

BY CHRISTIAN LEÓN

# FEMININE INTERFERENCES

*3 Performances by Jenny Jaramillo*

*Handle plastic conveniently long  
Stick on hook allows you to place  
The brush in the toilet within easy reach  
Container holders brush designed well with*

*Glass aluminum as such  
Cleaning domestic general for  
Fregona, melena, greña  
The miracle mop*

- Recorded text from *Miracle Mop*

In July 2004, Jenny Jaramillo performed three actions: *Miracle Mop*, *Deseasentar*, *Testa di sémola di grano duro*. Under these ironic titles, the artist from Quito staged multiple surprising representations of femininity about



**Alcances  
del acto  
performático**

**Jenny Jaramillo**

**November 19  
4 pm  
Royce 314**



**DEPARTMENTS**



## Feminism's Third Phase—Terminated?

Wendy Wasserstein's play *Third* explores feminism today through the character of feminist Professor Laurie Jameson, thirty years into a very successful career at an Ivy League–like college in New England. She has a disaffected daughter and husband (her career long ago exceeded his), a father with Alzheimer's, and a sardonic best friend/fellow professor (Nancy) who is battling cancer and resisting Laurie's care. The play opens with Jameson informing her English literature class: "This is a hegemony-free zone!" She then regales her students with a reading of *King Lear* that proposes Cordelia a wimp and Regan and Goneril the heroes of the piece. One of her students, Woodson Bull III ("everyone calls me Third"), a jock with a wrestling scholarship who's taking her English Literature class because it seemed like it would be cool, gets under her skin. When Third turns in a brilliant paper on *King Lear*, Laurie accuses him

of plagiarism because she does not believe a jock could have written the paper. Her actions set a chain of events into motion that lead to a final scene between the two in Third's dorm room. He is transferring to another college, and she is taking an extended, perhaps permanent, leave from teaching. She has sought him out to apologize to him. Her father has died, her marriage is in shambles, her best friend has fallen in love and is no longer available to her, and her daughter regards her mother with disgust because of her actions against Third. In short, Laurie is left with nothing. All that remains in the scene is for Third—written by Wasserstein as young, open-minded, and wise—to perform his moral and intellectual superiority over the professional, feminist Laurie. As I watched (in horror), I was reminded of a key scene in *Terminator II* in which Sarah Connor, the young woman turned warrior and feminist icon in the first *Terminator*, now bent on saving the

world in the second film, is confronted, mocked, and put in her place by her delinquent teenage son, John. The film and the series went downhill from there. If Wendy Wasserstein's *Third* is, among other things, appraising feminism's third phase, we can look to the *Terminator* series to see how popular culture has already thought through feminism to its so-called "post" phase. That phase? Sarah Connor emerges as a feminist heroine in 1984 only to become an ancillary character who receives her comeuppance from a teenage male in 1991. By the time of the third film in 2003, she has disappeared and is presumed dead, her character arc terminated. Laurie Jameson, upstaged by her young male student and undermined by her beliefs, leaves the stage for California and an unimagined future. Our challenge is to imagine a beginning from these kinds of endings.

— KATHLEEN MCHUGH

# Wandering, Form, and the Sentimental Novel

by Melissa Sodeman



Charlotte Smith

I CAME UPON MY DISSERTATION TOPIC almost by chance. In reading for my comprehensive exams, I was so struck by a single word in a poem (“wanderers”) that it determined the course of my future research. The poem, Charlotte Smith’s *The Emigrants* (1793), works to evoke sympathy for French émigrés who have fled the Terror in France. These wanderers, “outcasts of the world,” are unable to return to a homeland torn apart by revolution. I was startled by the way in which Smith collapses the condition of exile into a sentimental trope of

wandering, a rhetorical move that I found both perplexing and intriguing because today we are more likely to associate wandering with aimlessness than with exile, with leisure than with penury.

As I read more broadly, I noticed that Smith’s use of “wanderer” was hardly unique in later eighteenth-century sentimental literature. In sentimental novels of the 1780s and 1790s, for instance, wanderers seem to crop up everywhere; their poverty, homelessness, abandonment, and exile perpetually bemoaned. As I looked into the scholarly work on these novels,



*Mary Robinson, 1793*

DRAWING BY GEORGE DANCE

I was surprised at how little research had been done on wandering, especially given its ubiquity within sentimental literature. Who were these wanderers, and what did their stories tell us? Might not the unwieldy form of these novels—with their endlessly digressive plots, their postponement of narrative closure, and their refusal of probability—be tied to their preoccupation with wanderers?

I soon found that these wandering figures—though commonplace in all the sentimental genres—might help to account for the formal idiosyncrasies of late-century novels. Wandering, it seemed to me, might go a long way toward explaining the errant form of women’s sentimental novels of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Novels in this period are, in Claudia L. Johnson’s apt phrase, “famously bizarre and untidy.” My dissertation came to argue that the trope of wandering teaches us how to read these little-understood works. Later eighteenth-century fiction, I found, experiments

with formal wandering to resist linear historical trajectories and to de-plot, through knowingly repetitious, overextended, and highly clichéd narratives, a literary tradition that sentimentalizes its violent treatment of women who have strayed. Where sentimental fiction by Laurence Sterne and others condemn such women to madness or death, novels by Sophia Lee, Charlotte Smith, Mary Robinson, and Frances Burney allow wanderers to slip away from their usual fate.

My dissertation research increasingly convinced me that wandering could serve as a powerful conceptual key in unlocking the experimental nature of a genre not usually credited with formal complexity—sentimental novels by women. In late-century fiction, wandering allows novelists to de-plot sentimental traditions, to push cultural scripts to (and sometimes past) their breaking points, and to defer closure by spinning out narrative long past the requirements of plot. Given the way in which wandering in late-century novels



*Frances Burney*

by Lee, Smith, Robinson, and Burney allows narrative to run amok, it became clear that sentimental fiction, all too often seen as empty of aesthetic value, instead represents a tradition containing rich veins of formal innovation in the history of the novel. Nor were the only implications of my project for the history of the novel. My project, I realized, is a feminist one precisely because it attempts to reclaim women's sentimental fiction not for its political content or cultural work—a move that would implicitly reinscribe the long-standing vilification of sentimental form as non-conceptual, non-rational, and feminized—but for its formal complexity. In rehabilitating the formal richness of sentimental fiction in the wake of critical dismissal and neglect, my dissertation uncovers a wide range of novelistic practices that have since become obscure, and in doing so, suggests how we might reappraise women's experiments with novel form as political acts in their own right.



**Melissa Sodeman** is Assistant Professor in the Department of English at Coe College in Iowa. Sodeman completed her dissertation, "Wandering Form, and the Sentimental Novel," under the direction of Felicity A. Nussbaum in the Department of English at UCLA.

She received the CSW George Eliot Dissertation Award in June of 2007. This award, which is made possible through the generosity of Dr. Penny Kanner, recognizes an outstanding doctoral dissertation pertaining to women or gender that utilizes historical perspective in literature or the arts. Sodeman astutely shows in her dissertation how these professional women created the figure of the wandering woman to bring further fervor to others engaged in the work of vindicating the rights of women. Sodeman's work continues that process: it is not only a historical project but a feminist one, asking us to remember and rethink our own aesthetic principles as we encounter these women who, in her words, "were forgotten not because of their obscurity, but because they were all too conspicuous."

# PUBLIC TERRITORY | TERRITORIO PÚBLICO



BY REGINA JOSÉ GALINDO

**THREE OIL RAINBOWS** swirl around the lukewarm waters of wells in Cobán. A shaft of 75 meters opens up in the neighborhood of San Antonio. The body of a woman is discovered in a hotel in Zone 1, her back bearing the death threat “to all sluts.” Two hundred and fifty families protest in front of Congress against being evicted from their land. In a presidential debate, the “firm hand” calls Colón a “limp wrist.” The legs of a woman, cut into 8 pieces, are



REGINA JOSÉ GALINDO  
**Limpieza Social**  
Trento, Italy  
March, 2006



REGINA JOSÉ GALINDO  
**perra**  
2005

This video documents  
the artist cutting the word  
“perra” into her thigh  
to protest  
violence against women.







**REGINA JOSÉ GALINDO**  
**himenoplastia**  
2004

**This video documents the artist undergoing surgery to reconstruct her hymen. Galindo had the operation without anaesthetic and in the same precarious conditions in which many working-class women in Guatemala undergo this surgery.**

left in a cardboard box in Zone 3. Ash rains down on the capital after a volcanic eruption. Foot soldiers of the Salvatrucha gang assault a bus of tourists and kill all the employees. In congress the winner of the Noble Peace prize is spit upon by a FRG sympathizer. Unemployed workers start day 3 of their hunger strike downtown. A group of protesters are electrocuted by plainclothes policemen in front of the U.S. embassy. In a tortillería in the city center, an indigenous woman has her baby stolen. In Totonicapán a group of restless men burn the town hall and two police cars, while in Chimaltenango a woman accused of stealing a child is burned alive. A shop owner in the neighborhood of Verbena is shot and killed by gang members for refusing to

pay a 100 quetzales “tax,” while on Elena St. a bus driver is shot for the same reason...

In Guatemala we are surrounded by images of every type. Things that in other places are just the stuff of legend actually happen in Guatemala and happen everyday: in the street in front of our homes, on sidewalks by the office, in our cousin’s neighborhood, on the street that we take to the supermarket, in the buses, in the churches, in the schools, on football fields, in the banks, in shopping malls, at red lights.

The white sheet in the middle of the street is part of our collective memory. “Everyone” in Guatemala has seen, and seen more than once, that sheet; first in person and then multiplied millions of times in newspapers and on televi-

sion. The white sheet covering death is the most widely diffused image. Is it simply an irony of life or a Machiavellian form of keeping people in line? As someone once said, in times of peace, the best weapon is fear.

In Guatemala, we signed the peace accords in '96, but peace is not at all what we've had since. The minds of Guatemalans are filled with images of war; however, in our imaginary, while based primarily in images of violence, we also find images of peace and struggle.

These images are the ones that have been the starting point for my actions or that have contaminated them. My work is rooted in both fiction and reality, with my body between, as the *public territory* (territorio público) where they meet.

## Recorrido

*Regina José Galindo*

November 13  
4 pm  
UCLA Faculty Club

**Regina José Galindo** is an artist and poet. She was born and works in Guatemala. She received the Golden Lion award for best young artist at the 51st Venice Biennial in 2005. Regina José Galindo was recently published by Vanilla

*Edizioni and Prometeo Gallery. Galindo's poetry appears in numerous poetry anthologies and journals, and she is the author of Personal e Intransmissible, a collection of poetry published in 1999 by Coloquia, Guatemala.*

*Videos and other information about her work can be found at <http://www.karaandrade.com/>*

Translated by Brian Whitener



# Thinking from Women's Lives: Sandra Harding, Standpoint, & Science, the first project in the Women's Studies Media Initiative, debuts December 3

by Loran Marsan

*In one sense all feminist work uses  
standpoint; it all starts from  
the lives of women.  
That's what makes  
it feminist.*

- Sandra Harding  
*Thinking from Women's Lives:  
Sandra Harding, Standpoint, and Science,*  
a video by Loran Marsan

In the winter quarter of 2006, Professor Rhonda Hammer approached me with an idea for creating media that would at once enhance the women's studies classroom and archive visual material about famous and important feminists on the UCLA campus. The first subject would be Sandra Harding, a professor in the UCLA Graduate School of Education and Information Sciences and a pioneer of standpoint epistemology and science studies. Over the last year and a half, both the proposed video and the Women's Studies Media Initiative, a program designed to train women's studies graduate students in video production and encourage future projects that would benefit undergraduates in women's studies courses, have come to fruition.

Under the advisement of Professor Hammer and with the support of Professor Christine Littleton, Chair of Women's Studies, I created the first video project for the Initiative. "Thinking from Women's Lives: Sandra Harding, Standpoint, & Science" is an educational video designed for the undergraduate women's studies classroom and particularly for introductory courses. This video frames standpoint epistemology with broader connections to multiple feminist concepts making it not only a portrayal of Sandra Harding's work but an informative introduction to the field of women's studies as well. Featuring interviews with and a lecture by Sandra Harding, this video gives an overview of how Standpoint Theory came about, its history and applications, its relation to science, and how it


is still useful today. Says Professor Hammer of the project, “Thinking from Women’s Lives” is a first-class documentary that manages to not only capture Sandra Harding’s special charisma but also clearly explain some of her ground-breaking theoretical work in a comprehensive and entertaining fashion. Indeed, I believe that this video will be an important pedagogical resource for both graduate and undergraduate students, as well as other members of the academic community.” The video will premiere Monday, December 3, at 3 pm in the YRL presentation room.

The Women’s Studies Media Initiative—created by Professor Hammer and myself with the support of Professor Littleton—will have a two-fold benefit within the student population. Graduate students will gain and utilize video production skills to create educational videos for use in the undergraduate classroom. Multimedia presentations in the form of video will broaden the resources available to undergraduate students in the pursuit of enhancing their education. Graduate students will be able to convey their research experience via multimedia, and undergraduate students will have an audio/visual learning experience that connects materials through dynamic techno-

logical means. Though the next project has yet to be determined, this initiative has already interested many women’s studies graduate students, who are now thinking about including video components in their own research in an effort to broaden the meaning and accessibility of feminist research.

“To do research that’s *for* women is to make women subjects of history and knowledge,” says Professor Harding. Interviewing her was an amazing experience. I was immediately captivated by her charisma and ability to explain not only complex feminist theory and her own work within it but also concepts about the philosophy of science and the field of science studies. It was hard not to simply revere her as “one of the rock stars of feminist theory,” as fellow graduate student Saru Matambanadzo says in the video. In the interviews, she was gracious and open and very concerned that other theorists be credited in the collaborative theoretical venture that became Standpoint Theory. At Harding’s behest, the contributions of others were included, making the finished video more versatile as an educational tool. In keeping with her charge “to do research that’s *for* women,” Harding fully supported both my video work and the

Media Initiative. “Thinking from Women’s Lives” and the Women’s Studies Media Initiative further this crucial feminist goal as well.

 **Loran Marsan** is a doctoral student in Women’s Studies. Her research interests include critical film theory, queer theory, and postcolonial studies, as well as film production.



**Sandra Harding** is a Professor of Social Sciences and Comparative Education in the UCLA Graduate School of Education and Information Sciences. Her teaching and research interests involve feminist and postcolonial theory, epistemology, research methodology, and the philosophy of science. Over the course of her career, Harding has produced a substantial body of published work including *Is Science Multicultural?: Postcolonialisms, Feminisms, and Epistemologies* (1998), and *Science and Social Inequality: Feminist and Postcolonial Issues* (Race and Gender in Science) (2006). Harding was director of the Center for the Study of Women from 1996 to 1999, and she coedited *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* with Katherine Norberg, an Associate Professor in the Department of History, from 2000 to 2005.

# the Real (Porn) World

## THE POLITICS AND AESTHETICS OF THE NEW REALITY PORN

by Jennifer Moorman

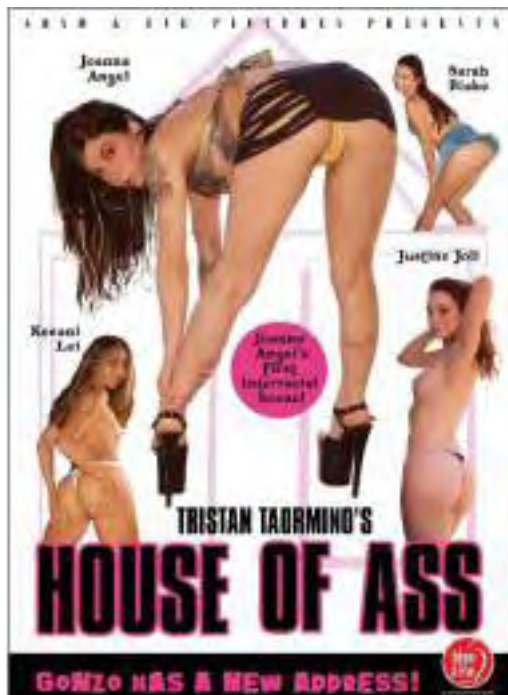
It may at first seem perfectly self-evident that a porn filmmaker would want to borrow from the conventions of reality TV. Cinematic pornography has, as Linda Williams suggests, concerned itself with proving its own authenticity since its inception.<sup>1</sup> And reality TV attempts to depict “the real world,” right? In fact, generally speaking, it doesn’t. A closer look at reality TV reveals its patently “false settings [and] contrived situations,” and we should not make the mistake of assuming that its audience is not happily aware of this.<sup>2</sup> Although the genre has arguably been around at least since the 1973 televising of *An American Family* on PBS, MTV’s *The Real World* is generally credited with having ushered in the era marked by its current incarnation. The genre has progressed quite a bit since and has

become increasingly self-conscious, a fact that is not lost on its fans. As Jeffrey Sconce puts it, the “‘reality’ in reality TV is merely one of many fluid plot conventions and not an inviolable foundation.”<sup>3</sup>

So why would a filmmaker—a feminist, openly queer, highly media-literate columnist for the *Village Voice* who claims to be depicting sex as it really is (at least, as it really is among porn stars)—utilize conventions that at once signal “reality” and acknowledge the quotes around it? In *House of Ass* (2005) and *Chemistry Vol. 1* (2006), Tristan Taormino does just that; she claims to depict “real” sex, that is, the sex porn stars have when the cameras aren’t rolling.<sup>4</sup> And yet the cameras unmistakably are rolling, and various aspects of the texts and extratextual materials like DVD covers, bonus footage, and deleted scenes,

openly belie these claims for authenticity. I would argue that the films’ polyvalent discourse allows for them at once to criticize the porn genre’s obsession with the “real” and to participate in this obsession.

Furthermore, it allows for a manifestly critical reflection on the politics of racialized and sexualized representation in a notoriously uncritical, unreflective genre. There are many examples of blatantly campy porn in which the actors and filmmakers are clearly aware of the ridiculousness of their narratives and the implausibility of their dialogue. Constance Penley argues that most pornography involves a fair amount of humor, and certainly this humor is often directed towards itself.<sup>5</sup> Critical reflection, however, is decidedly rare and, for the most part, avoided at all costs—porn does not want its viewers to engage in the sort of



*House of Ass*, Tristan Taormino, Smart Ass Productions, 2005

mental exercise that could inhibit the desired physical responses.

*House of Ass* and, to a far greater extent, *Chemistry* therefore stand out as curious examples of porn that is clearly designed to elicit both a physical and an intellectual response, a feat enabled by the conventions of reality TV. Shows like *The Real World* portray themselves as both unabashedly sensationalistic entertainment and a liberal venue for the examination of racial and sexual politics in US society. Taormino seems to have followed in these shows' footsteps in creating two adult videos that flagrantly appeal to viewers' prurient interest, even as they appear to open up a space for the investigation of racial and sexual representation in mainstream pornographic cinema.<sup>6</sup> I would like to consider the extent to which either of these texts succeeds in its examination of race and gender and genuinely presents a challenge to prejudices and stereotypes, and the extent to which either of these texts can be read as queer.

Both *House of Ass* and *Chemistry* have explicitly fashioned themselves after MTV's ongoing reality series *The Real World*, first aired in 1992. As such, it is worth reviewing the series' conventions and claims for social relevance. Jon Kraszewski suggests that "although not scripted, the show actively constructs what reality and racism are for its audience through a variety of production

practices."<sup>7</sup> These practices include, but are not limited to, the producers' casting decisions, choices regarding where and what to film, and the construction of narrative storylines through editing.

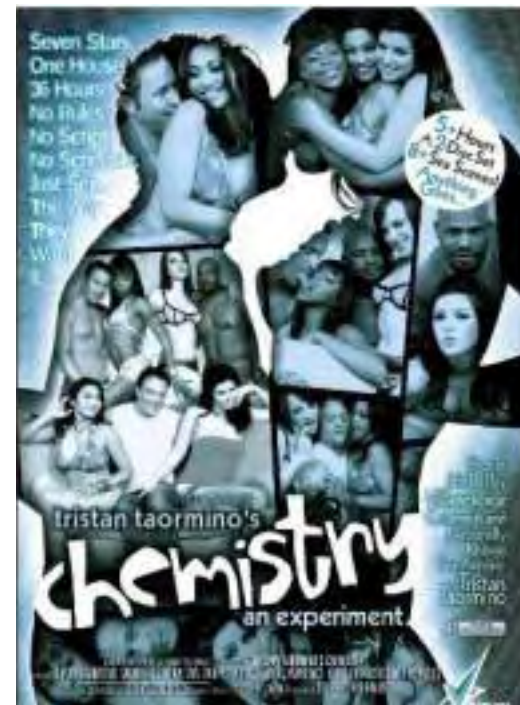
In the first season of *The Real World*, for instance, the producers chose to put the "seven strangers" in a New York City loft and to edit the show in such a way as to focus largely on the budding friendship between white yokel Julie from rural Alabama, who initially expresses racist assumptions, and black professional rapper Heather, who had already been living in NYC prior to the show's casting. The discourse of liberalism that informs the show enables it to pat itself on the back for its willingness to deal with the inflammatory subject of race relations in the US, even as it does not so much examine the issue as naively equate urbanity with an enlightened perspective. The show essentially suggests that racism can be solved if roommates can challenge the prejudices of rural conservatives and make them aware of their own ignorance. This awareness constitutes only one step along the way to an individual's awareness of and resistance to his or her own internalized prejudices, let alone a solution to the widespread, pervasive, systemic, institutionally encoded, and often relatively subtle racism that operates continually in the US; for *The Real World*, however, it's enough.

The show certainly makes its claims for the depiction of “reality,” but for my purposes, it is not so much any given show’s level of self-consciousness (or lack thereof) that matters, as it is a general cultural recognition of the machinations behind reality TV programming. For instance, as Jeff Sconce argues, “When the ‘news’ broke that producers of *Survivor* had staged certain events more than once . . . the public could have cared less” (Sconce 263). In other words, whether or not producers realize it, audiences have become increasingly cynical about, and increasingly aware of, the highly manipulated nature of reality TV. The pleasures to be derived from viewing reality TV have less to do with the belief that one is experiencing unmediated reality than with the joys of submitting to generic conventions; Sconce again suggests that “the promise of the real on these programs (or in these people)—however distant, strained, and artificial—enables forms of textual play like those unique to any genre” (Sconce 262).

With *House of Ass* we get a taste of the drama and discord that we’ve come to expect from shows like *The Real World*, but it seems remarkably out of place in a porno movie. In any case, the one moment of actual “drama” occurs off the screen. Apparently two of the cast members, a real-life couple, had a falling out over the fact that she (Jezeabelle) would not give him (Justin) a blow job, and left early

in the morning before anyone else had gotten out of bed. Justin left a note for Tristan, apologizing and explaining that his relationship with Jezeabelle had “reached an impasse.” It seems an odd drama to manufacture, if indeed Taormino did, since none of the remaining cast members particularly cares that they’ve left; yet, it is the only aspect of the video that actually resembles reality programming. The rest of the video is equally disjointed and amateurish, and in no way makes good on Taormino’s claims to making feminist porn.

Taormino explains, with regard to her theory of feminist porn, solidified during the making of the filmed version of *The Ultimate Guide to Anal Sex for Women*, that she believes “it is possible to create sexual images without stripping away someone’s entire identity” (Milne 95). This notion is doubtless the motivating force behind her use of the reality TV convention of the “confessional” in both *House of Ass* and *Chemistry*. But whereas *Chemistry* would employ this strategy in such a way as to genuinely convey something of the subjectivity of each of the performers and to challenge dominant sexual paradigms both within the industry and within American society at large, *House of Ass* uses it inconsistently, superficially, and—for the most part—incoherently. This is the format through which she examines the phenomenon that is prominently emblazoned on the front cover of the DVD and reiter-



*Chemistry, Vol. 1*, Tristan Taormino, Smart Ass Productions, 2006

ated on the back: “Joanna Angel’s first interracial scene!” Angel, who is white, neglects to problematize the fact that in her first scene she is made to have sex with the man who deemed “eating pussy . . . a waste of time,” but she hesitates in coupling with Mr. Marcus, who has a reputation for being a considerate lover, simply because he is a black man. In the confessional in which she talks about her scene with Mr. Marcus, she describes how she responded to a questionnaire (apparently conducted verbally by a member of the video’s crew prior to filming) by saying that she does anal, she swallows (semen), but that she does not do interracial scenes. She explains:

I don’t want to, like, do anything on camera that I haven’t, like, already done in my real life first, because, like, I think it would look really weird, or something . . . Does that make me racist? That I would let some white stranger, like, cum all over my face, but not a black one?

Yes, Joanna, I believe it does. The fact that she is able to acknowledge this, and that she is then able to do the scene with Mr. Marcus—because they had “chemistry”—does not make her significantly less racist or the video significantly more progressive than any other in which racial difference is fetishized. In no way am I suggesting that difference ought to be collapsed or elided or that we live in a “color-blind” society, but there is a considerable disparity between acknowledging or question-

ing difference and equating a person—indeed, an entire race of persons—with a sex act.

It is doubtless important to bring to light, as her confessional does, the sort of prejudices that operate in the industry and seriously impact casting decisions, among other things. The movie does not, however, go beyond this acknowledgement to challenge what I would call, following Stuart Hall, the “inferential” racism<sup>8</sup> inherent in Angel’s statement and in the idea that runs unchecked throughout both Taormino’s videos and the industry at large, that only sex between a black person and a white person should be described as “interracial.” The marketing decision to capitalize on the sort of sensationalism that the inclusion of Angel’s remarks seems designed to question is mystifying, unless it constitutes the sort of concession to industry pressure that may become unnecessary as her porn gains a significant audience. Regardless, for most viewers, the framing of the issue on the DVD cover provides the context in which Angel’s remarks will be taken. Even if the context created thereby was not so luridly exploitative of racial difference, any true examination of racial politics in adult video would have to move beyond the discourse that merely recognizes the existence of them.

Fortunately, nearly everything about *Chemistry Vol. 1* constitutes an improvement over

*House of Ass* and indicates that Taormino is in fact capable of making the kind of politically motivated porn that, until the video’s release in late 2006, she had only talked about. Even before watching the videos, the DVD packaging illustrates the differences in tone: whereas the DVD cover art for *House of Ass* is blatantly exploitative—on the front, three of the women bend over and bare their asses for the camera, and on the back is emblazoned the line, “see what happens when people stop getting polite, and start getting naked”—the front cover for *Chemistry’s* DVD depicts the cast clothed and cuddled up together, and includes the playful subtitle “an experiment.” The movies themselves reflect these differences. Most people who criticize pornography—often having watched hardly any of it themselves—for moral rather than aesthetic reasons argue that violence constitutes an “explicit or implicit theme in pornography,”<sup>9</sup> and that women in pornography are depicted as passive sex objects. Leaving the porn debates aside, I want to argue that the problem with most straight porn is not what it shows, but what it *doesn’t* show—a genuine attempt to convey female pleasure or subjectivity; the infinite variety of sexual experience and activity; heterosexual encounters that don’t end with external ejaculation; the preparation (such as the application of artificial lubricant) that generally goes into penetrative sex, and



anal sex in particular; the use of sex toys, like vibrators, during penetration in order for women to achieve orgasm; alternatives to racial stereotypes; the penetration of men by women or other men; and so on. It is not an overstatement to suggest that *Chemistry* comprises the first example of a mainstream American adult video that—to varying degrees—does show all of these things.

Taormino sets the stage for what we are about to experience in *Chemistry Vol. 1* in a voiceover sequence encapsulating many of the video's themes, and deliberately mimics the opening credits of *The Real World*:

This is the true story of seven porn stars picked to live in a house for 36 hours and have their lives taped. I know, it sounds like a rip-off of that very first reality show, but it isn't—it's better than that. It's seven porn stars, 36 hours, no script, no schedule, no holds barred. They decide the *who*, the *what*, the *when*, the *where* of their sex scenes. And then they come in here, into the confessional, and tell you the why. I want them to be themselves. I want them to show us a piece of their sexuality. That's not me getting in there and saying "do these five positions, do it in this place, do it at this time." That's the typical formula; that's not the one I want to follow.

The discourses of choice and authenticity communicated in this speech run throughout the video; the performers are explicitly endowed with subjectivity and framed as exerting spontaneous control over their own scenes and images. After sundown, the crew

leaves and the performers are purportedly left entirely to their own devices. As in *House of Ass*, the performers are given a (handheld) "perv cam" with which to film themselves; unlike *House of Ass*, footage derived from the perv cam comprises most of the video.

There is an implicit discourse of egalitarianism running throughout the text, indicated largely through the fact that there is no one cameraperson. Each performer in turn gets to film the other performers doing their scenes. There is no one star and, at least for the purposes of filming, after sundown there is no director. They talk to each other as they film one another—spontaneously joking around and philosophizing about sex and pornography, as well as talking dirty—and during group scenes in which Tristan asks questions for the whole group to answer, and they talk to Tristan in the confessionals. The result is that, with each performer, a remarkable amount of subjectivity is conveyed. It seems, upon finishing the video, that we've attained a sense of each person's unique personality and that all of them have had a good time. This is no small feat for a porno movie.

Whereas in *House of Ass*—like *The Real World*—interracial sex is brought up in such an individualized context as to preclude any genuine analysis, here racism is discussed as endemic to the industry. And, rather than the white performers, Mr. Marcus is asked

to communicate his outlook on the issue. Tristan asks him what he thinks of white women who won't have sex with black men in porn, and includes a full five minutes of his response in the final cut, during which he also gives a brief history of the industry's attitudes towards interracial coupling:

I remember when I first got into the business, you know, the only thing they would shoot would be white guys with black girls. I remember cable not wanting any type of interracial . . . There wasn't a market for it . . . But a lot of the younger girls are coming into the industry a lot more open. The urban culture is, you know, a lot more prevalent, and a lot more open-minded . . . Porn is a reflection of society—we're almost ahead of the crew when it comes to [sex].

Here Marcus appears to ascribe to the same liberal discourse that informed *The Real World's* approach to race relations: American society is improving and racism is dissipating because people in urban areas are open-minded. Nonetheless, there is quite a bit of insight packed into his response, and he is undoubtedly more articulate and self-aware than Joanna Angel had been on the same issue in *House of Ass*. His response also incorporates a relatively sophisticated argument about the systemic and often economically motivated ("there wasn't a market for it") nature of racism, and about the porn industry's relationship to society and the ways in which this

much-maligned genre—which, to its critics, appears to change very little over time—in some ways reflects and refracts changing societal attitudes towards race, gender, and sexuality. As this film constitutes such a radical departure from earlier standards, his remarks are also pointedly reflexive.

Moments like this occur throughout the movie, and they seem, among other things, designed to make the viewer feel better about what s/he is watching. First, the “reality” discourse enables us to believe that we’re seeing people have sex the way they *really* want to be having it, and that—rather than being in any way coerced into performing—these people are doing it because they want to. There are, however, also a number of ways in which the text undermines this sentiment. In one early scene in which Kurt holds the perv cam while talking to a partially clothed Mika Tan, they indicate through a hand gesture that “money” is a primary reason for participating in the project; Kurt has, at this point, already mentioned his financial motivations twice. This rather subversive reminder that they are paid performers—that is, that they are not in fact having sex with each other just because they want to be having sex with each other, but also because they want to get paid for doing so—is as sure a way as any to break whatever sexual reverie the viewer may have fallen into. There are other moments—as when Kurt says to

Mika that he “has to work in ten minutes”—that belie Taormino’s claim that they are working without a schedule, and still others—as when Mr. Marcus acknowledges that porn stars are “different . . . sexually different,” and Dana DeArmond indicates that it is a popular misconception that “girls in porn need, like, really huge cocks”—that act as reminders that mainstream pornography generally does not show sex as it really is. This does work to set *Chemistry* apart from typical porn, to assert its own authenticity amidst the morass of pornographic falsehood. Yet, the self-reflexivity of these moments nonetheless complicates this differentiation by acknowledging the limitations of conventions to which this film in many ways must comply.

Working against this, the introduction of gender nonconformity and transgressive sexuality, combined with a reversal of typical racial politics in pornography, comes when, in the second sex scene, we see Filipina performer Mika Tan strap on a dildo and penetrate the ass of white porn star Kurt Lockwood. Of course this does not constitute a first for pornography; Carol Queen, Ph.D., led that charge in 1999 with *Bend Over Boyfriend*. That, however, was an instructional video specifically about women anally penetrating men, with limited distribution, and the performers were not so much porn stars as middle-aged intellectuals; this is a mainstream porno movie

released by one of the major studios, Vivid Video. Furthermore, it is not an isolated occurrence in the text; images of her penetrating him in various positions appear throughout the movie and twice as extended sex scenes. And, as numerous critics and academics have commented on the tendency in porn to portray Asian women stereotypically as submissive and subservient, this scene proves all the more revolutionary by virtue of the fact that it involves an Asian-American woman penetrating a white man.

Perhaps the last major taboo that mainstream heterosexual porn is unwilling to transgress is that of male-on-male sex. Girl-on-girl is standard in any “straight” porn; regardless of how they identify in their personal lives, all women in porn are bisexual onscreen.<sup>10</sup> *Chemistry* again is notable for its inclusion of a discussion of this issue. Its counterpart to the drama of Jezebel and Justin leaving in *House of Ass* is the attempt to get performer Marie Luv to do a girl/girl scene. Marie admits to being comfortable having sex with women only if a man is involved, as in a threesome situation. Mika Tan, on the other hand, speaks at length about how she is genuinely bisexual and enjoys being with women as much as being with men. Male on male sex is, not surprisingly, entirely absent. The only mainstream (that is, marketed as heterosexual) adult video ever to involve a male/

male scene was *The (Sex) Zone* (1997). The director, Paul Thomas, “got a very bad reaction” to the movie from the industry and critics; it is unclear whether the reaction among viewers was generally negative as well.<sup>11</sup>

In *Chemistry*, when Mika suggests that she would like to penetrate (an unwilling) Jack Lawrence as well Kurt Lockwood, Mr. Marcus—presently in possession of the perv cam—says uncomfortably that he “would definitely put the camera down at that point.” For his part, Kurt is perfectly comfortable with enjoying being penetrated and explains in a confessional that this does not make him gay, as any scene between a man and a woman—regardless of the sex acts they perform—is straight. That it is so important for him to iterate this is indicative of the fact that, as he puts it, “the industry has been shooting the same shit for 20 years.” Homophobia continues to run rampant, and this penetration of a man by a woman—regardless of how vehemently he feels the need to insist that it does not make him gay (and it doesn’t)—constitutes a step along the way to a genuine challenge to the established conventions of mainstream pornography. I would also argue that it allows us to read *Chemistry* as a queer text in the general sense of the word; that is, it transgresses typical gendered and sexual norms.

Many of the representational issues from *House of Ass* are raised and reframed in *Chem-*


*istry*. Indeed, *Chemistry* is in many ways the inverse of *House of Ass*: where Scott Nails believes eating pussy to be a waste of time, Jack Lawrence suggests that there is nothing he’d rather do; where Joanna Angel brings up her hesitation to engage in interracial sex without adequately questioning the assumptions that have informed it, Mr. Marcus speaks to systemic racism in the porn industry; where *House of Ass* ends every scene, typically and androcentrically, with a facial cum shot, *Chemistry* allows for a number of different endings (although the typical one still predominates); perhaps most importantly, where the cast of *House of Ass* seems thrown together and the gestures toward endowing them with subjectivity half-hearted, the cast of *Chemistry* manages to constitute both a coherent and harmonious group and a collection of unique individuals with distinct personalities.

It appears as though, in the second video, Taormino has learned from mistakes made in the first. Gail Dines argues that in pornography the black man’s “wholeness as a human being is rendered invisible.”<sup>12</sup> Yet, one might just as easily ask: in pornography, generally speaking, whose “wholeness as a human being” is *not* rendered invisible? It is a matter of degrees—this is not, after all, a genre that generally seeks to depict well-rounded characters or complex human relations; its focus is the interaction of genitalia. And this,

finally, is why *Chemistry* proves so remarkable; all of the performers come off as comfortable with themselves and their sexuality, thoughtful and intelligent, and supportive of one another—that is, as whole human beings who are, if hornier than the rest of us, perhaps also less neurotic and more self-aware than most. The convention of the confessional and the distinct claims for authenticity borrowed from reality TV—a genre that at once insists upon its social relevance and refuses to take itself too seriously—allow for a self-consciously cerebral yet playful examination of racial and sexual politics in the mainstream adult video industry; surely no other format would indulge the pontifications of porn performers without condemning the movie to fall into obscurity almost before its release.

As it is, the novelty of the use of these conventions in *Chemistry* has prompted *Adult Video News*, the industry’s primary trade magazine, to designate it “the purest example ever of high concept reality porn,” and has enabled the bill that includes performers filming and directing themselves—even interlarded as it is with their subjectivity and discussions of racial and sexual politics—to pass unchecked through the industry’s old boys’ network. The full potential for the borrowing of generic conventions was not borne out until the economic success of *House of Ass* earned for Taormino the level of creative control

demonstrated in *Chemistry*, which I have argued has enabled her to create a genuinely feminist, queer, and transgressive text. It is by no means perfect, nor is it perfectly any of these things, but in a sense (and only in this sense) it can be seen as more queer than explicitly gay or lesbian porn, which is ghettoized as such, in that it subverts the expectations of its intended audience. The average straight man probably is not expecting to watch other men being penetrated in a porno marketed as mainstream and heterosexual, and the DVD packaging for *Chemistry Vol. 1* does not include any warning or even any neutral indication that the video includes such content, so to me it seems a bit like an ambush—subversive content hidden in a mainstream porno, designed to catch straight men with their pants down, as it were, and forcing them to examine their own assumptions. Whether or not this will have any “real world” effects remains to be determined, but the effects on the porn world so far have been small but unmistakable—*Chemistry Vol. 3* has already been released, and later installments are currently in production. Taormino, at least, is having her way with the porn industry, and with any luck, more feminist producers and directors soon will follow suit.

 **Jennifer Moorman** is a doctoral student in the Department of Film, Television, and Digital Media.

#### NOTES

1. Linda Williams, *Hard Core: Power, Pleasure, and the “Frenzy of the Visible,”* 2nd ed., (Berkeley: UC Press, 1999).
2. Susan Murray, “‘I Think We Need a New Name for It’: The Meeting of Documentary and Reality TV,” *Reality TV: Remaking Television Culture*, Ed. Susan Murray and Laurie Ouellette, (New York: New York University Press, 2004): 46.
3. Jeffrey Sconce, “See You in Hell, Johnny Bravo!” *Reality TV: Remaking Television Culture*, Ed. Susan Murray and Laurie Ouellette, (New York: New York University Press, 2004): 262.
4. This constitutes the first installment in the *Chemistry* series, of which at least two other videos are already in production.
5. Constance Penley, “Crackers and Whackers: The White Trashing of Porn,” *Porn Studies*, Ed. Linda Williams, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004).
6. By “mainstream,” I refer to the sort of porn that one could find in a typical adult video store.
7. Jon Kraszewski, “Country Hicks and Urban Cliques: Mediating Race, Reality, and Liberalism on MTV’s *The Real World*,” *Reality TV: Remaking Television Culture*, Ed. Susan Murray and Laurie Ouellette, (New York: New York University Press, 2004): 179.

8. This idea is elaborated in Stuart Hall, “The Whites of Their Eyes: Racist Ideologies and the Media,” *Silver Linings: Some Strategies for the Eighties*, Ed. G. Bridges and R. Brunt, (London: Lawrence and Wishart Ltd., 1981).
9. This quote is from Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*, (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1990). But the sentiment can be found in the writings of Andrea Dworkin, Catherine MacKinnon, and many other “second-wave” feminists.
10. Mika Tan exposes this hypocrisy in a confessional in which she speaks eloquently about how she is in fact bisexual in her personal life, and how much she enjoys working with other women who genuinely like women.
11. According to Mark Kernes, interview with the author, 9 June 2006.
12. Gail Dines, “King Kong and the White Woman: Hustler Magazine and the Demonization of Black Masculinity,” *Violence Against Women* Vol. 4 No. 3, (June 1998): 293.

Nevertheless, the mistakes, the interference, and the deviation end up transforming into a source of feminine creativity. The repeated male voice is transformed, violated, questioned. The Indian image, fixed and domestic, while projected over the artist's body, becomes warped, distorted, and empty. This step from mimesis to poesis, from imitation to replica, from copy to replacement, designates a subtle maneuver of feminine subversion. This strategy consists of liberating something unnamed by masculine law, something invisible in the stereotypes that anchor a woman's image to an identity or role. *Miracle Mop* alludes to this unnamed and invisible distance in an effective manner, pronounced through the repetition of commonplaces and stereotypes. The execution of routine actions, of verbal voiceover, and of a dislocation of images profiles a

semantic residue that alludes to a non-identified being, a woman represented but always absent, in a "lost state," as Gayatri Spivak says.

### LOQUACITY AND MUTENESS

*Desasentar* begins with a video projection shot in Amsterdam, where Jaramillo appears seated on a chair surrounded by multiple objects and clothing articles. As the angle widens, the artist wears the attire piled around her. Live, she appears nude, carrying a bundle just as the Andean women do. She walks around the stage, stops, spits, and spreads her saliva around with her foot, as though demarcating her territory on stage. After finishing, she offers cigarettes to the public and lights them. Finally, she returns to the stage, puts down her bundle, guards it, and abandons it.

In a strategy of Dadaist inspiration, Jaramillo articu-



lates heterogeneous elements that never communicate. The images from Amsterdam, which allude to a suffocating First World consumerist society, engage in an impossible dialogue with the nude and submissive body of the indigenous woman from the Third World. The clothing articles, suffocating symbols of identity and culture in the video, become a heavy load in the live action, a mark of loot. As

**JENNY JARAMILLO**  
**s/t**  
**performance**  
**15 minutes**  
**2007**



**JENNY JARAMILLO**  
**ve-ro-ni-ca**  
video-performance  
45 minutes  
2002



emptiness and contradiction. Jaramillo revisits her recurring theme: a gesture that trespasses the body, gender, and social aspects. This time, however, she employs a post-minimalist language that rescues action, sensorial experience, and sexual matters. The execution of varied routines that took place in the Benjamín Carrión Cultural Centre provoked a potent interaction with the public, who experienced a generalized interference of pre-established meanings about identity and gender. From the distance, the artist's performances have a restless strength that carves a unique place for her in the art practices of Ecuador.



### REPETITION AND SUBVERSION

In *Miracle Mop*, Jaramillo repeats words in English imitating a recording of a male voice. Her body has been painted with a military camouflage, and she keeps wings connected to her back and hands while a series of 28 slides are projected onto her. The slides show the artist wearing a sari while she manipulates several cleaning tools. The images, the sound, and her performance are repeated in regular intervals. The artist, a winged woman, insistently tries to repeat the recorded script; however, as time passes, her task becomes impossible. The accent, tone, diction, hispanidad, and femininity in her voice produce a distance between the



pre-recorded model and her execution.

Throughout the entire act, Jaramillo situates her action from a woman's subaltern place. "I don't understand where I can speak from. I am not a man, I am not a homosexual, I am a woman. I can only speak as a woman," says the artist. For this reason, *Miracle Mop* alludes to a masculine projection mechanism over her woman's voice and body. The slides images and recording suggest that feminine identity is a product of a copy or a transcription of the masculine order and desire. The performance represents a woman as a lapse of an established script, like a stain on the projected image.

the artist states, clothes are “a material sign that determines everything,” and it is nothing more than “a uniform” or “camouflage,” all and nothing at the same time.

*Desasentar* shows how an eloquence of symbols seems to rhyme with their aponia. On the one hand, the corporal actions allude to a production of femininity from social symbols, like a dress or domestic chores. On the other hand, the repetition of routine acts absorbs meaning, revealing a pure game of signified without referent. As Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick recalls, all performative acts expand in two opposite directions: “the actor’s extroversion, and the introversion of the signified.” Jenny Jaramillo’s art of actions confirms this statement in the sense of an impossible conjunction of loquacity and muteness. Video and theatre, dress and body, sexuality and culture, stage and public, are juxtaposed configuring

a palimpsest where acting and meaning are divorced. The repetitious and absurd acts dislocate pre-established meanings about cultural identity and gender. Representations of gender, nation, and culture experience a symbolic proliferation, as well as absorption of meaning.

### UNTRANSLATABLE IDENTITIES

Finally, *Testa di sémola di grano duro* combines performative actions with strategies of intervention into public space. In the installations at the Carrión Centre, four players, including the artist, cook some noodles while the public arrives. Bearing ordinary pots, pans, and small boards hanging from their backs, they go out on the streets. Jaramillo writes the word “Testa” on each of her fellow performers’ boards, and one of them repeats the action on the artist’s. The performers then go around the block, walking backwards and in a single-file

formation, while they slowly ingest the noodles they carry in their pots. They go around the block four times, and in each of them they pause to write another fragment from the phrase that titles the performance.

Once again, repetitive acts devoid of any goal elude and allude to a series of signifieds related to gender roles. The pots, pans, and noodles designate the kitchen, a conventional place of feminine recognition. The Italian phrase is an intertextual reference to the world of culinary publicity and products in the supermarket. As in the previous two performances, predetermined identity symbols are imbedded here. Not to affirm them or to essentialize them, as the media discourse would, but on the contrary, to question their meaning from a persistent semantical interference and symbolic rupture. These abundant significations about the feminine seem to be directed towards a dislocation

of conventional representations of women. We could claim something similar about cultural identities the artist frequently evokes. The allusions to Indian society, to Andean tradition, to Italian and English languages, stage the problem of cultural difference understood according to what Jacques Derrida outlined as an “untranslatable translation.” The identity symbols presented here are in a permanent battle, in mutual confrontation and interference, without solution or continuity. It is impossible to dialogue or translate around them. In that sense, a total and coherent reading of the cultural signifieds on stage is useless. The identity traits constantly appear fractured, incomplete, and indecipherable, displaced from their own center, deprived of an original meaning.

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## Usability Testing Recruitment

### *Women in U.S. Social Movements Portal Project*

The UCLA Library, in conjunction with the California Digital Library, is developing a digital research portal for the topic of women in U.S. social movements. This tool is designed to help library users simultaneously search across multiple databases that will help them conduct research in this topic area. Because ensuring that the web screens of this tool are easy to navigate and use is vital to advanced researchers, we are asking for your participation in a usability study. You can help test the usability of the research portal by completing a series of search tasks on the computer while being observed and by sharing your thoughts in the process. The entire session should take about one and a half hours.

All personal information will be kept completely confidential.

At the conclusion of the session, participants will be given a \$30 gift card to ASUCLA. In order to be eligible to receive the gift card, you must be either a U.S. citizen or a lawful U.S. permanent resident and must provide a completed Form W-9, "Request for Taxpayer Identification Number and Certification," prior to receipt of the gift card. Form W-9 is available on the UCLA Tax Services Web site. If you have any questions regarding this requirement, please contact Jenny Chung at 310 794 9868.

If you are interested in participating, please e-mail the following information to Sharon Shafer (sshafer@library.ucla.edu): your name and department, your contact information, including phone number, and the dates/times you are available during November 2007.



## CSW has a new address: 1500 Public Affairs

CSW has a new address: 1500 Public Affairs (the new name for the Public Policy building). Phone numbers remain the same. Publications, which still resides in Rolfe Hall, will be moving to the expanded and remodeled space in Public Affairs in December.

*CSW Update is a monthly PDF/web publication of the UCLA Center for the Study of Women.*

*EDITOR/DESIGNER*

*Brenda Johnson-Grau*

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BOX 957222

PUBLIC AFFAIRS 1500

LOS ANGELES, CA 90095-7222

CAMPUS MAILCODE: 722203

310-825-0590

310-825-0456 (FAX)

[csw@csw.ucla.edu](mailto:csw@csw.ucla.edu)

[cswpubs@women.ucla.edu](mailto:cswpubs@women.ucla.edu)