

The Architecture of a Feminist Movement

*Based on 'A Feminist Movement' in the
Introduction of Sara Ahmed's 'Living A
Feminist Life'*



Unit 01
Methods of Cataloguing
Written Response

Introduction

‘Feminism: the dynamism of making connections.’ (Ahmed, 2017, p.3)

In my project for *Methods of Cataloguing*, I came across the (well-known, albeit seldom corrected) gap in crediting of female composers through the classical and romantic eras of Western Music. A lot of credit for ‘her’ remained either invisible or assigned to a ‘him’. Using cataloguing to help reconfigure the bias in this space, I wanted to examine: **what then, is the backbone of a movement that helps to consistently recognize and mitigate these abrasions?** Consequently, I chose Sara Ahmed’s *Living a Feminist Life* for my written response.

Ahmed understands the movement through practices of circulating, accumulating and overlapping of feminist knowledge, and focusses on the grammar, tone and repetition that carries the encrypted politics of inclusion and exclusion. This response uses the form of a **crossword puzzle as a method and metaphor for her arguments.** The intersection of words weave a network that mirror Ahmed’s main argument of what constitutes the feminist movement. It creates **a visual and linguistic catalogue** to contextualise the ideas, and the clues become **an inventory** that indexes the emotional, political and theoretical textures of

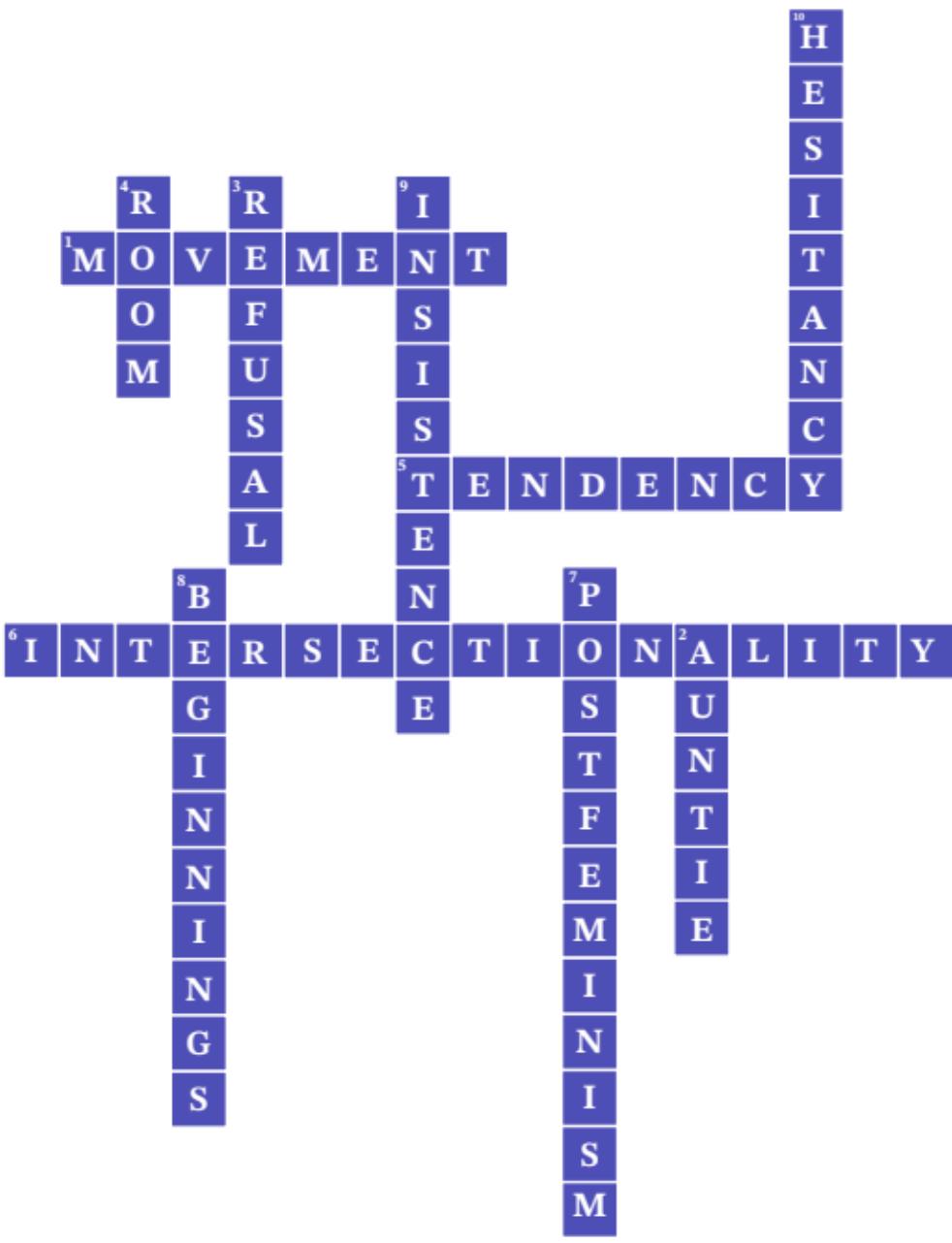
her text. The interlocking grid, in turn, illustrates the central message: that the multifarious concepts are not static but always in relation to each other, demonstrating a thought process that is **intersectional**.

The catalogue resists a linear flow in which the reader, too, traces these connections, fills in the gaps and confronts the latent contradictions that define the Feminist movement, essentially following Ahmed's directive for a **feminist pedagogy: one which remains both affective and participatory**.

The crossword, in effect, becomes an archive collecting the scaffolding and structure that builds the feminist architecture in which knowledge is always **relational and resistant**.



The Architecture of a Feminist Movement (A Crossword)



Across

- 1) We are **moved** to become Feminists. Like ripples in water; **each** making another possible. Another ripple, outward and reaching. (8)
- 5) A Feminist movement thus requires that we acquire Feminist ___, a **willingness to keep going** despite or even because of what we come up against. (Ahmed, 2017, p.6) (8)
- 6) It is a starting point, the point from which we must proceed if we are to **offer an account of how power works**. Sexism, sexual exploitation and sexual oppression cannot be separated from how the present is shaped by colonial histories including slavery, as central to the exploitation of labor under capitalism. (16)

Down

- 2) Often there is a history of how Feminism acquired utility as an imperial gift, but Ahmed's understanding came from her ___, in Lahore. **Where we find Feminism matters; from whom we find Feminism matters.** (5)
- 3) **Rejection** of the word 'he' interchangeable with 'she', that 'he' would promise her inclusion. (7)
- 4) We bring Feminism to **spaces** not held historically as political, but as domestic. In turn, Feminism brings people together, to convene and gather. (4)
- 7) A significant step for the Feminist movement is to **recognize what has not ended**. To not act as if Feminism has been so successful that it has eliminated its own necessity. (12)
- 8) **A Feminist movement is built from many moments of beginning again.** Renewal of the cause keeps it going forward. (10)
- 9) You point to structures; they say it is in your head. What you describe as material is dismissed as mental. Much of the Feminist and antiracist work is to **convince others** that it has not ended. (10)
- 10) **An over-confident Feminist movement has always cost us a lot.** An ethical pause is necessary, to reassess and navigate again. (9)

Conclusion

The crossword is an active landscape, sustained through connection.

This inventory grows and evolves, reconfiguring independent feminist practices so they can coexist and advance through assemblage, **collectively forming a movement.**



Bibliography

All of the information and clues used in the diagrammatic crossword are paraphrased from Ahmed's book unless mentioned otherwise.

Ahmed, S. (2017) Living a Feminist Life.
Durham, NC: Duke University Press.