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Special Issue! Resisting Power, Retooling Justice: Promises of Feminist Postcolonial Technosciences

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By Anna Zogas

In advance of our regular In the Journals post, I want to highlight a Special Issue. Anne Pollock and Banu Subramaniam have guest edited “[Resisting Power, Retooling Justice: Promises of Feminist Postcolonial Technosciences](#),” in **Science, Technology & Human Values**. Here are the abstracts!

[Resisting Power, Retooling Justice: Promises of Feminist Postcolonial Technosciences](#)

Anne Pollock, Banu Subramaniam

This special issue explores intersections of feminism, postcolonialism, and technoscience. The papers emerged out of a 2014 research seminar on Feminist Postcolonial Science and Technology Studies (STS) at the Institute for Research on Women and Gender, University of Michigan. Through innovative engagement with rich empirical cases and theoretical trends in postcolonial theory, feminist theory, and STS, the papers trace local and global circulations of technoscience. They illuminate ways in which science and technology are imbricated in circuits of state power and global inequality and in social movements resisting the state and neocolonial orders. The collection foregrounds the importance of feminist postcolonial STS to our understandings of technoscience, especially how power matters for epistemology and justice.

[Informed Refusal: Toward a Justice-based Bioethics](#)

Ruha Benjamin

“Informed consent” implicitly links the transmission of information to the granting of permission on the part of patients, tissue donors, and research subjects. But what of the corollary, informed refusal? Drawing together insights from three moments of refusal, this article explores the rights and obligations of biological citizenship from the vantage point of biodefactors—those who attempt to resist technoscientific conscription. Taken together, the cases expose the limits of individual autonomy as one of the bedrocks of bioethics and suggest the need for a justice-oriented

approach to science, medicine, and technology that reclaims the epistemological and political value of refusal.

[A World of Materialisms: Postcolonial Feminist Science Studies and the New Natural](#)

Angela Willey

Research often characterized as “new materialist” has staged a return/turn to nature in social and critical theory by bringing “matter” into the purview of our research. While this growing impetus to take nature seriously fosters new types of interdisciplinarity and thus new resources for knowing our nature-cultural worlds, its capacity to deal with power’s imbrication in how we understand “nature” is curtailed by its failures to engage substantively with the epistemological interventions of postcolonial feminist science studies. The citational practices of many new materialist thinkers eschew the existence of what Sandra Harding has called “a world of sciences.” I argue that the “science” privileged and often conflated with matter in new materialist storytelling is the same science destabilized by postcolonial feminist science studies. This does not mean that new materialist feminisms and postcolonial feminist science studies are necessarily at odds, as new materialist storytelling and prevailing conceptualizations of the postcolonial seem to suggest. On the contrary, I suggest that thinking creatively, capaciously, pluralistically, and thus irreverently with respect to the rules of science—about the boundaries and meanings of matter, “life,” and “humanness”—could be understood as a central project for a postcolonial feminist science studies.

[A Postapartheid Genome: Genetic Ancestry Testing and Belonging in South Africa](#)

Laura A. Foster

This article examines a genetic ancestry testing program called the Living History Project (LHP) that was jointly organized by a nonprofit educational institute and a for-profit genealogy company in South Africa. It charts the precise mechanisms by which the LHP sought to shape a postapartheid genome through antiracist commitments aimed at contesting histories of colonial and apartheid rule in varied ways. In particular, it focuses on several tensions that emerged within three modes of material-discursive practice within the production of the LHP: subject recruitment, informed consent, and participant reflections. In the end, it argues that several contradictory tensions were central to the making of the LHP’s postapartheid genome and that it should be understood as nonracial rather than antiracist.

[Identifying Democracy: Citizenship, DNA, and Identity in Postdictatorship Argentina](#)

Lindsay Adams Smith

In 1984, eight-year-old Paula Logares was called into a judge's chambers and was told the man and woman she lived with were not her parents. Her parents had been disappeared during the dirty war, and now, through her blood, scientists would be able to return her to her birth family. Paula, thus, became the first "stolen" child in Argentina to be identified via the incipient technology of DNA identification. With this forensic first, DNA identification has emerged as a central tool of good governance the world round. From routine crime fighting to international criminal tribunals, DNA plays a crucial role in attempts to reckon with crimes of the body. As an alternative origin for forensic DNA, Argentina offers an early example of science emerging from social movements in the Global South. Drawing on twenty-seven months of fieldwork with family members, activists, and scientists, this article documents the ways in which DNA has emerged as a core site of subject formation for individuals and families affected by the terror of the dictatorship and for the Argentine nation-state, as it reckons with the legacies of repression. Through a feminist, postcolonial frame, I offer the concept of re(con)stitution as a way of attending to the forms of biocitizenship that emerge during times of humanitarian crisis and transitional justice. As a tool of reproductive governance, forensic DNA acts not only as a powerful disciplinary site of biocitizenship but also as a potential space to reimagine the social contract between the body, the public, and the state.

[Latin American Decolonial Social Studies of Scientific Knowledge: Alliances and Tensions](#)

Sandra Harding

A distinctive form of anticolonial analysis has been emerging from Latin America (LA) in recent decades. This decolonial theory argues that important new insights about modernity, its politics, and epistemology become visible if one starts off thinking about them from the experiences of those colonized by the Spanish and Portuguese in the Americas. For the decolonial theorists, European colonialism in the Americas, on the one hand, and modernity and capitalism (and their sciences) in Europe, on the other hand, coproduced and coconstituted each other. The effects of that history persist today. Starting thought from these LA histories and current realities enables envisioning new resources for social transformations. These decolonial insights seem to receive only a passing recognition in the Latin American social studies of science and technology projects that have begun cosponsoring events and publications with northern equivalents. My focus will be primarily on the decolonial theory and on just two of its themes. One is the critical resources it offers for creating more accurate and progressive northern philosophies and histories of science as well as social studies of science. The second is insights from Latin

American feminists that carry different impacts in the context of the decolonial accounts.

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