

CSWupdate

THINKING GENDER



SPECIAL ISSUE

thinking gender 2012

CSWupdate

Panel Summaries BY
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Because I had coordinated CSW's Thinking Gender conference in 2009, I knew exactly what I was in for when I had the good fortune of being selected as the coordinator for Thinking Gender

2012: a really fun six months of planning and preparation for an extraordinary day that makes a real difference in the lives of young scholars who are, in turn, making a real difference in other people's lives. There would be brainstorming sessions and some creative problem solving. . . some arranging and then some rearranging. . . I would get to read and hear about all kinds of interesting projects in all sorts of areas of study. Lots of anticipation and lots of excitement, all because of one day, one opportunity to be surrounded by all kinds of people from all over the country and, in fact, all over the world. It would be one day during which I could enjoy being completely surrounded by people eager to share their ideas and research about women, gender, and sexuality. My mind would be

stimulated, but even more, my heart would be warmed.

I knew my heart would be warmed because, as I remembered it, coordinating Thinking Gender meant working with CSW's incredible network of good, kind, and generous people. It meant the excitement of meeting lots of new people, along with the joy and comfort of working with familiar faces. This year, 82 presenters shared their work at the UCLA Faculty Center. There was, of course, a strong showing of students from UCLA and the surrounding Los Angeles area. We had students come in from Oregon, Ohio, Maryland, Texas, New Mexico, Indiana, New York, New Jersey, Kentucky, North Carolina, Michigan, and the list goes on. . . Some of our panelists had even longer journeys and joined us from Hawai'i, Canada, England, Germany, and The Netherlands. The result was a Faculty Center filled with a crowd of people who represented not only geographic diversity, but a range of perspectives and approaches to some really exciting work. As one presenter told me after the conference, she felt Thinking Gender was one of the most genuinely interdisciplinary conferences she'd ever attended. In fact, she said she was happy Thinking Gender was the last conference she would attend before graduating, because it was a truly supportive environment and a positive experi-

ence, which is what conferences are supposed to be. Bravo, on all counts!

CSW works very hard to create opportunities for people to connect, and that's exactly what we saw at Thinking Gender this year. If you were at the morning panel "Mods and Vlogs: Gender Techs," you know there was even an unexpected virtual connection that took place! Panelist Gopinaath Kannabiran almost missed out on his own panel when he got stuck at the airport during a winter storm. The "Mods and Vlogs" moderator, CSW Research Scholar Rosemary Candelario, wouldn't hear of it! When I delivered her what I thought was some bad news, she didn't miss a beat: why not just Skype the presenter in? I asked, "Can you do that?" No problem! And suddenly, there was Gopi on the screen. How fitting for a panel on Gender and Technology. . . Once again, CSW's crew came through. Everyone just rolls with the punches, and they do it with a smile.

What I witnessed on the day of the conference was, quite simply, a lot of sharing. Presenters were engaged in conversations about each other's work, both inside and outside the sessions. They raised their hands with questions, sought each other out in the halls, and offered each other resources—but it doesn't end there. I have received so

many inquiries from panelists, as well as audience members, who want to get in touch with one another and find out more about the work that was presented at Thinking Gender. People want the dialogue to continue, and it will. It does!

If you missed some of the panels because you couldn't be in two places at once, or if you were, unfortunately, not able to make your way to the Faculty Center this year, there is still more Thinking Gender to be had:

Many of the papers, drawn from the plenary and the other 20 panels included in the program, will be published through the California Digital Library at the beginning of next month. Papers from panels such as "Altar Alternatives," "Voices on Violence/Wars on Women," "Pedagogies across Time: Created, Contested, and Changed," "Global Spirits," and "The 99%," among others, will be available soon. Do watch for their posting at http://escholarship.org/uc/search?entity=csw_thinkinggender in early April.

In addition, CSW filmed the following panels, which you can watch now, at <http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLA929BBD1F30DC69A&feature=plcp>: "Mumbling, Stuttering, Yelling: Gender Inarticulation in Argentina, Chile, Brazil and . . . Downtown Los Angeles"; "Parasexuality and the Arts"; "Masculinity Inside Out"; "From Chickens to Cookbooks:

Creating Community and Meaning with Household Artifacts"; and the plenary session: "Thinking Gender in Space, Place, and Dance."

My personal thanks go out to all of Thinking Gender's presenters and moderators, with a special thank you to Jacqueline Shea Murphy, Associate Professor of Dance at UC Riverside, for leading a lively discussion after the plenary, which included papers on women and textiles, the indigenous performance group FOMMA, female mariachis, and gender shifting in Taiwanese salsa. Abbreviated versions of all the plenary presentations can be found in this very newsletter, so please be sure to read on (as well as watch the video that I-Wen Chang has provided to illustrate some of the dancing techniques she describes)!

As I prepare to wrap things up and hand over the reins to next year's Thinking Gender conference coordinator, I'm reminded of what I said about the CSW staff when I wrote the "Coordinator's Notes" after my last conference, back in 2009. To the next conference coordinator, I wrote: "You have a phenomenal group of people upon which to depend while you are at CSW. Our Director, Kathleen McHugh, has assembled one of the best teams I have ever had the pleasure to work with, and you will enjoy every minute you are in the office."

What's funny is that while the actual staff and volunteer base I had at my side this round was almost entirely different than it was last time, I am compelled to say the same thing. This year's Thinking Gender team was truly one of the best groups of coworkers with which I've had the pleasure to work. Our Director, Kathleen McHugh, and Managing Editor, Brenda Johnson-Grau, have been part of Thinking Gender's success for many years, and they have a wealth of information to share with the next conference coordinator. Assistant Director Julie Childers was never more than a phone call or e-mail away and always either had or found the answers to my many questions. Associate Director Rachel Lee, thank you for all your enthusiasm and ideas. Your energy is just infectious! No matter who is at CSW next year, I know the next coordinator will have a great team of people behind her or him. While I was coordinating this conference, I never worried about a thing because I knew I had so many reliable people working with me to pull this great day together. I know it will be the same for the next coordinator. Actually, I know it will be even better, because Thinking Gender just seems to keep getting better with every year that passes. So, here's to the next year. . . Thinking Gender 2013 – February 1st, to be exact – see you there!

–Mirasol Riojas

PERFORMATIVE METAPHORS

THE “DOING” OF IMAGE BY WOMEN IN MARIACHI MUSIC

IN MUSIC STUDIES, scholars have often explored music as a metaphor for emotions, thoughts, and life. In the 19th century, music critic Edward Hanslick recognized the inherent metaphorical sense of musical discourse. As he stated in 1891, “what in every other art is still description is in music already metaphor,” (Hanslick 1986: 30). When verbalizing what music is, from representation to technique, one cannot avoid using figurative language, metaphors in particular, because a verbal description of *sound* is, of necessity, an interpretation.

In the first case regarding metaphors in music, metaphorical language is used to describe music in relation to musical practice or music theory. These metaphorical descriptions have un-

avoidably succumbed to the ideological horizons manifested through language. Musicologist Susan McClary refers to this as gendered aspects of traditional music theory in *Feminine Endings* (1991), a founding text in feminist musicology. She states: “music theorists and analysts quite frequently betray an explicit reliance on metaphors of gender (“masculinity” vs. “femininity”) and sexuality in their formulations. The most venerable of these—because it has its roots in traditional poetics—involves the classification of cadence-types or endings according to gender” (McClary 1991: 9). Musicians and music critics utilize the terms “feminine endings” and “masculine endings” to describe how a cadence ends, most without ever realizing that these metaphors perpetuate sexual

difference through musical language. In mariachi music, a similar situation has manifested with the increasing participation of women mariachi musicians. As more and more women perform in mariachi ensembles, the songs traditionally in a vocal register for men are necessarily transposed to suit the female voice. This alternative vocal register quickly became categorized as the “girl key,” or *tono para mujer*. While the use of this gendered metaphor is colloquial, we cannot ignore the reality that the metaphors in music terminology rely explicitly on metaphors of gender. Metaphor is thus not merely a poetic aspect of music language; it is also a way in which individuals and communities conceptualize their “doing” through metaphorical language.

UCLA CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF WOMEN PRESENTS

22ND ANNUAL GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH CONFERENCE

THINKING GENDER IN SPACE, PLACE, AND DANCE

PLENARY SESSION • 1 TO 2:30 PM • SEQUOIA ROOM • UCLA FACULTY CENTER

MODERATED BY

JACQUELINE SHEA MURPHY

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR, DEPARTMENT OF DANCE, UC RIVERSIDE

AND FEATURING

WARPING THE ARCHITECTURAL CANON: WOMEN AND TEXTILES

JAMIE ARON • ARCHITECTURE AND URBAN DESIGN, UCLA

**CHOREOGRAPHING COLLECTIVE INTERSECTIONAL IDENTITIES IN
REFLEJO DE LA DIOSA LUNA'S "MIGRACIÓN" PERFORMANCE**

YVETTE MARTÍNEZ-VU • THEATER AND PERFORMANCE STUDIES, UCLA

**THROWING OUT LEADER-FOLLOWER RULES:
GENDER-SHIFTING IN TAIWANESE SALSA TODAY**

I-WEN CHANG • WORLD ARTS AND CULTURES/DANCE, UCLA

**PERFORMATIVE METAPHORS:
THE "DOING" OF IMAGE BY WOMEN IN MARIACHI MUSIC**

LETICIA ISABEL SOTO FLORES • ETHNOMUSICOLOGY, UCLA

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In the second case, metaphors about music, metaphors do only represent the musical experience itself, but they also affect the way the music is to be experienced. These types of metaphors tend to both reflect and change one's experience of the music. McClary regards this as gender and sexuality in musical narrative: "Not only do gender and sexuality inform our "abstract" theories, but music itself often relies heavily upon the metaphorical simulation of sexual activity for its effects" (McClary 1991: 12). In the case of mariachi music, in the early 1990s when all-female mariachi ensembles began making their presence known on the U.S. concert stage, I remember many listeners describing their experience of the music with social codes taken to be "natural," those associated with femininity and masculinity. Judgments regarding their music included comments and complaints that it sounded "feminine," "weak," "slow," and that "something was missing." The music by all-female mariachi groups was not judged on musical qualities alone; instead the audience employed metaphorical language to characterize and express what the music meant to *them*, the listener. This was neither the macho masculine sound many were accustomed to, nor was it presented in the macho masculine image ubiquitously associated with mariachi music. Expressivity of judgments is not an attribute of the music; it is attributed to the music. In this sense, music serves as a metaphor for the significance of the experience, where the significance is founded on an ideological framework.

Although research concerning metaphor in and about music is common in music studies, I would like to propose an alternative way of approaching metaphor as it relates to performance. Philosopher John L. Austin, in coining the

word “performative,” refers to the meaning of utterances, or spoken words, as the “doing” of the action that it accomplishes (Austin 1978: 5-6).¹ Although this is the case with spoken words, what happens with the “doing” that has no words? For this, I refer to feminist Judith Butler’s notion of “bodily action.” In understanding the relationship between the speech act and the bodily act, Butler writes, “there is what is said, and then there is a kind of saying that the ‘bodily instrument’ of the utterance performs” (Butler 1997: 11). Actions are thus to be understood as performative metaphors, which are effective in bringing about the situation they represent, using an image rather than words.

The image created and negotiated by women mariachi musicians, both in their verbal descriptions of themselves as well as the non-verbal “doing” of their image, affirms the idea that a metaphor is not merely a linguistic mechanism; metaphors can also be performed, meaning that one does not have to “say” something to enact a metaphorical truth-value. A performance, for example, is a public action in which meanings are manifested into actions (and words) that stand for something else. In the following, I will illustrate briefly how metaphors can be performed, not through the music itself, but through the image presented by female mariachi musicians.

1. According to Austin, there are two types of performatives: 1) a perlocutionary act is “what we bring about or achieve by saying something,” (consequences brought about by a speech act); 2) an illocutionary act is the act we perform “in saying something.”



Figure 1: Example of the masculine mariachi image popularized with the Golden Era of Mexican Film

IMAGE IN MARIACHI MUSIC

Around the world, mariachi music is a powerful mode of cultural expression that has been predominantly recognized as a male-dominated musical tradition, despite the fact that women also play an integral role. Since the beginning of its worldwide popularity, the mariachi image has been utilized to represent a symbol of manliness—in part established by the National Charro Association’s 1921 code of ethics—in addition to

its significance as a symbol of Mexico.

Embraced as an emblem of Mexican identity during the nationalist movement in the 1930s, the mariachi image was constructed from a collection of symbols—such as the sombrero, the *traje de charro* (the stylized bullfighter outfit adopted by mariachi musicians), and pistol brandishing—all which collectively presented an image of Mexican maleness through films, television, and radio. Moreover, the masculine self-representation of

male mariachi performers has largely influenced the common perception of this musical expression, and it is this male conception that has been primarily accepted by much of the media and scholars of this performance practice.

In her article on the discourse surrounding the Mexican *charro*, Olga Nájera-Ramírez posits that the *charro* must be approached as both a national symbol and a cultural construction of maleness (Nájera-Ramírez 1994). Despite the fact that there is a feminine translation for the word *charro* (*charra*), mariachi musicians do not describe the female versions of the mariachi suit as a *traje de charra*. Women have nonetheless created and negotiated their image in a variety of creative ways. The following are only a few of the ways in which women mariachi musicians have innovated the *traje de charro*.

ALL-FEMALE MARIACHI ENSEMBLES

In the 1950s in Mexico, three all-female mariachi groups were formed and directed by women in the Mexican capitol: Mariachi Las Adelitas by Adela “Adelita” Chávez, Mariachi Femenil Estrellas de México (initially called Mariachi Michoacano) by Lupe “Lupita” Morales Ayala, and Mariachi Las Coronelas (initially called Mariachi Noriega) by Carlota Noriega, actress and a musician. These women, instead of adopting a feminized version of the *traje de charro* while performing mariachi



Figure 2: Mariachi Femenil Estrellas de Mexico handcrafted their own outfits. Courtesy of Felisa González, 2011



Figure 3: Mexico City's Mariachi Xochitl was formed in 1982 by Ramona Madera Gálvez

music, they handcrafted their own outfits, most of them knee-length variations of Mexican regional dresses. Figure 2 shows Mariachi Femenil Estrellas de México in examples of the very dresses they concocted.

Since their formation in 1982, Mexico City's Mariachi Xochitl by Ramona Madera Gálvez had a different vision of how to highlight their femininity as an all-female mariachi ensemble (fig. 3). Despite the mass dissemination of the masculine image associated with the *traje de charro*, and the feminine examples set by the first all-female mariachi groups that preceded them, Mariachi Xochitl feminized their image by wearing short length skirts that came just above the knees.

In the United States, Mariachi Reyna de Los Angeles de José L. Hernández, established in 1994, had the opportunity to perform for President Barack Obama and first lady Michelle Obama and at the White House for their 2009 Cinco de Mayo celebration (fig. 4). For this celebration, among their large variety of suits, they chose to wear their purple *traje de charro* with a white sash draping from the right hip.

In San Antonio, Texas, Mariachi Mujer Internacional by Lucila Torres, formed in 2008, modified the charro image by adding a bright pink *rebozo* (shawl) with a matching flower in their hair (fig. 5). The *rebozo* has a special significance to Mexican women; although warmly



Figure 4: Mariachi Reyna de Los Angeles de José L. Hernández, established in 1994, performed at the White House in 2009.



Figure 5: Mariachi Mujer Internacional by Lucila Torres, formed in 2008, modified the charro image by adding a bright pink *rebozo* (shawl) with a matching flower.

Figure 6: Mariachi Continental Femenil by Carla Bibiano Riveles employ a variety of mariachi suits that uniquely draw attention to the female body.



Figure 7: In Los Angeles, four women came together to create Mariachi Bella.

linked to indigenous and rural Mexican women, it emphasizes femininity across social classes.

In Jerez, Zacatecas, Mariachi Continental Femenil by Carla Bibiano Riveles employ a variety of mariachi suits that uniquely draw attention to the female body (fig. 6). In one example, they perform wearing a formal contemporary strapless dress with “botunadura” decorations, sometimes with a jacket, as shown below. In other occasions, they wear a strapless top with a long and colorful Mexican regional skirt.

More recently in Los Angeles, four women came together to create Mariachi Bella. Though

they have the now-conventional female *traje de charro*, they also present their music wearing a fitted top and pants with a red flower in their hair (fig. 7).

Mariachi Femenil de América by María de Jesús Xolocotzi Mata and her husband, Armando Muñoz Vasquez, was formed in 2011 in Tlaxcala de Xicohtécatl, Tlaxcala. In designing their first *traje de charro*, María de Jesús chose to have a more traditional look, albeit with princess-cut jackets (fig. 8).

By developing their awareness of the signs and signals that serve as a language of their body, and by choosing to “do” their image in order to *perform* a female version of the historically masculine mariachi suit, women mariachi musicians metaphorically assert and contest that which individuals and communities once conceptualized as the norm: the *traje de charro*. The metaphorical assertions by women in mariachi today, seen as perhaps a metaphor of the role of women in musical activities, thus provoke enticing questions regarding tradition, judgment, and symbolic meanings.

SPEECH ACTS AND BODILY ACTIONS

In formal interviews and informal conversations with women mariachi musicians, many enthusiastically share what they do to make the mariachi image more feminine. Some describe the colors



Figure 8: Mariachi Femenil de América, formed in 2011 in Tlaxcala de Xicohtécatl, Tlaxcala, have a more traditional look, albeit with princess-cut jackets.

they choose for their attire, the length of skirt they prefer, whether they prefer skirts or pants, and some still critique women who choose not to wear the long “feminine” traditional skirt while performing mariachi music.

In addition to the desire to create a feminine image, there is the underlying notion of “the traditional” and “the proper.” In a recent interview with Ramona Madera, director of Mariachi Femenil Xochitl, she felt the need to justify why they prefer wearing their short skirt, just above the knees. She explained that it was more convenient because the long skirts can be dangerous and their heels tend to get stuck in the hem, causing them to trip if they are not careful. She added that with the long traditional mariachi skirts, they wouldn’t be able to walk fast if they needed to.² Truthfully, as she later revealed, they did not mind looking like sexy women mariachi musicians. Despite their reasons for wearing knee-length skirts, Mariachi Xochitl has a matching full-length skirt to use in front of audiences who prefer more “proper-looking” all-female mariachi groups.

The metaphoric assertion of Mariachi Xochitl’s feminine, or even sexy, mariachi image is only one example in which the verbal description of their image may in fact complement the non-verbal “doing” of their image. The diverse attitudes that respond to these performative metaphors, many of which concern important notions of tradition,

2. Personal interview with Ramona Madera, 17 December 2011.

judgment, and symbolic meanings, have important effects on what should be preserved and what could involve change.

On Sunday, November 27, 2011, *El mariachi: música de cuerdas, canto y trompeta (Mariachi: string music, song, and trumpet)* was among eighteen new items of intangible world heritage to be added to the Representative List of the Intangible Culture of Humanity by the United Nations Organization for Education, Science and Culture (UNESCO). The idea that it is now a responsibility of the Mexican government and the mariachi musicians themselves to preserve the music (which is ambiguously disdained) has shed new light on how female mariachi groups will be included in efforts to preserve this musical tradition, particularly since UNESCO's recognition aims to protect heritage—often interpreted as old—and all female groups are more recent.

PERFORMATIVE METAPHORS

Performative metaphors address embodied actions that capture emotion and expression in the fluidity and adaptability of human activity. They are associated with self-presentation, display, and interpersonal communication. In this sense, the metaphors performed account for an appropriation and transformation of the ubiquitous masculine mariachi appearance. Performance is not just about music; it is also about the bodily

actions. Thus, a closer look at the performative actions, which are at the root of the preservation of performing arts, shed light on the quotidian metaphoric assertions made by women mariachi musicians today.

Performativity, thus, cannot be limited to metaphors in and about music. A closer look at how women mariachi musicians “do” their image takes into account not only what they wear and how they look, but also the performative metaphors that include the characteristics, attitudes, gestures, behaviors, and the musical manifestations themselves. All of these are subject to reflexive judgments that oscillate between preservation and change.

Leticia Isabel Soto Flores is a doctoral student in the Department of Ethnomusicology at UCLA. She presented a version of this essay at the plenary session, which was titled “Thinking Gender in Space, Place, and Dance.”

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LEADER-FOLLOWER

THROWING OUT GENDER RULES IN TAIWANESE SALSA TODAY

AGENCY AND FLOW IN PAIR-DANCING

In the traditional conceptions of gender role assignments for pair-dancing, the woman is typically conceptualized as a passive follower. However, if we examine the flow between the two dancers more closely, we can see that the interaction is far more complex. In partner dancing, partners cannot be understood as separate parts, but must be analyzed as a single whole and experiential body. The whole lived body is an intentional body, which is lived through and in relation to possibilities in the world. In order for the dance to go smoothly and successfully, there has to be clear *bilateral* communication between the man and

the women, such as being able to interpret changes in pressure, position, and weight that signal a change in the movement and the direction of the dance. In this way, dance is like a conversation; like any conversation, roles and power are negotiated and not necessarily given, giving agency to both men and women.

To further understand my argument concerning flow, I would like to make the analogy that flow is like the energy that each person possesses, similar to chi or life-force in martial arts. More concretely in pair-dance, it is the exchange of energy that occurs during the dance, which can manifest in subtle body language, change in contact, and sensitivity to one's partner.

Experienced dancers are able to sense the energy of their partners and adjust their response accordingly. This ensures a smooth interaction between the two, making sensitivity to this energy vital in dance.

Salsa in particular has a movement flow that favors equality between partners. Unlike waltz or tango, which highly emphasize gender etiquette with closed positions, salsa partners use open positions in which partners are connected primarily at the hands. Therefore, compared with other forms of pair-dancing, salsa has fewer pre-established moves between partners, which allows for more improvisation and dynamic interactions. In addition, salsa's movements are explicitly sensual

and erotic, as both men and women move their hips and sway their upper bodies in a soft and subtle way. The movement quality in salsa is not necessarily formally locked in a gendered binary but is flexible, allowing for more equality.

These qualities of salsa have contributed to its fast adoption in Taiwan, where it has been adapted to emphasize mutual respect between the partners and enjoyment rather than showy acrobatic moves. This is very different from what I see in the Los Angeles salsa style, which is a male-directed form and has developed into a much more staged performance full of flashy and showy “tricks.” In Taiwan it is considered proper etiquette for male dancers to be sensitive to their partner’s skill level and not execute technically difficult and forceful movements such as lifts or dips excessively. In fact, that kind of spectacle is rarely seen at all. Since there is less pressure to perform flashy movements, women are able to more actively participate in the flow process.¹ For example, female dancers are able to communicate their willingness to do certain movements such as the number of turns or their willingness to do solo dance via the points of contact (usually pressure on the palms). More importantly, the male dancers are receptive to this, and the expectation is to comply with female dancer’s intentions. In this way, there is a balanced flow, especially in cases where there is close physical contact. In the

1. Click here to view the “Taiwanese salsa scene” video.

Taiwanese salsa scene, it is generally expected there will be mutual agreement on the flow, and if the male dancer detects the female dancer’s wishes to go in a certain direction, generally the male dancer will yield in order to preserve the harmony of the flow.

CULTURAL BACKGROUND IN TAIWAN

Salsa’s ability to create a safe space for women to be free of traditional cultural norms in Taiwan is another reason for its popularity and acceptance among Taiwanese women. In order to understand this phenomenon better, it is important for us to understand how traditional culture in Taiwan disciplines the Taiwanese body. Taiwan has a history of multiple colonizations; here I focus mostly on the major long tradition of Chinese and Confucian conservatism. The female body is very restricted in Taiwanese society, and a woman’s body position in public is highly regulated. One relevant example of this is the old Chinese saying that states, “[Women] must be decent when you stand and sit” (站有站相，坐有坐相). “Decent” in this context means that women must keep their legs together and their hands on their knees when they sit. When women stand, they have to stand up straight and not sway. Slouching and fidgeting are also frowned upon. Under these regulations of the body, people always stand up straight and tall, and avoid rocking the lower part

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Taiwanese salsa scene



BECAUSE OF THE SEXUALIZED NATURE OF SALSA AND ITS INCLUSION OF MASCULINE AND FEMININE EXPRESSION, THE SALSA DANCE SCENE ALLOWS TAIWANESE MEN TO EXPLORE THEIR FEMININE DANCE QUALITY SAFELY IN A PUBLIC SPACE WITHOUT FEAR OF BEING LABELED HOMOSEXUAL.

of their bodies while standing or sitting down. The movement of salsa directly contradicts these norms. Furthermore, there is an old saying by Mencius (a famous Confucian scholar): “Men and women should not touch each other when giving or receiving an item” (男女授受不親), which demands a strictly regulated body distance between men and women. This concept has been extended to any general public contact. Those traditions still operate in contemporary Taiwan.

Thus, for Taiwanese practitioners salsa is a form of escapism through which they redefine the concept of self within a passionate and responsive body to counteract the dominance of the traditional Chinese identification and challenge the restriction of body distance in public. In addition, salsa, with its subtle and sometimes not-so-subtle mimicking of courtship and sexual interest, provides a way for dancers in Taiwan to make connections. This flirtation with the opposite sex is not a privilege only for men but for women as well.

In Taiwan there are also same-sex male salsa couples.² Because of the sexualized nature of salsa and its inclusion of masculine and feminine expression, the salsa dance scene allows Taiwanese men to explore their feminine dance quality safely in a public space without fear of being labeled homosexual. From this, we can see that the traditional roles of male leader and fe-

2. Click here to view the “Taiwanese male-male dancing couple” video

male follower are not strictly adhered to and that gender roles are blurred. These male dancers can easily switch the leader–follower roles without difficulty and display different leader–follower roles freely in public without fear. In fact, it is not unusual for other people to form a crowd around them to watch and encourage them with clapping.

However, rarely are women seen dancing with women. Same-sex dance couples are a privilege almost exclusively for male dancers, and allow them to transgress the heterosexual normativity. They exercise their power and are able to inhabit the femininity in the practice of salsa. They are gambling their masculinity by “being feminine in public” while at the same time showing their dance techniques. They are so “brave” to dance together in public; people look at them and admire them. The existence of these male-male dance couples at the exclusion of same-sex female dance couples actually reinforces the patriarchy by claiming gender latitude as a form of male power in male-dominated public space.

CLASS IN TAIWANESE SALSA SCENE

Class also plays an important role in the Taiwanese salsa scene. Due to the comparatively higher costs of learning salsa and attending salsa clubs, the majority of salsa club-goers in Taiwan tends to be young middle-class professionals with leisure time and extra money. Salsa requires skill and

Taiwanese male-male dancing couple



practice in order to flow with a partner. Therefore, the salsa dance club remains a territory of the elite beyond the reach of Taipei working-class people.

The lavish furnishing of the dance floor itself is a microcosmic dream world of urban modernity and serves only the people who can afford it. These entertainment spaces are not just a place of dance but also function as salons where young professionals can gather together to present and share information on a wide range of social, intellectual, and political issues. The “salon” of the salsa class makes exclusive a politicized space of bodies. By making a space to negotiate social body politics in the salsa “salon,” the everyday expression of bodies on the streets is depoliticized in an inverse action of class-defined political realms.

CONCLUSION

The global trend in salsa reveals different choreographies embodied in the different social codes that are deployed in salsa practice in various national contexts. In Taiwan, the way these practitioners imagine their gender roles is deeply related to the class position they occupy, and that very fact gives them relative freedom to challenge the traditional hierarchy through and in various spaces. A full grasp of the meaning of salsa practice in Taiwan thus requires understanding how it performs as part of a particular class structure, and also how traditional gender norms

are both challenged and restored. Through salsa, gender norms redefine a concept of self within a passionate and responsive body to counteract the dominance of Chinese identification. Taiwanese people participate in this international salsa trend to construct their national identity and establish global citizenship. In the future I will further analyze how class, nationality, and gender operate in complex ways in Taiwan.

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CHOREOGRAPHING COLLECTIVE INTERSECTIONAL IDENTITIES

IN REFLEJO DE LA DIOSA LUNA’S ‘MIGRACIÓN’ PERFORMANCE

LAST SUMMER (2011) I served as an intern at the Mayan Women’s cultural Center in Chiapas. The Center is called FOMMA, or *Fortaleza de la Mujer Maya*, meaning Mayan Women’s Strength. It is partnered with the Centro Hemisférico, a regional research and cultural center funded by the Hemispheric Institute for Performance and Politics. FOMMA centers on performances of Theater in the Center and in surrounding Mayan villages. The performances stage

issues of gendered kinship relations in Mayan communities.

Two pioneering Mayan writers and actresses, Isabel Juárez Espinosa and Petrona de la Cruz Cruz, founded FOMMA in an effort to promote bilingual theater and education in the Mayan languages of Tzotzil and Tzeltal through performance and also through other programs. This organization helps Mayan women and children to develop skills that will improve their daily

lives, offering workshops on commercial baking (bread-making), sewing, and computer literacy, as well as offering training in creative endeavors such as photography and performance.

For this presentation, I want to focus on one of FOMMA’s central missions: to stage how embodied gender dynamics in performance play a role in promoting a collective intersectional identity. Specifically, I will investigate *Reflejo de la Diosa Luna’s* “Migración” (1996) to underscore

that identity is not only performed but also choreographed and gendered. Particularly, I am focusing on the shared, though distinctive, experience of intersectionality among indigenous women in Mexico. The term “intersectionality,” is borrowed from Kimberle Crenshaw’s theory of intersectionality in which she questions the ways that experiences of Black women are excluded because feminism presumes whiteness and blackness assumes masculinity. In this case, I would add that studies of indigeneity most often elide the issues of gender that oppress indigenous women. This presentation will focus on two performance strategies aimed at critiquing gendered indigenous roles for women: cross-dressing and a materialist use of objects. I argue that the forms of cross-dressing employed and the ways performers cite or use objects define their body techniques and forms of identification. I argue that the performer modifies her body movements depending on the character she plays and the contextual factors of the performance. She uses objects to situate the body and the scene. In doing so, the performer provides alternative options for gendered representations, which in turn influence representations of indigeneity.

In “Migración,” Petrona de la Cruz Cruz plays the “male” protagonist, Mario, who, in her cross-dressing, points to his masculinist assumptions. Mario convinces a fellow farmer, Carlos also played by a woman, to move his family from its rural hometown to the city in hopes of finding a better

life. Without his wife's consent, and this is key to the gendered politics, Carlos sells his home, fields, and livestock to a friend. Then, when he loses his job in the city, he copes with his losses by drinking. With no hope of finding a new job, Carlos finds himself at rock bottom, and his family is left without basic necessities like food and shelter. The play brings several issues common to the struggles of these indigenous women to the stage: male chauvinism, sexual abuse, poverty, migration, alcoholism, and violence in general.

CROSS-DRESSING AND THE HYBRIDIZATION OF BODY TECHNIQUES

In the play, the actors use cross-dressing to make visible the ways that systems of fashion and gesture naturalize differences between men and women. When Carlos and Mario first appear on stage, both wear baseball caps, khaki pants, and button down shirts. Mario wears glasses, tucks in his shirt, and wears close-fitting pants while Carlos leaves his shirt hanging over his oversized baggy pants. These styles are typical of Mayan men from communities in Chiapas. While their differences indicate social gender codes, they function only in relation to a strict binary. In the process of performing the characters, the women performers must slip into men's clothes—a sharp contrast to the conservative *huipiles* or embroidered blouses and long cotton or wool skirts that

many Mayan women actually wear. These dress codes are strictly followed in the communities, so just playing and the audience seeing women in these clothes already makes an intervention into traditional gender codes. Ironically, by cross-dressing, the actresses also feminize the traditionally male space of theater by the mere fact that they are pioneer indigenous women performers. As Tamara Underiner notes, the performers are reversing "...these cross-gender casting traditions, not only in fact, but also in style. On stage, they are able to refashion a whole performance tradition that has historically mocked and excluded them" (360).

The necessity to use masculine clothing to represent a male character simultaneously makes visible and hybridizes body techniques. Within the story, Mario and Carlos' conflicts trigger a moment of confrontation. When Ocegüera Cruz, as Carlos, and Cruz Cruz, as Mario, perform acts of violence, they mock and threaten the image of a physically violent masculine, or macho man. As the characters argue, Cruz Cruz rolls up her sleeves, extends her arms, and holds on to Ocegüera Cruz's chest. Both women flail their arms, comically careful not to hurt each other, making a mockery of the characters' violence. In Mayan culture, it is commonplace for women to be quiet and submissive. In demonstrating these moments, the actors must exercise aggressive body techniques associated with men. Thus, when donning

IN USING MASCULINE AND FEMININE COSTUMES, THE ACTRESSES OFFER THE OPTION TO IDENTIFY WITH MORE THAN ONE GENDER. THEY ALSO OFFER A SUBJECT POSITION THAT RESISTS THE HETERONORMATIVE CONSTRUCTION OF FEMININITY.

men's clothing, the women performers are accessing a wider range of movements atypical for Mayan women and, at the same time, they mock the very masculinities that release them from their assigned social gender codes. In representing other options for women, theater becomes a potential site of resistance against patriarchal norms on and off stage.

Given the fact that all the performers are women, their performance excludes the presence of men. But in using masculine and feminine costumes, the actresses offer the option to identify with more than one gender. They also offer a subject position that resists the heteronormative construction of femininity. In portraying gender codes, the actresses play with the codes and reveal their instability. As women portraying the roles of men, *Reflejo* destabilizes the notion of subjects having a stable and unified identity by revealing the way that gender norms require constant citation in order to maintain power. As I have noted, the members of *Reflejo* are careful to cite normative encounters between men and women, but in doing so they collectively reproduce more than one gender category for indigenous women to identify with.

GENDERED SIGNIFICATION OF OBJECTS

Objects, like clothing, posit a gendered body for which the item was made (Ahmed 50). Alternately,

objects shape the bodies with which they are in contact (54). As Sara Ahmed argues in *Queer Phenomenology*, “gender is an effect of how bodies take up objects, which involves how they occupy space by being occupied in one way or another.... Bodies are shaped by the work they do” (59).

Ahmed's study treats objects as tools. But what if an object is purposely misused or purposely not used? What happens to the signification of the object within play? Further, how does that inform body? In its intended function, an object can have an intended failure—not *doing* in the *right* way. In this section, I will highlight examples in “Migración” that reference or exhibit gestures induced by the (mis)use of objects. I will highlight how objects take part in citing a home and producing a sense of belonging. However, when the actresses use or cite objects, this involves a mime. In other words, rather than using objects present on stage, the actresses fail to use them and instead produce gestures that convey the idea of an action. Thus, the absence of the object discloses and destabilizes the reiteration of gestures produced within quotidian spaces.

For example, the scene of *Reflejo* is a single generic backdrop with images that both denote a *campesino* (peasant) house and cite objects commonly used within that space. The domestic space is normally relegated to the background and allows for other, usually male-oriented, work. In this case, the privacy of the domestic space be-

comes public. The properties displayed and referenced on the backdrop include: a tortilla press (or *tortilladora*), bucket, bonfire, window, and kitchen table, among others. The backdrop symbolizes the gestures representative of an indigenous woman's quotidian life in Chiapas. It also stands in for a domestic space, a home, calling attention to how the sense of intimacy and belonging within a space is produced through the forms of objects placed in the background. The emergence of Mayan women in theater, as performers and characters, produces a sense of intimacy that combines private notions of family and home with public notions of narrative and performance. Yet Ahmed asserts that that which takes shape as the background is the result of the effect of the repetition of a certain direction (88). Rather than using these objects, and orienting themselves towards them, the actresses merely cite them. Ironically, the backdrop and its images of objects becomes that which figuratively places what would typically be in the background at the forefront. So they become signs of a Mayan woman, but they do not define her. Instead, she takes on the role of men while these signs remain on the scenery.

The tactical choice of objects on the stage reveal choreographed mimetic movements, especially when considering the ways that many household objects are not and often times cannot be used on stage. In one scene, Catalina prepares a bonfire. Isabel Juárez Espinosa, as Catalina,

arranges three pieces of wood to make a fire on the center stage floor. The mimetic action begins when she kneels down to blow onto the “fire” for a few seconds. As Ocegüera Cruz playing Carlos enters the stage, Juárez Espinosa disregards the “fire” and engages in dialogue. She stands up, moves down stage left, and faces the audience while speaking to Ocegüera Cruz. She blows on the “fire” again but this time she bends over instead of kneeling, creating a larger distance between her body and the wood. Finally, Juárez Espinosa stands up and faces the audience once again. This time she stops blowing. When starting the fire, she mimes the actions. Although making a fire represents a domestic act that women perform in Mexico, the performance resists the reproduction of that function. The act is *simulated* but is not *replicated* because Juárez Espinosa is clearly missing the tools required to create an actual fire. As a result, the act is choreographed and mimed; codes are cited but Juárez Espinosa refuses to reduce herself to a domestic act. Thus, while objects can be gendered, the actresses have the choice to resist, reveal, or exaggerate the proper way of using them. In this case, Juárez Espinosa’s resistance to perform realistic portrayals of this domestic act, alters and produces new gestures that defy normative expectations for women.

CONCLUSION

In this presentation, I have investigated how bodily gestures, specifically in relation to the clothing and objects used in performance, both reproduce traditions and produce alternate options for gender and therefore social representation. Specifically, cross-dressing and miming provide opportunities to defy Mayan men’s patriarchal values, which are reliant on a definition of women, which is biologically deterministic and essentialist. I extend my argument to note that *Reflejo*’s performances are continuously negotiating a collective intersectional identity given that they neither represent women as holistic nor stable and because neither body nor performance ever remain static. An intersectional collective identity is one that is always changing but remains connected through affinities. While proposing a pan-Mexican identity would run the risk of eliding difference and acknowledging differences can run the risk of essentializing, maintaining an interest in affinities produces a space where subjects who identify with an intersectional identity can work together towards structural change.

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WOMEN AND TEXTILES

WARPING THE ARCHITECTURAL CANON

TEXTILES have long been a part of the canon of Western architecture—from the folds of draped female forms in ancient Greek temples to the abstract Mayan patterns “knitted” together in Frank Lloyd Wright’s textile block houses of the 1920s. Yet just as any façade may conceal what’s inside, architecture’s shared history with weaving is often obscured. Today architecture sits at the top alongside the “fine arts” of painting and sculpture, while woven textiles occupy a less prominent position in the “applied” or the “decorative arts.” Appearing natural now, few remember that the hierarchy of the arts was not always so stable. Architecture and weaving were both at the bottom in the Medieval Period—positioned as “mechanical arts” requiring learned

manual skill rather than individual creativity or intellectual drive. Eventually, through hard lobbying by Renaissance artists and humanists, the establishment of art academies dedicated exclusively to the teaching of architecture, painting and sculpture, and theoretical backing by Enlightenment philosophers, architecture separated from its mechanical compatriots to become one of the dominant “visual arts” of modernity, leaving weaving behind as handicraft within the category of the “decorative arts.” It’s no secret that women have been generally left out of modern visual art history and associated with the decorative arts. Through the lens of historic reexamination I present three examples of “weaving workshops” led by women, whose work not only

intersected architecture at key moments in the twentieth century, but also challenged the hierarchical position and cultural agency of architecture.

In the early twentieth century, modern architects and theorists reacted to broad social changes brought about by Industrialization and social and political upheaval by rejecting the historic forms of the past. Partly due to theoretical build up from 19th century aesthetic debates on style and the value of ornament, modern architects theorized that even textiles, considered inherently ornamental within the interior, needed to be rejected if architecture was going to lead society towards a better future. In order for textiles to be reintegrated into the practice of architecture,

they would have to be reformulated as “functional equipment” rather than applied decoration, a conceptual struggle explored intensely by avant-garde artists and weavers across Europe.¹

Anni Albers entered into the Bauhaus after the height of the European debates on style and ornament. As an eager young German student in the late 1920s, she launched her artistic career at the Bauhaus, the experimental new school established in 1919 by the architect, Walter Gropius, during the Weimar Republic in Germany. Bringing all of the arts together under one roof, the Bauhaus sought to synthesize the fine and the decorative arts—with architecture acting as the mother of them all—a belief institutionalized by the mid-eighteenth century, practiced by Arts and Crafts reformers like William Morris, and inherited by modern architects like Gropius, Le Corbusier, and Mies van der Rohe. Like almost all of the female students at this time, Albers was placed in the Weaving Workshop, led by technique master, Gunta Stolzl, supplemented with classes led by form masters like Johannes Itten.² Despite the fact that the Bauhaus was one of the most liberal art schools of its time, gender roles were still medium-specific—men painted, sculpted, and designed buildings, while women

wove textiles, threw pots, and made crafts.³ This paradox—democratization of the arts without democratization of artists—led many Bauhaus women artists to become accomplished weavers because of the restriction placed on them to study the “higher arts” of painting, sculpture, and architecture. At points in the 1920s and 1930s, the Weaving Workshop represented the most financially successful sector of the Bauhaus, showing tapestries at industry fairs across Germany and eventually licensing designs to manufacturers.⁴ When the focus of the school shifted from one-off designs to prototypes for mass-production, Albers embraced the transition without pause. For her as a student and later as a practitioner, hand weaving was not only an end in itself but a necessary prototyping process—an essential step that she would adhere to in America when machine looms came to dominate the textile industry from the 1940s on.⁵ Later, after emigrating to the US, and teaching at the experimental Black Mountain College, Albers gained international success in 1949 as the first woman weaver ever to have a solo exhibition at the MOMA in New York. Not only did this broadcast the achievements of a woman artist to an American audience at midcentury, it elevated modern weaving to the status of modern art, positioning woven textiles as a topic of conversation

amongst the “higher arts.” While Albers’s show did not single-handedly set up textiles as an equal to architecture, the event signaled a positive shift in the perception of modern textiles; one that gave more weight to the intellectual and creative capacity of the modern weaver’s practice.

Albers wrote about her work extensively, including two books—*On Designing* (1959) and *On Weaving* (1962). These volumes embedded weaving deeper into the modernist discourse. Within the field of architecture, there is a long history of writing critically about building—from Vitruvius to the present—but there was no such long history of writing by women weavers until members of the Bauhaus, Albers included, intellectualized the practice from within.⁶ Weaving—as craft—

1. Christine Boydell, “Textiles in the Modern Home,” in *Disentangling Textiles: Techniques for the Study of Designed Objects*, ed. Christine Boydell and Mary Schoeser (London: Middlesex U Press, 2002).

2. T'ai Lin Smith, *Weaving Work at the Bauhaus: The Gender and Engendering of a Medium, 1919-1937* (U of Rochester, 2006).

3. Ulrike Müller, Ingrid Radewaldt, and Sandra Kemker, *Bauhaus Women: Art, Handicraft, Design* (Flammarion, 2009).

4. Ibid.

5. Anni Albers, “Handweaving Today: Textile Work at Black Mountain College,” *The Weaver VI*, no. 1 (1941).

6. Smith focuses on the mostly unpublished writings of Bauhaus weaver, Otta Berger, who was a contemporary of Albers.

had been first dominated by men and then generally limited to the “passing on of patterns.”⁷ Like infamous critics such as Clement Greenberg and postwar American painters like Mark Rothko, Albers wrote about her experiments at the loom to construct a theory for weaving, inventing, along the way, a vocabulary unique to the structures, process, and experience that making and viewing textiles could produce. She set out to both instruct her fellow weavers and students on the making of textiles, along with provide disciplinary boundaries that would set up weaving as an artistic practice. She defined a “tactile sensibility” to her practice, writing, “if a sculptor deals with volume, an architect with space, a painter with color, than a weaver with tactile effects.”⁸ In this statement Albers removes weaving from the craft category by inserting it alongside recognized artistic disciplines, arguing that weaving harnessed unique visual and haptic properties. Rejecting ideology that depicted weaving as gendered craft, Albers set up the parameters for a proto-discipline in which weaving could be considered an authoritative field onto itself, supportive to architecture but not subsumed within it. Her work, writing, and teaching influenced multiple generations of textile designers, an influence which can still be felt today.

7. Anthea Callen, “Sexual Division of Labor in the Arts and Crafts Movement,” *Woman’s Art Journal* 5, no. 2 (1984).

8. Anni Albers, “Tactile Sensibility,” *On Weaving* (Middletown, CT.: Wesleyan U Press, 1965).

Whereas Albers set up a conceptual framework for textiles to engage with modern architecture in the prewar period, Florence Knoll commodified ideas of modernism through textiles in the postwar period. Trained as an architect under influential émigrés from the Bauhaus and Scandinavia, first at the Cranbrook Academy of Art in Michigan under Eileel and Loja Saarinen, then at the Architectural Association School of Architecture in London, and completing her degree in 1941 at the “New Bauhaus” in Chicago (now known as the Illinois Institute of Technology), Knoll came into contact with many of the European “giants” of modernism, including architects Walter Gropius and Mies van der Rohe.⁹ Florence started her career as an architect at Harrison & Abramovitz, specializing in interiors, not because of the “integrated design” influence of her academic mentors, but because of the social conditions that restricted women from prominent roles within the architectural profession.¹⁰ In postwar America, sexism within the architectural profession was not yet a recognized practice to be fought against; it is remarkable that Knoll was able to secure a place within an architectural firm at all. However, in 1943, Knoll’s career shifted dramatically after freelance interior work for a client morphed into a full-time business partnership with her

9. Bobbye Tigerman, “‘I Am Not a Decorator’: Florence Knoll, the Knoll Planning Unit, and the Making of the Modern Office” (M.A. thesis, U of Delaware Winterthur Program, 2005), 29.

10. *Ibid.*, 33.

client, Hans Knoll.¹¹ As historian Gwendolyn Wright pointed out in 1977, the traditional roles of women in architecture included “exceptional women,” “adjunct,” “anonymous designer,” and “woman outside.”¹² From Knoll’s background it does not appear that she wished to remain anonymous or outside; rather, she found an unconventional way to play a part in architectural production. After marrying Knoll and investing in his small-scale furniture company, Florence developed a furniture line through key commissions from her network of established architectural colleagues and up-and-coming designers, turning the Scandinavian-influenced tables and chair company into a full-scale, modern design and planning company.¹³ Against the backdrop of American optimism and a belief that good design could make positive changes in people’s lives, Knoll’s Planning Unit team developed the “Knoll Look”—a sleek, sophisticated interior that visually represented the speed, strength, and technological innovation that American companies strove to embody in business in the postwar period.¹⁴

The production of textiles in-house became a vital component to the company as the Knoll

11. *Ibid.*

12. Dolores Hayden and Gwendolyn Wright, “Architecture and Urban Planning,” *Signs* 1, no. 4 (1976); Jane McGroarty and Susana Torre, “New Professional Identities: Four Women in the Sixties,” in *Women in American Architecture: A Historic and Contemporary Perspective: A Publication and Exhibition Organized by the Architectural League of New York through Its Archive of Women in Architecture*, ed. Susana Torre (New York: Whitney Library of Design, 1977), 131.

13. Earl Martin and Design History Material Culture Bard Graduate Center: Decorative Arts, *Knoll Textiles* (New Haven: Yale U Press, 2011).

14. *Ibid.*

Planning Unit gained more commissions. For the earliest commissions, Knoll did not produce her own textiles; instead she outsourced the upholstery and drapery for the custom-designed furniture. The Rockefeller family offices were one of her first commissions in 1946, recommended to her by one of her former bosses, Wally Harrison, and Howard Meyers, editor of *Architectural Forum*.¹⁵ Lore has it that Knoll had to search within men's apparel fabrics to find the appropriate material to upholster an office chair, settling on men's suiting fabric to fit the bill.¹⁶ The demand for appropriate upholstery and drapery fabrics was a priority to the firm, as it was only a year after she joined that Knoll opened a showroom on East 65th Street in New York to sell the first collection of Knoll Textiles.¹⁷ Knoll hired the most talented weavers and designers to design the first collection, including Marianne Strengell of Cranbrook University and half a dozen others, eventually hiring an entire team of textile designers to design both hand-woven textiles and textiles meant for machine loom production.

Highly textured weaves using new fibers such as rayon and plastics came out of this creative hotbed, surpassing utilitarian requirements to receive widespread recognition in architectural circles and in museum exhibitions such as Mo-

MA's *Good Design* exhibition in 1951 and the *Textiles USA* show in 1956. Upholstered furniture and drapery were two components of the Knoll look that became focal points within projects. Success, financially and in terms of innovative textile design, depended upon designs that could be mass-produced and easily plugged into interiors like a kit-of-parts, but sophisticated enough to ap-

peal to her high profile clients, like the architect, Eero Saarinen, and CBS president, Frank Stanton. Knoll used textiles as the crucial communicator between elements—color and texture could be repeated on a sofa seat or a sheer curtain to create a visual rhythm—without disrupting the smooth, clean lines of a modern interior. In the decade and a half in which Florence was the active cre-

15. Tigerman, "I Am Not a Decorator," 35.

16. *Knoll au Louvre: Catalog of the Exhibition held at Pavillon de Marsan Musée des Arts Décoratifs* (New York: Knoll International, Inc., 1971), 55.

17. *Ibid.*

ative director of the company, the Textile Division flourished as an artistic think tank—multiple disciplines working alongside each other to take one material to the highest level of aesthetic complexity, structural integrity, and durability. She advanced the commercial market for textiles at a critical stage in American postwar architecture, facilitating the reproduction of modern architecture on a grand scale by first styling the materials, then the client, to foster the need for modern fabrics. Overcoming barriers placed on her as a woman architect at midcentury, Knoll produced modern architecture as an influential tastemaker, defying ideology that had excluded women from significant roles in architectural production.

Moving into the present, the work of Dutch textile designer, Petra Blaisse, has received international recognition for her breathtaking curtains and wall treatments. Known within the architectural community as the “one who makes curtains,” Blaisse’s influence has extended beyond the realm of the decorative arts into a new terrain that defies traditional boundaries between decoration and structure. In other words, her work is architectural, structurally complex, and yet strikingly elaborate in pattern and form. Blaisse is the first to call her work architectural, even though she does not hold a professional license or construct buildings.¹⁸ However, her critical awareness of the

18. Petra Blaisse, *Inside Outside* (Rotterdam/New York, NY: NAI Publishers; Available in North, South and Central America through D.A.P./Distributed Art Publishers, 2007).

vocabulary of modern architecture has inspired critics to draw links between her practice and that of prewar textile designers like Lilly Reich at the Bauhaus, whose early collaboration with Mies van der Rohe, investigating the limits of the free-standing “textile wall,” share much in common with Blaisse’s alliance with Rem Koolhaas.¹⁹ While Reich first challenged the notion of the curtain as decoration within avant-garde architecture, draping sensuous black and red velvets and yellow silks over plates of vertical glass within the 1927

19. Dirk van Heuvel has commented on the similarities between Blaisse’s and Reich’s practices, *ibid.*

Velvet and Silk Café in Berlin, defining flexible interior spaces, Blaisse assigns the curtain even more responsibility in order to investigate the limits of the textile to perform like architecture.²⁰

Blaisse’s firm—Inside/Outside—often receives commissions well before construction starts, joining forces with architects and structural engineers at the conceptual stages of planning. In one of the most innovative, contemporary projects of our time—the Seattle Public Library (2004)—Blaisse

20. Matilda McQuaid, Magdalena Droste, and Museum of Modern Art (New York N.Y.), *Lilly Reich, Designer and Architect* (New York: Museum of Modern Art : Distributed by H.N. Abrams, 1996).

was hired in 2000 to consult on all of the horizontal surfaces and to design a site-specific curtain for the interior auditorium, contributing ideas to solve functional problems like circulation, acoustics, and lighting, as well as addressing intangibles like mood and atmosphere. For the single—non-structural—vertical element, Blaisse designed a massive S-shaped curtain that wrapped around the interior auditorium like a living, breathing, sculptural wall. Asked to resolve acoustics for two spaces—the auditorium and the common areas outside—her team developed a double-sided curtain that suppressed noise at multiple levels, with a texture of plastic “bear hairs” woven on one side to buffer everyday library traffic and green and white vertical striped “fins” on the other to address acoustical concerns inside the theater. As she explains in *Inside/Outside* (2007), instead of using a traditional, heavy material like velvet, Blaisse opted for a bright, lightweight and technologically complex fabric that her firm spent several years developing through the investigation of the surrounding landscape and fauna. While any texture would do, her formal imitation of nature—through the thick coat of a wild animal—speaks to the depth of her theoretical investigations and the sophisticated range of her formal vocabulary. Blaisse’s surfaces—whether they be a synthetic bristle wall, a giant knitted felt curtain, or a digitally-printed aerial view of the countryside on wallpaper—critically activate a space by

challenging the visitor to accept architectural norms, like solid walls and decorative curtains. Walls sway when viewers reach out to touch their seemingly tectonic surface while photorealistic grass printed flat on the floor looks frighteningly alive—so much so that visitors walk around it. The field of textile design wishes it could claim her as their own, as does the discipline of architecture. Sometimes landscape architecture, sometimes sculpture, theater design, digital art, or an installation, in total her work is in dialogue with many disciplines but refuses to be pinned down. With renowned architects like Ben van Berkel and Caroline Bos of UN Studio, Kazuyo Sejima of SANAA, and Rem Koolhaas of OMA seeking her out to collaborate, Blaisse has upended the hierarchy of architecture over the decorative arts to embark upon a new, if not woven, terrain.

While Blaisse’s work demands attention within the architectural community, her work is, in part, indebted to the conceptual influence of both Albers and Knoll, whom were both passionately dedicated to their work despite patriarchal barriers that originally excluded them from their chosen field. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, architecture has extended well beyond the site of the building, and architectural production is not limited to material artifacts. Conceptual production of architecture—through theoretical upheaval, influence rather than power, subversive methods, and performative acts—has

been as relevant to the study of women’s contributions to architecture as has material production. Without the expanded definition of architectural production I’ve outlined above, women would continue to be marginalized within the field. For architecture the opportunities are two-fold: new definitions allow for the reconsideration of historic moments and materials—such as the work of the three women I’ve presented, along with the reevaluation of what it means to be an architect practicing today, both of which contribute towards a more holistic view of women in architecture.

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Dirty Work: Women and Unexpected Labor

THE PANEL “Dirty Work: Women and Unexpected Labor” featured historically invisible women workers in occupations considered dangerous and highly masculinized. Moderator Sarah Haley, Professor of Women’s Studies, UCLA, described the panel as raising important questions about recovering agency for women who engage in “deadly work.” Panelists included Shelly M. Cline, Department of History, University of Kansas; Katie Smart, Department of History, University of Houston; Jason W. Sampson, Department of History, University of California, Riverside; and Saridalia Giraldo, Department of Political Science, San Francisco State University.

NOT A FELLOW MILITARY OFFICER, NOR A LADY

Shelly Cline’s paper, “Working Girl: Sex Discrimination in Auschwitz,” examines gender discrimination faced by women guards in the Auschwitz concentration and death camps. Cline argues that the image of S.S. women has been misinformed: these women were neither incompetent nor raving mad and given over to brutality. Rather, women guards were perpetrators who were also subjugated by male colleagues.

Women guards, mostly from blue-collar backgrounds, were recruited by the S.S. or volunteered. At Auschwitz, women guards oversaw female prisoners at a ratio of one guard to over four hundred captives, compared with one male guard

to only twenty-two male prisoners. S.S. women guards occupied a “middle area that lacked a conceptual framework”; they were neither *women*, as wives and mothers in service to the *Reich*, nor *comrades* to the male officers and overseers with whom they shared rank. Women appointed as camp overseers were met by hostility and skepticism from their male colleagues. Their presence was seen as an affront, as lessening the prestige of the post. Women guards received little if any support from colleagues or higher-ranked officers, and instead were despised as an inefficient bunch of “flustered hens.”

Women guards adopted different strategies to cope with gender discrimination in the camp and gain the approval of male colleagues and supervi-

sors. Surviving prisoners describe women guards changing their behavior in presence of male guards to appear more “animated”; this behavioral change was often punctuated with excessive violence or prisoner humiliation. Cline described one woman who, after commanding her dog to fatally attack a prisoner, announced to a male colleague, “This is my work.” Another strategy used by women guards was the employment of female prisoners as assistants in order to improve efficiency. Whatever their strategy, women’s efforts to gain recognition were fruitless. Remarkably, however, women guards did not deny or shift the blame when on trial after the war. The Allies granted S.S. women the equality denied to them by the Nazi party, and as full participants in genocide, women guards were executed alongside men.

“MANAGING SLAVES IS A TROUBLESOME BUSINESS”

In her paper, “De Old Devil’: Female Slaveholders, Violence, and Slave Management in Louisiana,” Katie Smart challenges the consensus about the lives of plantation mistresses. Smart refutes the common idea that women managed slaves only after the start of the Civil War. Her research paints a portrait of the plantation mistress that contradicts popular and sympathetic representations of slave masters’ wives as confined to their homes. Additionally, Smart’s research challenges

the notion that mistresses “humanized” slaves. She finds that plantation mistresses in Louisiana undertook the necessity of slave management before and during the Civil War and did not shy away from using violence to secure slavery’s continuation.

Smart uses the letters that plantation mistress Trefina Fox wrote to her mother in the period before the Civil War to demonstrate that plantation mistresses were comfortable in their roles and regularly used violence as a means of “slave management.” In her letters, Fox complains bitterly of slave management as her “greatest struggle,” attributing her increased workload to the laziness of her slaves. These letters reveal not only the extent of Fox’s household responsibility but also the constant pressure of slave resistance. Slaves employed various tactics to undercut Fox’s authority and carve out moments of relief. Smart’s research also demonstrates how power and authority is directly related to management tactics. When one of Fox’s slaves, Maria, ran away after her mistress beat her (though less severely, as Fox explains, than Master Fox would have), Trefina Fox’s authority on the plantation was diminished. Fox’s power was further undercut outside the plantation when Maria’s escape and subsequent hiding-out on a nearby plantation was discovered to have been facilitated by fellow, neighboring slaves.

A LONG TRADITION OF FAMILY LABOR

Women’s entry into the coal-mining industry in the 1970s has been seen as boundary-breaking, but in his paper, “Colliers in Corsets? Uncovering Stark County’s Nineteenth-century Coal-mining Women,” Jason W. Sampson, University of California, Riverside, shows that sex segregation in coal mining is a relatively recent phenomenon. Sampson uses census data and death records that account for 15 women who worked in mining in Stark County, Ohio, between 1870 and 1900. Sampson argues that women worked in the mines not as a challenge to gender norms but within an accepted tradition of family labor utilized in times of economic stress.

Just as women miners in the 1970s experienced challenges, especially gender-based harassment, women miners in the latter part of the nineteenth century overcame obstacles to attain employment with a mine. In some U.S. states women were forbidden from working in mining, and even when laws were not in place, powerful ideals of true motherhood and the separation of gender spheres kept women from seeking mining work. Sampson stresses, however, that gendered ideals of womanhood, though powerful, were also flexible; he argues that gender roles in the mining community were fluid. In the face of tragedy or severe financial constraint after a period of mining strikes, for

example, women worked alongside their brothers, fathers, and husbands without repercussions.

Sampson lists the names of at least half a dozen Stark County women miners, including one girl: Mary McBride, who beginning at age eight worked for less than four years as a trapper (a person who opens and closes vents). Sampson stresses that Mary's employment with the mine was a temporary stopgap in a time of crisis and wasn't the beginning of a career in mining. Women's income earned at the mine contributed to a household economy in need; their employment was not indicative of a fledgling women's movement, though, as Sampson demonstrates, their inclusion sheds light on how the meaning of women's labor has changed over the past two hundred years.

Both perpetrators and victims

The final panelist, Saridalia Giraldo, discussed the roles and demobilization process of women combatants in Columbia. Giraldo describes her paper, "Demobilized Women Combatants: Lessons from Colombia," as a case study that can be used to assess the situation of other women in armed conflicts. To contextualize the Colombian case, Giraldo explains that Columbia has been embroiled in a 50-year conflict that has resulted in over 70,000 deaths and over 400,000 disappearances. Much of the fighting and kidnapping has occurred in non-urban areas. To further shape the

background of her study, Giraldo stresses the conservative and patriarchal character of Colombian society. This character, she explains, shapes both the recruitment of women as combatants and the demobilization process.

Women combatants are both perpetrators and victims. Giraldo explains that women are perpetrators when they voluntarily join illegal armies to emancipate themselves from poverty, lack of employment opportunities, and violence at home. Some women join to demonstrate their ability as warriors and to gain respect from guerilla combatants. Other women are recruited by force. Giraldo says that girls as young as eight years old are often kidnapped by combatants and forced into lives of sexual slavery and mental and physical abuse.

In the process of demobilization by which combatants abandon armed conflict and attempt to rejoin civil society, women face a "triple disadvantage." The role of Colombian combatants is gender-specific, and women who chose to engage in the conflict are seen as deviant; upon demobilization they are often shunned by their families and denied contact with their own children. Contrarily, Giraldo adds, men combatants often receive accolades from their communities upon demobilization. Women who demobilize also fear being killed, tortured, or recruited again by active illegal groups—both the deserted group and enemy forces. Because of this, women often move

to urban areas in an attempt to disappear.

Finally, women combatants are challenged by a designated governmental process of demobilization that excludes the unique experiences of women. In conclusion, Giraldo suggests that the Colombian government must gender-sensitize the demobilization process for women and provide special considerations for women's unique needs in order to ensure their safe reincorporation into civil society.

Amanda Apgar is a graduate student in the Department of Women's Studies at UCLA.

Women's Rags: High-Brow, Low-Brow and OCD Publics

THE PANEL “Women’s Rags: High-Brow, Low-Brow and OCD Publics” brought together panelists whose work deals with diverse and converging forms of media including comic books, crime novels, graphic novels, and zines.

The first panelist, Julian Gill-Peterson from Rutgers University, presented a complex argument against problems he sees in queer genealogical analyses of Alison Bechdel’s *Fun Home*. Explaining what he saw as a production of “proto-gay” childhood subjectivities in analyses of *Fun Home*, Gill-Peterson instead suggested a view drawing from the writings of Henri Bergson, particularly the notion of virtual time and memory as an inventory to deal with child-

hood difficulties. The presentation argued for a more complex method of understanding adult memories of childhood, and most significantly, in granting more agency and subjectivity to children (or at least, to adult reconstructions of childhood memories and events). Gill-Peterson focused his concluding remarks on the case of Bechdel’s childhood Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder, which had been viewed as symbolic of her proto-gay repression by previous analyses of *Fun Home*. He argued instead that even as a child, Bechdel represented herself as aware of her repetitive behavior, and that pigeonholing her disorder as symptomatic of her “proto-gay” status is reductive.



Peter Lee from Drew University presented on the portrayals of female characters in certain crime comic books from the 1950s. Lee explained the popularity of American crime comics during the anxious cold war period, when the changing social and economic status of women was creating great shifts in American society. Creators of these comics portrayed the underlying tensions and conflicts by creating two main types of female criminal characters: the first were women breaking from the cage of their gendered sphere by engaging in brazen criminality and overt sexuality, who were always eventually married or jailed, neutralizing their transgressions but not erasing the challenge to convention that they represented. The second type were long-suffering, hard-working wives chained to domestic roles, often

used as foils for the brazen female criminals. Lee explained the censorship that came on the heels of these crime graphic novels, silencing aspects of these types of female characters.

The third panelist, Claire Rolens from UC San Diego, presented on Dorothy Hughes's 1943 novel *The Blackbird*, proposing it as a work that challenges typical notions of patriarchal dominance in crime thriller novels of the 1940s and films noir. Rolens described the plot of *The Blackbird*, in which the female protagonist must fight for her own survival while attempting to ascertain which of her two lovers (who Rolens describes as *hommes fatales*) is really a Nazi agent looking to kill her. Drawing from feminist film theory (particularly in relation to Classical Hollywood and film noir) Rolens posited that the female protagonist of *The Blackbird* directs a sexual gaze and desire toward a masculine other, with the female character acting as storyteller and detective in a reversal of the typical film noir structure.

The final presentation of the panel delivered by JoAnne Gordon from The University of Ottawa was on the topic of zines that dealt with topics of sexual assault and the ways in which certain zines challenge dominant discourses on that topic, offer concrete tools and examples of collective work, and how they represent changing discourses and responses to sexual violence. Gordon began her presentation with an acknowl-

edgement of the use of Native lands by the academy and specifically to the Native peoples who had once populated the land where UCLA currently stands. Gordon also warned her audience that her presentation covers sensitive subjects that may be alarming to some and that they should feel free to leave at any time. Using three zines used as tools by community workers, Gordon analyzed both their design and content for the ways in which they contribute to new notions of how people communicate about sexual violence. For example, one zine included a particularly useful list of questions that prompt the reader to examine his/her methods of communication and listening. Another section of a zine dealt specifically with how perpetrators of sexual violence can understand consent and also heal themselves (something very

rarely communicated in other forms of literature on sexual violence).

Panel moderator Yogita Goyal gave thoughtful feedback to each of the panelists and posed questions for each to answer before opening up to the audience. Goyal asked Gill-Peterson to discuss the panels and texts in *Fun Home* and how they might relate to the notions of time/space he put forth. He also responded to an audience question about the possibility of expanding his research to include post-humanism and the ways in which scholars like Jack Halberstam create an idea of a hermetically sealed past that are unconvincing, and that scholars are now looking more ahead towards the future than back towards the past.

Professor Goyal next asked Peter Lee about the role of race in the comics he analyzed, and about the readership of the comics. Lee explained that the comics he analyzed were almost entirely based on middle class or poor white characters, with occasional exoticized “others” or non-white communist characters. As far as readership, Lee explained that the comics were very popular, but it is difficult to ascertain any demographic information about readers or their responses since the only source for this type of information would be the letter columns in the comics themselves, which tended to only publish positive reviews highlighting the educational value of the comics.

Next, Professor Goyal asked Claire Rolens to discuss the role of a female author in a genre known for its misogyny, citing Steig Larsson’s *Millenium Trilogy* as an example. Rolens explained that she did not want to overstate the radicalness of *The Blackbirders*, pointing to the fact that the female protagonists and plotlines in Hughes’s novels often exhibit traits similar to the normal structures in crime novels, such as desire for motherhood and domesticity and romantic endings.

Finally, Professor Goyal asked JoAnne Gordon to explain the conditions of production and readership of the zines she analyzed. Gordon responded that zines are, by nature, ephemeral, hard to track, and often don’t have publication dates. They are accessed through word of mouth, online, or in independent or feminist bookstores. Gordon emphasized that she has found these particular zines useful in her work as an organizer/supporter and that the lack of publishing structures make them more effective and political.

Each of the four panels focused their analysis on forms of literature that are usually seen as ephemeral or pulp popular material (or, in the case of *Fun Home*, a work from 2006 directly responding to the classic marginalization of the graphic novels that actively works to elevate the form). The panelists’ attempts to re-claim these forms as ripe for academic analysis, particularly

analysis that focuses on issues of gender and equality, opened up fascinating lines of inquiry and pose new questions for researchers dealing with these forms of media.

Linda Juhasz-Wood is a graduate student in Cinema and Media Studies in the Department of Film, Radio and Television at UCLA.

GRRR(L) Futures: Subcultures of Rebellious Women

THE PANEL, moderated by Mishuana Goeman, Assistant Professor in the Department of Womens Studies at UCLA, looked at various iterations of rebellious women, from musicians, to academics. The presenters in this panel included Chloe Diamond-Lenow, a graduate student at UC Santa Barbara in the Department of Feminist Studies, Shelina Brown, a graduate student in the Department of Musicology at UCLA, Alice Royer, a graduate student in Cinema and Media Studies at UCLA, Jonquil Bailey, a graduate student in the Department of English at University of Virginia

TELLING STORIES ABOUT FEMINIST FUTURES: FROM ANDROCENTRISM TO ANTHROPOCENTRISM

The first presentation of the panel, given by Chloe Diamond-Lenow, examined the nature of women's studies, and all of its iterations, in an effort to argue that the feminist epistemologies and methodologies developed within women's studies can be successfully applied to other fields to produce new feminist work. In her argument, Diamond-Lenow singles out the developing field of critical animal studies as a prime area of inquiry that would benefit from the adoption of feminist epistemologies and methodologies. She also argues that work in women's studies would likewise benefit from the intellectual frameworks that critical animal studies is grounded in.

Jacques Derrida. Photo by Ben Oswest on Flickr

Critical animal studies is an academic field that, in a very simplistic sense, rejects the androcentric focus of the vast majority of academic disciplines and instead attempts to collapse the categories and boundaries that separate humans from non-humans. This particular field of study emerged, similar to women's studies, from the social justice movements focused on environmentalism that materialized in the 1960s and 70s. For a bit more context on the foundations of critical animal studies, one of field's most influential works in this field is Jacques Derrida's essay, based off of his address to the 1997 Crisy Conference, *The Animal That Therefore I Am (More to Follow)* where he says, "There is no animal in the general singular, separated from man by a single indivisible limit. We have to envisage the existence of 'living creatures' whose plurality cannot be assembled within the single figure of an animality that is simply opposed to humanity."

Diamond-Lenow, a career student of women's studies, feels that both women's studies and critical animal studies could benefit with an academic engagement with each other. She argued that with the dynamic feminist epistemologies and methodologies available in women's studies discourse combined with a history in feminist theory that questions andocentrism, women's and feminist studies engagement with critical animal studies would produce a more vigorous critical theory for feminist thinking.

She concluded her presentation by offering some suggested questions that could engage both women/feminist studies and critical animal studies. These questions include how media reports on "gay penguins" at the zoo inscribe discourses on sexuality or monogamy, how discourses frame "gay marriage" through ascribing representations of bestiality to it, or what representational politics are involved when BBC names a panda as one of its top women of the year.

COOL MOMS: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC TAKE ON CONTEMPORARY GRRL PUNK POLITICS

The panel continued with a shift away from the theoretical work of constituting academic disciplines to an exploration of identity politics in a Los Angeles-based, DIY girl punk band Cool Moms. The presenter Shelina Brown, the drummer/guitarist for Cool Moms, discussed the formation and style of the band in the context of experimenting with new forms of musical expression and redefining the roles and power structures in traditional punk rock bands. Peppered throughout the presentation were clips of the band performing to show of the musical and performance style for those who may not have been able to identify "post punk, no-wave punk rock ... 4/4 rock drum patterns...trebly guitar... dissonant bass lines" without seeing and hearing the band perform.

Brown's described the key features of the band that constituted its experimental style to display how the freedoms gained from experimentation had other, more negative side effects. When the band formed, the members decided to be experimental with the structure and musical style to curate a carefree, youthful character for the band. To accomplish this, they decided to each take up instruments that were not their primary instruments and share vocals instead of appointing a front person. These decisions opened up many musical possibilities for the band derived from simple instances like physically being in a different place while the band performs and rediscovering the excitement of learning to play a new instrument. However, "switching up instruments" is not as innocuous as it seems at first glance. In fact, Brown describes many interpersonal problems surrounding how to divvy up performance time for the bandmates that shared guitar and drum responsibilities.

Brown took the time to Pauline Oliveros' ideas about active and receptive models of music making. Brown's summation explains that in western rock bands, the guitarist and lead vocalist are often thought to be the active creative members of a band while the bassist and drummer are thought to be passive in the creative process. Also, because the drummer is often located in the back of the stage during a performance, they are then seen as the least important band-

mate. Understanding this issue, as well as other gendered conceptions of how music should be created and performed helped Cool Moms retain the experimental, feminist, youthful character they were striving for all along.

(DIGITAL) REVOLUTION GIRL STYLE NOW!: SUB-CULTURES, SOCIAL MEDIA, SUBJECTIVITY AND THE VIDEOS OF SADIE BENNING AND THIRZA CUTHAND

In this talk presenter Alice Royer looks at how subcultures, particularly feminist artists, function in today's digital society compared to the social networking from the riot grrrl subculture of the 1990's. In particular she argues that even though today's form of digital social networking could, in fact, bolster the sharing of multimedia work, there is an anemic and decentralized quality to digital subcultures when compared to the riot grrrl community.

To illustrate her point Royer takes the example of two video artists – Sadie Benning and Thirza Cuthand who both use similar cinematic techniques and autobiographical content to review how the various technologies that contribute to social networking affect their belonging to a specific community. Royer first looks at Benning's career as a video artist in the 90s and how even though the riot grrrl aesthetic permeated her work, she was always on the outskirts of that particular subculture. Royer attributes Benning's outsider status in

Cool Moms

Thirza Cuthand's blog

the riot grrrl subculture to the medium of her work, in that the riot grrrl subculture used physical ways of distributing materials and Benning's video work was diminished in the subculture, not because her work didn't fully subscribe to the riot grrrl aesthetics or she herself wasn't directly involved with other riot grrrls, but because it was more difficult to distribute her work to a large number of people. On the other side of the spectrum, Thirza Cuthand's work is quite easy to distribute to large groups of people by way of Web 2.0 social networks. However, she is not situated within a specific community or subculture, and while she promotes herself and her work online she does not have a huge community of people who follow her filmmaking activities. Royer notes that a subculture or community like riot grrrl could help a younger generation of video artists take charge of the technology they use to create social change.

A NEW KIND OF PLEASURE: FEMINIST STORYTELLING IN LIZZIE BORDEN'S *BORN IN FLAMES*

In the final presentation of the panel, Jonquil Bailey argues that Lizzie Borden's *Born in Flames* (1983), a feminist science fiction film, provides a new and unique way to portray women in film. Bailey focused her presentation on analyzing the film techniques that Borden uses throughout *Born in Flames* and how those cinematic techniques both afford the audience pleasure as

well as providing enough detachment to give the audience room to critically assess the film's female characters. Bailey also argues that the film's narrative structure and the fact that there is no one central character provides the audience with the space to focus on the film's central theme: a feminist uprising and social movement within the film's universe.

The film itself follows various members of a feminist movement in New York City during a post-social-democratic revolution era where the Social Democrats push propaganda that denies

sexism and discrimination against racial and sexual minorities. The feminist movement dubbed the Women's Army uses protests and media to shed light on the joblessness and the underrepresentation of women. Bailey argues that because the film refrains from focusing on one character to drive the story and instead moves through the narrative using multiple women in diverse situations, providing examples of women in physical demanding jobs, or of women exploring their sexuality, Borden strips the female body of naturalized meanings and creates a larger possibilities for female experience and expression within the film. Bailey also discusses how this decision to focus on many female characters rather than one gives the audience the opportunity to identify with, rather than one single woman, the category "woman."

Bailey also argues in her presentation that Borden's construction of the erotic gaze in this film breaks the power dynamic this technique usually produces by, rather than using the heterosexual man as the possessor of the gaze she lets the female characters both be subject to the gaze as well as possessors of it. Bailey claims that this new gaze, give the audience the chance to look in many different ways at the female body as well as look at the female body with new eyes. Bailey also makes it clear that though the film employs the erotic gaze, it does not do so in a

way that reduces the female characters to only their sexuality.

Ultimately, Bailey concludes that the film creatively appropriates traditional film techniques to reinforce and emphasize women's agency, women's diversity and individuality, and creates a "unique and alternative way to view women in film."

Lindsey McLean is a graduate student in the Department of Information Studies at UCLA.

Mods and Vlogs: Gender Techs

THIS panel was moderated by CSW Research Scholar Rosemary Candalario, and featured graduate students whose work investigates the connections between gender and technology in contemporary society.

Gopinaath Kannabiran, a Ph.D. student in the Department of Informatics at Indiana University, Bloomington, discussed human-computer interaction in his paper “Gender and the Design of Technology—A Critical Analysis.” Human-computer Interaction, or HCI, is a field of study that concerns itself with the design and use of technology. Kannabiran talked about how gender issues in technology design have previously been addressed in several different areas, including domestic technology, product design, virtual online environments, and software engineering. Existing

research stresses the importance of considering gender during the process of design, and suggests relevant implications for designing technology with gender in mind. The wall that scholars run into is that gender research is often viewed as a niche focus, and the insights of such research as one-off results. One major question in the field of study, Kannabiran said, is how men and women differ in their use of technology. This question is so accepted as to be part of the canon of the field; thinking outside the box is seen as an anomaly. The problem with the question, according to Kannabiran, is that it assumes a male-female gender binary. He argued that gender should be seen as a removable piece of technology design; he used LEGOs, the stacking-bricks toy, as a visual simile for the idea. The way forward in HCI is to take

non-binary genders into account, to consider not the differences between genders but how genders are formed. As Kannabiran put it, his work attempts to understand what hinders the progression of gender discourse in HCI from achieving its full potential. His method is to critically observe existing research in order to address one central question: “What do we talk about when we talk about gender?” Through Foucauldian discourse analysis, Kannabiran highlights some of the blind spots, misconceptions, and assumptions in the existing body of research, as well as what the research’s implications are. Understanding the discursive process through which gendered conceptions are realized, he said, is the required next step in addressing the concerns and issues of gender in HCI.

Perhaps appropriately, Kannabiran's presentation on gender and technology was saved by technology. When Kannabiran's flight to Los Angeles was delayed, another panel member read his paper for him. He then joined the panel via Skype video chat to answer questions and receive feedback while sitting in an airport across the country.

Sarah Ray Rondot, a Ph.D. student in English and Women's and Gender Studies at the University of Oregon, presented second. Her paper, "TransEuphoric' Vlogs: Documenting Gender Transitions on YouTube," analyzed how people use YouTube to share their gender transitions with an internet audience. She pointed out how technology's current sophistication has connected people to a greater degree than ever before, and lets them share stories that otherwise might not be heard. Rondot focused on the ability of vlogs, or video blogs, to tell personal narratives in an open and largely unmediated format. For individuals who feel that their gender identities are anti-normative, vlogging can be a mode of resistance against one's position in a hegemonic society. As Rondot pointed out, vloggers feel free to tell the truth about their feelings and bodies on YouTube, even if they must lie to doctors, psychiatrists, or other authorities for a variety of reasons. The medical profession tends to make gender all about biology. Vlogging combats this by being a potent method of performing and presenting gender, creating and legitimizing new identities, asking questions, giving answers, and actively defying the medicaliza-

tion and pathologization of gender "dysphoria." Vloggers use technology to ask why they must fit into defined gender rolls; video posts foreground body work, evoking feelings of authenticity since the vloggers' agency depends on physicality. Trans-vloggers often document their lives, hormone shifts, and where they fall on the male/female spectrum. Speaking about trans-vloggers, Rondot referred to Judith Butler's work, which posits gender as an ongoing citation process. Vlogs are thus one significant tool with which vloggers gain representational value, cultural currency, and self- and group validation. Perhaps most significantly, Rondot showed how over time YouTube has become and continues becoming a lasting archive of videos and vlogs documenting gender transitions with which current as well as future audiences can connect and watch.

Erin English, a Ph.D. student in American Studies at Rutgers University, gave the panel's final presentation. Her paper, "(Post)Mods and Rockers: Subcultural Aesthetics, Disabled Girlhood, and Queer Becomings in *We Are the Mods*," uses the titular film as an entry point into examining the connections between bodies of flesh—especially the "deformed" body of a teenage girl—and what English calls "technologies of subcultural becoming." In the case of the film, these technologies take the form of self-fashioning through scooter riding, vintage fashions, and sexuality. *We Are the Mods* tells the story of two young female students, one a naïve, androgy-

nous outsider, the other a mod fashionista with a prominent physical disability, who become sexually involved. English noted that "mod" in her paper refers to 1960s British youth subculture as well as modification as a practice of assemblage, pointing to a scene in the film in which the latter girl acquires a Vespa scooter by taking advantage of someone's sexual fetishization of her disability. English explained that her paper draws on recent work in feminist disability studies that takes a Deleuzian approach to desire. In this context, desire comes into being through DeleuzoGuattarian "desiring machines," which destabilize binarisms, including male/female, active/passive, and organic/inorganic, thought to be integral to understanding sexuality. This method defies the idea of disabled bodies and girls' bodies being non-sexual, and instead claims that their disorganization and contiguities with an array of others—significantly, as English points out, inanimate others such as, in the film, a cane or scooter—allows the breaching of corporeal boundaries to explore past the limits of the body. As with the panel's other presentations, English's paper questioned the concept of gender and sexuality as binaries. Queerness, English said, is not an orientation. She posed the question of what makes a "queer kid," and argued that the experience of "queer kids" needs more study and attention.

Josh Olejarz is a graduate student in the Cinema and Media Studies Program at UCLA.

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