself as a bad feminist because, as Roxane Gay puts it, "I am a mess of contradictions." When picturing a feminist, people tend to create different images in their minds. Perhaps they think of their mother, an author, or hopefully themselves, but often this picture comes with stigma and preconceptions. When first asked if I was a feminist in my first year of undergrad, I said no because of those preconceived notions. When asked that same question today, I would answer, "yes, but a bad one." I owe this new answer to the reading and study of the materials listed in this collection.

Before getting into each book, I want to explain a few concepts and themes. First, I want to point out that this collection is anti-gender essentialism. Gender essentialism refers to the idea that there is something innate about gender and some universal component of feminism. Now I am not here to join this debate fully; however, I believe that one singular thing cannot define one's personhood. Instead, I suggest that one's identity is an amalgamation of intersecting identities, experiences, and expressions.

As a result, books within this collection speak to the authors' experiences in various genres and modalities. I have organized the presentation of this collection into the following sections. (1) *The Theory* lays the foreground of the feminist ideology at play. (2) *Poetry* showcases emotional power. (3) *Non-fiction and Autobiography*; the heart and core of the collection. (4) *What I call Soft Fiction and The Biomythography*; re-imagining the self.

This collection tells the lived experiences of those who are, as Maggie Nelson calls them, "my many gendered mothers of the heart." It is a tribute to those who have shown me what feminism can look like for marginalized groups, people of color, and members of the LGBTQ community.

Section 1: The Theory

To start off this collection, I want to introduce the book that started it all, *Gender Trouble* by Judith Butler. Butler is one of my all-time favorite theorists and an inspiration for my own experience and expression of gender and feminism. This book first came to me in a required textbook list for a contemporary philosophy class I took. I want to start with Butler here because this book started the reconceptualization of what feminism and identity politics could look like. *Gender Trouble* makes a strong argument against gender essentialism and argues that gender is a performance influenced by interacting factors of identities.

Another book within the section of theoretical writing is Maggie Nelson's *The Argonauts*. After learning about autotheory in my Queer theory class, I have recently purchased this book. We did not need to read this book, but it was referenced in works of autotheory and has been on my reading list ever since. Since reading this book, I feel that I have a newfound love for the experience of living an auto-theoretical life. What I mean by this statement is that one's life is theoretical. Most feminists know the rallying cry of "the personal is political." Still, autotheory

takes this idea differently and states, "the personal is theoretical." Autotheory and the work of writers like Nelson encourage me to ground my theoretical concepts in my own lived experiences and to respect the experiences of others as a working theory.

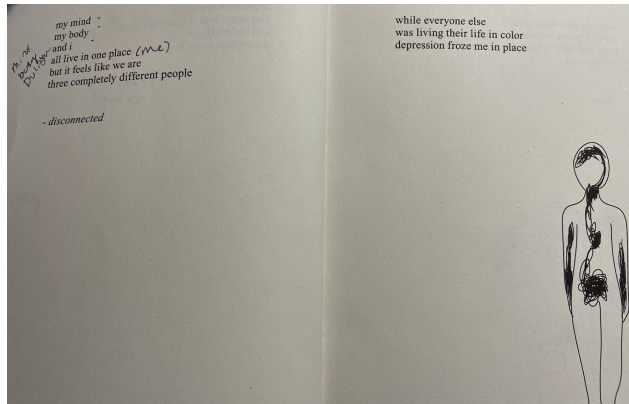
Section 2: Poetry

In my philosophical studies of modern thought, I am constantly reminded that emotions are not logical. I have concluded that this is not true, and the exclusion of emotion is anti-feminist. Therefore I want to introduce a few works of poetry within this section. I feel that poetry draws from the most emotional experiences of human existence. When reading poetry, a piece of me resonates so deeply within myself and the writer. This emotion generates the power of empathy, which is a critical tool for any feminist.

When it comes to feminist poets, Emily Dickson is at the top of many lists. I included her work within this collection because of its sheer volume and the time she wrote it. I wonder if Dickson would consider herself a feminist? I resonate most with her poem *I'm Nobody! Who are you?* This poem addresses the self as Nobody and the listener as one too. I sometimes feel that I am Nobody, but who could I also be addressed as Nobody by someone else that is also Nobody. I believe that this poem speaks to the connection between women in their "nobodiness." This collection is a pocket edition of about 207 of Dickinson's poems open for emotional exploration.

As part of the poetry section of this collection, I wanted to include the memoir collection of essays *A History of My Brief Body* by Billy-Ray Belcourt. I feel that he belongs within this section because I initially read his works of poetry before finding his essays. Even in the reading of his writings, he still invokes the emotional experiences of his poems. Belcourt speaks to different experiences than those previously listed within this collection because they are nonfemale and non-white. I wanted to explore Belcourt's work and understanding of their personhood. The memoir delivers these wants in a way that re-imagines indigenous queer lives through the creative expression of poetry and writing.

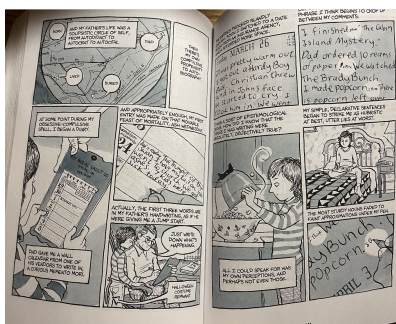
Finally, the last book within this collection section is *Home Body* by Rupi Kaur. I have been a fan of Kaur's work ever since she publicized *Milk and Honey*. I decided to include *Home Body* within this collection due to its overall message on the imposter syndrome that many women face. I really connect with Kaur's experience of this sensation of high pressure and success. The intersectionality of Kaur's identity as the child of an immigrant and woman of color heightens her knowledge of this imposter syndrome and her demands. Her simplistic style also draws out the most basic human emotion while still strictly speaking to her feelings. The simplistic line drawings within the book reinforce this idea.



Section 3: Creative Non-Fiction and Autobiography,

This section is the most significant component of the collection. It takes the form of Creative Non-fiction and autobiographical. I have come to learn that feminist work is personal work. One must include themselves and others within the conceptual framework that makes up the feminist ideology. On top of this, feminists must read and explore the lives of other feminists to gain empathy within our difference. Hearing about the lived difference of feminists before and during our movement helps one become a bad feminist in understanding their own contributions.

The first book I want to touch on within this collection is Alison Bechdel's *Fun Home*. This book was given to me by my partner after I first learned about the Bechdel test and how it measures whether a work of fiction showcases women in a sexist light or not. *Fun Home* tells the story of Bechdel's childhood through a modality that combines graphic novel and autobiography. This auto-graphical piece showcases the creative aspects of creative bad feminists in its communication and form.



Next within the section of this collection is *Hood Feminism* by Mikki Kendall. I got this book due to a disagreement I had with a friend. The conversation went something like this...

Me: "Anthony, are you a feminist."

Anthony: "No"

Me: "What do you mean by that?"

Anthony: "I just don't like that feminism is so white-centric." "Are you a feminist"?

Me: "yes, but a bad one."

Anthony: "read *Hood Feminism*, and then we will talk."

I got the book soon after and read it in a day. I can now have better conversations with Anthony about his positionality on feminism. The reading of this book was weighty for me. It is not supposed to be an easy read. Kendall speaks to issues facing women of color in low-income areas and which mainstream white feminism fails to address the problems within the hood. She argues for a reconceptualization and showcases the importance of intersectionality.

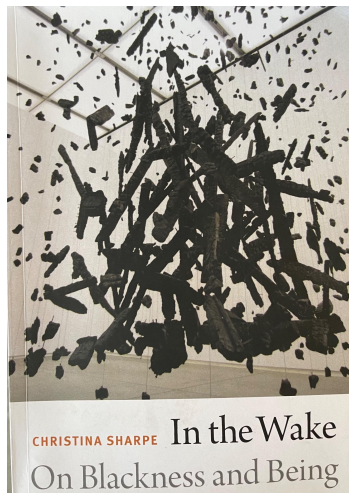
To juxtapose the reading of *Hood Feminism*, I also include *When Katie Wakes* by Connie May Fowler. This book follows the personal story of a middle-class, educated white woman who was the victim of intimate partner violence. I first read this book in my feminist psychology class my first year at Goucher. I feel like this book deserves a spot after *Hood Feminism* because Kendall talks about the shift in public options when domestic violence became an issue for white women. I believe what Kendall says about awareness of intersecting identities as not equal is very well told and essential. It is crucial to include intersecting identities at varying class levels and different races and identities. Fowler's abuse had other social repercussions than the abuse that Kendall faced. These two women from diverse backgrounds had different experiences of violence inflicted on them. I think the thing to focus on in these two feminists' experiences is qualitatively different. Still, they should not be responded to quantitatively differently. These women should get the social and legal recourse appropriate to their qualitative experiences.

Next in line is *Dear Ijeawele, or a feminist manifesto in fifteen suggestions*. I read this book my sophomore year in my first WGS class. This manifesto falls under the category of creative nonfiction since it takes the form of 15 "letters" or suggestions. These suggestions are on how to raise a feminist daughter. The first suggestion in this book is to "be a full person" when it comes to motherhood. I feel that this concept is vital in bad feminism. Frequently you hear the saying, "she was someone's daughter, someone's sister, someone's mother." We forget that she is someone too, "she is someone." Being a full person is the best role model, for your own personhood is enough.

This idea of feminist personhood as enough is echoed in Audre Lorde's collection of essays *Sister Outsider*. The work draws from multiple intersecting identities that Lorde belongs to and what makes up her unique complex feminist identity. One of the responses I love reading Lorde's position is that she is so personal. Although she belongs to identifies that I do not, her work suggests that one should embrace differences in individuals and acknowledge one for their identity regardless of its multiplicities. When I talk to people about my favorite philosophers, Lorde is at the top of my list despite others not categorizing her as such. I hope to read more of her work.

Within the theme of autobiography is the book *Soldier; A Poet's Childhood*, by June Jordan. I recently got this book for my transnational feminist theory course this semester and have yet to get a chance to read it. *Soldier* is included in this collection based on my professor's brief

discussion. She informed me of the creativity of the writing style and the other expressions of intersectionality. Another book from the same course is Christina Sharpe's *In the Wake; On Blackness and Being*.



I just finished reading this book and knew it had to be in this collection. Sharpe uses the multiple definitions of the word wake to re-imagine the archive of the transatlantic slave trade. Her book includes hunting images of girls that have become ships, old songs, and her autobiographical work. Sharpe coins this re-imagining as "wake work." To a certain extent, I believe that that is what feminists are trying to do when they do feminist work. This re-imagining and retelling of one's life and the re-positioning of the self in another.

Keeping with the idea of re-telling, the next book in this collection tells the story of an overlooked woman. *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks* by Rebecca Skloot follows the lives of three women. One is the author Skloot, one is Henrietta Lacks herself, and the other is Henrietta's daughter Deborah. This book is one of my favorite works of creative nonfiction because it interweaves so many disciplines and elements into one true story. I think Skloot does a fantastic job recognizing her own positionality in the re-telling of the Lacks story. Through her work with the family and dedication to the truth, Skloot and Deborah form a friendship over the re-archival of Henrietta's life. When it comes to telling others stories, it is essential to use as many of their own words as possible. In *Beyond magenta: transgender teens speak out*, Susan Kuklin does an excellent job highlighting the voices of six different trans and gender-nonconforming teens. Along with Kuklin's own story, they take the reader on the complex journey of others. I feel that both Skloot and Kuklin position themselves within the levels that they are re-telling in a respectful way of their differences.

With these elements of sameness in difference, intersecting identities, and creativity in mind, I would like to introduce the core of this collection *Bad Feminist* by Roxane Gay. I happened to pick this book up when I was in Boston visiting a friend. I primarily wanted something to read on the train ride home. I was hooked on Gay's life story and feminist dilemmas within the first essay. Although Gay and I have very different lives, I can agree with her feeling of not fitting into the essentialist model of feminism. I feel that Gay showed me that it was okay for me to be a bisexual feminist and not a lesbian feminist, despite not belonging to either of these

categories. Within my sexuality, there are many contradictions to both straight feminism and lesbian feminism. That is because I belong in neither group. I had internalized for so long that I could not have these conflicting views within my own feminist praxis. But Gay showcased to me that taking pride in one's own contradictions makes you a better feminist because you notice the difference within yourself and in those around you fighting for women's equality. Since I have these contradictions and because I am a multidimensional being, I am a bad feminist.

Section 4: What I call Soft Fiction and The Biomythography

This final section of the collection is what I call Soft Fiction and Biomythography. The term and genre known as biomythography originated from Audre Lorde's *Zami, a new spelling of my name: A biomythography*. Lorde was able to wave together myth, history, and biography into a narrative tale of half-truth and half mystic in this story. Lorde herself takes the character of *Zami*, who moves through significant life events. Lorde can personify her earlier life in a somewhat fictional character. This real-life personification allows Lorde to hyperbolize herself in a serialist kind of way. The Writing of *Zami, a new spelling of my name: A biomythography*, has inspired others to follow this same kind of exaggerated truth when it comes to telling their own stories or the stories of others. The following books in this section take on elements of biomythography. In emotional truth, but draw on other literary devices and styles such as fiction and the unreliable narrator. I have started to call this genre of writing soft fiction because it lightly follows the authors' lives and the experiences they have had.

Before getting into the books that have followed the lead of Lorde's writing of *Zami*, I want to bring your attention to one of the first popularised lesbian fiction novels, *The Well of Loneliness* by Radclyffe Hall. Written around the 1920's Radclyffe tells the story of young lesbian women. Although the book is classified as fiction, the events and characters loosely follow the author's life. In the mids and aftermath of WW2, there was a rise in the art form of surrealism. *The Well of Loneliness* follows this trend in presenting characters and narratives. The release of this book led to public backlash, and it was even banned for a while. Like any good book, Radclyffe's work is still controversial. However, at the end of the day, this book's closing message speaks to the battle for equality and inclusion of LGBTQ+ members. Radclyffe's last line reads, "Give us also the right to our existence" (437).

Along with this soft fiction, the category is *Trumpet: A novel* by Jackie Kay. Unlike *The Well of Loneliness* and *Zami*, this book is not based on the author's life. Instead, the somewhat fictional story follows the life of American jazz artist Billy Tiptons who was living as a closeted transgender man. This book belongs within this collection because it deals with elements of toxic masculinity and father-son dynamics. Earlier in this collection, I touched on the relationship between mother and daughter when raising a feminist. I feel that we often overlook the critical relationship between father and son when creating a new generation of feminists. I find the use of fiction to retell another's story a very tricky dance of truth and myth. However, Kay does a

wonderful of showcasing the difficulties children face in our society when they belong to a queer family.

Turning back now to books more closely related to biomythography, I would like to introduce you to one of my new favorite authors and their work; *Juliet Takes A Breath* by Gabby Rivera. Rivera is a Goucher Alumni and came to Goucher to speak on Latinx Joy. I went to this talk as an assignment for my Latin America class and was fascinated by Rivera's presentation. When the speech was over, the audience was given signed copies of Rivera's fictional semi-autobiographical novel *Juliet Takes A Breath*. The story loosely follows the life events of Rivera, as they find their own form of feminism that does not fit the cis-white feminist model. I highly recommend this book to any Goucher student interested in writing.

Last but not least is a book that I consider many things, and the embodiment of the soft fiction and reimagined self. *Fierce Femmes and Notorious Liars* by Kai Cheng Thom is a somewhat fictional autobiographical novel that reimagines the typical trans narrative.



Within the book, we follow the story of a nameless character who moves to the "Street of Miracles," where she is adopted into a transgender gang. Cheng uses hyperbole, surrealism, and metaphor to showcase her emotional experience. *Fierce Femmes* can be used as a survival guide for those who find themselves in a similar situation as our protagonist hence her being nameless. I feel that work like this allows the reader and the author to have a connection beyond just the words on the page. It leaves room for the imagination. For the self to become true. For one to accept their conditions and become a bad feminist.

Conclusion

Within this collection, I have spoken to many things. Throughout these books, one can see the many lives of "my many gendered mothers of the heart." Bad feminism is many things; among them are its differences and similarities. One of the goals of this collection is to shine a light on these differences. As feminists, we must dismiss the idea of essentialism and that our operations are the same. We must listen to one another's stories and tell our own. There are many ways to say our truths and the more creative that form takes, the more emotional impact it has. Creativity allows for expression in a way that science and fact lack. We must embrace the imaginary and construct new realities for the revolution. I hope you have enjoyed learning about my journey of becoming a bad feminist and how these authors have taught me that creativity and freedom of expression are ways "bad feminists" can share their stories. I know the answer to the question "are you a feminist," and I hope you do too.

Annotated Bibliography

Adichie, C. N. (2018). *Dear Ijeawele, or, a feminist manifesto in fifteen suggestions*. Anchor Books, a division of Penguin Random House LLC.

Dear Ijeawele, or A Feminist Manifesto in Fifteen Suggestions, is a series of letters written as both an epistolary and Modesto. The original intention of the letters that makes up the book was to create a feminist out of one's daughter. The book itself lists 15 suggestions that follow the cultural importance of the author Adichie while critiquing its traditional gender norms. The main goal is to challenge gender roles and raise a feminist daughter. Although this seems like a very niche category, I feel that this book is essential for any inspiring feminist, mother or not. Out of the 15 suggestions, I think that number 1, "be a full person" is the most important to this collection.

Bechdel, A. (2007). *Fun Home: A family tragicomic*. A Mariner Book, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

In this Graphic memoir, Alison Bechdel chronicles her childhood and family relationships. The story itself jumps around the timeline of her life and interviews both fact and fiction and other literary work that hints at her own experiences. The Allusions and literary connections throughout the book help construct and ground Bechdel in her memories and serve to juxtapose her and her father. Although she and her father had many similarities, they handled things differently. Bechdel's father was closeted his entire life and practiced his artistic outlet by maintaining an aesthetic home and family. On the other hand, Bechdel was openly gay and openly expressed her masculinity. This memoir touches on many things, including mental health, gender roles, and family dynamics. The story also focuses on death and the possible suicide of Bechdel's father. Regarding its place in this collection, I feel that it fits the markers of creativity and personal self-discovery through memory work.

Belcourt, B.-R. (2020). *A history of my brief body: Essays*. Two Dollar Radio.

This Book by Billy-Ray Belcourt is his first memoir and a collection of essays from his own experiences as a queer Indigenous individual. Through the collection of essays and stories, Belcourt shares his meditations on love, joy, and even rage. Some of the major themes through the book are grief and injustices but how creativity and joy can flourish despite oppression and misgivings. This book is within this collection due to the authenticity and emotional vulnerability of the author. Throughout the pages, the reader can see how Belcourt has struggled to explore their gender and sexuality and rejoice in love and connection despite hardship.

Butler, J. (1999). *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity*. Routledge.

Gender Trouble is a feminist and queer theory work by philosopher Judith Butler. This work by Judith Butler has become a pinnacle text for what is known as queer theory. In *Gender Trouble*, Butler proposes that gender is performative. She uses the elements of language, politics, and intersectionality of identities to showcase this idea. In this iconic book, Butler ushers in a new

conceptualization of gender, one that counters the concepts of gender essentialism. This book, therefore, belongs within this collection, for it helped to kickstart a new way of navigating gender and identity while accounting for the multiple factors that create one's gender performance.

Dickinson, E. (1993). *Dickinson*. Knopf/Everyman's Library Pocket Poets.

This book is a pocket-size collection of 207 of Emily Dickinson's poetry. During Dickinson's life, she was not famous for her poems but is now considered one of the essential poets in America. I don't know if she set out to be a feminist, but her work showcases feminist ideals such as challenging gender roles and masculinity. Dickinson's poetry was very self-expressive and unique from when she wrote it. My favorite poem from this collection is *I'm Nobody! Who are you?* Although this poem is not inherently feminist, I feel like it speaks to self-identity and the speaker's acknowledgment as Nobody. I feel like Dickinson took joy in being Nobody but herself. Her behavior reflects this in that she was permanently isolated and on her own. Dickinson's work belongs in this collection due to her tendency to express herself in poetry and challenge the norm and the legacy she left behind.

Fowler, C. M. (2003). *When Katie Wakes: A memoir*. Doubleday.

When Katie Wakes, is a real-life story about the domestic abuse Connie May Fowler suffered. The physical and psychological abuse inflicted upon her by her abusive boyfriend, the memoir also flashes back to the death of her abusive and abused alcoholic mother. Fowler's hardship reflects that of generational trauma her mother once underwent. With the help of Fowler's dog Katie, she can escape her abusive boyfriend. Throughout the story, Fowler comes to see herself as capable of living her dreams of becoming a writer without the help of her once radio-famous boyfriend. This memoir fits nicely into this collection because it is a first-person account of battered women. When people view situations such as Fowler's, they comment, "why don't you just leave." Fowler speaks to the multiple layers of abuse women face and how it is not just a matter of leaving the abusive partner. Instead, it is a journey of self-love, discovery, and forgiveness needed to leave an abusive situation.

Gay, R. (2014). *Bad feminist: Essays*. HarperCollins Publishers.

Bad Feminist is a collection of essays by Roxane Gay that follow her through her life. Along with personal experiences, Gay references pop culture, her students, gender, race, and politics. The essays within this book are sad, funny, and relatable. I included this book within this collection primarily due to its name and the main messages of Roxane Gay. Gay expresses both hesitancy and a dislike for what is known as essentialism within the feminist ideology. Not only this, but Gay's personal experiences and life does not fit into the essential feminist model. As a woman of color, she advocates for more diverse perspectives regarding the feminist narrative. Along with the intersectionality of her identity, Gay speaks to liking things that feminists are not supposed to like, for example, the color pink. Due to these parts of her identity that she takes pride in, she describes herself as a "bad feminist."

Hall, M. R., & Ellis, H. (1990). *The well of loneliness*. Anchor books.

The Well of Loneliness is a fiction novel written in the 1920s by Radclyffe Hall. Although the book is a fictional story, the events and characters loosely follow the author's life. The main protagonist is a young woman named Stephen who, like her name suggests, does not follow gender norms and prefers to present herself in masculine styles. Throughout the book, Stephen struggles with understanding her identity and accepting her mother. After her father's death, she learns of her true identity as an "invert" or homosexual today. While serving in WWI, she meets a woman she loves, settles down, and begins writing books. Stephen senses her lover's sadness in that she can have a normal and more accepted life. Stephen fakes an affair leading to her lover leaving her for a man. At the time of this book's publication, there was a lot of public backlash and disapproval. The book was even banned for a time. Despite its controversy, the story of Stephen gave hope to many and shame to some. I feel that this book must be included in this collection because it was one of the first of its kind. The book pulls from themes of self-hatred and self-pity; however, I feel that these are meant to strengthen the final remarks of Stephen. "Give us also the right to our existence" (437). Due to the political events, this prayer speaks volumes to the feminist cries of "the personal is political."

Hall, R., & Saxey, E. (1981). *The well of loneliness*. Avon Books.

Introduction and notes by Esther Saxey. Alternative cover art.

Jordan, J. (2001). *Soldier: A poet's childhood*. Basic Civitas Books.

Soldier is the childhood memoir of June Jordan, a well-known feminist and American author. The biography uses both poetry and prose to showcase the experience of Jordan's childhood. Throughout the span of about 12 years, Jordan's parents work to give her opportunities and education. This work showcases the beauty and struggles of youth and what it means to be the child of a low-income immigrant family with a dream. This book connects to the collection on the theme of creativity and intersecting self-identities as Jordan re-creates the world that created her.

Kaur, R. (2020). *Home body*. Andrews McMeel Publishing.

Rupi Kaur's *Home Body* is her third and most recent book of poetry. Along with her two other poetry books, Kaur's *Home Body* includes simple line illustrations and poems spanning a few lines to multiple pages. I considered including my copy of *Milk and Honey* by Kaur in this collection as it was her first and most famous poetry book, but decided to include *Home Body* on its own. My reasoning for this may be more personal than some of the other books, but I feel that the message of imposter syndrome speaks to me in these poems. Imposter syndrome is when one doubts their accomplishments and success and will be found fraud or fake even though this is not true. Many high achieving women under challenging fields have to deal with imposter syndrome and a feeling of inadequacy. Kaur speaks to these feelings in this book. She shares pieces of her identity as an immigrant that contribute to this feeling. Kaur shares guilt about her family and their hardship and disbelief about her work throughout the book. In the end, Kaur concludes that you are only obligated to your dreams and nothing else. Personally, I constantly feel that I am an imposter with my accomplishments. This book speaks to the more profound

psychological conditioning women face and how sometimes we hold ourselves back. *Home Body* reminds us to be confident in our abilities, minds, and bodies.

Kay*, J. (2000). *Trumpet: A novel*. Vintage Books.

Trumpet is a 1998 Fictional novel that was inspired by the life of an American jazz artist Billy Tipton who secretly lived as a transgender man. *Trumpet* takes place after the death of Joss Moody and the reveal of her transgender identity. After his death, his wife Millie grieves in private, and his son Colman is enraged that he doesn't know about his father. Due to the period and setting of Scotline, Colman constantly has to grapple with both his identity and his father's. I feel as though his book speaks to the complexity of exciting identities. Being a successful black transgender man in the 1990s was not very common. Therefore Moody wanted anything of everyday life with his wife; he needed to keep his identity a secret. Now knowing the truth, Colman is confronted with the truth of his own identity as a male adopted son.

Kendall, M. (2021). *Hood feminism notes from the women that a movement forgot*. Penguin Books.

Hood Feminism is a collection of personal essays written from the life experience of Mikki Kendall. Kendell highlights some of the exclusionary factors commonly practiced by white feminism within this work. Her work tackles issues that affect women of intersecting identities, including members of the LGBTQ community, are low income, and POC. *Hood Feminism* takes place within the hood where Kendall grew up. The essays speak to the issues that many girls face within similar environments. Due to the problematic context and the empathy it invokes, I feel that it must be part of this collection. This work showcases girls' struggles with intersecting identities and the blatant ignorance of the white feminist movement's response.

Kuklin, S. (2015). *Beyond magenta: Transgender teens speak out*. Candlewick Press.

This book by Susan Kuklin follows the story of six transgender or gender nonconforming young adults throughout their transition. Along with the individual personal stories, the individuals' images through the book help showcase their emotions during their transitions. I like this book because it highlights the differences in every individual's life and how gender identity is only one component of one's personhood. This book belongs in this collection because it shines a light on the complex journey of understanding and expressing one's gender. This book got a lot of push back from anti-trans groups who worked to get banned. I feel that this book points to some of the more personal experiences of those who often cannot tell their stories.

Lorde, A. (1996). *Zami, a new spelling of my name: A biomythography*. Crossing Press.

This book by Audre Lorde is the first of its genre, biomythography. Lorde herself coined the term and its culmination of history, biography, and myth. The events of the book loosely follow the events of Lorde's own with a sprinkle of myth and history throughout. The story itself speaks to Lorde's earlier life and some of the dynamics of her family. The reader follows Lorde's experiences with love, abortion, and sexuality. Due to the time in which the book takes place, Lorde expresses what it was like to live as a lesbian black woman during the jim crow area and

outlawing gay marriage. Along with these central themes to Lorde's identity, there is also a focus on Lorde's mother and their relationship. A relationship that was difficult but still inspired strength and growth for Lorde. This book is essential to this collection because it speaks to Lorde's earlier life and self-exploration. I love this book because it can speak about her truths mystically and mythically. Lorde's biomythography has inspired many other authors and some of the other books included in this collection.

Lorde, A. (2015). *Sister outsider: Essays and speeches*. Crossing Press.

Sister Outsider, is a collection of essays and speeches from renowned author and poet Audre Lorde. The work itself draws from multiple intersecting identities that Lorde belongs to and what makes up her unique complex feminist identity. Belonging to such identifies as black, female, or mother puts her on the outside. However, Lorde's work suggests that one should embrace differences in individuals and acknowledge one for their identity regardless of its multiplicities. Lorde can challenge a racist, patriarchal society by sharing her own identity that clashes with the status quo. She speaks the importance of expression and poetic languages to overcome oppression. I feel that this collection of work by Audre Lorde is one of the most critical parts of this collection.

Nelson, M. (2016). *The Argonauts*. Graywolf Press.

The Argonauts, by Maggie Nelson, is both a memoir and a work of autotheory. The book focuses on the love and relationships between Maggie Nelson and her gender-fluid partner. This connection to her own life and work of theory makes this memoir autotheory. The language used to describe her feelings of love and family is intended for an intelligent reader, but I feel that this memoir could be helpful for a new mother. Some of the book's central themes focus on identity, sexuality, and individual rights as they occur during and after the passing of prop 8, which made gay marriage illegal once again in California. This book is different from others within this collection due to its higher level of theory. Nelson considers identity deeper, leaving her to believe in her own right to happiness as a queer person. However, I feel that the emotions expressed by Nelson and her complexity around her identity make it a perfect fit for the collection.

Rivera, G. (2019). *Juliet takes a breath*. Dial Books, an imprint of Penguin Random House LLC.

Juliet takes a breath is a fictional semi-autobiographical novel that loosely follows the life events of Gabby Rivera herself. Throughout the story, the reader follows Juliet's path of self-discovery as a queer Latinx woman. When she takes an internship across the country to work under one of her feminist icons, she quickly learns that their feminist ideologies are very different. Due to the intersectionalities of Juliet's identities, she feels that she does not fit the white feminist model. Over time Juliet empowers herself in her own culture, sexual identity, and race to promote diverse identity within feminist ideology. *Juliet takes a breath* fits well into the themes of this collection since it is self-inspired. In a beautiful act of self-love, Juliet creates space and acceptance for herself and, in doing so, helps others feel the same. The idea that those who do not fit into the straight cis white feminist ideology are bad feminists falls short within this story.

Sharpe, C. E. (2016). *In the wake: On blackness and being*. Duke University Press.

In the Wake: On Blackness and Being, is a work by Cristina Sharpe that brings in works of literature, visual material and autobiography to re-archive the narrative of the transatlantic slave trade. Sharpe speaks to the current day experiences of African Americans by referring to the wake as the ripple effect of slavery. The integration of multiple modalities is what brings these untold stories to life and showcases the importance of the creative.

Skloot, R. (2010). *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*. Gale/Cengage.

The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks is a work of creative nonfiction by Rebecca Skloot. The book follows the author Skloot in her investigation and retelling of the Lacks family story. Henrietta Lacks cell line, known as HeLa, is an immortal cell line used in research and scientific advancement. In the 1950s, when Lacks was undergoing treatment for cancer, doctors removed a sample of her cervix without her consent. The research done on the cell helps researchers better understand the effects of AIDs, cancers, and toxins.. The reader is immersed in the experiences of Rebecca as she follows the story of Henrietta and, as a result, an understanding of Deborah and the entire Lacks family emerges. In Skloot's telling of Henrietta's life, the reader flips back and forth through time and space and the growth and trust between Skloot and Deborah grows. The juxtaposition between these two women could not be any more clear. But overall, they were connected by their curiosity for the same women. A woman whose life had saved and helped countless others. Through their work together they were able to uncover her story and tell the world about who she was and in the process learned about themselves and built a friendship out of trust and understanding.

Thom, K. C. (2019). *Fierce Femmes and Notorious Liars: A dangerous trans girl's confabulous memoir*. Metonymy Press.

I consider *Fierce Femmes and Notorious liars* to be many things. Initially published in 2016, the book is both a survival guide, a surrealist novel, and a memoir that follows the energy and style of the biomythography. The story itself is about the life of an unnamed transgender girl who runs away from home to the "Street of Miracles." Once there, she is adopted by her found family and then a gang set of avenging the murder of a fellow femme (trans women)—metaphors and hyperbole flow throughout the book to highlight the effect of trauma our protagonist must face. In the end, she must be true to herself to keep the loved ones she has found. The style that Thom wrote this book in speaks truth to the feelings and experiences of the author's own life. The events and stories of them have been exaggerated and mythologized. Creatively, Thom spun the classic transgender narrative and offered the advice she wished she had when she was young. One of the central themes of this book is the lies the main character must tell herself for protection. Sometimes truth and fiction are not that far apart and are only divided by one lie said to the self. Lorde's Biomythography inspired Thom to create this book and the myth and autobiography show. Its place in this collection represents a serial story of the trans narrative.

Wish List

Barnhart, D., & Mahan, I. (2018). *Women of resistance: Poems for a new feminism*. OR Books.

This book was recommended to me by a friend because it showcases the work of creative activists in the wake of the 2016 election. I hope that in reading it it can connect to the themes of poetry as emotional power and the creation of new feminists. The book also seems to cover intersecting identities and advocates for queer people and reproductive rights.

Bechdel, A. (2020). *The essential dykes to watch out for*. Mariner Books.

The Essential Dykes To Watch Out For is the closest thing I could find to the illustrated book version of Bechdel's original comic strip series *Dykes To Watch out For*. I have seen a few of these comic strips here and there but have never seen the whole collection. I feel that the imaginative story of young lesbians living in what could be Minneapolis would provide some comedic relief to some of the more severe books within this collection. Plus, I love comics.

Birdsong, M. (2020). *How we show up: Reclaiming family, friendship, and community*. Hachette Books.

This book was recommended to me by a close friend who is interested in studying family dynamics. The work itself critiques the idea of a nuclear family and how it leads to happiness. Rather than reinforce this idea Mia Birdsong looks at alternative family structures and other ways one can reach self satisfaction. I believe that this book would mirror *Hood Feminism* well, in provide different types of support to those who come from diverse backgrounds.

Fox, H. (2020). *How it feels to float*. Penguin Books.

When I was doing some investigative work to create this collection, I came across the book *How it Feels to Float*. From the brief overview of what I have found, the story follows a young girl as she tries to come to terms with the death of her father and the grief that it brings her. I know that grief does not seem to be an issue that is inherently feminist, but we have to remember that we

are bad feminists. Issues of emotion and trauma must be on the table. I feel that the way the main character details her grief and the ghost of her father could make for an exciting perspective within this collection.

Frye, M. (2007). *The politics of reality: Essays in feminist theory*. Crossing Press.

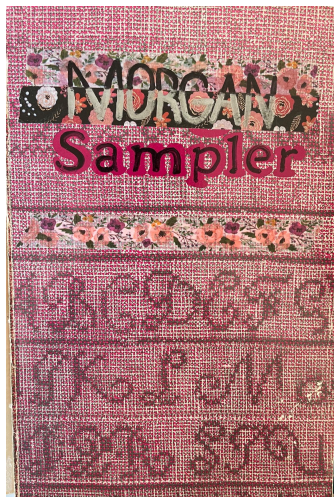
This is a collection of Political essays by feminist philosopher Marilyn Freye. I have never read any of Frye's work but it has been recommended to me by professors. Within this collection focuses mostly on oppression and the structural forms of it. I want to learn more about structural as political and how oppression is the result of systems that have been in place since our nation's creation.

Kaur, R. (2021). *The sun and her flowers*. Memories of Ages Press.

The Sun and Her Flowers is the second poetry book published by Rupi Kaur. Like her other poetry books this one follows the same simplistic language and short lines. The structure of *The Sun and Her Flowers* follows the life cycle of a flower. I have really been drawn to this concept of *Blooming* when it comes to ones feminist identity. This interest mostly stems from my work and publication in *Bloom* magazine two years ago. The themes of these poetry books focus around the idea of trauma and healing. Due to the emotional vulnerability and story of becoming that Kaur presents in this work, I feel that it would fit well within this collection.

Jackson, M., (unknown) *The Morgan Sampler*

Within my wishlist I would like to include my own work. Last semester I created a book alteration of *The Piaget Sampler*. I altered every chapter and page of the book to reflect my own experiences and life. I changed the title to *The Morgan Sampler*. I hope that one day I can contribute my own feminist experience to the existing body of literature out there.



Lorde, A., & Gay, R. (2020). *The Selected Works of Audre lorde*. W. W. Norton & Company.

This is one of the most recent compilations of Audre Lorde's work. Although I have read most of the essays that make up this collection, I would like this book within my collection because they are presented in an alternative order. On top of this there are edits from Roxane Gay along with an introduction from her. I feel that this piece combines two of the core writers of this collection and I would love to see their work in tangent.

Lorde, A., & Smith, T. K. (2020). *The cancer journals*. Penguin Books.

The Cancer Journals was initially created in 1980 by Audre Lorde. In this work of nonfiction, she tells her struggle with breast cancer. She raises awareness of social justice issues related to women of color. This within the nature of healthcare and the treatment of women of color bodies are essential issues within feminism. This book would be a challenging read because it would push me to see one of my favorite writers in pain. But I want to learn about her pain and feel it with her so that I can be more educated on breast cancer and its effect on women.

Rivera, G. (2017). *America Chavez*. Marvel Comics.

America Chavez is the first Latin- American LGBTQ superhero character to star in an ongoing Marvel comic series. I first learned about this comic series when Gabby Rivera, this character's original creator, came to Goucher on their book tour. I was struck by the creativity used to describe the hero's origin story. The character herself hails from a planet of all women. This means that she has two mothers. I love the creativeness that Rivera used in both images and text to explain how the love of the two women combined created our hero. I often have trouble describing how I have two mothers. I am frequently asked if I am adopted as a follow-up question to "I have two moms." I hope that more stories like *America Chavez* can be out there for children who have same-sex parents or those who don't.