

MAY 10

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update

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BY LAUREN (ROBIN) DERBY

Male Heroism, Demonic Pigs, and Memories of Violence in the Haitian-Dominican Borderlands¹



MAY 10



in this issue

Community Building, 21st Century style!

During Women's History Month, Gloria Steinem remarked, "If I could have one wish for the women's movement worldwide, it would be to have feminist groups everywhere. We're communal creatures. We need to gather together once a week or once a month and discover we're not alone, and to be able to tell the truth together." She expressed this wish in response to a question about who was at the forefront of the women's movement now. For her, leadership was less an issue than community. Steinem lives her words, keeping up an active network of political allies, writing groups, and retreats as a foundation for her political engagement, her writing, and her activism. Fostering a supportive community is crucial to the mission of CSW and we cultivate it in a number of ways. This year, a series of workshops, brought scholars and graduate students together around several

hot-button issues. In "Climates, Clocks, and Kids," graduate students and faculty shared their experiences making critical decisions about family planning, career timelines, and the impacts of institutional climates. Participants talked of networks of very close friends and supportive partners as crucial to having children while pursuing academic careers. In the April issue, Daniella Perry reported on the workshop and shared her thoughts about the importance of getting and giving support while pursuing a PhD and a family. In "PhDs: Careers beyond the Academy," a distinguished group of women who chose not to pursue an academic career shared their experiences and advice with a group of about fifty graduate students in disciplines ranging from astrophysics to women's studies. In the June issue, Jaimie Baron will be writing a report about the workshop.

In an interview in this month's issue, Lucy Burns praises CSW's support: "CSW has been incredibly committed to junior faculty, especially junior faculty of color. I have benefited greatly from that.... In my time as an Assistant Professor here at UCLA, CSW has been one of the most supportive units outside of my department." Reaching across the campus continues to be crucial to CSW's mission. Now, we also reach across the country and around the globe through our website and listservs, our site on the California Digital Library, and our Facebook page and Twitter account. Become a fan or follow us and get regular updates!

–Kathleen McHugh

LAST JULY, I spoke with Gumercindo Sebala alias “el ranchero,” who told me the story of a harrowing trip home on his motorcycle to the tiny provincial central frontier town of Bánica, Dominican Republic. Bánica is located right on the banks of the Artibonite river, which is the official border between Haiti and the Dominican Republic. Like most residents, Sebala is a small-scale subsistence farmer who raises pigs, goats, and cattle. It was night and he was on his motorcycle when he was forced to stop due to a very large tree—perhaps a *Ceiba*—which had fallen across the road, blocking his way. He got off his bike confounded by the tree since it was a species that is not common in the region today, looked around, only to be accosted by a beast he could not immediately recognize. He had trouble identifying the creature that jumped onto the trunk. Resembling a dog or a pig, he finally concluded it must have been a *jabali*, a kind of feral boar with long whiskers that was common in the area into the 1970s. Thinking to himself *lo mato o me mata* (“I kill it or it kills me”), he grabbed his gun just as the animal disappeared, vanishing into the night as



quickly as it had appeared. When he arrived home, he told his landlady about the episode, who asserted with complete confidence that it had been a *bacá*, an evil spirit prepared by someone for purposes of sorcery.

This essay seeks to interpret a particular version of stories about a highly feared phenomena called *bacá*—imaginary hybrid beasts that steal farm animals, harvests, and cash through shape-shifting. Created by sorcerers, *bacás* are spirit creatures that enable people to become dogs, cats, pigs, and

goats and to amass wealth. Strongmen such as the Dominican dictator Rafael Trujillo, the Haitian outlaw Charlemagne Peralte, and the notorious Tonton Macoutes have been said to have had such powers of transformation.² They are hot spirits, which are difficult to control, and often entail a sacrifice; they can even turn on their owners. In the Dominican central frontier town of Bánica, butchers told me stories about sheep that meowed, goats with pigs’ tails, person with pig ears, and bulls which cried like a baby—animals which were

Interviews, Bánica, Dominican Republic, July, 2009

TRANSLATED TRANSCRIPTION OF STORIES ABOUT CREOLE VS. GRINGO PIGS; SWINE FEVER MASSACRE 1979; AND A BACÁ SIGHTING, IN WHICH IT APPEARED AS A JARABALI OR CREOLE FERAL PIG.



Click on image to watch video.

Ramón Alcantara

- So was it the same to care for the two types of pigs?
- No, these (Gringo pigs) sometimes do not like to eat scrapings of yucca, mango. They (Creole pigs) ate everything. Sometimes these don't eat household leftovers.
- So like Gringos they are spoiled?
- Yes that's it!

"El Ranchero" Sebala

- The others were better quality?
- Exactly. Tastier. Let's take an example. The Gringo chicken and the Creole chicken don't have the same taste. One has to have an example. They don't taste the same. That's it. Those (Creole) pigs are the ones with the best tasting meat. Because the Creole pigs have such taste that if you taste some today, you want to keep on eating it. That's the truth.
- Like the Gringo chicken?
- Yes, and the Creole Guinea fowl. That's how they are, and that's how we are too. If I know someone's selling Creole chicken, I will buy it all up. If Pipil over there has killed a goat, I will ask him, Pipil, is it a creole goat or an Americano? Give it to me – even if it's only the feet, head, the liver, and I will buy it because I really like creole goat.
- The taste is really good.
- The swine flu has always existed here. We call it *cacedó*. But what happened was that the Americans wanted to sell their product. So they killed the ones here to replace them with white pigs.
- Were there protests, or did people hide their animals, because I would think that people were desperate, especially the poor?
- There were national protests and municipal protests. And some people hid them (their pigs) in the mountains, very hidden, and even today, there are people who have these pigs hidden in the hills. There was a path that not everyone entered – but they

know the mountains, and they know every corner, nook and crevice.

And they put them there, and even today that type of pig still exists.

- Are they wild?
- Not really – they are kept tied up. They tie them up or put them in a pig pen and they keep them there. And those are the best tasting pigs.

Bacá Sighting

- I was coming on my motorcycle from San Juan to here, and I saw a large stick in the road – but not your average stick – it was huge – and I said how does a stick of that size appear in the road? Here there are no large trees – no Ceiba of that size. I stopped to see what it was. I thought, I kill it or it kills me – I am always prepared – it kills me or I kill it, right? So something is strange if I've never seen such a huge branch before, right? So I see it. And I say, ok, let's see what it is. I am always armed, not with any intention but – you never know – to defend myself. And I saw an animal – and I am looking at it and it at me – and then it hopped like this, like this – and I am thinking what is going to happen now? And on top of a huge stick. And afterwards, when I arrived here, Alicia, who still lived here, said, “well, that was a bacá.” This was Alicia's home then.
- Did you see the animal?
- Yes.
- What kind was it?
- That I cannot say – a dog, a goat. I could not tell. It was pitch black.

- A pig?
- I could not say what kind it was. It was an animal but I could not distinguish what type. For example, you are here, and it goes “prrr” and away it goes. That's what happened to me.
- Like a chupacabra?
- Something like that. And it went like this...
- It flew?
- No.
- I had my gun ready to kill it. I always have my firearm just in case. If I go out during the day or at night – not with a bad intention, of course. It was a strange thing, though. It had a large snout (*pico*) as if it was a *jarabali* – one of those pigs – one of the wild pigs that had the whiskers.
- Yes, that has large teeth.
- That's it!
- And that has long hairs on either side of the mouth, those long whiskers.
- So maybe it was a wild Creole boar?
- That's what I say – that it was a wild boar. So I thought it was a *jarabali* – one of that kind of wild pig. That's what we call them. But it never stopped.
- A *jarabali* is a *cimarrón* pig.
- And that has long whiskers around the mouth. And I was watching it and it disappeared. I didn't know why. It must have left very fast. That's what I think.

really *bacás* or spirit animals. I heard haunting stories about how invisible visitors were eradicated and how virile men fought off these beasts during struggles in the bush. Ranchers and butchers told of *bacás* that eviscerated their herds and drained their cash. I even encountered a *curandera* (healer) who boasted that she could make one for me.

Bacases are a particular subset of shape-shifter lore in the Dominican *campo*; others include *galipotes* and *tuntunes*. The version of *bacá* narratives interpreted here are specific to the central frontier region, where they appear as a local variant of Haitian *lougrou* lore in which the core feature is the anthropomorphism of the object—the stick, rock, or dog is actually a person. In Haiti, such accusations that beef was actually human flesh landed several people in jail on cannibalism charges in the 1870s. *Bacá* narratives can be adapted to fit new rumor paradigms as they arise, for example, morphing into a version of the *chupacabras*, a black dog with a penchant for attacking goats when those rumors spread across Latin America.³ And rumors surfaced recently with a vengeance as tent dwellers amidst the post-earthquake ruins of Port au

Prince killed a woman said to have been a *lougrou*, poised to suck children's blood in the dead of night. These narratives are reflective of a highly tangible notion of evil, one evidenced as well in beliefs that bad dreams occur due to the entry of a wicked presence into the body, which is why it is considered preferable to sleep sideways or face down.

Wood and animals are key natural symbols in Bánica; the very name of the town derives from the Arawak term for ebony because of the rich forests that sheltered the area into the eighteenth century. The town's patron saint is Saint Francis, guardian of animals. Indeed, mahogany is the national wood and is considered sacred, as is the Mata de Piñon, which is said to be able to bleed like a person and can be used to protect a house from evil spirits and natural disasters (although in Haiti it is also used to capture spirits and bottle them into zombies).⁴ There is a mahogany (*caoba*) forest in los Haitises where if one tries to cut the trees, the earsplitting sound of drumming will emerge until stopped.⁵ Dogs seen swinging in hammocks or in rocking chairs are said to be *bacás*. While animals are the

most popular changelings in these tales, wood appeared regularly in the *bacá* narratives I have collected. In one story, a thief turned into a tree stump during a hurricane so as to avoid capture by the police. Such powers of metamorphosis are most often said to emanate from Haiti. Scholars have noted the effects of deforestation on Haitian peasant economies, but they have not yet considered how the decline of the wilderness (*el monte*) has created anxieties associated with diminishing access to everyday forms of magical protection from evil. Indeed, shape-shifter lore about demonic cattle arose in the early conquest period during another ecological crisis, when grief over Indian deaths in Mexico was channeled into Nahua narratives about Spaniards turning them into horses.

From a Dominican perspective there is a nationalist resonance to these *bacá* narratives since Haitians are renowned for their superior sorcery powers and are thus seen as ultimately responsible for *bacás* and their thievery. Located in Haiti for much of the nineteenth century and a central theater of war during the Haitian revolution and its aftermath, Bánica has long supplied meat products to

the Haitian side of the central frontier, which is too mountainous to sustain livestock; although today Dominicans sell beef and rice to Haitians who supply Dominicans with goat, pig, and guinea fowl. In addition to the disappearance of the forest, *bacá* narratives must be contextualized within cultural economies of difference that emerged within the broader history of transborder circuits of markets, migration, and religious pilgrimage in the Haitian-Dominican borderlands. The small-holder economies of Bánica and the corresponding Haitian town of Biassou are heavily reliant on pastoralism—cattle, goat, sheep, and pig. This informs the cultural meanings of animals where people reside intimately with their beasts and for whom animals occupy much of their imaginative and accusatory discourse. These may still harbor a view of themselves as at the mercy of natural forces and thus may hold an enchanted view of animals as representing the power of an often inscrutable nature. The *bacá* has several crosscutting genealogies since shape-shifter beliefs are prominent in African as well as Amerindian cultures such as the now-extinct Taino and Arawak who once inhabited this

area, as well as French-derived traditions of the *loup-garou*.

Given the fantastic nature of these shape-shifting beasts, I originally assumed that I would need to use a folklorists' methodology to interpret them and that I would be searching for story kernels, genres, and variations alone. But I want to argue that these stories can be read as a form of historical evidence, even if as a genre they are not oral tradition as such, since their historicity resides in their poetics—the historical meanings that have accrued to formulaic elements or key symbols, rather than their narrative.⁶ Witchcraft can thus provide a standpoint from which to reflect on different kinds of historicities.⁷ Following Carlo Ginzburg, one might read these key signs metonymically, as “the verbal condensation of a historical process.”⁸ Thus reading these texts as historical evidence requires removing elements from the narrative sequence within which they are embedded and tracing the historical context which over time has accrued certain meanings to key symbols like varnish on a brass plate. Drawing upon Freud, one might say that inadvertent or minor details in these stories

may provide clues which reveal resonances which are not available to the conscious mind of the informant.⁹

I would like to consider *bacá* talk as a genre of embodied historical memory of the past, one that is conveyed by the history and poetics of the particular forms these spirits inhabit, from dogs, pigs, cattle and extinct species of wood. As such they are popular recollections of a landscape and economy which came to an abrupt end with the USAID-induced swine slaughter of 1979 when U.S. officials feared that a swine flu epidemic could threaten the domestic pork industry and ordered that all pigs on the island be killed. If history is always a story about power, these haunting tales represent suppressed subaltern histories of a desire for a time and a place when life was far easier for the rural poor in the borderlands, as well as the surfacing of certain memories of trauma from the colonial past.¹⁰ These were animals might be termed what Rosalind Shaw has called “embodied memories” of the *montero* economy one that provided free access to the hunting of wild pigs, goats and cattle in the forested interior and which sustained this region and

its poor for centuries until the 1950s. These phantasmic ghosts represent popular desires to hold on to the last vestigial traces of the free range economy of *montería* which provided ready subsistence for the poor for centuries, while they are also vernacular histories of trauma from the colonial terror unleashed upon the free peasantry; while simultaneously channeling some of the virile pride freedmen felt as powerful hunters in the mountainous interior.¹¹ They are not unchanging static images, however, but represent a “process of historical sedimentation” that shapes a vision of moral community, yet one which is constantly revised to meet new circumstances.¹²

Yet as we shall see, there is a strong gendered dimension to these stories. Mary Crain in her research in Ecuador has argued that similar devil pact tales are women’s stories of resistance to wage labor exploitation; women play a more veiled role in this case, however.¹³ Due to the strong presence of the Catholic Church, women are loath to locate themselves as protagonists or even narrators of these stories of the demonic. As in Sebala’s story in which his neighbor

throws her interpretation in obliquely from the margins, women are highly guarded about their *bacá* observations. This is probably due to the important role Catholicism plays in this community, and the fact that women typically run the *cofradías* or religious brotherhoods for San Francisco and other regional patron saints. Honorable personhood for women requires a discursive strategy of distancing oneself as far as possible away from these creatures and their stories, especially since uttering their name could conjure them into being. Bánica has one of the oldest Catholic churches in the country, and I have not yet met a woman who would confess publicly to believing in *bacás*. While loath to head on confrontations with the demonic, they will admit to being indirectly affected by them. This was apparent in stories I heard just after the Haitian earthquake (which some said had been caused by a *bacá*) that the presence of evil—in addition to the restless spirits of the unburied dead—were causing nightmares and keeping people awake at night.

The work of the Devil?

These narratives might be classed within the genre of Latin American devil-pact lore except for the fact that *bacás* are also said to protect one’s crops or beasts, so they are powerful but not necessarily negative, which is why I am hesitant to term them devil pact narratives which has a univocally negative moral timbre.¹⁴ In Bánica, there is another genre of *bacá* narratives in which wealth generation is more central which more closely conforms to the devil-pact model; like witchcraft narratives those accused are community outsiders either by regional provenance or class. Stories about export free-trade-zone owners and politicians fall within this rubric, or the dog of Consuelo Ingenio which was said to change form and size and was seen all over the place which many said was José Mota’s *bacá*.¹⁵ Or the assembly zone in Santiago owned by someone from the large regional town of San Juan de la Maguana which was found to have been the scene of mysterious deaths and blood in the toilets; or the tale of an *alcalde* (mayor) who was said to have had a “*muchachito*” or small black man who smoked and was actually a *bacá* which made his large herd of cattle

in Haiti grow while his neighbor's failed; his *bacá* eventually causing the suicide of his cousin who was his political rival. The centrality of blood imagery, desiccation and unnatural death—what Dundes calls the “bloodthirsty revenant” —render these stories a different substream of the *bacá* genre, however, one more akin to vampire stories than shape-shifter tales, even if the two forms are related. These tales also conform to Freuds' insights about why the “beloved dead” become “demons” since those accused are usually blood kin. By contrast, Dundes would describe *bacá* tales as “memorates” that is, personal stories of encounters with supernatural creatures told as true.¹⁶

Bacá stories clearly form part of a transnational genre of Latin American lore, and certain formulaic elements can be found from Colombia to Nicaragua, such as the highly suspicious bull with gold teeth. Stories in which the wealthy are said to have made their money by turning their workers into animals have surfaced in Colombia and Nicaragua, and Gould reports a tale of an enchanted burro which purportedly

helped generate wealth as well.¹⁷ Yet my *bacá* narratives are not always about wealth generation, and thus could also be seen as a vision of evil as wily and inscrutable. Early modern British witch trials also reported the devil appearing as a dog, cat or fly.¹⁸ Latin American tales about witches frequently involve their ability to transmute, often into birds, enabling them to locate children in order to suck their blood.¹⁹ In the British West Indies, women with supernatural powers are said to transform into animals, particularly cats or dogs by ingesting potions; not surprisingly, they are also wealthy and said to grow in power via eviscerating the life blood of others.²⁰ Scholars may be imposing a binary moral vision upon a corpus of belief that actually expresses a more complex vision, one which presumes the existence of a range of invisible supernatural forces, not invariably of the classic Faustian type.

Scholars of devil pact narratives have identified the genre via the plot or moral of the stories—the wealth or “bitter money” that is generated which carries a satanic cast. They thus classify the tale on the basis of its narrative genre rather than its constitutive

motifs.²¹ This perspective also reduces the essence of these tales to a popular commentary on markets and inequality, thus indicating the presence of a culture of “generalized reciprocity.”²² Yet this view avoids the question of the specificity of the demonic vehicle—why are one particular set of beasts are invoked rather than others? What is it about certain animals—dogs or pigs in particular—that make them more prone to emplotment in demonic tales than other beasts? Michael Taussig has urged scholars to attend to the vivid detail of devil pact narratives, yet no one has yet taken on the centrality of the beast itself in new world representations of evil, a fact with particular salience in contexts in which pastoralism provides the backbone of economic life.²³

An important context for *bacá* tales is the forest itself, a space of enchantment cast as feminine, and one which harbors alluring female wood sprites. As in France, where Peter Sahllins reports the woods were anthropomorphized as a “feminine supernatural being,” Dominican forests have long been inhabited by *ciguapas*, for example, which are mute indian women with long

hair who walk with their feet backwards.²⁴ They appear to be wereanimals but in a different sense than the *bacá* since they are themselves hybrids; people without language or clothes covered with long hair or fur, innocents who live in a pre-edenic state. They are mischievous and kidnap people often using them to sire offspring. Upon their return, then, their victims are blessed with “*poderes*” thus they maintain a connection to *lo mas allá*—the world of the spirits. Trees are gendered as *hembra* and *macho* and female is the unmarked category, a fact that indicates that the forest is a feminine space.²⁵ *El monte* (the wilderness, the bush) is associated with fertility, and menstruating women can ruin a harvest, cause disease in livestock, and spoil eggs, just as lesbians are said to cause earthquakes.²⁶ Since mountains historically have been wooded, they are also seen as sacred, and can demand cash or goods.²⁷

It is important to note, however, that these stories are the subject of a particular form of story telling. *Bacá* tales are resolutely male drinking stories. As such they are most often told at night, in private, among groups of men, and accompanied by plenty of beer or *kleren*,

potent home-made Haitian rum. They are private because people are aware that they are not rational explanations, which is why they are termed *boca del chivo* or *disparates*, stupid beliefs. They are male not only in performance setting, but also in content. They are prototypically stories of bravery in relation to an adversary of untold proportions since the *bacá* at first glance appears to be a creature but it is actually of the spirit world, a small demon able to wreak untold havoc. They are also traveler’s tales, usually cast as encounters on roads; yet as Hyde has noted, given his abilities to vanquish a demon, the protagonist is not a mere mortal but rather himself divine.²⁸ Thus in telling these trickster tales, notwithstanding the comraderie of his mates (since these stories are not told in public but rather among close friends) the protagonist is also engaging in “crab antics” which cast him above his peers.²⁹ In a context in which the logic of conjuring is taken for granted—that uttering the name of Satan can invoke it—these are stories told in private.

As male stories, they also span the class spectrum in this rural community, from the descendents of the founding cattle ranching

families who constitute a kind of local aristocracy, to their field hands. I have heard *bacá* stories recounted by former *síndicos* (rural mayors), as well as elementary school teachers, pig farmers, day laborers and the military. Class marking in this poor rural community is not altogether clear, however, since, for example teachers are poor but have symbolic capital. Sebala for one, is today an indigent pig farmer, but he named his children after his favorite philosophers, including Socrates, Thucydides, and Hegel, a cosmopolitan gesture. Of course, men have a wider spectrum of movement than most women do, and these stories take place on the road and cast the narrator as a virile protector of family and nation from diabolical forces.³⁰ Men are also intimately linked to their animals, whether they are cattle ranchers or raise fighting cocks or pigs; it is the men who are primarily responsible for herding the animals from pen to savanna, and men slaughter the animals when its time to butcher them. For the poor whose lack of income means that they cannot adequately provide for their family these narratives may also help heal a “wounded masculinity” by casting

the protagonist in a heroic mode.³¹ Given the preponderance of female out-migration from the Dominican *campo* today, combined with the lack of available land, livestock and well remunerated work for rural men, one could also say that these stories provide the opportunity to enact a heroic performance which aims at persuading the audience that the male protagonist may be immobile but is still capable of male virtues such as protecting their families and communities from danger.³² For this reason, the performative dimension of *bacá* storytelling and the genres of male self-fashioning it enables is as important as their content.³³

The free range boar hunting economy of *monteria* continued into the 1970s throughout the country until the arrival of swine flu in 1979, when it struck in the Artibonite valley.³⁴ USAID spent \$30 million dollars in the slaughter of all pigs on the island, hoping that this would curtail the disease from spreading north to the U.S..³⁵ Given the importance of feral swine to poor subsistence farmers in the border, it should not be a surprise that this region was devastated more than any other by the pig eradication program in 1978. The

southern border towns of Pedernales and Jimaní were central to the effort in 1978, while later outbreaks occurred in Dajabón and the province of Elias Piña where Bánica is located.³⁶ Worse still, the pig slaughter arrived after a series of droughts that left the population even more dependent on livestock.³⁷

Until then, creole pigs had been the mainstay of the peasant subsistence economy. Not only was the black boar a key symbol to Haiti, the chosen sacrificial object at Makandal's bois caïman vodoun ceremony, the event which started the Haitian revolution. The French term *marron* which became maroon for runaway slave came from the *puerco cimmarón* (wild pig) who was the originary primordial forest creature on both sides of the island.³⁸ Creole pigs were extremely well adapted to their environment, thriving on palm fronds, worms and grubs, they disposed of household food remains, their excrement providing fertilizer for the *conuco* or garden plot, and their rooting loosening the soil for planting. For an initial cost of less than \$10 their offspring could sell for \$250.³⁹ For virtually no cost in

maintenance, they were an ample and secure protein source; they also could be used as credit to secure a loan.

Although hunting was prototypically a male pastime, interestingly the creole pig massacre had an important gendered component to it. Irrespective of the popular prohibition against killing female swine, especially the pregnant and their offspring (which are taboo to eat), many of these were killed, a fact which outraged owners who railed that "this was the only thing to sustain a family."⁴⁰ Moreover, some of the most strident resistance was from women who were outraged at the governments' orders and preferred to kill and eat their own pigs rather than hand them over to the troops.⁴¹ Women, of course, were the primary caretakers for the family hogs which were tied up in the patio and lived off household leftovers, and probably stood to lose more from their husbands from this source of family income. (See *photograph on page 1.*)

During the swine fever slaughter, women may have been particularly irate since they had fewer other options for generating cash than men and thus were even more

dependent on their pigs than their menfolk. In their pitiful complaints to the authorities they wrote that “we are women who live off pig production” who are now destitute. The pig assault cut to the heart of the family, perhaps even more so since the rate of serial polygyny and thus female-headed households in the border was higher than elsewhere, so there were more women headed households with a single income stream. One woman from Villa Vasquez wrote that she had received a voucher for reimbursement for the loss of her pig but when she went to the Agricultural Bank she was told there was no money left and she wrote “please pay as soon as possible, I am a poor widow with seven children to take care of.”⁴² Nearly a half of all those who wrote in to complain were women, primarily from the largest segment—the “humildes” and “gente pobre” (the humble poor) who owned fewer than ten hogs.⁴³ Which is why the governmental campaign to explain the rationale of the slaughter and eat more pork was aired on the Dimensión Feminina (Feminine Dimension) and Nosotros en su Hogar (We at Home) programs, alongside Radio Guaracuya, and on popular rural radio

stations in border towns such as Barahona, Pedernales, Neyba and Jimaní.⁴⁴

This essay asks that we read these *bacá* visions as embodied historical memories, which like dreams, require deciphering. They are flashes of memory which seek to repossess elements of the past and reanimate or reemplot them in historical time.⁴⁵ These *bácas* may have been embraced during the food crisis that developed right after the creole pig slaughter in the 1980s, as Reagan’s Caribbean Basin Initiative intended to transform the Caribbean from a food sustaining economy into one that produced nontraditional products for export, a vision in which cheap labor was the comparative advantage of Haiti and the Dominican Republic. Even USAID admitted they knew this shift would cause tremendous rural urban displacement, increasing urban populations by 75%; one which would generate an ample reserve army of labor which would keep its price down.⁴⁶ As Haitian labor was supposed to shift to export free trade zones in the capital, lower tariffs imposed by IMF “shock treatment” eventually displaced Haitian staple foods as Haiti—the poorest country in the

western hemisphere—became the largest net food importer in Latin America. Given the dramatic erosion in food security since 1979, it might not be a surprise that the creole pig continues to haunt the border, a poignant reminder of better days for the *campesinado*. In over 50 hours of interviewing I have not yet met one person who received a white U.S. replacement pig, although I have been told that these were much more difficult to handle than the *mansa* or gentle *jabali*. Indeed, I was told that due to their viciousness, you had to watch them constantly; they were so ruthless, they would even eat a small child. Indeed, these tales of gringo man-eating pigs are reminiscent of the vicious attack dogs brought to hunt down runaway slaves and ravage them in the colonial period. These tales of the *bacá*, as Luise White has said, can thus uncover intimate layers of personal experience and emotions such as anger and betrayal which are not always apparent in the cold historical archive.⁴⁷ They also reveal the central place that items such as wood and pork have played in the social history of the central frontier, as commodities which formed the basis of the subsistence economy,

while maintaining the magic of the gift.⁴⁸ As elsewhere in Latin America, in Bánica the “hearth defines the home,” and indeed bonds of family are indexed through where one eats and who feeds you, and most of all, what’s for dinner.⁴⁹

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NOTES

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2. See *The Dictator’s Seduction: Politics and the Popular Imagination in the Era of Trujillo* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009); and Robert Debs Heinl and Nancy Gordon Heinl, *Written in Blood: The Story of the Haitian People, 1492-1971* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin 1978), 602.
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LUCY MAE SAN PABLO BURNS

Studying the interlocking genealogies of the Filipino American performing body

Lucy Mae San Pablo Burns, who joined the Department of Asian American Studies at UCLA in 2005, recently received a CSW Faculty Development Grant to support her research for “Puro Arte: On the Filipino Performing Body.” She kindly agreed to talk with us about her current project and activities.

Can you tell us a bit about “Puro Arte: On the Filipino Performing Body”?

“Puro Arte: On the Filipino Performing Body” is a book-length study of the emergence of Filipino American theater and performance. It stresses the Filipino performing body’s interlocking genealogies as it conjoins colonial histories of the Philippines with U.S. race relations and discourses of globalization. In *Puro Arte*, I stage a conversation between colonial constructions of and contempo-

rary performance practices by Filipinos and Filipino Americans, such as in U.S. taxi dance halls, anti-martial law theater, and the play *Miss Saigon*. I do so by bringing together a diverse set of materials through an interdisciplinary research method combining performance theory, close textual analysis of plays and other cultural texts, archival research, and oral interviews of performers, playwrights, directors, and other cultural producers.

Part of what I am exploring in this book is how certain bodies come to have

metaphorical and/or analogical value. In other words, I'm interested in the process by which some bodies can easily and unquestionably call up a world and others are reduced to particularity.

Puro arte, translated from Spanish into English, simply means "pure art." In Filipino, however, *puro arte* performs a more ironic function, gesturing rather to the labor of overacting, histrionics, playfulness, and purely over-the-top dramatics. *Puro arte lang iyan* is phrase I often heard as a child. I can still hear my aunt's dismissive tone as she brushed aside my complaint as simply a show I was putting on. To be called out as *puro arte* is to call into question one's veracity, genuineness.

My taking of *puro arte* as a descriptive metaphor for the emergence of the Filipino performing body is inspired by the sentiment and creative "flippin'" that poet/performance artist joelbtan makes in his poem "ignacio—in 2 parts" (*seguro* in Spanish means "surely"; *seguro* in Tagalog means "probably"). Like tan, I perform an appropriative act

that considers and highlights the labor and productive possibilities of *puro arte* in the history of the Philippines colonization.

What else are you working on?

I am lucky to be in collaboration with two great scholars in the UC system—Professor Christine Bacareza Balance (Asian American Studies, UC Irvine) and Kevin Fellezs (Music, UC Merced)—as we organize a workshop symposium, titled "California Dreaming: Production and Aesthetics in Asian American Art." This gathering explores artistic processes and the circulation of art objects to understand the place of California in the artistic imaginary. With "California Dreaming," we approach "California" as both a specific locale and an identity marker that circulates, tying the state's artistic imaginary, labor, and economy to Asia Pacific, the Americas, and the world.

Another project I am working is one that considers the intersection of performance and migration. In brief, the main question animating this project is what do performance and migration, as analytical frame-

works and fields of study, offer to our understanding of migrancy as a condition of contemporary late twentieth/early twenty-first century?

I continue to be interested in dramaturgy work, though that has taken a back seat when I began my job here at UCLA. I am fortunate to be working on one of the best projects I've ever been involved in, a play titled *How to Make it to the Dance Floor: A Salsa Guide for Women (Based on Actual Experiences)* by Cindy García (Professor of Dance at the University of Minnesota and a UCLA alum) The play explores many things including social relations amongst Latino migrants, power and gender, and (perceived and actual) battles between different styles of salsa dancing. In the play, which is set in a salsa dance club, a lot happens in one night: Guadalupe and Coatlopeuh reunite after more than five hundred years of being separated by colonial violence, Cuban singer diva (and long-dead) La Lupe shows up, and a red-headed Chicana feminist ethnographer

initiates revolutionary rumblings—all because she uses the bathroom stalls to note down her observations. It is action-packed, funny, chaotic—dead icons coming in, lines from another play make it in there, a head is served on a platter, and a skeleton goddess wonders why she is not being asked to dance. Plus the salsa dancing styles and a live DJ! While it is all that, *How to Make it to the Dance Floor* is also heart-breaking and introspective. By the way, we're not finished with it yet!

What courses are you teaching? Are you planning any new one?

Courses I have taught here at UCLA include Feminist Performance and Race, Introduction to Filipino American Studies, The Art of Protest, and Exploring Asian American Theater. I'm teaching these last two courses this quarter and it's really exciting.

There are two new courses that I'm hoping to teach next year—Cultures Of and Against Empire and Dressing the Nation. In Dressing the Nation, I'm putting together a class that builds from an essay

I wrote on the performance of the *terno* (also known as the butterfly dress, the Philippine national costume). The class will cover a range of topics exploring racial formation and embodiment through clothing, costume, fashion, and dressing practices.

Has the presence of CSW on campus been important to you and to your fellow faculty members?

In my time as an Assistant Professor here at UCLA, CSW has been one of the most supportive units outside of my department. I think it has the most dynamic programming of the many centers on campus. I'm always adding CSW events to my calendar. For example, I attended "Exploring Metaculture with Devil Bunny" (yay Gigi!). And, I recommended it to my students as well!

CSW has been incredibly committed to junior faculty, especially junior faculty of color. I have benefited greatly from that—I've been a part of a faculty-curated reading group, co-organized a year-long series on transnational feminisms

and comparative racialization through the Center, and most recently received a Faculty Development Grant towards the completion of my manuscript. Last year, CSW provided me the tremendous opportunity of receiving feedback on my book-in-progress.

I think CSW is one of the most realized centers on campus. It has such a diversity of programming, and it is clearly an intellectual unit. I also appreciate its feminist approach to achieving its multifaceted programming through opportunities such as curatorial grants for faculty and research scholars.

Lucy Mae San Pablo Burns is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Asian American Studies at UCLA. Her publications include an anthology titled The Color of Theater (edited with Roberta Uno). She received a CSW Faculty Development Grant to support her research for "Puro Arte: On the Filipino Performing Body."

Jaimie Baron is a PhD candidate in the Department of Cinema and Media Studies at UCLA.

by Hannah Landecker

Food as Exposure

Nutritional Epigenetics and the Molecular Politics of Eating

FROM FRUITS ENGINEERED TO BE HIGH IN anthocyanins to cheese sticks fortified with omega-3 fatty acids, supermarket shelves are increasingly stocked with foods bearing a health message about their constituent molecules. Even if you don't know an antioxidant from a trans-fat, you're likely to be able to categorize these two molecules as good or evil. Ever since the first words about cholesterol were allowed to appear on packages of rolled oats, the peculiar rhetoric of the health effect that makes no specific claims has been under intense development, and

it has developed into a fine art. Since 1997 nutritional supplements have been allowed to bear general claims about "supporting immune function" or "strengthening the body's defenses" as long as they include this text: "This statement has not been evaluated by the Food and Drug Administration. This product is not intended to diagnose, treat, cure, or prevent any disease." Conventional foods as well as nutritional supplements are allowed to make "qualified" health claims if they can "establish a relationship between a food or food component and a disease or

health-related condition," such as high blood pressure.

In general, this linking of particular food molecules to health is part of a peculiarly twenty-first century synthesis of food and medicine. Food has been understood to be medicinal in many different ways in different historical periods; one has only to consult the Roman physician Galen on the qualities of lentils to see that it is not new to think about food as more than fuel for the body. According to *The Properties of Foodstuffs*, twice-boiled lentil soup will dry up gastric

What are the political and social consequences of the sciences of food and metabolism used to establish a relationship between food and health?



fluxes and increase the tone of the esophagus, and is thus an appropriate food for those with gastric complaints. However, in our time, an intensely *molecular* language of interaction between food and the body is in play. It is the interaction of food's molecules with the body's molecules that draw the focus of biomedical research, and, in consequence, shapes regulatory cultures of food as well

as the marketing language and popular perception of food's therapeutic or disease-preventing effects.

As a social scientist, I am interested in the increasingly molecular focus of contemporary eating discourse, and the attendant anxieties and uncertainties produced by seeing food as both potential preventative medicine and potential threat to health. What are

the political and social consequences of the sciences of food and metabolism used to establish a relationship between food and health? My studies are directed at some of the places in which the language and logic of food as molecular medicine is currently under construction, and I have focused my attention on the biomedical research laboratory. I have been looking at nutritional epigenetics, an



Nutritional epigenetics seeks to understand how the molecules in food affect long-term health through their interaction with the molecules that mediate gene expression in the body.

area of biomedical research that seeks to link nutrition with patterns of gene expression. The basic hypothesis of nutritional epigenetics is that food type and availability during so-called “critical periods” of development affect patterns of gene expression and thus the physiology and disease susceptibility of an organism for the rest of its life, and perhaps the life of future generations. Thus,

the findings produced by this research are particularly significant in relation to prenatal and early postnatal nutrition. As such, the politics of parenting are inextricably entwined with even the most esoteric-seeming experiments in the molecular biology of metabolism.

Nutritional epigenetics seeks to understand how the molecules in food affect long-term

health through their interaction with the molecules that mediate gene expression in the body. Much of the work done in this area is done in animal models. In particular, the agouti mouse model has been used to establish a link between prenatal and early postnatal nutrition and gene expression. The agouti mouse model has a piece of foreign DNA called a retrotransposon in the promoter region of the agouti gene, which normally produces the agouti protein in select cells in the body and affects coat color. If the retrotransposon is heavily methylated—has many CH₃ groups attached to the cytosine molecules in the DNA sequence (the C's in ATCG)—then the gene is not expressed at high levels. However, if the retrotransposon is not methylated, the DNA is open to other molecules that spur the transcription and translation of the gene into its protein product, and the agouti protein is expressed all over the mouse body. This wide expression of agouti protein has several effects on the mouse's body—most noticeably it is fat and yellow instead of thin and brown, and it suffers from susceptibility to diabetes and cancer. Significantly, two mice can be genetically

identical, but have very different bodies, because the set of molecules attached to the DNA are different and thus modulate the same genes differently. These changes are referred to as “epi”-genetic, exactly because they do not affect the gene sequence in the same way as a mutation would, but work instead at the level of regulation.

Pregnant agouti mice fed diets supplemented with substances that contribute methyl groups to the methylation process produce litters in which a higher proportion of the pups have brown, thin bodies than their non-supplemented peers. Pups weaned and then fed a diet depleted in methyl donors show loss of methylation of genes associated with diabetes. Even if the mice are switched back to a methyl-donor sufficient diet after 60 days, the effect on gene expression lasts through their lifetime (Waterland et al. 2006). These molecular effects of diet have also been found in human populations—individuals who were in utero during the Dutch hunger winter of 1944-1945 show reduced methylation of the same gene locus associated with diabetes in comparison with their siblings born after the war (Heijmans et al, 2008). The basic

idea is that food conditions early in life, in utero or early postnatal life, affect patterns of gene expression and thus the way the body works for a lifetime, and perhaps beyond. There is even some evidence that methylation patterns are heritable between generations of mice. Scientists call these animals “epigenetic biosensors,” because their bodies show at a macroscopic scale events happening at a molecular scale.

These scientific developments mark a pronounced shift in our understanding of both food and metabolism. Where classic biochemical studies of metabolism depicted food as fuel or as substrate for the building blocks of the body, nutritional epigenetics depicts food as information or molecular signal. This information, conveyed by the molecules traveling from the outside of the body to the inside, indicates what kind of environment the body will grow up to occupy and thus affects the systems that respond to the environment. In the logic of nutritional epigenetics, food at critical periods in development actually shapes the metabolic interface that will process food later in the life of the organism. Or, to put it most



By looking at how something social, such as “eating,” is conceptualized and constructed as an experimental variable, we can track the ways in which the social is given scientific materiality, and the ways, in turn, material scientific objects are then taken as meaningful for social life and can change understandings of such broad concepts as “environment” or “food.”

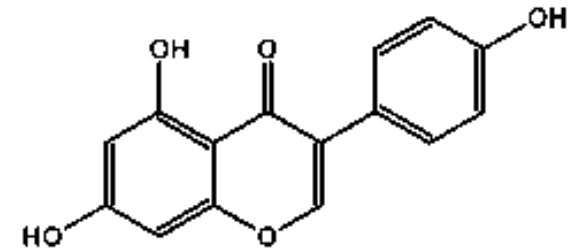
bluntly, food shapes the conditions of its own reception in the future. Food, as a carrier of biologically significant molecules, is a kind of environmental exposure that shapes the way the body responds to the environment.

When scientists do experiments, they are creating highly controlled situations to test particular hypotheses about the effects of food on health. By looking at how something social, such as “eating,” is conceptualized and constructed as an experimental variable, we can track the ways in which the social is given scientific materiality, and the ways, in turn, material scientific objects are then taken as meaningful for social life and can change understandings of such broad concepts as “environment” or “food.” When experiments are done with animal models such as the agouti mouse, the controlled setting that is created in the laboratory is what I call an “experimental image” of human life, and in this experimental image an emerging discourse of food as exposure becomes very clear.

In the agouti mouse model system, three substances in particular characterize the experimental image: soy, folic acid, and bisphenol-A. Soy-derived genistein is one of

the molecules fed to these mice. Agouti mice whose diets were supplemented with genistein had offspring whose coat colors shifted toward brown, indicating increased methylation of the agouti promotor (Dolinoy *et al.* 2006). Genistein is a socially significant molecule, because soy is everywhere. Soy is consumed in the form of soy milk and tofu and edamame; it is a commonly used ingredient to increase protein content or lend texture and form to foods; it is fed to industrially farmed chickens and pigs. It is also frequently used as a base for infant formula. Of course, the experiment does nothing more than signal that soy in the diet can affect gene methylation; it does not indicate whether this is a good, bad or neutral occurrence, nor what kinds of dosage might have health effects, nor whether these effects happen in humans in the same way as mice. Nonetheless, the results seem highly applicable to human affairs exactly because of the ubiquity of soy.

A second socially significant molecule that feeds these experimental animals is folic acid, which provides methyl groups to the metabolic cycles that methylate DNA. Folic acid is probably a familiar micronutrient for



Top, soybeans; below, molecular structure of genistein.

readers. Because folic acid supplementation has been shown to decrease the incidence of neural tube defects and anencephaly when consumed in the first trimester of pregnancy, mandatory folic acid fortification of all wheat products in the United States was instituted as a public health measure in 1998. Currently over 65 countries world-wide have mandatory fortification of wheat or maize flour or both.

Folic acid is a synthetic form of a molecule whose natural form is called folate. Folate is in high levels in things like oranges, beans, and leafy green vegetables. Folic acid is in all wheat products, and is added to many “functional foods” such as nutrition bars. Consumers have little control over the amount of folic acid they consume, as it is not a mandatory part of food labeling to indicate how much is in a serving of a bread or cereal product—only the original fortification is mandated. Pregnant or periconceptual women, meanwhile, are encouraged to take an additional folic acid supplement of 100% RDA on top of their regular diet and their regular intake of fortified foodstuffs. Now, more than ten years after mandatory

fortification came into place, unmetabolized folic acid is present in the blood of most individuals—particularly children and the elderly who consume higher proportions of cereal and bread (Smith et al. 2008). The rate of neural tube birth defects has dropped markedly in the United States since the introduction of this policy. Debate has begun to reopen however, as questions are raised about links between methylation and cancer, and excess folic acid could be responsible for causing or exacerbating colon cancer in older adults, even as it prevents birth defects.

The idea of food as exposure is intensified by the slippage between the notions of food and toxin. Also using the agouti model, researchers fed mice high levels of bisphenol-A, observed the depression of methylation caused by it, and then attempted to counter the effect with methyl-supplementation (Dolinoy 2007). Bisphenol-A is a plastic-derived endocrine-disrupting molecule that is ingested through food and drink, because it is in the linings of cans and plastic containers used for storage and transport. Food can therefore be biologically

The idea of food as exposure is intensified by the slippage between the notions of food and toxin.

active in terms of epigenetic changes in its “natural” state, in its manufactured or engineered state, and in its unintentionally polluted form.

Genistein and folic acid are pervasive and invisible ingredients rather than discrete and obvious components of food, and bisphenol-A is also undetectable and widespread. There are clear implications for conceptualizing food as a discrete object that can be refused versus food as a miasma in which people are immersed. The first frame—food as controlled by individual choice—implies that personalized nutrition will be part of personalized medicine, drives the production of consumables for health, and increases the imperative to monitor food intake at the molecular level, thus increasing the susceptibility of publics to molecularized marketing. This is the frame in which many functional foods operate: consumers are encouraged to take care of themselves by buying and eating foods with tangible health benefits, such as the promise that one pot of yoghurt a day equals one person’s improved digestion/immune function. The second frame—food as milieu—leans instead toward

a sense of collective or social responsibility for health and regulatory approaches, as these are things well beyond our control as individuals. If people are encased within these environments, then all one can do is work on those environments and the amelioration of their effects and do it in a way which affects more than one individual at a time.

Nutritional epigenetics, in linking food and food pollutants to health, has the potential to contribute to both an individualized politics of eating and an increased sense of social responsibility for caring for the food environments of populations. It might seem yet another way to pin responsibility for fetal and child health on the individual actions of pregnant women, but the politics of this particular linkage of eating and long-term health points in a rather different direction. The logic of epigenetics spreads the responsibility over many generations as well as between men and women, as epidemiological studies point to an important role of male nutrition in influencing epigenetic regulation in offspring (Kaati et al, 2002). Analysis of the experimental images being generated in the laboratory indicates that the kinds of objects

that are chosen to represent “food” in these controlled settings contribute strongly to a notion of food as a kind of molecular cloud that surrounds us. However, this science is relatively new and so far its main impact has been to shift the way food is studied in molecular biology and epidemiology rather than to shift the way food is controlled or perceived in spheres of regulation or consumption.

Epigenetics raises questions about the governance of food and the environment more generally in the interests of human health. It remains to be seen how or whether this will translate into regulatory changes, for example, banning the use of Bisphenol-A in food containers, a rethinking of the regulation of supplements and functional foods, or renewed attention to the public health impact of improving prenatal care. Or how it might translate into individual action: as epigenetics becomes more familiar to public audiences through newspaper accounts, food health claims, and popularizations, it will be important to track how consumers incorporate this narrative into their food choices and their understandings of food and

the body. At its heart, nutritional epigenetics represents a hope for intervention in the long-term health of bodies and thus the general health of populations, via the medium of food. Epigenetics has a very specific temporal logic to it, one that emphasizes the multigenerational impact of the environments surrounding fetuses and children. Given the social and cultural importance of food and eating and the fraught nature of contemporary parenting when it comes to feeding children, the unfolding generation of these specific links between nutrition and health calls for our continued critical attention.

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Hear the Voices

THE NEED FOR PERSONAL NARRATIVES IN HOLOCAUST STUDIES

by Margarete Myers Feinstein

It may come as a surprise to scholars in gender studies that the use of personal narratives as historical sources is controversial in Holocaust studies. Surprising because oral history and women's history have grown up together. Both are engaged in recovering experiences that the dominant historiography has ignored and neglected. At the same time, the influence of feminist scholars on oral history has led to greater understanding of the interview process itself. Concerned with hierarchies and power relationships, feminist scholars

recognized that the dynamics between interviewer and interviewee influenced what was remembered, how it was recalled, and what was shared. Increasing awareness of the subjectivity and shifting nature of memories led scholars to focus on discourse and language. These developments only seemed to confirm the opinion of leading Holocaust scholars that survivor narratives had no value as documents.

Despite famous collections of videotaped survivor testimonies at the USC Shoah Foundation Institute for Visual History and

Education and at Yale University's Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies, many Holocaust scholars long rejected the study of the recollections of victims and favored instead the use of written evidence provided by the perpetrators. The preeminent Holocaust scholar Raul Hilberg, for example, rejected survivor testimony on principle. Trained as a political scientist, he was interested in how the bureaucratic state could be turned to use in mass murder. The memories of victims were not important from that perspective, especially since

viewed through German documents, the victims appeared to have cooperated with or offered little resistance to the Germans. Historians are also trained to give preference to the written word over the verbal and visual. Saul Friedländer did use survivor testimonies in his Pulitzer Prize-winning book, *The Years of Extermination: Nazi Germany and the Jews*, where he intended them to disrupt the historical analysis by provoking in the reader a sense of disbelief. He did not use them, however, to gain knowledge.

I had undergone similar historical training, but when I submitted my first article about Holocaust survivors in the displaced persons (DP) camps, the journal editors recommended that I supplement my research with oral history. The result had a profound impact on the course of my research. By coincidence the first survivors whom I interviewed were women. I had conceived of my study as one focusing on national identity, but I carefully asked interviewees broad, open-ended questions so as not to influence unduly the memories recalled by my subjects. Often I would not

receive any information about national identity or politics until the end of the interview when I did ask more directed questions. Soon, I realized that I needed to listen to what the survivors were telling me rather than what they were not.

The women spoke overwhelmingly about domestic concerns. They had quickly married men they had met after liberation and then found themselves confronted with pregnancies. They shared their fears of German doctors, the toll that pregnancy took on their ravaged bodies. Their time became consumed with the task of providing for their young families: washing diapers could take all night and standing in the line for milk rations could take a good part of the morning. These activities rarely entered the written record and yet they were vital to the renewal of Holocaust survivors as they struggled to recreate family and to establish a sense of normalcy in the immediate aftermath of the Holocaust.

Awakened by these women survivors to the need for a gender-sensitive study of DPs, my research then focused on the ways in which survivors came to understand their

THE PREEMINENT HOLOCAUST
SCHOLAR RAUL HILBERG, FOR
EXAMPLE, REJECTED SURVIVOR
TESTIMONY ON PRINCIPLE.
TRAINED AS A POLITICAL
SCIENTIST, HE WAS INTERESTED
IN HOW THE BUREAUCRATIC
STATE COULD BE TURNED TO USE
IN MASS MURDER.

AWAKENED BY THESE WOMEN SURVIVORS TO THE NEED FOR A GENDER-SENSITIVE STUDY OF DPS, MY RESEARCH THEN FOCUSED ON THE WAYS IN WHICH SURVIVORS CAME TO UNDERSTAND THEIR HOLOCAUST EXPERIENCES AND TO CREATE JEWISH LIFE WHILE STILL ON GERMAN SOIL.

Holocaust experiences and to create Jewish life while still on German soil. Drawing on scholarship that suggests that women and men experienced the Holocaust differently, I explored how their recovery might also be gendered. I first entered the field in the 1990s when women historians were asserting that women had survived the Holocaust “better” than men. They based their claims on women’s social networking and domestic skills. My work and that of other young scholars suggested that too literal readings of survivor narratives were leading to faulty conclusions. Pascale Bos, for example, pointed out that some scholars have mistakenly concluded that women were singled out for the humiliation of shaving off of hair because women survivors’ narratives dwell on this event more so than men’s (33–34). While the Nazis’ treatment of men and women in this regard was the same, the narratives tell how the shaving was experienced and recounted differently by women and men.

Along the same lines, I found myself wondering why survivors frequently referred to caring women, regardless of their ages, as

mothers and foster mothers while helpful men were never referred to as fathers. In one memoir, I finally encountered one man described as a father figure in the post-liberation period, only to learn a few pages later that he was an SS man attempting to escape detection by infiltrating a band of survivors. That the one father figure I had encountered turned out to have been a wolf in sheep’s clothing led me to investigate further the absence of father figures. Was it a sign of a crisis of Jewish paternal authority or did it say something about how survivors constructed their narratives? I concluded that men acted in ways that could have been interpreted as fatherly, but that men had more terms to describe these caring relationships than did women. They could be comrades, soldiers at arms, colleagues, brothers, and uncles. Women tended to have fewer points of reference and chose to describe their behavior in maternal terms. What this study demonstrated is that gender is an important factor in determining the actual ordeals men and women faced as well as in the ways in which they interpreted and narrated those events (Feinstein).

In the past, sources have been an obstacle to the study of the private lives of DPs. The records most commonly used by historians to document their work on DPs, such as reports written by military and United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) personnel, frequently ignored domestic life. Often women and children were only mentioned when their marriages and births were registered. Social workers, psychologists, and other observers recorded their interpretations of DP attitudes and living conditions in reports and journals, but often they imposed their own preconceived ideas onto the DPs. Thus, they often tell us more about the attitudes of the observers than of the DPs themselves. The study of domestic life and identity construction requires the use of new sources, such as memoirs and oral history interviews.

Personal narratives can illuminate the meanings behind DP behavior, helping us to understand the significance of religious ritual after the Holocaust, to explain attitudes toward revenge and questions of gender and ethnic identity. In

my book, *Holocaust Survivors in Postwar Germany, 1945–1957*, published this January by Cambridge University Press, I have supplemented the written record of DP documents with diaries, memoirs, and oral history interviews. It is essential to treat personal narratives of the Holocaust with great care. Scholars have discussed the difficulties that survivors have articulating their memories and that their audiences have comprehending them; researchers have warned against the temptation of infusing meaning into survivors' suffering. Memories of the DP experience, however, are usually less traumatic than those of the Holocaust. While the ability to communicate the trauma of the Holocaust is limited by what is "tellable" by the survivor and "hearable" by the reader or interviewer, memories of the DP period are easier to convey. Like all historical documents, however, DP narratives need to be analyzed by taking into account their manner of creation, the purpose for which they were created, and the intended audience. An awareness of the conditions in which the recounted memory was encoded and in which it was retrieved

MEMORIES OF THE DP EXPERIENCE, HOWEVER, ARE USUALLY LESS TRAUMATIC THAN THOSE OF THE HOLOCAUST. WHILE THE ABILITY TO COMMUNICATE THE TRAUMA OF THE HOLOCAUST IS LIMITED BY WHAT IS "TELLABLE" BY THE SURVIVOR AND "HEARABLE" BY THE READER OR INTERVIEWER, MEMORIES OF THE DP PERIOD ARE EASIER TO CONVEY.

MEMORY STUDIES ALSO SHOW THAT INDIVIDUAL MEMORIES ARE SURPRISINGLY CONSISTENT OVER TIME. WHEN ONE HAS ACCESS TO A LARGE NUMBER OF PERSONAL NARRATIVES, THEY CAN HELP ISOLATE CORE MEMORIES AND SCREEN OUT ANY DISTORTIONS.

as well as how the gender of the survivor shaped the memory can help the historian gauge its usefulness for historical evidence.

In the cases of a few survivors, I was able to compare both earlier and later interviews, and interviews with memoirs. The central memories remained constant with slight variations in the details that the survivor remembered or chose to share at a particular time. Historian Christopher Browning has also discovered that survivor memories are more stable and less alterable over time than one might expect, affirming their usefulness as historical documents, particularly when no other records exist (47). Memory studies also show that individual memories are surprisingly consistent over time. When one has access to a large number of personal narratives, they can help isolate core memories and screen out any distortions. Neuroscientist Daniel Schacter has argued that videotaped interviews with Holocaust survivors “can help to ensure that forgetting and distortion—which can infiltrate any individual rememberer’s story—are counteracted by the overwhelming truths that emerge from core elements that

are shared by numerous rememberers” (305). Carefully read and analyzed, DP personal narratives can provide important information about events as well as about the meanings survivors have given them.

My determination to use oral histories was strengthened when I viewed videotaped interviews at the USC Shoah Foundation Institute. I had already gathered much material about pregnancy in the DP camps, but I was interested in learning more about abortions, and the index at the archive allowed me to identify which testimonies discussed abortion. Of the five Holocaust survivor interviews in the archives that discuss abortion in the DP camps, only one, a German Jewish survivor, actually had an abortion in postwar Germany. The second woman suffered a miscarriage that required a dilation and curettage that she mistakenly referred to as an abortion. In the third interview, the DP contemplated an abortion but chose not to risk an illegal procedure. Tragically her son died when his skull was crushed during a forceps delivery.

Two remaining testimonies about abortion reveal that German doctors recommended

that the women terminate their pregnancies. The outcomes of these two pregnancies, the successful deliveries of healthy babies with no ill effect to the mothers, raise questions about whether the doctors had been genuinely concerned about the mothers' health or whether they were using the excuse of maternal risk to encourage DPs to terminate viable pregnancies. Most DP women expressed fear at being treated by German medical personnel, remembering the role that German physicians had played in grotesque human experiments and also recalling that Jewish mothers and infants had been targeted for death. Pregnancy and childbirth revived Holocaust terrors and left the women feeling particularly vulnerable. Watching their interviews, I wondered, whether their feelings of victimization were simply an understandable reaction based on past experience or whether the women had indeed been victimized in the postwar period.

As I investigated the experiences of DP women with German medical personnel, I compared the reported experiences of the DPs to German medical standards of the

time in order to determine whether the women's complaints suggested incompetence or worse on the part of the caregivers. In both cases mentioned above, the doctors had not followed German medical standards when recommending abortions. Many DPs interpreted the lack of pain relief during childbirth as a deliberate, antisemitic withholding of care; however, the use of pain medication during delivery was not standard medical practice. Also, many medications were not to be had because of postwar shortages. These survivors, many of whom experienced the pain of childbirth for the first time while under the care of German healthcare workers, interpreted the lack of relief as a continuation of their mistreatment by the Nazis. Later, when they contrasted their experiences with those of their daughters, many of whom gave birth in the U.S. during a time when anesthesia was commonly used, they felt convinced that the Germans had deliberately tormented them. At the same time, it soon became apparent that more than a quarter of the women who discussed the medical care they received during pregnancy described events that did

...IT SOON BECAME APPARENT THAT MORE THAN A QUARTER OF THE WOMEN WHO DISCUSSED THE MEDICAL CARE THEY RECEIVED DURING PREGNANCY DESCRIBED EVENTS THAT DID NOT MEET THE STANDARDS OF CARE OF THE TIME. SOME OF THE CASES WERE LIKELY THE RESULT OF INCOMPETENCE BUT OTHERS ROSE TO THE STANDARD OF MALPRACTICE. A FEW NOTABLE CASES SUGGESTED THAT MALICE WAS AT PLAY. THIS ASPECT OF SURVIVORS' EXPERIENCES WOULD NOT HAVE COME TO LIGHT WERE IT NOT FOR THE ORAL HISTORIES.

not meet the standards of care of the time. Some of the cases were likely the result of incompetence but others rose to the standard of malpractice. A few notable cases suggested that malice was at play. This aspect of survivors' experiences would not have come to light were it not for the oral histories.

On a visit to the DP camps, the future prime minister of Israel, David Ben-Gurion, questioned why so few DP women were in leadership positions. The answer lies in the tremendous domestic responsibilities they had assumed because of the harsh conditions of camp life. The arrival of children had encouraged the reestablishment of prewar gender roles. Women assumed household duties of diapering, laundry, cleaning, and procuring and preparing food. Fears that Jewish children would not be allowed to survive heightened natural maternal concern, putting great pressure on Jewish women to protect their children. Although some women managed to continue their employment or schooling, most gave up these activities when their children were born. Men worked (for the Allies, in DP vocational schools and workshops, or on the

black market), dealt with emigration issues and the authorities. This division of labor was encouraged both by the conditions of camp life and by attempts to recreate the "normalcy" of their prewar homes. This domestic situation rarely made it into the written record.

Personal narratives can teach us much about aspects of people's lives that do not enter the documents that historians prefer. In the case of Holocaust survivors, the written documents were often created by outsiders who had their own agendas and prejudices. To ignore the survivors' memoirs and oral histories would be to create history based on sources no more credible. In some instances, there would be no other documents at all. To ignore the survivors' testimonies in those cases would be to let their history go untold.

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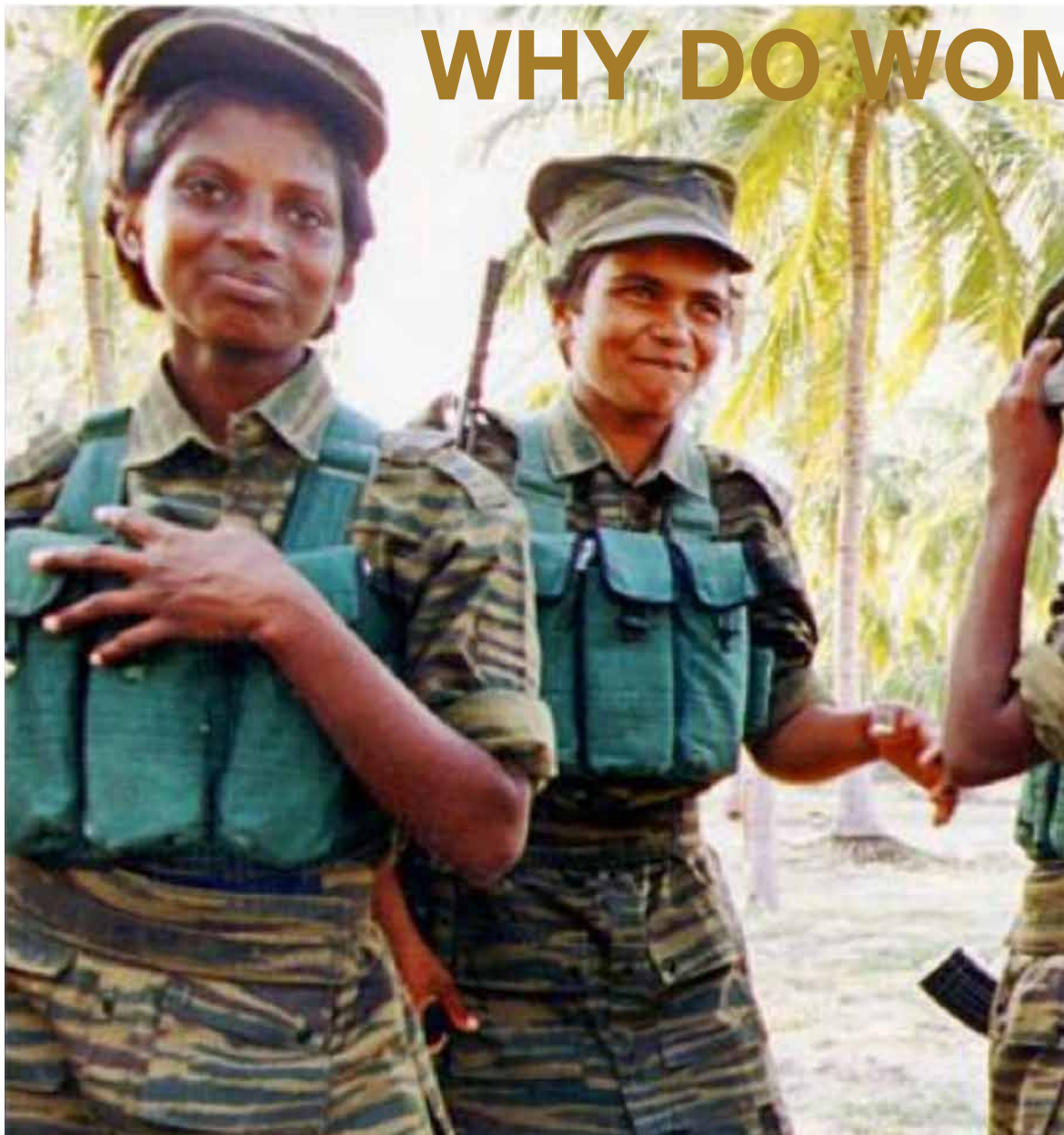
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WHY DO WOMEN REBEL?



Understanding State Repression and Female Participation in Sri Lanka

by Nimmi Gowrinathan

When I see the enemy, I think of my brothers, and how they were killed, how they were captured and beaten, and how they did this to all our people, and the thought comes that if I can get close to the enemy, I can do whatever I want.

—Interview with Sita, LTTE cadre,
March 1996 (Trawick, 2007)

ON MAY 17, 2009, the Government of Sri Lanka declared a military victory over the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), a guerilla group who had waged a thirty-year-war for a separate state for ethnic Tamils living amongst the Sinhalese majority on the island. The few journalists

who had access to the conflict zone in the final days of the bloody war report that one all-women's unit of the LTTE fended off Sri Lankan Army military advances for nearly a week. In the year since the defeat of the LTTE, access to territories formerly controlled by the rebel movement has slowly increased—opening up the space for inquiries into life within the borders of, what was, a fledgling nation. One of the most underexamined amongst these continues to be the impact of the conflict on the lives of women in Tamil society, in particular the thousands who chose to take up arms and join the militant resistance movement. The women who survived now remain in detention centers across the island, with little to no access to the outside world. As we witness a resurgence of the state repression and militarization that first initiated this seemingly intractable ethnic conflict, how do we understand the impact of these processes on the lives and experiences of the female combatant?

Formed in the mid 1980s, the self-determination platform of the LTTE was modeled after liberation movements in



THE CASE OF THOUSANDS OF FEMALE COMBATANTS PARTICIPATING IN THE LIBERATION TIGERS OF TAMIL EELAM, A NATIONALIST MOVEMENT WHICH FOUGHT FOR AN INDEPENDENT STATE IN SRI LANKA, IS ONE OF SEVERAL WHERE AN ANALYSIS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN STATE REPRESSION AND THE NATURE OF FEMALE PARTICIPATION IS PARTICULARLY RELEVANT.

Latin America and elsewhere, and the group soon became known (and feared) as one of the most ruthless and sophisticated guerilla movements in the world. The case of thousands of female combatants participating in the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, a nationalist movement which fought for an independent state in Sri Lanka, is one of several where an analysis of the relationship between state repression and the nature of female participation is particularly relevant. In 1983, the dedication and passion of four female Jaffna University students who were actively protesting the marginalization of the minority Tamil community led to their inauguration into what was then the seeds of a revolutionary movement. Breaking free of conservative cultural gender roles, resisting state oppression, joining brothers and fathers, and guaranteed, momentarily, safe shelter and food, these women eventually constituted the “Womens Military Wing” and “Birds of Paradise” Units, accounting for 30% of the participants in an ongoing struggle for an independent state of Tamil

Eelam (Balasingham, 2001).

The female rebel (and often, female martyr) and their role in resistance movements from the Black Panthers in the U.S. to the freedom fighters in the Eritrean People’s Liberation Front is a symbol that evokes mixed emotions and reactions in academic literature and the media—and particularly amongst feminist writers and scholars. In the post 9/11 era, all such rebels and martyrs quickly became terrorists and suicide bombers—further increasing the fascination with and scrutiny of the “female terrorist.” In 2007 *Marie Claire* magazine published an interview with a female LTTE suicide bomber who was in custody, highlighting some of the central tensions in how these women are perceived: “Listening to Menake talk, it’s hard not to sympathize. Her future will be at least as grim as her past has been. And yet, had she not been apprehended, her legacy would have been that of mass murder” (*Marie Claire*, 2007). We are conflicted in our understanding of the “agency” of this woman and her role in acts of political violence, a tension further complicated by western understandings of female “empowerment.” Even with the

numbers of female combatants increasing globally (most movements report participation levels between 20 and 40%), limited scholastic interest, as well as the difficulty in accessing these women, has limited our ability to understand the experiences and motivations of women who engage in rebel movements. In my research I attempt to better understand the “agency” of the individual female combatant in the LTTE and to explore the causes that led to her choice to join an armed rebel movement.

Existing studies in political science and resulting theories of mobilization and participation in rebel movements often rely on the underlying assumptions about gender. Women have often been assumed to be more peaceful and less warlike than men, creating an expectation that women are primarily nurturing and nonviolent beings. As women began to be considered within broader debates on mobilization, recruitment, and participation, gender-based mobilization was often viewed from the perspective of a patriarchal leadership, where women are only understood as “disempowered cogs” who have been discovered as an as yet

“unexploited constituency” (Coomeraswamy, 1997; Victor, 2004). Understanding female participants as a homogeneous collective, this approach to the agency of female combatants tends to “diminish women’s credibility and influence both within and outside organizations” (Cunningham, 2003).

Taking the role of female combatants more seriously, feminist scholars have found that large-scale structural changes combined with a rise in international feminism specifically generated new forms of women’s activism (Kampwirth, 2002). It has also been argued that periods of conflict and the absence of men open up spaces of agency for women to cross private/public barriers and to assume new roles as heads of households, thereby shifting cultural norms to allow for the mobilization of female fighters (Rajasingham, 2001: 105). Recent research on female fighters in Latin America has identified multiple factors that might push women to join rebel movements, amongst which state repression (using varying definitions of repression) is often a catalyst independently or in conjunction with existing activist networks pushing women towards violent forms of

resistance. (Kampwirth, 2002; Viterna, 2006). These studies enable women to be “ideologues” and active revolutionaries in their own right, rather than passive followers of a patriarchal movement (Cunningham, 2003:186).

The seeds of my own intellectual interest in the women of the LTTE began with a grassroots experience with girls living in the conflict-affected zones in the northern and eastern districts (areas partially controlled by the LTTE). Developing a leadership and English-teaching program for orphanages in these areas from 2002 to 2005, I spent my summers living amongst these young girls, listening to the traumatic stories of their journey to this place. As a result of a temporary ceasefire, girls who had relatives in the LTTE were joined by young women who had been recently released by the LTTE. Self-conscious about their short hair and often more aggressive than their peers, these young women largely kept to themselves. Some had joined the LTTE voluntarily, others were abducted—but each of their life histories challenged and complicated my preconceptions about agency and the impact

THE SEEDS OF MY OWN INTELLECTUAL INTEREST IN THE WOMEN OF THE LTTE BEGAN WITH A GRASSROOTS EXPERIENCE WITH GIRLS LIVING IN THE CONFLICT-AFFECTED ZONES IN THE NORTHERN AND EASTERN DISTRICTS (AREAS PARTIALLY CONTROLLED BY THE LTTE). DEVELOPING A LEADERSHIP AND ENGLISH-TEACHING PROGRAM FOR ORPHANAGES IN THESE AREAS FROM 2002 TO 2005, I SPENT MY SUMMERS LIVING AMONGST THESE YOUNG GIRLS, LISTENING TO THE TRAUMATIC STORIES OF THEIR JOURNEY TO THIS PLACE.

of state repression on female combatants.

From 2004 to 2009, I have engaged in looking at issues around gender, militarization, and state repression in Sri Lanka from a number of vantage points. While in the doctoral program at UCLA, I have also been working part-time as the Director of South Asia Programs at Operation USA. I managed post-tsunami and post-conflict humanitarian programs on the island, focusing in particular on vocational training and educational support for young girls and women in the northeast. Later, as the UN representative of Operation USA, I chaired the Sri Lanka Working Group of NGOs, spearheading advocacy efforts with policymakers and members of civil society in the U.S. around issues impacting Tamil communities in Sri Lanka. Working with the very active Tamil diaspora in the United States, I also developed Tamil Women's Groups, which are formal community groups across the country that raise funds and awareness around issues impacting Tamil women in Sri Lanka.

In my academic research, I developed a unique sample set of interviews with current and former female fighters, political leaders in the LTTE, former fighters in refugee camps

in India, as well as leaders of civil society and academics in Sri Lanka. Close ties to the communities I worked with also gave me access to regions and archived materials that have been overlooked in most existing scholarship. The approach I take in this study combines approaches adopted in existing interdisciplinary studies to create a unique theoretical framework within which the hypotheses developed in my dissertation can be tested. This framework applies social psychological approaches to existing understandings of the state repression within political science. I argue that the approach taken in this dissertation is best able to highlight the central role of state repression in understanding the causes and types of female participation in rebel movements. The theoretical framework is comprised of three distinct components, which draw on and build upon existing theoretical approaches put forward in various disciplines.

First, this study moves away from static conceptions of female participation and conceptually situates the grievances of the individual female combatant in an interactive dialectic with the grievances of a collective

group, such as the LTTE. This approach highlights that there is a multicausal pathway for each individual female combatant into rebel movements (Viterna, 2006) but understands varied individual grievances as reflective of and incorporated into collective grievances framed by the LTTE.

This study also draws on a “person-centered” approach more common in anthropology, where theories on specific behaviors of personal or cultural experience are understood through interviews that allow for reflection on past and current experiences of female combatants. (Hollan, 2008) Rather than focusing on particular events (moments of state repression or specific experiences in the movement), this approach extracts patterns in the behavior of female combatants from within the broader context of an individual combatant’s life story.

Finally, this study shifts the site of agency away from being entirely embedded in the rebel leadership and its ability to influence and recruit possible female combatants to being a more nuanced relationship which allows the female combatant some agency in

her choice to participate.¹ Drawing on the approach put forth by Miranda Alison, I view female combatants as exercising “restricted agency,” acting as “agents making their own choices, though acting within multiple hierarchical structures and specific contexts” (Alison, 2004).

Working within this framework, I find that given pre-existing conditions of inequality (both social and gender), the identity of female combatants in the LTTE (a unique intersection of ethnicity and gender) were mobilized by multiple mechanisms, among which experiences of direct and indirect state repression were most likely to shape the nature of their eventual participation in the movement.

While the hardline approach of the government of Sri Lanka drew widespread criticism for its blatant violation of internationally established humanitarian and human rights norms, the military defeat was absolute. A hastily called presidential and parliamentary election that consolidated

1. “Agency” here is understood as women taking action with purpose and meaning, though the meanings and contexts of these actions may be partially culturally pre-determined, and not entirely intrinsic (Paul, 1990).

WORKING WITHIN THIS FRAMEWORK, I FIND THAT GIVEN PRE-EXISTING CONDITIONS OF INEQUALITY (BOTH SOCIAL AND GENDER), THE IDENTITY OF FEMALE COMBATANTS IN THE LTTE (A UNIQUE INTERSECTION OF ETHNICITY AND GENDER) WERE MOBILIZED BY MULTIPLE MECHANISMS, AMONG WHICH EXPERIENCES OF DIRECT AND INDIRECT STATE REPRESSION WERE MOST LIKELY TO SHAPE THE NATURE OF THEIR EVENTUAL PARTICIPATION IN THE MOVEMENT.

power in the center, but political grievances of the Tamil people remain unaddressed (Gowrinathan, 2010). Female activists in the capital city of Colombo fear that the entrenched militarization and harsh crackdown on all forms of dissent under extended “state of emergency” policies has limited the space for women’s activism, particularly those from the Tamil minority (Interview with author, Colombo, January 2010).

This space was ironically most present at a moment when the LTTE was at the height of its political power. Visiting former rebel strongholds, one woman activist commented recently on the role of Tamil women in the LTTE: “Women had this romantic notion of emancipation and were looking for a taste of equality, which the rebels were providing” (Semath, 2010). During the peace talks in 2002, the Subcommittee on Gender Affairs brought members of civil society across the island together with the female leadership of the LTTE to discuss ways to address issues of gender equality that should be incorporated into any political solution.

Many of these same activists now face

continued harassment and intimidation as they push for the implementation of basic standards of democracy, transparency, and human rights in former conflict areas. They have been denied access to the female leadership of the LTTE, whose actions and writings had once initiated a new discussion around gender and militarization. As we attempt to understand the driving forces behind the mobilization of women into an armed resistance struggle, state repression emerges as one of the primary causes of female militancy. Nearly thirty years later, as the context and conditions of repression re-emerge, the question remains, will history repeat itself?

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Seeking Sex in an Electronic Age

by Patrick Keilty

Technology is never merely used, never merely instrumental. It is incorporated into our lives in ways that are socially pervasive and profoundly personal, informed not only by its own specific materiality, but also by a political, economic, historical, and social context. Just as transportation technologies, such as the train, plane, and automobile, have

extended our culture's spatial and temporal consciousness, so too have representation technologies, such as the photograph, film, and the Internet. Technologies help shape and reflect our presence to the world and to others. In the past decade, scholars, such as Don Ihde,¹


1. Ihde, Don. (2002). *Bodies in Technology*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

Vivian Sobchack,² Kate Hayles,³ and Brian Massumi,⁴ have become interested in the radically material nature of our human

2. Sobchack, Vivian. (2004). *Carnal Thoughts: Embodiment and Moving Image Culture*. Berkeley/Los Angeles, CA: UC Press.

3. Hayles, N. Katherine. (1999). *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

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These new forms of sexual sociability also reveal the body's participation in creating new media cultures, which lies at the intersection of sexuality studies and studies of our embodied encounters with technology.

existence in an increasingly electronic age.

In concert with these corporal concerns, sexuality scholars have wondered how objective encounters with computer technologies may reconstitute our sexual sociability. At the end of his lengthy cultural history of masturbation, Thomas Laqueur observes that masturbation, once a solitary sexual pleasure governed by Enlightenment sexual ethics, has become an increasingly public, social, and communal experience online.⁵ These new forms of sexual sociability also reveal the body's participation in creating new media cultures, which lies at the

5. Laqueur, Thomas W. (2003). *Solitary Sex: A Cultural History of Masturbation*. New York: Zone Books, 419.

intersection of sexuality studies and studies of our embodied encounters with technology.

Online pornography is especially ripe with examples of the ways in which the body participates in creating new media cultures. There are literally thousands of websites that cater to every masturbatory fantasy imaginable. But what is new is the way in which these sites reflect and create fetishistic communities and diagram relations of sexual desire through the arrangement of images on display. This is because pornographic images online have often been arranged around corporal and social experiences, whereby curiosity, frustration, surprise, desire, repulsion, pleasure, and

wonder arise from the relation of images to their location within a digital space, from their representation of particular acts, body parts, and other such fetishes, and their proximity to similar or different images, a kind of sexual *Wunderkammer*. Indeed, several scholars have conceived of the display of digital objects within a digital space as part of a Baroque genealogy.⁶

Pornographic video hosting services (basically YouTube for pornography), for example, have incorporated social networking

6. Murray, Timothy. (2008). *Digital Baroque: New Media Art and Cinematic Folds*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press; Munster, Anna. (2006). *Materializing New Media: Embodiment and Information Aesthetics*. Hanover, NH: Dartmouth College Press.

Pornographic video hosting services (basically YouTube for pornography), for example, have incorporated social networking design elements into their websites, making explicit sexual communities online.



design elements into their websites, making explicit sexual communities online. Viewers can “befriend” each other, exchange stories, follow each other’s uploaded videos or favorite videos, and contribute to wikis. Viewers add titles, descriptive tags, commentary, and narrative description about images that solicit or repel them. These textual fragments contribute to the metadata of an image, which enables searching, retrieval, and the arrangement of images on display through a predetermined dataset in the design of an algorithm. In this sense, viewers enter into a participatory, albeit mediated and constrained, relationship with online pornography in that the arrangement of

these images are particular to viewer-initiated spatialization.

The corporal and social experiences viewers have with online pornography thus enable an image’s relation and proximity to each other and reflect an image’s place in a larger network of sexual fetishistic relations. Conceived diagrammatically, an image functions as a single node around which a constellation of images, along with their respective textual fragments, maps a fetishistic network within a digital space. These corporal arrangements adhere to the associative principles of indexing and classification systems, in which objects are placed always in relation to other objects for a

particular purpose. Many online pornography websites, then, effectively catalog and index sexual fetishes. These systems, following Suzanne Briet, not only point to an object but also reflect the social networks in which the object appears. Any catalog or index is always a culturally embedded and socially networked phenomenon.⁷

Yet these images do not maintain a fixed identity in relation to other images. Nor do they represent the static presentation of a thing. Instead, these images are performed when looked at or experienced. Their corporal and

7. Briet, Suzanne. (2006). *What is Documentation?: English Translation of the Classic French Text*. Trans. R. E. Day and L. Martinet. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press.

social arrangements constitute, according to Johanna Drucker, an “active, dynamic field of forces and energies in dynamic suspension, acting on each other within a frame of constraint” to produce the conditions a viewer is provoked by in the constitutive act of seeking, viewing, or hearing that makes an image.⁸ Thus, these images and their arrangements are lived events, not fixed entities.

It is important to remember, too, that a viewer’s experience with these images is always mediated through one’s own body capacity and the particular material limitations of a technology. Some of these limits can be seen in the material limits that characterize the operation of a computer’s information flow: the capacity of silicon to conduct electrons at particular speeds, its resistance to degrees of deterioration, its ability to change in composition and properties according to temperatures, the possibility of its combination (or not) with other material flows, and so on. And then there are any number of material limitations of the desktop computer that

8. Drucker, Johanna. (2009). “Entity to Event: From Literal, Mechanistic Materiality to Probabilistic Materiality.” *Parallax* 15 (4), p. 14

concern ergonomics: its stationary status, the height and size of a screen, a reliance on the proximity of certain hardware (such as the mouse, keyboard, and electrical outlet), and an appropriate level of illumination of the screen, to name a few. These limitations can be said to further mediate, constrain, and structure the body’s participation in creating new media cultures, which are of necessity technologically grounded and structured. As technologies change, so too will the structures of these social relations. Pause for a while, for example, over the impact of mobile electronic devices on sociability and one quickly grasps how important technological structure becomes.

The corporal and social arrangements of pornographic images online are only one example of the many ways in which the body participates in creating new media cultures. Understanding these arrangements allows one to map the contours of new forms of sexual sociability in an electronic age. In this way, the Internet does not merely act as a repository for objects. Instead, these objects are relational and dynamic, and their arrangement is socially and culturally embedded. The Internet is, therefore, never merely used, never merely

instrumental. It is itself a site of social relations that has become incorporated into our lives, transforms us as embodied subjects, and alters our subjectivity.

Patrick Keilty is a PhD candidate in the Department of Information Studies with a concentration in Women’s Studies at UCLA. His dissertation project is entitled “Seeking Sex: Embodiment and Electronic Culture.”

BRUIN FEMINISTS FOR EQUALITY GO TO WASHINGTON

UCLA Students Attend Feminist Majority Foundation's National Young Women's Leadership Conference

by Miranda Petersen, Myra Duran, and Cindy Le

Over spring break three members of the student group, Bruin Feminists for Equality, were given the opportunity to attend the Feminist Majority Foundation's National Young Women's Leadership conference in Washington, DC, with the generous help of the Center for the Study of Women. The three of us, Miranda Petersen, Myra Duran,

and Cindy Le, participated in this three-day event that focused on a broad range of issues facing the next generation of young women in the United States and around the world. The conference featured speakers such as Eleanor Smeal, former president of the National Organization of Women (NOW) and current president of the Feminist Majority Foundation



from left to right: Myra Duran, Cindy Le, and Miranda Petersen

(FMF); Shelby Knox, who was the subject of a documentary on abstinence-only education in Texas, "The Education of Shelby Knox"; and Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-Washington, DC).

The timing of our trip to the nation's capital could not have been more serendipitous, as it ended up being the same

weekend that historic health care reform bill was passed by the U.S. Senate. The energy of the conference was extremely tense as the Stupak Amendment resurfaced, and our morning assembly was paused while conference attendees placed desperate calls to Congress members to make sure it would not be included in the final bill. In addition to the events surrounding health care reform, we were able to join more than a hundred thousand people in a historic march on Capitol Hill demanding comprehensive immigration reform.

The conference itself included several workshops on issues such as the re-introduction of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), birth control access, women in the media, and campus organizing. In addition, one of our members, Myra Duran, was asked to speak on a panel (see *photo*) about her own experience going undercover at a Crisis Pregnancy Center (CPC), and the insidious ways in which these centers carry out their anti-abortion agenda by misleading pregnant women and posing as comprehensive reproductive clinics.



While most of the workshops provided at the conference centered around topics most relevant to the FMF's own interests, there was one workshop that we felt was refreshing in its break from the norm: "Immigration Reform as a Feminist Issue." We were surprised and encouraged to see the FMF focusing on an issue which has not traditionally been viewed as a "feminist issue," although it is one that has strong implications for women in this country, and had personal relevance to many of the people attending the conference. A testament

to this was the popularity of the session, which packed a large room and drew many questions and emotional responses.

The workshop, titled "Access Denied: Women, Immigration Reform, and Reproductive Justice," focused on many immigration issues that have not only been neglected in the feminist discourse, but in the immigration debates as well. For example, Veronica Bayetti Flores of the National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health spoke about the human rights abuses that women in the

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country illegally have faced while giving birth, including incidents of women being handcuffed to their hospital beds during labor, women who developed infections from not being allowed to breastfeed or pump, and women whose children were immediately removed and placed in foster care against the mothers' wishes. She also spoke of transgender issues within the immigration debate, telling stories of transgender immigrants who have died in jail because their AIDS medication had been withheld. These are just a few stories out of many that highlight the importance of women's and LGBT issues within the larger need for immigration reform.

Attending this workshop stirred conflicting thoughts about the focus of larger feminist organizations, such as FMF and NOW, and emphasized the need to expand on issues beyond the traditional feminist areas of employment and reproductive rights. While it was inspiring to see young women from across the country collaborate and organize around feminist issues, younger generations have new challenges they must face, and the older feminist organizations are in need of catching up. We hope that FMF's expansion

on issues like immigration reform is a trend that will continue, because it is an attitude that is absolutely vital to keeping feminism alive in our younger generation.

Leaving this conference, we are motivated to explore new ways to engage our peers in dialogue about what feminism means in our own lives, and to expand the definition of what constitutes a “feminist issue.” We are determined to continue expanding our own conceptions of feminism to more fully and accurately include issues such as immigration and civil rights, LGBTQ rights, and class and race inequality. This conference was an amazing experience, one that has energized our existing feminist passions, as well as sparked new and exciting interests that we hope can be reflected through the organizing of Bruin Feminists for Equality.

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CSW has revived the Visiting Scholars program to take advantage of scholars who have a permanent academic affiliation elsewhere but who are conducting research and residing temporarily in Los Angeles. CSW may offer office space or university affiliation to faculty conducting research that pertains to ongoing Center projects and research areas. The following guidelines distinguish between the services available to international and domestic scholars:

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MAY 10

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