

## FINAL PROJECT | FORMAL EXPERIMENTATION WITH THE SELF | SPRING 2019

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Deadline: Tuesday, May 28 (during G block exam)

In the opening lines of the poem, “Planetarium,” [Adrienne] Rich casts Caroline as a ‘woman in the shape of a monster’ and ‘a monster in the shape of a woman’. The skies, Rich says, are full of such women—figures drawn from classical mythology, who are ‘doing penance for impetuousness’, and who have lent the stars their names. Rich imagines Caroline [Herschel] ‘riding the polished lenses’ of her telescope into the night sky, through which she sees these wives, daughters, temptresses, all rendered monstrous, like her, for violating the expectations of their sex.

To this day, astronomy remains one of the only scientific fields that relies so heavily on ancient Greek and Roman mythology for its naming conventions. Cosmology and mythology have been interwoven throughout human history, so it’s not surprising that modern-day astronomers have inherited this tradition. But classical mythology is deeply misogynistic, and using it to identify celestial bodies contributes to a scientific culture that diminishes the achievements of women like Caroline. Male deities and figures reign with nearly unlimited power, while their female counterparts suffer violence and humiliation.

—Leila A McNeill, “[The struggle of women in science is written in the stars](#),” *aeon*, 16 August, 2016

This semester, we have (a) contended with the origins and manifestations of cultural misogyny through predominantly 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century literary “protest” texts and (b) parsed the methods of articulating and restoring the self into existence (“Woman must put herself into the text—as into the world and into history—by her own movement.” –Hélène Cixous, “The Laugh of the Medusa”).

Your final project will comprise two parts and will demand your able grasp and application of the various texts and concomitant concepts that we have covered in the arc of this course.

(1) In the first part, you—as a class—will compose a 700-word OpEd urging [NASA](#) and the [American Astronomical Society](#) to rename spacecrafts, missions, and celestial bodies (15 in total) that are associated with misogynist myths and figures. You will also propose in the OpEd 15 new names for the 15 “systems” you have identified that require nominal transformation (**see part II for more details**). In order to persuade the astronomy community to dismantle the constellations and rearrange the stars away from the wounds of mythology, you need to cite which celestial objects and space endeavors are layered with anti-feminist narratives. Do your due diligence! I will pay particular attention to the following as I evaluate this part of the project: (a) **strength of research**, (b) **collaborative imprints**, and (c) **adherence to stylistic conventions of the Op-Ed form**.

(2) Part 2 of the project is **not collaborative**. You will individually meet with me during exam block for 10 minutes to discuss *a new name* you have proposed for *an existing celestial body, system, or a space-related endeavor*. Your name must NOT be rooted in Greek and Roman mythology. Instead, resuscitate a **female figure from indigenous, subaltern history or mythology whose narrative requires universal heed**. Make sure you have a **500-word statement** that clarifies why you chose this particular figure for **neutralizing** an existing model in or through space that diminishes or negates female subjectivity and reinforces patriarchal rhetoric and modes of thought. Hand me a hard copy of this statement during our meeting. **Evaluation of this part of the project will be based on the details and reasons you adduce for your choices.**

**Be sure to:**

- a. Read about the [OpEd project](#) and
- b. Familiarize yourself with Op-Ed guidelines:
  - i. [How to submit an Op-Ed essay](#)
  - ii. [Writing Op-Eds that make a difference](#)
  - iii. [How to Write an Op-Ed or Column](#)
  - iv. [Writing Effective Op-Eds](#)

Best of luck!

Sabrina