TRANS AFFECTS:
PERFORMANCE, TECHNOLOGY, AND THE RACIALIZATION OF FEMININITY

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ABSTRACT

Ali Na: Trans Affects: Performance, Technology, and the Racialization of Femininity
(Under the direction of Della Pollock)

Recognizing performance and technology as entangled modes of bodily expression, *Trans Affects: Performance, Technology, and the Racialization of Femininity* examines how Western tropes of Asian and Asian American femininity continue to shape differently sexed and gendered bodies. Drawing on Asian and Asian American artists in relation to U.S. contexts, this study enacts close readings of performances of hypersexuality, drag, and the trans body as they intersect with photography, Internet culture, multimedia installations, viral videos, biomedia, and emerging technologies. Specifically, the dissertation focuses on four contemporary artists: Laurel Nakadate, Ming Wong, Luo, and Yozmit. Employing "*trans"* as a theoretical lens to highlight affective capacities of art, I argue that "trans affects" in these performances resist the binary choice to either reject tropes or accept them as totalizing. The set of artists I explore do not engage in direct opposition to the stereotypes or tropes forwarded by processes of racialized femininity. Instead, they operate in more diffuse modes of affirmation, destabilization, confusion, and play, pointing to the possibilities that indeterminacy might offer politics and ethics. Trans affects accounts for the temporal crossings of affect and the political resistances of trans. As such, trans affects offers modes both of reading and politics. This study employs critical cultural methodologies, historically situating

contemporary medial performances in cultural, linguistic, and political context. Through critical race/ethnic studies, queer theory, trans studies, and feminist theory, this interdisciplinary project demonstrates how performing and media-making might counter dominant normativizing modes of representation. Where scholarship on performance and technology has tended to eschew connections amongst race, gender, and sexuality, this project advances a comparative account of transnational racialized femininity in women, men, and those who defy the gender/sex binary. Moreover, where Asian and Asian American gender and sexuality studies have tended to focus on problems of representation, this dissertation offers tactics for resistance.

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What would it mean to engage the native boy as "Asian American" Asian diasporic,"and/or "postcolonial" in a queer, national, and transnational context? Would it only reiterate the critical interest on the complex white man and relegate the native boy to different states of erasure, mediocrity, or even unrecognizability? Conversely, would his visibility only perpetuate the stereotype of an emasculated Asian male in the U.S. context or reinscribe the colonial notion of Asian nations as under developed and needing guidance? […] Caught between a rock and a hard place, the Gay Asian Princess sashays her way onto center stage and declaims in mock anguish, "Are you diasporically fucked in the United States? Well, then bring on the drama!" (Lim 2014, 143).

The problem I address in this dissertation is the static and totalizing power of the racialization of femininity.

When Edward Said articulates Orientalism as "historically and materially defined" "as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient," he points primarily to scholarship from the late 18th Century on (Said 1979, 3), but Orientalist forms of knowledge construction certainly predate the 18th Century, particularly when we expand our scope beyond the scholarly setting. Taking Said's work as foundational, this dissertation attends to the entanglements of race, gender, and sexuality as they relate to femininity.[1] In the long

1 I return throughout the dissertation to the idea of entanglement in its everyday usage and as aligned with the scholarship in Chris Salter's history of performance and technology practices *Entangled: Technology and the Transformation of Performance* and Rey Chow's *Entanglements, or Transmedial Thinking About Capture*. My

history of Western constructions of Asian femininity, the primary distinguishing factors are otherization and subjugation. Such subjugating knowledges imbricate race or ethnicity with femininity, regardless of gender or sex.

One of the earliest examples of the racialization of Asian femininity comes from the Greeks. In 400 BCE Hippocrates wrote, "the Asiatic race is feeble" (Hippocrates 1952, 15), specifically citing the Scythians (an Iranic ethnic group) whose many eunuchs "perform female work, and speak like women. Such persons are called effeminates." Hippocrates also referred to many persons who, seized by feebleness and impotence, "go in to women and cannot have connection with them" after which, "fancying they have committed some offence against the god whom they blame for the affection, they put on female attire, reproach for themselves effeminacy, play the part of women, and perform the same work as women do" (17). These quotations point to the denigration of femininity itself. The body of the woman serves as a model for femininity but does not limit its effects. Femininity becomes a marker not of particular bodies, but of the "Asiatic race" and, as Said describes, the question of power lies at the root of these Orientalist depictions. Hippocrates forwards the Scythians' femininity as a reason why they want to be conquered and thus should be overtaken. By making femininity synonymous with weakness and innate to race, Hippocrates' construction serves to provide the rationale for oppression and conquest.

If Hippocrates marks an early predecessor to Western constructions of "Asiatic" femininity, the early Chinese diaspora in the United States serves as an early formative circumstance of Asian American feminine capture. Early sexed representations of the Chinese

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work in this dissertation is in resonance but not specifically engaged with entanglement theory, such as that of Karen Barad's *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*.

along the West Coast fell primarily into two categories. The first was effeminate men, in which men were broadly conceived of as like women, defined as undersexed in comparison to those realizing proper masculine sexuality. The second was women as prostitutes, portrayed as hypersexed relative to norms of properly contained sexuality. These two constructions worked in tandem to inscribe femininity as insidious to white American values.

Few women immigrated from China in the early diaspora – a comparative disjuncture that was simultaneously overstated, erased, and taken as an impetus for exaggerating the prevalence of sex work. Before the Second World War, the Chinese women that came to San Francisco (the largest site of trans Pacific immigration in the United States) were not numerous, and those who did were categorized as either "large-footed" (Roberts Coolidge 1909, 19) or "prostitutes." The "large-footed" women were considered undesirable and were masculinized in order to explain why they applied a work ethic associated with men.[2] By casting these women outside the realm of acceptable understandings of the feminine, such representations served to deride and to dismiss their existence. Generally, Chinese women were ignored in historical accounts and societal discourses because the general public was more enraptured and repulsed by women involved in commercialized sex work. Historians acknowledge that it is likely that perceptions of prostitution clashed with the actual percentage of the female population employed in sex work (Peffer 1999, 7). The majority of the ethnic commercial sex workers during the early diaspora were young girls from Hong Kong, Canton; some may have been kidnapped while others were drawn to the prospect of a new land of economic opportunity (Ling 1998, 55). What is clearer about sex workers during the time is that very few lived the lives of concubines or purchased mistresses. Instead, San Francisco served as an auction site where the girls were

2 The distinction by the idea of foot size here also points to the practices of foot binding as associated with class.

stripped of their clothes, to be bid on in the barracoons (places of auction for illicit "goods") (55).[3] While speaking in San Francisco in 1872, Senator Cornelius Cole inscribed the root of Chinese undesirability in gender and sex: "I have no fear of the Chinese overrunning this continent, and yet when I look upon a certain class of Chinese who come to this land—I mean the females—who are the most undesirable of population, who spread disease and moral death among our white population, I ask myself the question, whether or not there is a limit to this class of immigrants" (Peffer 1999, 75).[4] The exaggerated feminine void also worked to inscribe Chinese men as feminine. Chinese men were ridiculed and criticized for involving themselves in "women's work" – reifying the boundaries of what it is to be woman while placing Chinese men in the pejorative category of the inferior sex. After many Chinese were forced out of mining by unjust ordinances and widespread violence, they turned to other openings in laundries and homes —often as nannies. In 1878, the California State Senate report announced, "The Chinese washerman has taken the place of the white washerwoman. He has usurped the place of the white girl in families" (California State Legislature 1878, 50). In this construction, racialized femininity poses a threat to the structuration of white feminine roles in society.

As with Hippocrates, these constructions of racialized femininity served to secure power. In the case of the early Chinese diaspora in the United States, this power was made manifest in legislation and mob violence. Beginning in 1868, the Burlingame Treaty attempted to address

3 For further reading on stereotypes and counternarratives, see Judy Yung's *Unbound Feet*, pages 15-68 and *Unbound Voices*, pages 9-171. Also, see Annette White-Parks' piece "Beyond the Stereotypes: Chinese Pioneer Women in the West," in *Writing the Range: Race, Class, and culture in the Women's West*.

4 These constructions further served to vilify Chinese culture as the origin of the taint of otherized femininity. W.J. Shaw, a "distinguished citizen of the state" reported to the California State Senate that, "The women in China occupy the same position as in most parts of Asia—virtually slaves, mere creatures to pander to the wishes of males, and promote their happiness" (California State Legislature 1878, 25). Not only was Shaw referring to the brothels, but he also brought his generalization to a level that insinuated innateness to the actions of Chinese women. For further reading on complications of gender in Confucian writings see, "Editors Introduction," in *Under Confucian Eyes: Writings on Gender in Chinese History,* Mann, Susan and Yu-Yin Cheng, eds., (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 1-8.

concerns of Chinese immigration; the Page Act of 1875 was even more clearly geared towards Chinese sex work. The two catalyzed the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, derived from negatively-charged emotional appeals and moral superiority. The report of the California State Senate on the "Evils of Chinese Immigration" was a rallying call to "good white citizens" warning that, "*Their touch is pollution,* and as harsh as the opinion may seem, *justice to our own race demands that they should not be allowed to settle on our soil*" (California State Legislature 1878, 32). Following the logics of legislative acts, mobs were marshaled along the West Coast. A notable example was that of the Tacoma Method. On November 1, 1885 an order delivered by Mayor Weisbach called on Chinese to leave the city, and 150 members of the diaspora left Tacoma, headed for Portland and Vancouver BC. On November 3, 1885 a mob fell upon Chinatown and gathered 200 of the Chinese who remained in their homes on 7th and Pacific Ave.[5] They were then marched to the train station in Lakeview while Chinatown and anyone who might have remained there were burned to the ground.

The power of the Chinese Exclusion act underscored the effects of the racialization of femininity through white moral opinion. In *Bodies That Matter,* Judith Butler articulates the perilous outcomes of illegible construction: "Viewing and understanding the body as constructed fashions a realm in which bodies are painfully limited to subsist in a binary of the 'livable' and 'unlivable' bodies" (Butler 1993, xi-xii). The morality of the unlivable feminine raced body is preached by B. E. Loyd in his description of San Francisco's Chinatown: "[L]icentiousness, debauchery, pollution, loathsome disease, insanity from dissipation, misery, poverty, wealth, profanity, blasphemy and death, are there. And Hell, yawning to receive the putrid mass, is there

5 Some accounts note that two died of exposure (as the group marched in the rain) and one woman was driven insane by distress (Alexander Karlin 1978).

also" (Matsubara 2003, 34). From this distinction arises a call to action spearheaded by the anti-Chinese protests in Seattle between 1885 and 1886: "War! War! War! The Chinese must go!" (Alexander Karlin 1978, 105) was the war cry screamed to the ears of all who would hear that these unlivable bodies, inimical to the domain of "good citizenry," needed to be eliminated.

In both classical Greece and 19th century Chinese exclusion in the United States, the Orient manifests as feminine. 'Orient' stems from the Latin o*riens*, meaning 'east,' and marks everything East of Greece. Though often synonymous with the regions that comprise the geographical area known as the Middle East, the Orient has, in the United States in particular, been extended to thinking about East Asia (and later Southeast and South Asia). As Said remarks, "Americans will not feel quite the same about the Orient, which for them is much more likely to be associated very differently with the Far East (China and Japan, mainly)" (Said 1979, 1). My project takes up this American perspective critically as a locus both for projections Eastward and for the linkages that map such projections onto Asian Americans. I examine Asia and Asian America from within the context of the United States.[6] My dissertation engages the following ethnicities made manifest through individual artists in these geopolitical places respectively: fourth generation mixed race Japanese American in the U.S.; Taiwanese in Taiwan as then taken up in the U.S.; Singaporean in Singapore and Italy as connected to Germany and the U.S. as manifest in the three major ethnic groups: Chinese, Malay, and Indian; Korean diasporic in the U.S.; Japanese diasporic in the U.S.; and second generation Chinese American in the U.S..

Recognizing the risk of retrospective that Dorrine Kondo describes, namely the potential

6 The disciplines of Asian Studies and Asian American Studies from the U.S. setting have faced generative critique. See for example Kandice Chuh and Karen Shimakawa's edited volume *Orientations*, especially pages 7-9. With these criticisms in mind, I remain critically aware of my positionality within these fields and practice an anti-colonialist stance throughout my analysis.

disciplinary policing that might come of aligning one's personal experience with the group identities under consideration (Chuh and Shimakawa 2001, 25), I nonetheless offer a brief lineage of this project. First, I emerge out of Area Studies. I was originally trained in Asian Studies with a focus on the political economies of China and Southeast Asia.[7] I then moved into the politics of diaspora studies and postcolonial theory. As a graduate student, I shifted my focus to performance and media studies with an emphasis on tropes of Orientalism in relation to East and Southeast Asia and its diaspora. Along the way, I became invested in the status of the Asian American. My research interests have always taken up these fields in relation to sex, gender, and sexuality. Second, I am a second generation multiracial Korean American.[8] Asian America is not a unified and delineated place, set of cultures, or people anymore than Asia is. I am, however, compelled by its entanglements, configurations, and imaginaries as spurred by lines of physical mobility, cultural shifts, and digital connectivities. I do not approach Asian America as a site of blurred categories or knowable objects of mastery. In my usage of both terms – 'Asian' and 'America' – I mean to point to the ways in which they are mobilized continually to stand in for a set of representations which are simultaneously informed by and related to disparate places, cultures, and peoples.

The problem that emerges from Western constructions of Asian and Asian American femininity is the totalization of a static identity as a means of exercising threat and oppression. Race and femininity become entwined in order to sediment and to enable continued logics and

7 As Kondo describes, it is a generally rare move to begin in Asian Studies and move to Asian American Studies, as she did. I would not characterize my studies as a move, but as an expansion and set of imbricated issues.

8 I acknowledge this because my experiences and those of my family inevitably influence my understanding of Asian America and Asian diaspora. Further, some scholars have critiqued the identity position of East Asian Americans in American Studies as complicit with U.S. Imperialism. Also, I write second generation in accordance with norms of generational immigration tracking. My mother is a Korean national living in the United States; she does not identify as a Korean American.

practices of cultural domination. The Orient becomes feminine through articulations of power and femininity and is further entrenched as disposable and valueless. Thus, this project seeks to affirm femininity without stabilizing the racialization of femininity as a tool of subjugation. Much scholarship has traced representations of hypersexualized women or effeminate men, but femininity is not delimited by sex or gender; the femininity that is taken to render the Asiatic and the Asian American as inferior or pliable to conquest moves across, within, and between bodies. In addressing these connectivities, then, I examine the racialization of femininity across bodies of men, women, and those who defy the gender binary. At the same time, in thinking at the limits and discontinuities of bodies, I approach Western constructions of Asian and Asian American femininity *across* and *beyond* geographical entanglement. Such crossings bring me to the term "trans" as a theoretical opening.

On Trans

Trans, as a prefix comes from the Latin and means "across, to or on the farther side of, beyond, over" (OED 2017). Trans connotes movement and excess between dualistic, binary, or dichotomous poles. In this dissertation, I lean on trans as a means of mobilizing the relationship between various oppositions or mutually exclusive areas, not by collapsing the two but by activating crossings and by pushing at the limits of their boundaries. Trans acknowledges the boundaries that limit its passage. "Trans-Asian," for instance, figures the vastness of the Asian continent in a sense of relationality as process rather than as a geographical span per se. It is across. Across from that which stabilizes the locus of the subject—across from the Americas, across from Western Europe in Trans-Atlantic, across from Asia Pacific in Trans-Pacific. Trans situates two positions caught in power and domination. The trans in "Trans-Atlantic" points to

the crossing of the waters, its histories, and its atrocities in the slave trade. This trans is movement that is deeply entwined in history. Trans is both the process and also the distance.

However, the formation of trans as across is limited in its teleological or static condition. If trans only means to go from one thing to the other as caught in networks of power, it fails to provide resistance to those static poles of distinction. In order to address this, I combine the popular understanding of trans as across with its meaning as "on the farther side of, beyond." By thinking of the active form of trans as crossings that also push beyond and to the other side, I advocate a conception of trans that does not rely on telos and limited movement. Trans offers a way of attending to the entanglements and differences within, between, and beyond Asian America and Asia. Trans is movement and the carrying of language and ways of knowing—translation and transcription. This is the trans, for example, in "transhuman" – exploring an idea of being beyond the human, on the far side of what we can conceptualize as human. It is an unlocatable horizon that points to the limits of the current paradigm of thought. Trans is overflow and excess, transcending the confirmed *status quo.*

In addition to the prefix, trans is also used in the adjectival form. In the U.S., trans has come to be shorthand for transsexual, transgender, and transvestite (OED 2017). This use of trans as an abbreviation points to the ways in which the Latin term itself transitions through time and place. The U.S. emphasis on trans as a stand-in for transsexual and transgender (less frequently in contemporary times for transvestite) puts the history of the term into contact with contemporary issues of sex and gender as codified by American and Western social norms, which establish sex and gender as a correlative binary: male sex vs female sex as discrete categories that link respectively to man as masculine and woman as feminine. Trans evokes a non-

conformity of gender and sex, an excess, deviation from the norm, or the collapse of binary and prescriptive societal positions. In writing about the racialization of femininity across differently gendered and sexed bodies, trans signals a non-binary approach, an understanding that the relationships between sex and gender do not operate in static, uniform, or predictable ways. My use of trans is not meant to widen the term transgender, but rather to account for resonant understandings of normative gender/sex resistance that are not captured in the meaning of transgender. Trans does not make transgender into a diffuse category but crosses into and beyond transgender, accounting for bodies that are not strictly transgender but nonetheless destabilize gender/sex binarism. My project looks to disruptions of normative gender by feminine women, feminine men, and feminine persons who defy the gender binary. I approach this by accounting for the intersections of the meanings of trans in relation to three points of contact: the racialization of femininity, performance, and technology.

Racialization and Trans

Racialization plays heavily into expectations of gender/sex conformity. My project examines Asian and Asian American performers and media makers, necessitating a trans perspective on localities and globalizations. It is imperative to consider geography and cultural exchange given the demands that codified histories of gender/sex put on racialized bodies. In the Asian American context, femininity has been established across sexed bodies through the histories of stereotyped U.S. representation (e.g. Yellow Peril as dangerous femininity in film from Anna May Wong in early 20th century U.S. to Lucy Liu in contemporary Hollywood), cultural framing in politics and social narratives (e.g. U.S. immigration practices of sexual and moral purity in 19th century or contemporary American perceptions of Chinese women and

“anchor babies”), and classed position as gendered through labor practices (e.g. Chinese male nannies in the late 19th century U.S. or contemporary Filipina nannies as a national global export). Trans attends to the movements that occur in the passage of immigration and is extended through the racialization of gender as a historical movement of accumulation. Trans provides a theoretical opening into a way of thinking that sees such established codes of femininity as static, rather than shifting and transposed onto multiple surfaces.

Trans is uniquely suited to analyzing Asian and Asian American femininity because femininity has not been isolated to coding woman as extended from the female sex. Scholars such as David Eng have noted how the Asian American man is conflated with the anus, making him penetrable (Eng 2001). In other words, femininity here functions to make men “like women.” Along similar lines, Kondo has noted that Western constructions fashion the Orient as a woman (Kondo 1990). Thus femininity becomes the key feature of gender, regardless of sex, in constructions of Asian America. Femininity is also keenly sexed and sexualized. Eng's analysis demonstrates the implied sexuality of the Asian American man, while Celine Parreñas Shimizu argues that Asian/American women's sexuality has always been considered excessive and so doubly pressed to conform to prescribed notions of femininity (Parreñas Shimizu 2008). Given these prevalent tropes and their complex transpositions, then, there is limited potential in simply rejecting or inverting the sexualization of Asians and Asian Americans. Parreñas Shimizu cautions against a rejection of sexuality, which would remake Asian/American women as frigid and incapable of expressing or owning their sexuality. Likewise, Eng rejects Asian Americans who have employed homophobia and misogyny in order to rearticulate Asian American masculinity. This project aims to explore the more productive strategy of rendering visible and

thus enabling the rearticulation of these transpositions of femininity. Toward this end, trans provides a connective thread to rethink the broad circulation of Asian and Asian American femininity across differently sexed and gendered bodies.

Examining the Asian diaspora in the U.S. context is insufficient to account for the complex ways that bodies are made, fashioned, viewed, and consumed. In terms of transgender and transsexual analysis, Asia is often marked as a place of gender/sex disruption (so that, for example, Thailand is known as a hub for sex change operations and "ladyboys"); however, this scholarship is often isolated from transnational connection and little scholarship examines transgender Asian Americans. The practices of Trans Asian travel for ladyboy entertainment and sex change operations rearticulates not only the cultural exchanges between queer and gender non-conforming Asian Americans, but also how Asian Americans are viewed in relation to Asian countries. As Lisa Lowe argues, the Asian American is seen as a perpetual foreigner (Lowe 1996) and thus always tied to the mythic Asia – mythic in the sense that Asia is seen as a unitary point of origin.

The movement of diaspora is not isolable to one country or region. For instance, one of the works I engage with from artist Ming Wong explores the three primary ethnicities of Singapore (Malay, Indian, and Chinese) in relation to a filmic retelling of a U.S. film about biracial (black and white) passing. The piece demonstrates the limits of a Southeast Asian approach that ignores South Asian or East Asian influence. It is Trans Asian, necessarily bringing the Asian American diaspora into contact with questions of African American histories of passing. Thus, trans in the Asian context opens the political into the geographical crossings and movements amongst Asia and Asian America. It highlights the transitivity of Asian and Asian

Americans culturally and regionally, indicating cultural exchanges that often happen in transitional spaces of identity and that are transposed through time-lags of diasporic framing or interpretation from the outside. The trans of Trans Asian explores the limitations of bounded difference and the shared markers of identification, both personal and imposed.

The Turn to Performance and Technology

The current literature on Asian and Asian American gender and sexuality predominantly analyzes representation – notably cultural presentations in literature, film, and theater. I draw on and build from this work by situating my chapters in relation to cultural and political representational practices. I highlight tactics for resisting static and totalizing constructions of racialized femininity by looking to the possibilities of disruption in performance and technology works by Asian and Asian American artists. My engagement is in assessing resistance, performativity, self representation, and the complexities therein.

Increasingly, bodies are known and expressed through performance and performative acts in conjunction with media technologies. If we understand performance, particularly in its unscripted or self-scripted manifestations, as a means of enacting reconfigurations or disruptions of identity by generating conversations between one's body and the world viewing it, then we must attend to the question of the media forms through which such conversations take place. Today more than ever, many performance artists appear discontent with a traditional conception of media technologies as being in a state of permanent contrast with the performing body. The proliferation of media access as well the increasingly transitive nature of digital technologies – what Wendy Hui Kyong Chun has isolated as a mounting emphasis on "updating to remain the same" (Chun 2016) – has contributed to an understanding of media as outlets for creative

expression rather than technologies of simple documentation. Thus, unlike what Diana Taylor describes as a divide between the archive and the repertoire (Taylor 2003) – that is, between technologies of documentation and bodily practices – the tendency of newer media forms toward degeneration and impermanence has increasingly been understood as enhancing rather than delimiting the work of live performance.

As such, I approach trans in relation to Asian and Asian American performers and media makers. I contextualize them in relation to prevailing notions of the racialization of femininity and offer their work as trans interventions into Orientalist gender/sex connections. The artists I engage in this dissertation deploy performance, media, and technology in deeply connected ways. I approach performance and technology with a transdisciplinary attention to the crossings and extensions between and at the limits of each field. Trans is a heuristic that has deeply affected the fields of both performance and media & technology studies, and I map out these elements through the dissertation. In assessing the political possibilities for unsettling the stasis and totalizing power of the racialization of power, I look to what medial performances do and what affects they produce. The research questions that I attend to throughout the dissertation are: what are the performers, performances, and technologies doing? What are the affective politics that emerge from the medial performances? How might those affects destabilize the stasis and totalizing power of tropes of racialized femininity? These questions take seriously what performance and technology work has to offer theory.

Trans Affects

What emerges from the performers' work is what I call “trans affects.” Trans affects combine the non-teleological power of trans with affect as a political force for disrupting

sedimented thought. Trans affects attend to what these bodies do and what affective capacities of art arise from this doing, thus providing a way of examining not only the imbrications of technology and performance but also the ways in which resistances of codified racialized femininity might function. Trans affects create fluidity across the tensions between performance and technology studies; this liquid movement makes room for the bends and turns in the flowing course of scholarship beyond strict disciplinary boundaries.

Contemporary affect studies is increasingly split into two dualistic expressions of the body: 1) the synaptic or extralinguistic and 2) the emotional. In the first, affect occurs within a fraction of a second (Hansen 2006); this form of affect happens at the level of the extralinguistic and what Gilles Deleuze refers to as the virtual (Massumi 2002). Both the philosophical and cognitive neuroscientific work around affect in this lineage sever affect from emotion. The second field of affect studies muddles this immediacy and separation from emotion, instead focusing on the affective experiences that happen before, alongside, and in place of nameable emotion (Ngai 2005; Ahmed 2010). The divide in affect studies characterizes the two expressions as mutually exclusive: the synaptic response is immediate, before cognitive processing and articulation, whereas the emotional is digested and discursively delineated. This division does not account for trans as a movement that engages in crossings and working beyond dualistic poles. I argue that this divide problematically curtails experience of medial performance and the duration of time as a trans movement. "Duration is always the location and the environment of differences in kind; it is even their totality and multiplicity" (Deleuze 1991, 32). Duration aligns as a trans movement. I propose a non-teleological reading of trans that embraces its multiplicity of movements and temporal experiences. By approaching trans affect in this way,

I seek to explore how affect manifests in multiple ways that are not uniformly connected. Trans affect thus accounts for the synaptic responses and the uncertainty of feeling that arise from and in relation to performance.

Patricia Clough argues that the emotional understanding of affect, through a teleological connection, reduces affect to a means to reach an end product of feelings (Clough 2010). Her argument mirrors the traditional understanding of trans as a singular movement across. In light of Clough's criticism, my approach to affect does not make emotion the end product of the first form of affect. Instead, my understanding of affect is three-fold: Affect, as it appears in this dissertation, refers simultaneously to the immediate and extra-linguistic reaction to stimuli; the realm of the emotional, but particularly where emotions escape or resist definition; and the non-teleological crossings that entangle these first two senses. What emerges in the dissertation is a set of medial performances that enact affective response in modes that cannot be easily disentangled as singular, chronological, premeditated, or causal. Short-circuiting the directionality of use that arises from this telos, I offer trans affect as a concept that addresses the precognitive and continued affective experience. How might performance invoke affective relation that sometimes has a lasting field of experience that does not rise to the level of nameable and knowable emotions? Specifically focusing on the racialization of femininity across differently gendered and sexed bodies, I begin to explore trans affect as a theoretical extension of and political contribution to performance and its entanglements with technology.

Trans is a motility across, a transient process that disrupts what Elizabeth Freeman calls chrononormativity (Freeman 2010). Chrononormativity functions to organize bodies towards maximal productivity through adherence to societal norms. For Freeman, a trans critique of

normativity works towards an alternative understanding of temporality. And the question of temporality cuts to the heart of trans affects because affect is, in large part, defined in relation to time. While each wing of affect studies seeks to define affect on its own terms, as either extralinguistic or emotional, the distinction between the two understandings hinges on the question of immediacy – that is, whether affect refers to the immediate or the lasting. Picking up on the resistances to normative time and its demands on non-normative bodies, I look to trans affects to cross performing sexualities through disruptive practices and unruly bodies. Affect, as temporally explored in trans, does not bind itself off from one expression to the next. Instead, it operates in a slippage that moves in a non-teleological relationship to proposed dualisms. Trans is on the other side of or beyond; as such, it acknowledges the political limitations across which it moves, but trans is not fully bound by such normative demands. Trans affect thus accounts for the temporal crossings of affect and the political resistances of trans.

Trans Affective medial performance and the racialization of femininity

I propose trans affect as an emergent critical lens, a theoretical amplifier, and a way to feel around and into the work of four contemporary artists: Laurel Nakadate, Ming Wong, Luo, and Yozmit. I focus on these artists because they all affirm femininity while disrupting its static and totalizing racialization. They do so in resonant ways that explore affective experience and the uncertainty of crossings while pushing at the limits of gender, sex, and sexuality. They simultaneously affirm femininity and critique its exclusionary uses. Their politics operate indirectly in complex ways that yield moving and multiple forms of Asian and Asian American femininity. I examine four artists in the body of the dissertation (I theorize with two more artists in the conclusion: Haruko Nishimura of the Degenerate Art Ensemble and Wu Tsang) in order to

take seriously the ways in which the performances are working and doing femininity otherwise. I am interested in how these four artists offer something to reevaluating constructions of Orientalized femininity. Accordingly, I delve deeply into their works, dwelling in their medial performances. I look to the tactics they offer not as a distilled conglomeration of artistic trends, but as possibilities that engage deeply with cultural formation and subordination. As such, the dissertation is necessarily limited in scope, offering tactics as possibilities rather than prescriptions. These tactics are valid in that they produce productive provocative possibilities, not because these performance tactics are practiced en masse as a cultural phenonomenon across a region of like artists. In order to avoid recreating a totalizing or indulging an "authentic" rebuttal to racialized femininity, I do not attempt to account for all Asian and Asian American performance, even as represented regionally or ethnically.

Nakadate, Wong, Luo, and Yozmit necessitate a trans affective approach along two primary lines: 1) the politics of intelligibility 2) the entanglements of performance and technology.

First, to the extent that the racialization of femininity is a codified demand that bodies be societally intelligible, trans affect provides a method for exploring the political possibilities of performance work that destabilizes the codes of the body. The project examines femininity in relation to Asian and Asian American women, men, and persons who defy the categories of woman and/or man. Trans affect attends to the connectivity across such bodies—the temporal loops and sedimentations of notions of racialized femininity alongside the excesses of the performing body. Nakadate's work embodies her ancestry and performs into memory by rethinking the bounded intimate relations of femininity. It both engages affective aesthetics and

the affect of negative feeling that often lingers for those who encounter her works. This sense of immediacy and prolonged affect brings the need for trans affect into relation with the question of racial intelligibility. Yozmit is a man and is a woman. As such, it is necessary to place his performances in connection with histories of the feminization of Asian and Asian American women and men. Trans affect attends to the temporal transience of these circulations that are not simply additive but conjunctive and transformative. Yozmit demonstrates how his body exceeds the normative demands of time and transition. Yozmit enacts temporal crossings in the face of the configuration of her body as deviant.

The second emphasis that the artists bring forth in relation to trans affect is the entanglements of performance and technology. Each of the artists performs through, with, and/or alongside technology. From Nishimura's technique of looping recorded *butoh* with apparatuses to Wong's intervention into world cinema through multi-media performance installations, technology is entwined with performance. Performance has been predominantly hailed for its ephemerality (Phelan 1993) while technology has been generally constituted as a thing (Slack and Wise 2005). Much scholarship has amended and rejected these positions. In performance studies, scholars have sought to undercut Phelan's position (Auslander 1999), to note that liveness has an undue burden on bodies of color (Muñoz 1999), and to demonstrate that performance remains in and beyond its documentation (Schneider 2011). I endeavor to examine medial performances not as ephemera but as active affective processes by working across performance and media/technology studies. Bodies perform. Human and media bodies express and enact their deeds and identities through performance. I am less concerned with disappearance than with the affective process therein entailed. Moreover, I forward medial

performances not as performing bodies with technology, but as an expansion of the very notion of bodies. Alongside a Deleuzian understanding of bodies, I look to the ways in which technologies perform with and alongside the artists I analyze. These artists trouble strict distinctions through political affects of form. Trans affects open up the intimacies between forms through a temporal experience of performance technology works. Both the content of racialized femininity and the form of performance illustrate the transtemporality of trans affect in that both operate across times and experiences of time by reaching towards atemporal influxes of histories and enacting an opening beyond normative time.

Method

Methodologically, I combine critical theories of difference and cultural studies to examine performance and media technology as sites of political possibility and struggle. In order to ask questions of political resistance, it is necessary to attend to context. I situate myself in relation to cultural studies through an engagement with cultural histories of immigration, migration, language, and representation. I mark the context of these contemporary artists as occurring in multiple periods of history and through many facets of society. To analyze how these social formations influence and are influenced by performance and technology works, I investigate how related cultural practices are solidified through systems of power with attention to norms of sexuality, gender, nation, and ethnicity/race. Looking to the cultural forces that produce racialized femininity enables me to ask: what might affective politics of performance do to networks of normativity at the level of perpetuation and reception? I examine cultural practices as fluctuating and transnationally informed. Following the political connectivities of society and resistance, I put the performances into conversation with relevant historical, cultural,

and geographical contexts.

My investments in theories of queerness, feminism, critical ethnic studies, and diaspora drive my turn to critical cultural studies.[9] In addition to my commitments in questions of politics and affect, this dissertation is informed by and indebted to many areas of scholarship. Critical ethnic studies, Asian American Studies, Inter-Asia Studies, and diaspora studies each contribute invaluably to my transnational Asian American studies approach. Queer Theory and Queer of color critique frame my analysis on sexuality, and in line with José Esteban Muñoz's approach to queer of color performance, I write about both race and sexuality because I cannot write about one without the other (Muñoz 1999, 10). I continually return implicitly and explicitly to feminist scholarship, predominantly in the form of queer materialist feminist thought and transnational feminisms.[10]

In enacting a critical cultural studies method, performance is a process and a field of study that assembles my thought. I am interested in what performance – as a means of analysis, but more importantly as an assemblage of actions – is doing. I emphasize the body as engaged in performance as politically relevant and powerful. My analytic attention is to those processes that are resistant to all that constrains the creation, enactment, and reception of performance. As such, I take seriously Joshua Takano Chambers-Letson's observation that "partitioned critical approaches" fail to account for the ways in which performance, law, media, and cultural history

9 I build out of Cultural Studies. In particular, I take the work of Stuart Hall to be implicitly influential in my approach to questions of representation, power, and politics. However, my work is more readily aligned with critical cultural studies as practiced by scholars such as Sara Ahmed, as I do not turn explicitly to conjunctural analysis (which is distinct from but related to my analysis of performance in cultural historical context), the Frankfurt School of critical theory, or the Birmingham School more generally.

10 Some of the major feminist theorists that influence this dissertation are: Sara Ahmed, Rosi Braidotti, Judith Butler, Rey Chow, Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan, Elizabeth Grosz, Jack Halberstam, Luce Irigaray, Elizabeth Povinelli, Jasbir Puar, Celine Parreñas Shimizu, and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak.

mutually affect one another (Chambers-Letson 2013, 5). I enact a close reading practice of the performances because I am interested in the tactics offered by particular works. As such, I do not turn to methodological models in anthropology or ethnography.

In addition to drawing on key theories and theorists in performance studies, the performances of Nakadate, Luo, Wong, and Yozmit have important inheritances from performance art. Performance art is by nature difficult to define but characterized, as RoseLee Goldberg suggests, by politics, identity, the body as medium in space and time, unpredictability, and provocation (Goldberg 2001; Goldberg 2004). Performance art can be traced back at least to Italian Futurism, but has taken up questions of feminine, queer, and raced bodies in particular in its manifestations after the 1960's.[11] Artists such as Carolee Schneeman and Karen Finley have pushed the limits of women's bodies and their (non)acceptance in society.[12] Ana Mendieta's performance work has mobilized the feminine as a political force for disruption while also engendering questions of gender violence, racial difference, nature, and form.[13] Stemming from such work, performance scholarship has readily taken up issues of feminine, raced, and queer expression and bodies. Muñoz's work highlights examples of queer and queer of color performance art in both *Disidentifications* (1999) and *Cruising Utopia* (2009) and Jayne Wark's *Radical Gestures* (2006) analyzes the history and practices of feminist performance art in the

11 I point to a few artists and performance studies works in this introduction, but due to limits of space and focus leave out other influential performance artists who take up some of these themes—from Adrian Piper's thought-provoking work on the experience of her black body in society and the academy to Yoko Ono's gender performance work on the violation and pleasures of her body.

12 See for instance Carolee Schneeman's 1964 *Meat Joy* or 1974 *Interior Scroll*. Famously, Karen Finley was one the "defunded four" who lost National Endowment of the Arts (NEA) funding due to her taboo performances. For further reading on feminist performance art, see *Acting Out: Feminist Performances* edited by Lynda Hart and Peggy Phelan.

13 For further reading on Ana Mendieta, see Jane Blocker's *Where is Ana Mendieta?: Identity, Performativity, and Exile*.

Americas.

The ways in which Yozmit, Luo, Wong, and Nakadate diverge from theorizations of performance art in performance studies necessitates a turn to media and technology studies. The perhaps glaring peculiarity of performance art I have not mentioned is its association with liveness. Because of the emphasis on the live as distinctive from media and technology, traditional approaches to performance have not addressed media and technology studies. Moreover, my approach to what might I refer to as medial performance engages not only the influence of media and technology as integral to understanding Nakadate, Luo, Wong, and Yozmit, but also performances of technology and media in their own right. I am particularly influenced by digital culture and Internet studies, which emerge throughout the dissertation as the means of transnational engagement and formation of bodies in society. Critical cultural approaches to media and technology enable movements amongst various commitments and modes of the field, namely representation, reception, and medium analysis. While I engage in reception analysis, I do not forward a comprehensive survey of audience. Instead, I examine threads of power, dominant interpretation, and the potential for resistance. I am influenced at a general level by the work of Marshall McLuhan and his famous adage that the medium is the message. Taking this together with critical cultural perspectives, I attend to medium as central in understanding the reception of representation. Accordingly, I join with scholars such as Lisa Nakamura and Wendy Hui Kyong Chun in approaching questions of difference, media, and technology.

My methodological commitments catalyze as a close reading in social context, following the performance and technology practices where they lead. This in practice manifests similarly to

Bruno Latour's interpretation of Actor-Network-Theory in that I trace connections where problems arise, following the actants – actors, agencies, and objects – where they lead (Latour 2007). However, I use politics as a parametric for my method. I only follow the actants to the extent that they answer the questions of politics related to my central research question: in what ways do the performance and technology practices work to destabilize the totalizing force of racialized femininity as subjugation? What I offer is a reading of the performance practices that stipulate what possible flickers of productivity arise for politics. As such, I engage a performative exploration of the artists' works that underscores their possibilities, rather than determined effects. These possibilities are offered a way into the political promises that arise in the medial performance works as embraces of femininity.

Chapter Outline

Each chapter explores the intricacies of the racialization of femininity in their cultural, affective, and political manifestations. Attending to the movement of femininity across differently sexed and gendered bodies, each chapter focuses on one or two artists' work with emphasis on the successive, alternating, and twisting entanglements of medial performance with society. Affirmation and embrace run through each chapter as a mode of performance. This thread is contrasted by the modes of rejection, ridicule, and partial inclusion in the reception of the art.

In chapter one, “Stranger Intimacies: the *trans*portations of Laurel Nakadate,” I approach the question of context broadly within immigration histories and cultural fantasies. Working through Nakadate's performance photography, video work, and engagements with early Internet culture, I argue that Nakadate’s work is *trans*portational in at least three ways: literally,

temporally, and affectively. These transportations are put into motion in relation to imagery, cultural histories, stranger relations, material aesthetics, and tactical media practices. Nakadate's art constitutes "contact zones" of power and feeling. The zones are loosely bound with permeable and uncertain accumulations of dispersed proximity; these are the sensations through which transportations are at once placed and somewhere else. Through her work, Nakadate toys with the male gaze, embraces unexplained expressions of emotion, reluctantly discusses racial identity politics, and baffles the image of sexual reclamation. As a mixed race fourth-generation Japanese American who does not understand her work as identity-driven, Nakadate nevertheless presses on the codified hypersexualization of Asian women according to a male fantasy. Through a multimodal push and pull of politics and uncertainty, her work conjures affect marked by an unsettling ambiguity.

The chapter has three primary subsections. "Mobilizing Americana: Disruptions of Mythic Masculinity" takes up the literal transportations of Nakadate's work as ways of unsettling Western landscapes that work simultaneously to 1) secure a nostalgia for (white) mythic masculinity and 2) suppress the immigrant labor of Chinese rail workers and establish a racialized femininity that enables the continued power of mythic masculinity. "Performing Postmemory: Asian Americana from Pin-Ups to Picture Brides" examines the function of memory in historical transportations of Nakadate's work from the racialization of femininity in American pin-ups to Japanese Pictures Brides in the United States. Exploring resonances between her work and personal biography, I argue that her performances enact embodied memory, rethinking the possibilities for an Asian Americana as counter to the pervasive whiteness of Americana. The final section, "Preydatory Performance: from spectre of the dragon

lady to flipping surveillance," proposes the sticking power of negative affect as productive in challenging binary choices regarding stereotype. The section posits Nakadate's work as enacting both predator and prey, generating negative affective encounters demonstrated by critical receptions of her art. I situate these negative affects in relation to histories of racial stereotypes and propose that they offer a form of stranger intimacies that call into question typified relationships amongst people marked by their difference.

I begin chapter two, "*Trans*mediations of e-Feminacy: Regurgitations of globalized drag between boys and men," by thinking with scholarship on David Henry Hwang's play *M. Butterfly* as a performance site that enacts the tensions between queer expression and stereotypes of Asian and Asian American men. I connect racialized femininity from women in chapter one to men and boys in chapter two by taking up the video work of Singaporean director and performer Ming Wong and the online video drag performances of a young Taiwanese boy named Luo. Forwarding *trans*mediations as a conceptual framework to analyze the translation of media across various forms, I address the entanglements of cultural and medial translation in Wong's transfer of racialized femininity from museum installation to YouTube posting. In Luo's drag performances, the transfer in medium is based in asymmetrical transnational exchange of cultural framing, as his work relies on the medium of Internet videos and shifts contexts from Taiwanese online culture through appropriation by U.S. humor websites. Adding the dimension of transcultural reception to transmediations, I argue that digestion provides a productive analysis of what happens when effeminate Asian performance is interpreted within dominant frames of Western meaning making. These understandings are integral to perceiving how queer resistances often function across homophobic formations of codified identity.

In particular, chapter two examines two instantiations of each Luo and Wong's work. In the case of Luo's performance of Taiwanese pop star Jolin Tsai's song/music video "Honey Trap," I analyze his drag work first in the Taiwanese context as critical subculture. Taking up themes of sexuality, gender, and the question of the child, I analyze the distinctions in Taiwanese and American queer naming and identification. Luo's context demonstrates the racialization of femininity as a deeply transnational and discontinuous set of ideas that nonetheless coalesce around the uncertain figure of the child. Second, I analyze the cultural anxieties at work in Internet humor in subjugating racialized femininity. I also consider two Wong pieces commissioned for the Singapore Pavilion at the 53rd Venice Biennale (2009): 1) "Life of Imitation" a racial recasting of a scene from American film *Imitation of Life* (1959) by Douglas Sirk and 2) "In Love for the Mood," which recasts race and gender in a scene from Hong Kong film *In the Mood for Love* (2000) directed by Wong Kar-wai. I argue that the bodies cast and miscast in relation to transnational power dynamics expose how transmediations can serve to override the function of content. In conclusion, I extend transmedial cultural in/digestion through the idea of nausea as a reading practice that offers delays not afforded by the medium shifts. I argue that nausea serves to address problematic exchanges in transmediations of effeminacy online, or what I call e-feminacy.

In chapter three, "*Trans* Asian: Yozmit's New Liberal Entanglements of Gender," I explore technologies in the work of Korean-born and Los Angeles-based performance artist and singer Yozmit within a theorization of *trans* Asian. The prefix trans is open, rather than modifying, to attend to the various lines of relation across trans and Asian. While I draw on trans studies, Yozmit does not identify as transgender but as both a man and a woman. This identity is

fractured and multiplied by Yozmit's own descriptions and enactments; it is further caught by the modes of identification that mark Yozmit's body as transgender, as gender non-conforming, and as foreign. Trans Asian emphasizes the transfer of racialized femininity across the bodies of women, men, and those who defy the gender/sex binary. Trans Asian functions as a way to theorize transnational Asian American studies while attending to the sometimes porous and often fluctuating geographies and governing powers at play in establishing the racialization of femininity. Given the centrality of transnational mobility, cultural transfer, and political control, I read trans Asian alongside neoliberalism to address the limits and excesses of biopolitics, securitization, and the politics of recognition. I frame these as "new liberal" entanglements of gender to highlight the thread of "new" in Yozmit's work: new media, new gender, new body, and new materialism.

Chapter three has two primary sections. "Cutting Trans Luminosity," first contextualizes the politics of new liberal entanglements of gender and then demonstrates the problematics of those politics through a reading of a cut scene from the Marina Abramović documentary film *The Artist is Present* (2012), directed by Matthew Akers and Jeff Dupre, in which Yozmit performs woman. This reading emphasizes the progressive narrative of trans inclusivity as a means of covering over trans Asian. The next section, "Yozmit and Technologies of the Self," opens and closes with a reading of Foucault's theorization of technologies of the self. It has two primary case studies: "Sound of New Pussy: the Buddha and the iPad" and "Silicone Embodiments: from plasticity to siliconicity." The first examines the influence and techniques of queer Buddhism in relation to gender as assemblage. The section articulates Yozmit's trans Asian practices of gender as tied to technological futurity, as demonstrated by the iPad as a wearable

technology of gender and sex. I argue that this techno-diasporic queering of Buddhism points to the importance of trans Asian analyses of gender non-conformity. I then explore the technology of the self embodied in Yozmit's use of silicone in live burlesque shows and related videos. Yozmit's use of silicone evokes the trans Asian context of biomedia and the tensions between surgical and non-surgical body transformation. I offer "siliconicity" as a means of theoretically engaging trans Asian ethics within a neoliberal context of remaking the body. Together, the two cases of technologies of the self emphasize techniques and technologies of what might be considered neoliberal self-making. I argue that these practices of confessing gender are reasons why neoliberal critique should not function as a form of dismissal, because the same bodies who engage in neoliberal self-making are often at greatest risk of biopolitical control in the service of unintelligibility and expendability.

The conclusion, "*Trans*mutations of the Racialization of Femininity: becoming animal, becoming thing," asks how the entanglements of the racialization of femininity might relate to theoretical turns to animal and object studies. I draw the dissertation's connections across bodies to thinking about how these formations relate to and are enacted by different species and non-living things. I locate this analysis in the existing cultural practices of Orientalism that frame Asian and Asian American femininity in relation to animals and things—from butterflies and dragons to fans and robes. As examples of how such resonances might function otherwise, I take up two examples of performance and technology: becoming animal and becoming thing. In the former, I analyze an installation from the Frye Art Museum by the Degenerate Art Ensemble. I argue the piece about a slug princess enacts a Deleuzo-Guattarian becoming animal that demonstrates the ways in which animality is constitutive in the racialization of femininity.

Further, I contend that the focus on the slug along with the form of the video loop create productive indeterminacy through a disruption of gender binary and a form of what Siane Ngai designates as “stuplimity.” Looking to cross-racial connections and thing theory, the conclusion closes with an analysis of Wu Tsang's documentary film, *Wildness* (2011), about a predominantly Latinx L.A. trans bar. Tsang' and DAE's performances exemplify a core and resilient theme of the dissertation: trans as non-teleological movement across bodies that breaks down the existing boundaries that constitute categories of differentiation for the purposes of division and subjugation.

Chapter One – Stranger Intimacies: the *trans*portations of Laurel Nakadate

My art is about free fall, toying with danger and desire and its relationship to failure, and beauty being the bedfellow to disaster. Gravity is hilarious, and it always wins; dancing is slightly embarrassing. It's a good place to be ~ Laurel Nakadate (Kina and Dariotis 2013, 72).

Laurel Nakadate is a fourth generation mixed race Japanese American woman. She holds a Masters in Fine Arts from Yale, had a retrospective at the New York Museum of Modern Art in her thirties, and is often reviewed by art critics and New York magazines and newspapers. Although she has reached acclaim and criticism in the art world, she seems to have largely eluded scholarly attention.[14] Her early work explores sexually-charged photography at Northeastern women's colleges while her most recent endeavors include directing feature length films. I focus here on her performance camera work that occurs between these two periods. Unlike her early and late work, Nakadate performs in the middle works – not behind the camera but in front of it. These projects exhibit her exploration of strangers, sex, and fantasy with white middle-aged men as the primary interlocutors and co-performers. Nakadate's works provide an imperative perspective on the racialization of femininity in the Asian American context through the lived encounters, places, and technologies of America. In each of these categories, Nakadate pulls the accreted histories of the racialization of femininity into her work through mobilization, biography, and strategy. The question these works raise for me is: how does Nakadate's unique blend of bodily intimacies, poseur performance, and techno-art challenge static femininity? I

14 There are some notable exceptions in the collections. *Racial Representations in Asia* (2011) edited by Yasuko Takezewa examines Nakadate alongside a group of other artists featured in an exhibition of Asian and Asian American artists. *War Baby/Love Child: Mixed Race Asian American Art* (2013) edited by Laura Kina and Wei Ming Dariotis describes Nakadate's work in brief and offers interviews with her on the topic of Asian American art.

contend that Nakadate affirms femininities by making them transitive, providing a critique of the racialization of femininity that is not premised on the rejection of sexuality and desire. This chapter tracks her camera-based performance work to expand scholarly capacities for disrupting the ways in which the racialization of femininity functions to corral Asian and Asian American bodies into totalizing conformity, expectation, and subjugation.

Nakadate's work is *trans*portational—in at least three ways: literally, temporally, and affectively. These transportations are put into motion in relation to imagery, cultural histories, stranger relations, material aesthetics, and tactical media practices. In the first section "Mobilizing Americana: disruptions of mythic masculinity," I analyze Nakadate's photography and femininity in relation to American moralistic male masculinity. This section takes up the literal transportations of America — the train, the car, the truck — as they are manifest in Nakadate's practices of disruptive movement. The literal transportations of Americana are categorized by a form of movement that demands the submission of the land and the people for the values of American empire and Westward Expansion. Nakadate's work unfolds through physical forms of transportation, calling upon the cultural histories and contemporary connotations of trucks and trains. Harold Innis demonstrates that the train as transportation is also a rewriting of the cultural landscape; a train is the medium by which culture is made (Innis 1971, 1995, 2007). Transportations thus distribute a socio-cultural system of values and material practices that inflect the power of the nation. Nakadate's transportations demonstrate the ways in which value-systems embedded in the trucks and trains of America create a figure of citizenship that obscures the bodies of women of color, even as such bodies prop up the systems of normativization.

Temporally, Nakadate's transportations function to move in and out of the accumulation of time in the experience of time in action. Transportational performance serves to provide an opportunity to reflect on the sedimentation of histories of racialized femininities by mobilizing critical geographies and temporalities. In the second section of the chapter, "Performing Postmemory: Asian Americana from pin-ups to picture brides," I examine how embodied memory expresses cultural histories of racial politics through the genetic and identificatory connections of photography with attention to American pin-up girls and Japanese Picture Brides. Temporal transportations connect disparate chronologies as a demonstration of how socio-cultural inheritances manifest through performance practices. Such movements cross through and beyond but also culminate in performance that is "betwixt and between" (Schechner 1985, Turner 1969). It is through transportations that Nakadate disrupts conventional forms of masculinity. And, it is through the transportational quality of her work that the affective strain is so palpable.

Temporal transportations also enact the relationship between media in Nakadate's work. I join with Rebecca Schneider in accounting for the temporal excess of the still in relation to the live performance, moving away from an understanding that the photograph is no longer live. As Schneider argues, "we would do well to trouble any distinction between live arts and still arts that relies on an (historically faulty) absolutist distinction between performance and remains" (Schneider 2011, 168). Temporality thus does not function as a chronological progress but a movement that accumulates and cannot be captured by countable and knowable limits of the thing that was and the practice that is. The lived experience of time is instead replete with immersive skips, flows, and interruption. Nakadate's art emphasizes these lags and recurrent

threads of temporal (dis)connectivity.

Affectively, transportation is both the process and the ongoing outcome of the liminoid performance. Performance does but does not simply transport the audience. It is instead an entanglement of doing, bodies, and reception. As such, transportation is an enactment of affect. As Brian Massumi describes, affect occurs within a "margin of manoeuvrability;" shaping "'where we might be able to go and what we might be able to do' in every present situation" (Massumi 2015, 3). The fourth definition of transportation in Oxford English Dictionary notes the transport of feeling, such as rapture or ecstasy (OED 2016). In each case, these feelings surpass the normal spectrum of emotion; they move into an extralinguistic extension of feeling. Here, transportation enacts the limits of emotion, initiating crossings between emotion and affect. Massumi contrasts his understanding of affect from emotion, speaking instead of the Spinozan sense of the "body in terms of its capacity for affecting or being affected" (Massumi 2015, 3); "when you affect something, you are at the same time opening yourself up to being affected in turn… you have made a transition, however slight. You have stepped over a threshold. Affect is this passing of a threshold, seen from the point of view of the change in capacity" (4). The limen that is crossed demonstrates the ways in which affect is transportational. It is a process between bodies that also exceeds the fleshly quality of touch. The affective space enacts an intimacy that is not based on knowing but is instead uncertain in its relation from body to body.

Nakadate—at once feminist and misogynist—makes femininity an uncomfortable, affective space. Affective intensities take on the sense of trans as fluidly moving in liminal actualizations of art. Throughout this chapter, I argue that Nakadate activates what Kathleen Stewart calls "ordinary affects." Nakadate draws on the mundane and taken for granted

undercurrents of everyday daydreams that manifest as a kind of "contact zone where the overdetermination of circulations, events, conditions, technologies, and flows of power literally take place" (Stewart 2008, 3). Nakadate's art constitutes "contact zones" of power and feeling that are loosely bound with permeable and uncertain accumulations of dispersed proximity; these are the sensations through which transportations are at once placed and somewhere else. Through her work, Nakadate toys with the male gaze, embraces unexplained expressions of emotion, reluctantly discusses racial identity politics, and baffles the image of sexual reclamation. Her work is nevertheless pressing on the codified hypersexualization of Asian women perpetrated by male fantasy. The push and pull of politics and uncertainty through multimodality demonstrates how her work conjures negative affect.

Nakadate's transportational work is an affective experience that is marked by an unsettling ambiguity. The OED points to the example of Thomas Stanley's 1660 *History of Philosophy* to illustrate the history of the use of transportation as feeling: "A soul disturbed with anger or pleasure, or any other unbefitting transportation" (OED 2016). Transportation marks not only the limits of emotion as outlined by the original definition but also the moralism attached to such excessive emotional capture. Transportation of feeling is unbefitting of the proper display of the moral subject. These excesses are disturbing to the soul. The definition is particularly fruitful in drawing out the ways in which negative affect presents an experiential space of sensations that are marked by intensities beyond not only typical emotion but also acceptable social mores. In the third and final section of this chapter, "Preydatory Performance: from spectres of the dragon lady to flipping surveillance," I examine art critics' discourses about Nakadate's work in relation to gendered tropes of Asian women. I argue that Nakadate's performance tactics flip surveillance

in order to counter discursive framings of feminine expectations. Transportation in this section is in excess of emotion, creating a negative affective field in relation to Nakadate's work. The chapter unfolds in and re-envelopes her works to move through the art in a non-exhaustive fashion—revisiting the same works from different angles. It is my hope that this unruly tactic will begin to approach the multiplicities active throughout Nakadate's transportations.

Mobilizing Americana: Disruptions of Mythic Masculinity

Nakadate's photography and video work are always specifically placed—in truck stops, national parks, the homes of strangers, trains, and pick-up trucks. These placements compel me to ask the question: In what ways is she working the interiorities and exteriorities of what could be called kitsch Americana? How does her work call on and reorient typified images of America? In particular, I am interested in the two photographic series, "Lucky Tiger" and "Trouble Ahead, Trouble Behind," both of which display Nakadate in and against changing backdrops. From the waterfalls of Yellowstone National Park to the sleeper car of a cross-country train, each series travels through Americana. The two series feature Nakadate as performer, object, and director. Notably, they create an atmosphere of America through a subtly sexed context created by the imposition and insistence of her body. "Lucky Tiger" traverses U.S. National Parks and monuments as well as scenes of typified Americana through imagery such as the pick-up truck, cowboy hat, and Superman t-shirt. The imagery presents an Americana that taps into the sometimes phallic underpinnings of legends – male heroes put into a sexed context. The legends of the American everyman are built around virility, and the recurrence of such legends are found not only in the retelling of cowboy stories and pioneer tales but also in the objects and landscapes associated with them. These stories, things, and places perform a nostalgia for an

untouched “time of old” before women's liberation. If feminist social movements are an obvious counter to these legends, Nakadate’s technological performances are an unexpected operation of movement that muddles political locatability. Images of Americana present themselves as timeless while being rooted in an imagined transcendent past, and Nakadate's use of them begs the question: is her work subversive or playing into the fantasy? I argue that the complexities of her performance photography do both and more. Through performance photography, Nakadate unmakes mythic masculinity in its claims to purity and integrity by flowing through and beyond the limitations of mobile pleasures.

Americana: kitsch and traditional masculinity

Americana is an under-theorized term. It is predominantly used to label a genre of music, which is defined by Justin Tubb, son of country musician Ernest Tubb, as “the music of the working man, the farmer, the trucker, the factory worker” (Petrusich 2008, 255). Americana is the consolidation of the idealized form of what it is to be American, of the United States of America. And, in this accretion of Americanness, the image that arises is masculine, male, and predominantly white. Americana, although continued through sonic forms of expression, is also immensely visual (sometimes iconic) and tactile (made known through objects). In a popular account of Americana, Amanda Petrusich argues that it still moves, “slowly evolving, gathering new momentum” (8) which is meant to counter the dominant use of Americana that she notes is “overloaded with vague connotations and heavy-handed nostalgia” and is “almost meaningless outside the faux logs of Cracker Barrel gift shops” (5). Petrusich's insistence that Americana *still* moves serves to oppose an understanding of American values as timeless and unchanging. Nonetheless, the pace of Americana's movement is glacial. Like the molasses of gift shop

cookies, Americana is so viscous in its form, it moves in a way that maintains its stagnation.

Yet, if the content of Americana is resistant to movement, Americana's effects quickly mediate the direction of society. As Marshall McLuhan describes, “When you look into the rearview mirror, you do not see what has gone past, you see what is coming. And, the rearview mirror is the foreseeable future; it is not the past at all” (“The Medium Is the Message Part 2” 1977).[15] McLuhan’s statement describes the importance of analyzing the ways in which nostalgia projects itself through the transportation of the medium. When you look into the rearview mirror, you do see what you have passed, but it is not the focus of looking back; to activate the looking of nostalgia is to seek out what is coming. Accordingly, I mark nostalgia as an imperative site of analysis in that it shows us the shape of masculinities to come, not as an inevitability, but as a predictive quality of historical effects in the now and not yet. The varying speeds of nostalgic Americana define their ability to continually make still the figure of idealized masculinity, placing masculinity back into the mold of Americana. Between the knick-knacks of a commercialized chain of country stores and the music of the farmer, Americana takes on at least two forms: kitsch and traditional. Kitsch Americana is the newer model of the concept that traffics in tactile display items – items that function as trinkets of synthesized American identity. The farmer, worker, and trucker, while sometimes associated with the kitsch form, hail from the spirit of American manhood, embedded in traditional legend and myth.

15 Transcript is my own.

Illustration 1: Lucky Tiger #80 2009 (Saatchi 2017)

Nakadate's work has two primary recurrences: her body and the mythos that is carried in Americana. This mythos is America itself, presented as the frontier: open, wild, and to be conquered. The masculine sense of the West brings with it the rogue cowboy, ready to domesticate the untamed and willing frontier. The West is carried in the image of rural Americana, which Nakadate makes her plaything. Straddling a blue pickup truck in the "Lucky Tiger" series, she looks left, posed in pink lace-lined panties topped with a midriff-baring superman t-shirt. Nakadate is making mischievous eye contact with a gentle smirk. The old model pickup truck sits in the mud, unwashed and unpolished. The scenery carries with it the messiness of Americana: grit. Grit builds a foundation of masculine ideology that permeates the

scene. Placing her body amongst items of Americana, Nakadate invokes the picture of the cowboy – an idealized man that projects images and sentiments that aspire to "*mythic universality*" (Pippin 2010, 21). As the cowboy conjures legends and myths of American ruggedness and the American spirit, so too does Nakadate's choice of t-shirt. Superman exists as the hero – the American hero – from another planet, surpassing the humble images of the cowboy. In one move, the scene painted by Nakadate builds from one of the icons of Americana in the cowboy to the notion of super heroic masculinity that sets an unreachable standard of power for the good of the people.

In the confluence of western imagery, Nakadate places her body amongst the sexed female bodies of comics in an explicitly nationalistic sentiment. She dons the masculine garb of the hero but not as the hero—as the sexed body for the consumption of the believer in Americana. She does so in a manner that serves up Americana for consumption through the awareness of how her own body plays into a form of idealized feminine beauty. However, her form is not quite ideal within the story of Americana, just as the story of Superman is not quite the Protestant hero he projects. Superman is the creation of Jewish immigrants and began with the trappings of Jewish tradition and teachings. However, in creating the immigrant story for an American audience, the Jewish identity was interpreted through a lens of Americana. In becoming a symbol of the American hero, Superman had to be wrapped in the truth and justice of the flag, through a journey of American whitewashing (Brod 2012, 14). The parallel to the superhero is marked on Nakadate's own body in the photographs. She evokes all the elements of sexed Americana while also being separated from them (in particular by her racial difference) and implicated in whitewashing as constitutive of the creation of the American hero. She is here

out-of-joint with the mythos while simultaneously deploying its message.

Illustration 2: Lucky Tiger #10 2009 (Saatchi 2017)

The out-of-joint sense lingers in the barrage of girlish wiles, sexualized body-positioning, and Americana throughout "Lucky Tiger." In the series, Nakadate takes her colorful bikinis on tour of the National Parks. Holding the "native scenery and wildlife" as elements of humanity, President Franklin D. Roosevelt declared, "There is nothing so American as our national parks" (Roosevelt 1934). Americana, through the National Parks, is a claim over the native land and an erasure of the native body. Nakadate's performance photography provides an opportunity to disrupt Americana's claim to the land. Bending backwards, midsection stretched bare, Nakadate embodies sexed girlishness at Yellowstone; she perverts or perhaps reminds us of the perversities at play in the erotic claiming of the land, given that the United States Congress established

Yellowstone as a “pleasuring-ground” (“Act Establishing Yellowstone” 1872). Glancing seductively over her shoulder, her heels stick in the dirt of the Badlands. Many of the photos feature her, knees turned-out, body pulled taut. Her gaze sometimes bores forward; in other images she averts her eyes. Her body is twisted and turned into shapes that elicit desire, beckoning the viewer to see her in the preserved landscapes of the National Parks. She is counter to and yet placed within an understanding of Western conquest and virility. Nakadate does not embody either but invites the pleasures and suspicions of both. The images and links of masculinity and landscape caught in nostalgia are emphatic in the genre of Westerns. These films have served to establish a societally accepted link between imagery of nature in the United States and a particular cultural valuation system. As Lee Clark Mitchell argues, landscape serves as “a paradigm for male behavior” creating an ideal that “both assumes and compels the kind of quiet restraint men are expected to take” (Mitchell 1996, 38). Male behavior is thus encapsulated in nature as a dead receptacle for a form of masculinized morality (40). If landscapes of the American West establish an immobility that cements a sense of morality (35), then Nakadate infuses mobility back into the still image of Americana.

Nakadate's mobility creates leaky fissures that spill forth and seep from the still framing of the photograph. Whereas nature is made still by the masculine ideology that Nakadate’s work plays off, her femininity functions transgressively, reimagining possibilities of stillness—not as passive and malleable but as vibrant matter. Through her sexuality and feminine disruption, Nakadate enacts the Barthesian punctum of the photograph (Barthes 1981) — the way in which the photograph exceeds itself is how it affects the onlooker. Moving beyond the classical rendering of the still, Nakadate’s work frees the photograph from pacification. Her body

positioning leaves something in the air—something unfinished. Henry Sayre describes the rhetoric of the pose as already frozen—still waiting to be the picture it will become (Sayre 1989, 52). Nakadate expresses her body in pose but not through a sense of stillness. Her body bends, opens, indicates, suggests. It is a gesture in the sense that Giorgio Agamben describes as exceeding the image and becoming political in that it is not "produced or acted" "but rather something that is being endured and supported" (Agamben 2000, 54-56).

Reanimating the stillness embedded in the frozen image of untainted land, her performance work demands movement in stillness by extending the photograph into circulation as an integral component of the art. She further mobilizes the images of moving Americana – the open road, the truck stop, the motel – that point perhaps inversely to an immorality in transience. By juxtaposing the Americana of purity – the unspoiled landscape – with the kitsch Americana of truckers and drifters, Nakadate's "Lucky Tiger" series transports the photos of her body as commodity through an exchange system at truck stops on the American roadway. Animating the already present exchange of dirty images, Nakadate offers photographs of her body posed in sexed positions through the American landscape to truckers to look at and touch as they please. The pictures are less explicit than ones truckers might purchase from the curtained off sections of such pit stops, but the tenacity of the practice is in the presence of Nakadate's warm, fleshy body. She is the real thing, and the presence of her verifiable form comes at a price—but not a monetary one. She lends the pictures with the catch that the men cover their hands with fingerprinting ink and return them to her afterward. The inky exchange deformalizes and makes uncertain expectations and roles, keeping fluidity in the movement of images and the contact of bodies.

Mobilizing the photos into the system of travel, Nakadate places her work in the liveliness of the truck stop. In doing so, she sends ripples through the landscape of still American nature – one defined by perpetual movements in the comings and goings of bodies and transportation. The grit of masculine morality is transitioned into the grime and grease soaked hands of a disconnected community of truckers, who elicit a certain classed sense of the drifter or at least the perpetual stranger. If the moral masculine image calls upon dirt for grit, then blue-collar masculinity is in excess of the grit, the dirt, making its way into the dirty, the salacious and the immoral. The man who touches her photos leaves his inky mark, his touch on the surface, contradicting the morality of the landscape in the quick fix of sexual desire. The transient trucker arouses something akin to the moral stillness of the conquered landscape but in ways that rework nostalgia into a blue-collar masculinity inflected by the invisible or home-bound presence of femininity. Moving beyond the curated image of the Western into the Americana that engages a sense of matter out of place, Nakadate's work links the moral landscape to a more playfully lurid and grime-covered location that feels intimate, while also charged with the sentiment of seedy sexual exchange amongst strangers. Her work recasts the divide between dirt and dirty by revealing the points of connection between the honesty of dirt as a marker of labor and the degradation of dirt through moralistic viewpoints.

Through her work, Nakadate makes a move from the exteriority of moral masculine Americana to the interiorities of a kitsch Americana. The landscapes of grit and the legends of mythic masculinity function as exteriorities or the abstract values of Americana. Interiorities function as intimacies; they are only depths insofar as they operate through the significances of touching surfaces. Kitsch, whether in keychains or knickknacks, rubs against the bodies of its

bearers and adorns their homes. In its mundane occupations that are too often dismissed as cheap surfaces of exchange, kitsch gives off the warmth of bodies and lived places. It is in these interiorities that Nakadate's work finds traction. "Lucky Tiger" performs kitsch as a mode of transportational relations among the images and icons (both exteriorities) of hypermasculinities of Americana. First, by instilling movement into the moral landscape of Americana, Nakadate reframes the masculine ideology that demands submissive silence from her feminine form. Second, Nakadate rejoins the moral stillness to the mobile classes' context of the truck stop; movement serves to destabilize the timelessness of Americana by making it subject to instability —the instability of the locations in transit, the precarity of blue collar work, and the uncertainty of the feminine fate in arenas dominated by male hypermasculinity. This sense of moral uncertainty makes her work evocative of the trade of sexualization in the crevices of implicit American patriarchy. The dominance of moral masculinity functions through the absence of the feminine form and the demand for nature to be inert. The Western landscape presents through scripting immobility onto life-forces in nature. Contrary to such stasis, mobility revitalizes the dead landscape, opening it to possibilities of impurities that circumvent the ideological power of nostalgia embedded in Americana. Mobilizing Americana places her work back in time, not necessarily in the countable chronological sense but in the sense of change, duration, and differential experience.

Illustration 3: Untitled (Police Panty) 2005 (Mutual Art 2017)

In Nakadate's mobilization of Americana, her body creates flow from one concept to another; she is the vehicle for movement, even as she takes transportation for a ride. The photo and video series "Trouble Ahead, Trouble Behind" continues to explore, connect, and invert the interiorities and exteriorities of kitsch Americana by unsettling the American railways and historic locations. Riding Amtrak, Nakadate travels across the United States and Canada throwing her panties out the window, scattering a token of herself and her femininity along the route. In one of these images, her hand dips over the edge of the photograph's frame, holding berry-hued string and lace — both recognizable and unsure as lingerie. This rose-colored lens draws attention to the stark contrast in tone between the playful panties and the nondescript police car set alone against the drab backdrop of scattered snow and dry bush. The photograph showcases the rugged landscape with the open highway and the law, straight and narrow as the telephone lines that pass overhead. Here the image of Americana is conveyed through transportation and the law as that which cuts through the untouched landscape. The scene is gray, tinged with a dusty look—a sense of a time passed into the present, untouched but perhaps long ago. Nakadate's fist full of pink both obscures and recolors the image with the unmistakable

sense of flirtation. She is flirting with Americana and its protectors. By dangling a part of her feminine adornment, she acts as an obtrusion into the timelessness of the open road, frozen landscape, and image of "right." But she is not simply dangling; she is letting loose her panties. The ephemera lingers, and in its movement from her hand to the topography, it alludes to her now lack of panties. Her flirtation is met with the presumed image of naked form, waiting in the train car. What then does her feminine interruption unsettle?

The Locomotion of Racialized Femininity

Why does the transportational quality matter in relation to the racialization of femininity? If, as Tavia Nyong'o argues, racist kitsch evokes a sense of disgust that makes society want to forget a time from which it was made (Nyong'o 2002), then I want to suggest that the "failure of seriousness" that Clement Greenberg foundationally posits about kitsch (Greenberg 1992) is only a failure of the singular object, not the whole. As a composite of objects, as kitsch Americana, the seriousness of kitsch is that it defers a sense of disgust in its seeming failure to be taken seriously. However, the values that kitsch Americana accretes and solidifies are ones embedded with racialization through the valuation of whiteness as the norm. What Nakadate's transportations do is evoke a racialized feminine body within a paradigm of traditional and kitsch Americana that secures moral and blue-collar masculinity as white. The train, specifically, is a site of the Asian American racialization of femininity covered over by the brawn of Americana as whiteness.

The transcontinental railroads, as emblem for American progress and empire, hide the racialized underpinning of mythic brawn. As Julia H. Lee argues, the railroad functions as a message of Asian American identity formation through erasure (Lee 2015).[16] Nakadate's work

16 In particular, Lee's work forwards this analysis in relation to two literary autobiographical works: Maxine Hong

likewise invokes a history of Asian American narrative practices; however, she moves away from textual metaphor into embodied and technologically mediated practices. As I read her performance, she unsettles Americana's masculinity in part by stirring up the sedimented social formations of racialized femininity in the making of the railroads. I argue that this othering move is contextualized in the erasures of 19th Century Chinese railway workers. The transcontinental railways were built almost entirely of immigrant labor, and the majority of those workers were Chinese men who were treated as expendable.[17] They were paid a fraction of the wages of their Irish counterparts while toiling in the most dangerous positions (Saxton 1971, 60-66).[18] As Ryan Dearinger puts it, "the railroad was oiled by the blood of their sacrifice" (Dearinger 2016, 162). The weight of their bones returned to the Californian coast for burial rites exceeded twenty thousand pounds (166), and the specter of their labor demonstrates the deep and troubled connectivity of racialized femininity to the railroad.[19] White railroad men — rail workers, foremen, and owners — viewed Chinese laborers as suspiciously feminine.[20] As Stan Steiner recounts, the Chinese were considered:

> too 'effeminate' to do a 'real man's work,' such as laying the iron rails. They were too

Kingston's book China Men and Frank Chin's essay "Riding the Rails with Chickencoop Slim."

17 Irish men composed the other major immigrant working population. Forming perhaps an excluded inclusion between the American born white owners of production and the far other non-white workers embodied by teh Chinese. After the Chinese Exclusion Act, Japanese immigrant labor began to fill the gap of Chinese flows in the continued railroad development. This also pushed Chinese workers into the Americas south of the United States, namely Mexico, where they continued to work on the railroads. This was compounded by the completion of the Canadian Pacific railroad, which pushed Chinese workers South. (See White 2011, 303-305)

18 Some historians contest this claim, citing some documentation of equal pay in company logs. However, the Irish were additionally paid room and board, which is a point agreed upon by historians of the railroad.

19 This estimate excludes the Chinese bodies that were documented as left alongside or below the railroad.

20 I am here referring to white "native born" Americans (this term was historically deployed and is used by most historians of the railroad) and Irish immigrant men who would come to be folded into this whiteness and were at the time placed in a racial hierarchy between "native born" white and the Chinese.

> ‘delicate.’ They had ‘too small hands’[…] The ‘lack of manhood’ of the men from Kwangtung was evident not only in their diminutive size but in the ways they dressed and bathed. In the rugged frontier camps, after work they religiously washed in hot bathtubs made from empty whiskey kegs. Every man soaped and rinsed himself ‘like a woman’ in ‘flower water,’ and emerged ‘smelling of perfume’ (Steiner 1979, 129-130).

If grit recurrently denotes blue-collar masculinity, making classed laboring bodies emblematic of masculinity, the connection or disconnection of grime to Chinese workers further highlights the way in which Americana’s mythic masculinity is underpinned by layers of class, race, and gender subjugation. Washing away the grime marked the Chinese rail workers as deficient of the grit of (white) masculinity. The Irish immigrant railroad workers were alternatively admired for their grit and grime — “they bathed only when there was a stream nearby” (Combs 1969, 63). Nakadate’s engagement with grime shuttles femininity into the valuation of both classed and classic Americana. Erasure also functioned through modes of immorality. Discursive framings of Chinese rail workers paired the narrative of effeminacy with fear of miscegenation. Political cartoons depicted Chinese railroad men as a threat to white masculinity in their desire for white women (Dearinger 2016, 176). The railroad thus encodes two contradictory tropes of racialized gender and sexuality — the degraded and the dangerous. Nakadate embraces the themes of degraded and dangerous femininity through the railroad. As such, her work upsets the attribution of low value to femininity and the stability of masculinity as power.

The construction of the railways was a show of force against nature; it was nature made ruly for the convenience of new class wealth and commerce. The building of the railways solidifies not only a sense of accomplishment in Americana as a mode of conquest and progress but also a deeply embedded masculinity founded on the bodies of idealized men. Such masculinity is unmarked by its whiteness. “Numbering between twelve and fifteen thousand, the

Central Pacific's Chinese workers were the most numerous group of railroad builders and yet arguably the least visible" (Dearinger 2016, 199). Chinese lack of visibility was specific to their role in constructing the railroads. Chinese immigrant labor was used to mobilize anti-Chinese support that culminated in the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, while Chinese labor was disarticulated from the construction of the railroads.

Railroad photographs provide an excellent example of securing invisibility. There are no Chinese workers pictured in the most famous photograph of the Golden Spike ceremony that marked the union of the Eastern and Western rails. The image stands in for the successes of the building of the railroad; it is an image of Americana as masculine progress and expansion. There are no Chinese pictured. The photograph of the ceremony is arguably most emblematic of the Chinese erasure from the narrative of the transcontinental railroads; however, it is by no means an exception. Few pictures of Chinese workers exist, and those that do exist are often excluded from the visual archive. The 1969 "pictorial documentary" *Westward to Promonotory* is exemplary of the trend of erasure. Only one image depicts Chinese workers, "Chinese laying the last rail" (Combs 1969, 71). Three Chinese men are surrounded by dozens of white men's faces. Two of the men are fully visible but faceless, while the third appears only as a spectral blur of movement. Imagery of the railways, steam engines, and the respectable Old West feature the select bodies of white masculinity, invisibly undergirded by the sweat and brawn of racialized bodies constructed as effeminate.

Nakadate remakes the imprint of masculinity through the pairing of her feminine play of sexuality with the symbolism of the railways. These racialized erasures are steeped in gendered formulations that continue to constitute the interpretation of bodies such as Nakadate's. Her work

stimulates its own conditions of arrival through the literal transportations of Americana, figuring her own racialized femininity as a countering visibility, one of her own choosing. In doing so, Nakadate's work destabilizes the seemingly impenetrable narrative of mythic masculinity, allowing for racial counternarratives to seep through the fissures and cracks.

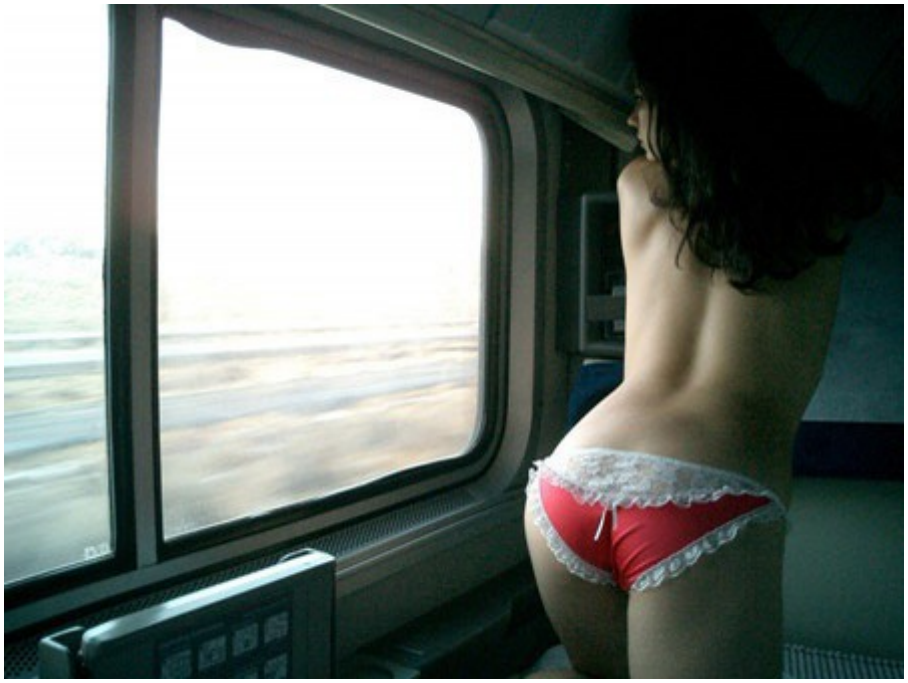

Illustration 4: "Trouble Ahead, Trouble Behind" 2005 (Indrisek 2006)

If the Chinese laborers provide a critical historical framing to Nakadate's travels, then Freud's phallic train is the insistent theoretical thread yet to be addressed. The train as patriarch and father redirects the desires of the child and penetrates the embodiment of the feminine, the mother. Nakadate's femininity asserts the girlishness absent from the reading of the male child and serves as a rupture in the Freudian train's penetration the landscape. She circumvents force through concurrent movements against a unidirectional narrative. The video format hints at the movement captured but in process— the vista streaming by as Nakadate moves slowly, intimately, in an alluring fashion. The window is out of focus but prominent in its occupation of

space in the photograph, while Nakadate's body takes less room to much greater effect. She appears with clarity while the remainder of the image is out of focus. She also is striking against the dull surround, creating greater visual impact than her setting. She is looking out the window, chin to shoulder. Her back faces the camera lens, draped with long dark hair, but exposed along its curvature down to her white lace-wrapped panties, tied with a petite bow against the red triangle of fabric hugging her skin. The content of the video indicates a sense of voyeuristic direction to her body but the staging and enactment of the scene directs the gaze not to her sexy pose but to the movement in transportation, out the window to the land speeding by. When encountered alongside the panty freeing photos, the view from the inside of the car connects the image of the lingerie with the expectation of her nude form. It makes the panties strewn across the terrain intimate. She is not nude in the video, but "caught" in the frisson of anticipation the moment before the garment is released. Uncertain expectation sets the mood of the video. It is the same anticipation that lives in the strange intimacy of the train – the possibility of chance encounters. Public and private without separation, the scene creates a liminal public space. The transportational quality slips into a commingling of feminized private with the masculinized public domain, which entails a breach of the proper and the respectable. The train is for strangers cut off from the publics of social life, and perhaps the correlating social mores; it is a place brimming with intimate potential.

In motel, hotel, and train cabin, Nakadate transposes her body into scenes of Americana. I use the sense of transposition to highlight the doubling that her body creates in its presence amongst the already established elements of American cultural memory. During her transcontinental trip by train, Nakadate recounts that she visited the *American Gothic* house used

as the setting for the Grant Wood painting and imposed herself into the setting by pole-dancing in front of the house (Indrisek 2006). Whether it be by littering panties or pressing and rubbing her body against the images of austere Americana, Nakadate activates the road trip as a playground for feminine sexuality. She is clever but girlish. She promotes the girlish virtue as counterpart to her overt sexuality. Nakadate infuses a trickster into the grave image of American scenery. Layered histories are transmitted in these images of Americana. What is the open road if not a history of conquering the landscape? Westward expansion and the domination of nature with concrete, steel, and gasoline reek of nostalgic masculinity as mastery. By pairing surface and core, it becomes easier to see masculine domination and control as contradictions of Americana. The surface is both depth and superficiality. It is the cowboy, the railways, the open road, and the meanings each carries in its projects. The core is the material practices that are both promoted and suppressed. It is the laboring Chinese bodies of the transcontinental rail, the promotions of Westward expansion that made empire, the indigeneity made invisible by the laying of asphalt, and the femininity and sexuality that expose all.

Nakadate's work moves across and through Americana through transportations of her femininity. She enacts a political affective process that performs in action, image, and history. She presses her sexuality against the masculinities that desire and are made uncomfortable by her persistence. These movements resist the static bookends of Americana's forms of dominating patriarchal ideology by opening alternative modes of being in Americana as a site of multiplicity. Moreover, Nakadate's femininity is not inert in its displays. She is directing, not being directed. Nakadate puts her body on the line, apparently unsure of the consequences, but willing to live out the enactment. She laughs at risk and embraces the productivity of failure. The pornographic

magazine counter offers up explicit renditions. In contrast, we encounter Nakadate's actions in surprisingly mundane relationship, in unexpected contact zones, what Mary Louise Pratt describes as "social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relationship of power" (Pratt 1991, 33). Her body is undoubtedly sexy and, in re-citational ways, conventionally sexed throughout her performances on camera. However, she does not ascribe to the classical perfection of femininity that would correlate to the Western (Mt. Rushmore) perfection of masculinity. Her beauty is also somehow ordinary and mundane. It is not manicured but rather surprisingly alluring in its unkemptness. Her hair, her skin, her body, while wrapped in lacy garments present themselves as vulnerable in their exposure, not inured by perfect scripting. It is the quotidian placements and enactments that make the affective femininity of Nakadate's sexuality so strongly felt. In experiencing the performance documentation through digital film or print, the strength of the affect is also in her amateur aesthetic. Nakadate is approachable in her sex appeal; its force is in the promise of attainable intimacy.

Nakadate's photography instills stillness with motion— not in the sense that she is photographing active scenarios, but rather the gesture of her work brings the stillness of the frame into motion by activating a cultural context and emphasizing the circulations of the photograph in the movement of ephemera from place to place and from person to person. She engages the literal transportations of American masculinity, while also creating an affective experience that transports those who engage her art. Her use of motion rescripts and exposes the contradictions of American masculinity's deep connection to a relatively inert frontier. Masculine travels only gain the status of movement by making nature into a still – a form of manufactured

mastery that disengages the multiplicities of movement. Nakadate's movement, on the other hand, has a sense of in-betweenness. She projects her body as part of nature's animacy where moral masculinity seeks to impose control over it.

Shirking telos, movement proliferates in Nakadate's work, activating feminine sexuality in transitive nature and continuously breaking free of strict origins or destinations. It is a political practice of gesturality -- "a sphere of pure means" (Agamben 2000, 59). Whereas the transcontinental movement of masculinity drives towards expansion, enacting an imperialist mentality, Nakadate's work journeys through a specifically feminine process. She scatters her feminine bits to the wind and performs *with* the landscape. She rides next to the countryside; she bends with nature. Her gestural provocations are open rather than dominating. She disrupts the notion of conquering that land through travel by joining it with the mobility of playful sexuality. In this way, the middle is where things move quickly, swiftly; like "a stream without beginning or end, it banks up speed in the middle" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 25). Nakadate's movement thus flows, as Luce Irigaray argues, in opposition to the phallocentric privileging of solids through Western rationality (Irigaray 1985, 107) and instead offers an instability (112) that has the potential of redirecting the channels to which it has been made to travel. The movement in Nakadate's rethinking of transportation offers a disruption of the American landscape. In both the kitsch and traditional views of hypermasculinity in Americana, Nakadate's work opens up channels of redirection, inviting nature to flow with her body and the mobility of her femininity. She counters the imagery of transportation as mastery over the silent backdrop. And in this fluid motion of femininity, Nakadate loosens the stronghold of Americana on the American sexual imaginary.

Performing Postmemory: Asian Americana from Pin-Ups to Picture Brides

Americana evokes a sense of a nostalgic capture of the American landscape filled with the objects and people that conjure the essence of an imagined U.S. nationhood. It is the cowboy hat and the cowboy that bridge the imagined community. Kitsch Americana remakes these items in collectible bobbleheads or tokens of America in refrigerator magnets or keychains. Unspoken whiteness permeates the soundtracks and images played in the spotted film reel of a home video recording. Whiteness does not write race out of the history of the nation but rather loops it into a fabric of wholesome separation and patrolled assimilation. The bobblehead must be white if it is to conjure the protagonist's role in Americana. The cowboy hat must be worn by a white man if it is not to throw the essence of U.S. Nationhood into question. Time is made still in its transcendent hold. Taking the themes of the moral stillness of the American landscape together with the trappings of whitewashed heroes, I want to suggest the specter of Asian Americana within Nakadate's themes and practices of visuality. This section investigates the racial histories that Nakadate's photography might evoke.

In part, Asian Americana is a reading practice. For me, Nakadate's series "Lucky Tiger" evokes kitsch Americana and unsettles the sexual subjugation of its namesake. The American brand of men's grooming products, Lucky Tiger, "has been helping men get lucky since 1935" (Lucky Tiger 2016), and it relies on heritage to sell a misogyny captured in nostalgic masculinity. In part, the brand does so by promoting their advertising history, such as "Lucky Gets the Gals," from the magazine, *Esquire's* September 1957 issue, which shows Lucky, a tiger with the body of a white man dressed in safari gear, standing next to his scoped rifle, cigarette in hand, leering through his monocle at his wall-mounted hunting trophies: three white women named Linda, Lola, and Louise, lopped off below the bust, above the nipple. Lucky Tiger, the brand, points to

its own colonial implications and what Lisa Lowe calls the intimacies of four continents (Lowe 2015). The advertisement represents yet obscures connections amongst European liberalism, settler colonialism in the Americas, the transatlantic African slave trade, and the East Indies and China trades in the late 18th and 19th centuries. Lucky Tiger is the colonizer who uses his racialized, geographically-privileged position to enact the violent male fantasy of conquering women, to be met only with their smiling faces in return. The lucky tiger is also caught in the narratives of collision between the East and the West by rearticulating the luck of the tiger to support a liberal motivation for economic power in the pursuit of the ideal family life. Nakadate's performance work serves to displace Lucky as the hunter; she changes the roles without changing the desire, subverting the play of power. The brand Lucky Tiger also invites the history of the pin-up photograph into the photography series "Lucky Tiger," as one of its marketing ploys involved offering pin-ups in exchange for boxtops.[21] I argue Asian Americana is also about animacies—the actions, enactments, and accumulations of lived bodies.

The context of Asian American identity is complicated – particularly for Nakadate. She is mixed race Asian and white. She is fourth generation Japanese American. She presents as sometimes racially ambiguous.[22] Nakadate embraces her identity as a fourth generation Japanese American and is quick to indicate that her mother is white and that her work is not motivated from a place of Asian American identity politics. I argue that the histories of Asian America are

21 This practice is seen in the September 1957 Esquire advertisement and is more prominently featured in earlier advertisements such as "Get Your Pin-up" featured in Popular Mechanics's March 1950 issue with the invitation to "hang me on your den or workshop wall." The pin-up specifically places masculinity in the domaine. It reifies the capture of the woman through not only the practice of the pin-up but also the cartoon image at the bottom of the advertisement of a nude woman being pulled in a cage by worker tigers being directed by (presumably) Lucky Tiger.

22 At a Q&A for her MoMA PS1 show in 2011, a man who presented as racially Asian, stood and stated that Nakadate did not look Asian. She looked like a Latina.

all the more imperative to consider in order to understand the political affects of her work. Even as she sometimes is culturally read at the limits of Asian American identity, she is marked by yellowness. Nakadate notes that her "birth certificate says 'father 'yellow'/mother 'white.' It's amazing. It says I'm half 'yellow' … I was born in 1975—it's not like it's even that long ago!" (Kina and Dariotis 2013, 69). She is demarcated as yellow, even as she otherwise sees her life as American. Yellow, as forwarded by dominant U.S. representation practices, signals yellow peril, yellow fever; it is foreign. She instead points to her identity in the unhyphenated sense. The hyphen (i.e. Asian-American and African-American) allows for a "construction of American identity [that] must always disavow it's own particularism and the lived antagonisms surrounding ethnicity" (Chow 2002, 30). Nakadate may be Japanese American, but these two identities exist together side by side, potentially at odds or floating away as distinct signifiers.

Nakadate's declaration of history explodes the hyphen. "My dad is an American literature professor so I didn't grow up thinking I am Asian and I should be doing work about Asia. When I got to college my professors really pushed me to make work about being Asian but I kept thinking, 'I was born in Texas! What does that mean?' I am fourth generation American. My mother is white and my father is Japanese" (Chiu et al 2006, 28). Nakadate's statement demonstrates the importance of reading Asian American history in her art not as an intended inspiration but as a palpably and recurrent relevant experience. Nakadate's reflection highlights the conflation between race and culture. She points to the idea found in her professor's suggestion – that "being Asian" is presented as open-ended while belying itself as code for a singular notion perpetuated as foreign intact culture signified by racial difference. By pointing to Texas as the place of her birth, she conjures the image of the state of Texas wrapped in the

American flag, present on so many items of kitsch Americana under the headline, "Don't Mess with Texas." Boasting of Texan heritage is claiming an American cultural foundation that seems to exceed the national norm for patriotism. It is the most American place, if not more American than America.[23] Moreover, Nakadate declares that her father, from whom her Japanese heritage comes, is an expert in American literature. Along with her mother's whiteness, Nakadate's description of her father's occupation works to push back against reading her mixed-race heritage as dominated by Japanese cultural expression. Nakadate expresses her frustration with being American while being identified as Asian in Lisa Lowe's sense that Asian Americans are perceived as perpetual foreigners (Lowe 1996). Accordingly, Asian American bodies link back to the point of immigration. I look to Asian American history to demonstrate the ways in which those returns to the point of immigration do not represent bodies in American society but instead frame the continued cultural demands and intelligibility of those bodies.

Looking in particular to a correspondence between the American pin-up girl and Japanese picture brides, I take on the question posed by Josephine Lee: what does it mean to perform Asian American? (Lee 1997, 26) I take Lee's question not in the context of representation, but enactment. How might Nakadate be performing Asian American? What are the entanglements of racialized femininity present in her performances? How do these performances temporally transport cultural histories as context and familial experiences as embodiments? I argue that in performing what Marianne Hirsch calls postmemory, Nakadate is compelled by history to

23 While at the Alamo gift shop in San Antonio in the fall of 2016, the items of patriotic kitsch in the store convinced me of this sentiment. The objects performed American patriotism for Texas, remaking Texas into American itself. They expressed the idea that Texas is the bar of American patriotism. It has been and always be, regardless of its attachment to the rest of the United States, the most American. The site of the Alamo and its history demonstrate the ways in which these attitudes are built through a nostalgia of the American West. The Alamo represents the braun of masculinity fighting to the death, even in the face of failure, to subdue the imposition of the delineated outsider.

perform racialized femininity as an enactment moving across and through time as a marker of experiential zones. She, alongside the medium of the photograph and the technological practices of the video, animates the temporal transportations of Asian America.

These temporal transportations are enacted through what I call performing postmemory.[24] Hirsch develops the concept of postmemory to point to the ways in which memory is carried through generational trauma. My application of postmemory diverges to establish the ways in which the concept serves as a productive entry point into how cultural memory functions as a felt embodiment, or more precisely comes into existence through the act of performing. Hirsch argues that "postmemory is distinguished from memory by generational distance and from history by deep personal connection. Postmemory is a powerful and very particular form of memory precisely because its connection to its object or source is mediated not through recollection but through an imaginative investment and creation" (Hirsch 1997, 22). Following Hirsch's description, mediation is not absent but thinly felt through connection to the past both through the reliving of such memories by those who experience them and to the family who bear witness to that reliving. The process of the transference is through familial practices in the everyday; postmemory is the palpable experience of the condensed past in the mundane aspects of lived life as a happening of time. Postmemory, for Hirsch, "characterizes the experience of those who grow up dominated by narratives that preceded their birth, whose own belated stories are evacuated by the stories of the previous generation shaped by traumatic events that can be

24 For other works elaborating the idea of performing postmemory, see Yana Meerzon "Framing the Ancestry: Performing Postmemory in Atom Egoyan's Post-Exilic Cinema" and Marie Cruz Soto "The killing of Mapepe: Performing postmemory in late 20th century Vieques Puerto Rico." My use of the idea differs significantly in that both Soto and Meerzon's works do not distinctly theorize performing postmemory and instead apply the concept of postmemory to performance. Further, neither diverge from Hirsch's formulation of postmemory, given the similarity of their content analysis.

neither understood nor recreated" (22).

Postmemory applies in at least three ways to Nakadate. First, Nakadate's performance of Asian Americana reiterates cultural narratives that precede her birth. She does so in a manner that looks to her family as the source of these narratives and lives lived. Nakadate's emphasis on her own upbringing, rather than an indication to the position of Japanese Americans generally, warrants a turn to Hirsch's theory to complement the role of cultural memory at play in Nakadate's work. I examine the pin-up as a cultural memory that carries with it a racialized history of feminine framing. Accordingly, I look to the history of Japanese picture brides as an example a performing postmemory. Picture brides indeed have a cultural resonance in Nakadate's work, but they are also an effect of postmemory given that Nakadate's great grandmother immigrated to the United States as a picture bride. These narratives, through their mundane iteration and extraordinary repetitions, come to frame Nakadate's performance works in ways that demand an analysis of memory and history to account for the political capacities of intimacy in the context of the racialization of femininity. Second, these stories function as belated. The story comes too late insofar as it is not the overt intention of Nakadate's art. She instead performs into the history and only retroactively realizes her historical and familial connection. Nakadate points to the stories of her great grandmother only after the works have been created as a tardy recognition. The connectivity lags behind the performance but nonetheless is entangled with it. The temporal flux that occurs in Nakadate's performances reactivate the past in the present. In part, the sense of being belated comes from the force of the narratives as lived experience. Third, the performances are neither recreated nor understood, but relived. As Hirsch argues, postmemory does not recreate or understand, and so the linkages

between planned performance and postmemory can be potentially problematic. Nakadate does not restage histories. Histories emerge from her performances. The memories function in the realm of repetition, but they are activated in performance—enacted, not reenacted.

I offer performing postmemory as complementary to Hirsch's description of understanding and recreation. Nakadate's performances do not reenact memories of past generations; they instead break into postmemory through performance. Rebecca Schneider argues that "the performance takes place as photograph" troubling the distinctions between redocumentation and reenactment (Schneider 2011, 154). Nakadate's work also performs as photograph, disarticulating the line between the performance and the medium; it further questions the genesis of reenactment. History is not a planned endeavor for Nakadate, but one that is marked by the instilled capacities of cultural memory. In its animacy, performance demonstrates postmemory as a belated enactment of memory. Performing postmemory is not about making the past knowable, but it demonstrates the ways in which the past lingers often unknowingly in embodiments and continues to shape the lives of the generations that follow the narratives of the past. Hirsch describes postmemory as coming out of the persistence of the stories that permeate the formation of the second generation. In the case of Nakadate, the generational distance between her and her great-grandmother is especially great, making the function of postmemory more tenuous. However, what Hirsch's analysis provides in similarity is the ways in which those narratives come to shape the lives of the continuing generations. The narratives are less germane to the formation of her childhood and instead linger in the translation of postmemory to the next generations. Diffusion makes performance a necessary force in the embodiment of memory.

The legacy of picture brides has undoubtedly left an imprint on the lives of the generations that follow, but it does not conjure the trauma of the experiences that Hirsch describes. Hirsch developed the notion of postmemory to describe the experiences of the children of Holocaust survivors, and yet offers that "it may usefully describe other second-generation memories of cultural or collective traumatic events that can be neither understood nor recreated" (22). My application links the ways in which both pin-ups and picture brides have established cultural demands of femininity in ways specific to differently racialized bodies. In particular, it is not postmemory as Hirsch describes at work but *performing* postmemory. The distinction between the two is that in performing postmemory, performance is a necessary catalyst to see the effects and make the connections to the event. Just as she does not stage a recreation, Nakadate does not experience a consistent reflection of postmemory. Instead, postmemory comes into being through the act of performance. Performing postmemory is postmemory breaking into life through the unexpected effects of performance. Nakadate experiences her own cultural inheritances and the compounding nature of histories and the weight of their constructions by *doing*, which activates an affective politics regarding racialized femininity.

American Pin-Up Girls: feminism and the question of race

Building on performing postmemory, I analyze Nakadate's photographs first in relation to the pin-up, locating both within the circulation of photography geared to meet the male gaze. While it has been argued that pin-ups only succumb the male gaze, inviting objectification and violent possession (Gabor 1973), at its best an analysis of pin-ups can also demonstrate feminist potential. In a similar fashion to the kitsch of Americana previously explored, pin-ups are the products of a form of mass production and circulation of the hyperfeminine woman. Maria Elena

Buszek argues that pin-ups provide a site for thinking the sexualization of the body as postfeminist or akin to third wave feminism. For her, the feminist pin-up is about expressing sexual agency (Buszek 2006, 12).

Nakadate may be a feminist pin-up. However, there are two important ways in which Nakadate's art diverges from what Buszek describes. First, Nakadate does not embrace a form of aggressive sexual reclamation. In her work, she is explicitly sexual and enjoys the sexual presence she projects, but none of her images are structured to shock or to send a flat message about gender/sex. As Buszek indicates, the "pin-up continues to impress young feminists with her aggressive sexuality, imperious attitude, and frightening physique"; she is a "monster/beauty [who] radically departs from normative, ideal representations of beauty […] it is extravagant and generous" (3). Whereas Buszek paints the feminist pin-up as a break with soft femininity akin to a sexual predator, Nakadate's femininity is soft, lurid perhaps, but not monstrous. She operates in excess but in an understated manner rather than through extravagance. Overflow contributes to the transportations of negative and ordinary affects in her work. The understated opposition in Nakadate's art lingers rather than shocks.

Second, Nakadate diverges from the feminist pin-up in terms of race. The pin-up promotes an image of American idealized beauty, implicitly lined by markers of whiteness. The pin-up is almost always white and furthers an aesthetic resonance of domesticity through cultural allusions that reinscribe prevailing whiteness. From her markedly pale skin to such objects of 1940's nostalgia as wartime artifacts, the pin-up may exist in myriad interpretations of sexuality but only in a dominant narrative of race. With the exception of a few tangential examples, Buszek's survey focuses on white pin-ups. There are few examples because the history of pin-

ups is remarkably white. Buszek's analysis draws in tokens of racial minority presence in order to make claims about the progressive capacities of pin-up feminism.

Women of color are sparsely represented but perhaps more importantly, the inclusion of women of color in pin-ups perpetuates racist and racialized understandings of their respective races. Actress Tsen Mei in 1919 appeared in *Photoplay* under the title, "A New China Doll," highlighting her fragility and inanimacy as a commodity for purchase. In 1932 Anna May Wong was featured on a cigarette card (164, 196-197) after her role in *Shanghai Express*. Wong's portrayal is in line with the fantasy role that she occupied in Hollywood as an object of sexual desire whose racial otherness defined that desire as toxic. In both instances, language and aesthetics portray Wong and Mei as objects of exotic Orientalism.

A 1970 *Playboy* centerfold that Buszek includes in her survey of women of color pin-ups is rendered from an Alberto Vargas painting, presented with the vulgar line "I believe in black pride, but there are some things I'd *rather* take lying down" (270). The represented woman's likeness references the iconic image of Angela Davis, although Davis did not pose for the painting. The caption presses the association with Davis, given her recognizability and prominence in the black pride movement. Conjuring the image of Davis as the pin-up undoes the power of her revolutionary activism for black rights by reappropriating it for sexual fantasy. Davis is amongst the strongest of emblems of powerful black woman, which makes the centerfold insidious as a sweeping movement of disarming black women's strength and politics more generally. Power is dislocated by positing the onlooker as the force of the pin-up's receptive submission. The likeness of Davis serves, first, to position her as a threat to the order of white male dominance and second, to neutralize that threat. The image makes black femininity

“safe” by at once conflating black sexuality with hyperaggression and removing any power from the assertion of sexuality. The act of corralling racialized femininity in the Davis likeness resonates with the pin-ups of Wong and Mei. Difference is subordinated in each case, though Wong and Mei's subordination is figured as the inherent deference to male power ascribed to feminine Asians – attributes coded in the trope of the passive lotus blossom. All three examples run counter to Buszek’s claim that women of color feminism is present in this form of inclusion. Their inclusion is through a domestication of black power, a reinscription of Oriental passivity, and a deference to (white) pin-ups.

Vargas' name is often synonymous with the pin-up itself. His watercolors are largely of white women; the presence in his work of black women and women of color generally is sparse. Moreover, the African-American pin-ups Vargas did paint closely resemble their white counterparts. For instance, the March 1964 issue of *Playboy* featured a Vargas painting of the first black woman in the magazine due to the lack of “a suitable flesh-and-blood playmate” (Austin 2006, 117).[25] By substituting an artistic rendering for a direct photograph, *Playboy* rescripts the pin-up, “liberating” her of the flesh-and-blood black body. The resulting Vargas pin-up is a white ideal of blackness. These characteristics make themselves known in the lightness of her skin, the soft pink hue of her nipples, and the fineness of her hair.

Buszek’s analysis focuses on the beauty of Vargas’ portraits and claims that their place in a generally white-only realm is characteristic of the strides of within feminist movements. Her analysis fails to take into account that pin-ups are marked by whiteness and that the inclusion of women of color has been at the exclusion of their ability to be other than tokenized admissions.

25 Out of over 100 pages of Vargas girls, this is the only noted black woman in the collection of Vargas’ works edited by Reid Stewart Austin.

These examples do not counter whiteness or demonstrate progressive feminism as Buszek contends. Instead, they *supplement* whiteness in the Derridean sense. These women of color pin-ups are additions that also undermine the integrity of the concept of the pin-up. In their addition, they "transgress a prohibition" — the prohibition on the body of the other — and also "confirm the interdict they transgress" (Derrida 1976, 165). "Neither presence not absence" (314), they seem like an addition that might be read as inclusion and progression, but in their supplementation they also supplant whiteness. Whiteness cannot hold without a supplement that functions as a false counter, that is actually made assimilable to the function of whiteness. Like the faux Davis, Wong and Mei are Others made submissive to whiteness. Whiteness itself is always prefigured by the racial other, and the late and sparse emergence of these women of color pin-ups makes such a dependence evident.

Still, the pin-up may be identified with feminism by featuring expression beyond victimhood, sometimes in the face of the male gaze. In Nakadate's work, she performs the feminist pin-up by taking the toxic misogyny of objectification and flipping it for her own sexual expression. Buszek's recuperation of the pin-up for feminism is important in that it accounts for a reclamation of evocative sexuality. However, what Buszek's approach to the feminist pin-up misses is the dynamic of race as a constitutive component of sexuality and gender construction, reception, and experience. Thus, Nakadate is not the feminist pin-up but instead recalls the ways in which racialized femininity has functioned as the pin-up's supplement. Given the inability of the feminist pin-up to account for racial difference, I turn to performing postmemory as a means of expanding the frame. The pin-up functions as pose and circulation. Cultural memory and the expectation it creates radiate beyond the frame into context.

Japanese Picture Brides: remembering and photographic performance

Picture brides provide an alternate history to the pin-up. In order to focus on the animation of cultural memory as performing postmemory, I engage with the history of the Japanese picture bride as pulsing through Nakadate's work. This pulsing is a familial experience; it is the cultural inheritance of racialized femininity. The Japanese picture bride is a nodal point of connection and sentiment of history carried in Nakadate's art. Picture brides are a necessary addition to the pin-up in analyzing the photographic cultural context in Nakadate's works. The liminal transition between the point of Asian origin to the lived reality of Asian American identity is defined, in part, by the Japanese picture bride. The Japanese picture bride depended on circulating images that were meant to encapsulate identities laden with sexualized femininity. Since the exchange of marriage happened across the Pacific ocean, the bride was not of fleshly form but encapsulated in a photograph so she could be passed hand to hand in the global work of commodity distribution. Nakadate's work likewise manifests in photographs to be circulated amongst men, as with the "Lucky Tiger" series. Through chance encounters in mundane locations, such as home improvement store parking lots, or through the online classifieds of Craigslist, Nakadate meets strangers, men, who want to be near her. The resulting video and photography work tells a story of intimacy amongst strangers. In this way, Nakadate's medial performances are also the story of the picture bride.

In the United States, "picture brides" refers to the thousands of Japanese women who immigrated from about 1910 to 1920 through a photograph. The phenomenon of picture brides began in earnest after the United States and Japan made the Gentlemen's Agreement of 1907 (Hune and Nomura 2003, 107), which allowed Japanese men who had already immigrated to the US to acquire brides from Japan (91). I use the word acquire to highlight the element of

exchange present in the practice of picture brides. Circulation of the image was a key factor of the picture bride. Japanese men living in the United States sent photos; however, the focus was largely on the woman's beauty. The term picture bride is a mistranslation of the Japanese (*shashin kekkon*) more accurately translated "photo marriage" (Ichioka 1980, 342). The mistranslation is apt in that it draws attention to the bride herself who was the image of the marriage encapsulated in the photographic exchange. The specular nature of the photographs encapsulated the material movement of women's bodies across the Pacific through the transportation of the photograph. As the pin-up was circulated for the visual pleasure of strangers, the picture bride enacted the felt and lived experience of the pin-up. The visual register of the photograph exceeds itself, as it encapsulates a story of the picture bride, in which she participates in the demand for intimacy (marriage) under the parameters of the unknown (strange land, strange man). Nakadate's work invokes both the picture bride and the photo marriage. In works such as "Lucky Tiger" she becomes, as with the Western interpretation of picture brides, the specular object in circulation. In other works, she carries these elements of the picture bride into the photo marriage, the culmination of the two disparate bodies meeting in image.

Illustration 5: Video Still "I Want to Be the One To Walk in the Sun" 2006 (Smith 2006)

Nakadate enacts the stranger intimacy of the picture bride by performing postmemory. In a still of the video piece "I Want to Be the One To Walk in the Sun," Nakadate sits casually on a convenience store countertop, barefoot, in a short pink skirt pulled just low enough to show the top of her bikini bottoms. Her bikini top's small triangles cover some of her breasts, leaving them peeking out on the bottom. Her fresh face is framed by hair coming out of her haphazard ponytail. She looks young, beautiful, sexual, and fit. The store is bustling with excess: cluttered snacks clamor for recognition on the countertop overshadowed by the insistent display of animal heads, perhaps most notably, bucks emerging from the mint green walls showing off their antlers in a postmortem deafening silence hailing the performance of hypermasculinity. One set of antlers hovers over the head of a man, the convenience store attendant, perhaps the owner; he too is presenting his own virility. He pulls open his shirt to reveal his bare chest, belly, and the line of

very low-hanging pants. Against type, he is not fit, not young. Nakadate and her interlocutor's bodies throw the anticipation of sexual encounter into confusion. Their relation is that of strangers, their bodies are so proximate, perhaps touching ever so slightly, or at least breathing their heat onto one another. She is the consumer and he is the cashier, yet as he looks upon her, she looks out and away with a half smile on her face and a spark in her eye. Behind her, the man's eyes are obscured by orange aviator sunglasses hit by the same glare that reflects in the picture hanging behind him of a woman posed seductively by a fire.

As a reading practice, cultural memory accounts for the history of picture brides to be felt through the photographs and performance work of Nakadate. The countertop scene demonstrates a separation between strangers that have come together in an intimate proximity that questions the possibility of relation and desire. In the arranged marriage practice of picture brides, the photograph becomes the mediator of relationship and intimacy. The photograph's metonymic function, standing in for the person, the bride, presents the incongruent reality of a larger social context. The picture bride is animated in the felt experience of encountering Nakadate's work; as such, the constitution of Asian Americanness is at once specular and affective, connecting the cultural context of Asian American histories to the form of performance (Shimakawa 2002, 19). Nakadate's performance also exceeds the story of the picture bride. Her body challenges the classical specularity of the bride's shot and the kempt nature of the photo marriage more largely. Whether it is Nakadate's breast escaping her top or the cashier's frank belly escaping his shirt, the scene reminds and exceeds to the point of rupturing the very notion of intimacy. The picture bride presents in classical specularity and through the moral virtue projected through a notion of filial obedience and arranged marriage. The picture bride also unsettles the ideal form as it is

presented in the image. Picture brides were often thrown into not only a strange culture but also a relationship of strange intimacy. Nakadate's work makes palpable these bizarre tensions in intimacy, desire, and encounter. Nakadate's beauty serves as the marker of her body in the specular performance of relational context, and the lonely older men she engages seek her in her beauty while she often looks away, looks at the exit, the camera, the unknown. The condition of many picture brides emanates from this scenario, as upon arrival to the United States, many women felt disillusioned with the men they were married to through the photo, men who were often not what was expected — older, perhaps less attractive, and less successful than the women had been told. The picture bride's tale is not simply one of young beautiful women being traded internationally through the medium of photograph; it is also a historical legacy of how the U.S. has constructed Asian women's sexuality through expectations of femininity.

The practice of picture brides was uniquely gendered and required virtuous femininity. In the immigration of the picture brides, structures of exclusion and inclusion were premised on gendered conceptions of morality. Japanese men immigrating during this period were not subject to examinations of sexual morality – only labor statuses. Women, however, were subject to rejection and deportation based on their sexuality, founded on the idea and assumptions that Asian women had a predilection for sexual deviance (Hune and Nomura 2003, 98). The conception of sexual immorality propped itself up on fear over Asian prostitutes (Ichioka 1980, 343), a fear that long defined the restricted immigration of Asian women to the U.S. The identification of Asian women with prostitution was not simply enacted by some nonrepresentative immigration officials; it was written into the law:

> Attacks on Chinese and Japanese women's sexuality formed the ideological background for the legal exclusion of Asian women in the late 19th century. In 1875, the Page Law

> prohibited the entry of Chinese, Japanese, and 'Mongolian' contract laborers, women for the purpose of prostitution, and felons. Although the Page Law did not significantly impact the immigration of men, it was enforced effectively against Chinese women, all of whom were assumed to be prostitutes. In the case of Japanese women, amendments to the legislation in 1891 prohibited particular categories of immigrants, including prostitutes, contract laborers, and paupers (Hune and Nomura 2003, 98-99).

The laws simultaneously worked to establish a link amongst Asian cultures ("Chinese, Japanese, and 'Mongolian'"), particularly with such legislation such as the Page Law amendments and Immigration Act of 1917, which secured aversion to the sexual deviance that was presumed to be rampant amongst Asian women. The "stringent and subjective evaluation of their sexuality" (99) framed picture brides as either sexually aberrant or pure and virtuous, determined by interrogation and careful policing. Purity was codified by region, class, and social isolation, prioritizing the immigration of rural women without prior occupation or friends, because urban areas were considered to harbor licentious women. These areas were considered to be synonymous with prostitution. Having friends served as proof of being involved with prostitution, in which groups of women were perceived as organized sex work. Thus, these legal practices solidified sexual deviance as the default setting of being an Asian woman.[26] Prescribed sexual aberration is an example of what Lowe calls U.S. Orientalism around the "immigrant"

26 The immigration checks at Angel Island are only one example of a longer history of U.S. hypersexualization of Asian women. Reaching further back, the advent of major Asian immigration to the United States with the Chinese in the 19th Century served to first erase women. Most documentation of the time asserts that only men immigrated; however, certain historical accounts demonstrate a small amount of women immigrated to the U.S. as well (the historical record refers to these women as large-footed to indicate their bodies were wider set and associated with hard labor). This first erasure then serves to heighten Asian women as only marked by excessive sexuality, as in the years that followed the only visible presence of Chinese women was in relation to sex work. This absence further served to increase American stigmatization of Chinese men as women, which manifest in labor practices, such as nannies and washermen. A later example of this exchange comes with war brides brought home from Asian countries (namely Japan 1940's+, Korea 1950's+, and Vietnam 1960's+), wartime love affairs and the ensuing "love children," and sex work around and on American military bases in Asia. The continued U.S. military presence in such countries continues these practices, particularly of marriage (many of these bases in Asia now employ Eastern European women, many Ukrainian). The euphemism of so-called comfort women that arose with Japanese soldiers taking on sex slaves from Korea, Southeast Asia, and China during WWII has also come to attach itself to sex work around these military bases.

that fashions a cultural subjectivity linked to the discriminational practices of entry and (non)acceptance (Lowe 1996). The law here enacts a practice of racialized gendering through the justification of economic protections by ensuring an American labor base. I argue this framing of immigrant gender purity extends to contemporary conceptions of Asian femininity invoked by Nakadate's work, as pictures brides were one of many practices caught up in a long history of immigration politics and the formation and performance of liberal subjectivity. The formation of the American liberal subject is uniquely raced and gendered in a manner that prohibits full acceptance, making entry into American culture necessarily partial.

Nakadate's intimacy with strangers makes palpable the cultural inheritance of a socio-cultural description of Asianness as predisposed to sexual aberration. As she sits on the bustling countertop, she also places her body amongst objects of instant gratification, the impulse buys before checkout. She is crossing some line of what is proper, but propriety is based on the limits of acceptable public social interaction. While her engagement pushes at the limits of sociality, she appears as a youthful girl. Her breasts escape her top as a moment of naivete that comes with pulling out last year's swimsuit without realizing that her breasts have filled out. Her bare feet and sloppily pulled back ponytail evoke a sense of carefree embrace, rather than a moment of sexual allure. However, she is already hailed into a conception of hypersexuality, even when an explicitly sexual act is absent. Her body remembers the acts of moralized sexual practice in the context of America. The experience as Asian America marks her as foreign, even as she is contextualized as assimilated. Consequently, Nakadate's contestations of her identity as strictly defined in relation to race demonstrate the problem of thinking of assimilation as the opposite of foreignness; they demonstrate her resistance to abjection as a felt reality of how her raced body is

read culturally. She is both by virtue of her place in the process of abjection; she is the internalized other. Assimilation marks her as already other. She is incorporated but always reminded of her otherness because her racial identification overrides her experience of culture. Nakadate is astonished at the documentation of her mixed race heritage as “yellow” and “white” (as a way into thinking about how her art is always yellow even as she feels uncomfortable with the demarcation).

While cultural memory functions as a reading practice, Nakadate’s performances reach beyond textual analysis by *performing* postmemory. Without any explicit connection, Nakadate's work justifies the connection to Japanese picture brides, in what they evoke. I argue that additionally, they break into performance in that they deliver the unexpected connection of postmemory. Nakadate’s familial connection to picture brides is the activation point of postmemory in her work, focusing the liveness of her performances as well as the elements that exceed looking. When I first encountered Nakadate’s work, I found myself caught in bends of cultural context and synaptic relays of connection in relation to the history of picture brides. At the time, these connections seemed tangential, but they came together in non-sequential unfoldings when I found in a footnote to an interview that “In 1913, Laurel's great-grandmother, Mariji Ashizawa (Nakadate), and grandmother, Hatsune Imoto (Marumoto), came to the United States through the picture bride system of arranged marriage” (Kina and Dariotis 2013, 251). At the level of familial connection, Nakadate work articulates a new relation to cultural memory. In another interview, Nakadate describes what I argue demonstrates how her work performs into postmemory in that only in retrospect did she understand her work to be enacting. By realizing the connection as performed, rather than premeditated, Nakadate enacts performing postmemory:

I “realized that these were the same kind of pictures that I was making. It struck me that I was making these pictures that I had never seen. But I didn't go into the project thinking that I would make these photos about being an Asian American woman” (Chiu et al 2006, 28). Nakadate muses about discovering the material foundations of her medial performance after it was made. She points to the ways in which she only comes to see how her work is formed by the stories that precede her birth in looking back. The reflection demonstrates that her work is not a premeditated performance of a culturally relevant historical moment, but an effect of postmemory activated in performance. Nakadate’s retro-discovery leads to the very seeing of her artistic works as disruptions in racialized femininity. The initial cultural relevance forms a surface depth, which also plays into the forms of contradiction and emergence in the otherwise flat image. Alongside one another, the interplay of cultural memory and postmemory form an indeterminate zone of experience. By thinking of her art with the cultural frequencies being played along the surfaces of the work, the temporal disjuncture of her work also comes to the fore. Her medial performances are transportational through temporal experience—for her, for the reader, and for the images themselves.

As Nakadate notes describing her grandmother as picture bride, the photograph of the stranger in the photo marriage pivots on the concept of intimacy, made mandatory and impossible by the situation of arranged marriage. On average, picture husbands were about fifteen years older than their photo brides (Ichioka 1980, 347). Age discrepancy is a trend also seen throughout the “photo marriages” that Nakadate performs. In both circumstances, age plays a mediating role in gendered interactions premised on the exchange of photographs of strangers in order to create a relationship. Sex is absent in the circulation of the photograph but lingers

through the anticipation of what the photo marriage will bring. In the case of Nakadate's work with her collaborators, sex also occupies a space of uncertain anticipation as the undercurrent of tension in intimate strangeness. In the countertop scene, the primal charge of sex is dripping from the edges of taxidermy and in the discomfort of the two varied bodies so close while portraying emotional dissonance. The age of Nakadate's interlocutors throughout the greater arc of her work disrupts expectation of intimacy in normative understandings of American sexual practices. Nakadate's relation to the men is an interruption of propriety. She engages these older men at their places of work (the convenience store) or their homes as in pieces such as "I wanna be your midlife crisis," in which Nakadate and a man dance near one another. The semi-truck cab functions as both at once. In both places, the presence of the stranger is too intimate or too strange. The picture bride catalyzes the felt cultural experience of this incongruity in Nakadate's work.

Reaching through the cultural context of Nakadate's photographic performances operates in a non-linear fashion in which history is activated in performance**.** The contexts of Nakadate's work, as I have outlined them, move across and transport the temporalities into a field of unfolding experience. As Della Pollock describes, "Performance makes history *go* sometimes by making it seem to *go away*, by exercising its representational tactics so vigorously that history can no longer be *seen*. At this moment, at the very moment that performance seems to eclipse history, it achieves its surplus" (Pollock 1998, 27). Nakadate's performance of Asian Americana can seem to shy away from the historical influence in her refusal of identity politics labels. Her art is, however, political because it engages history in the contemporary – not because it has restaged history. Her work opens onto a multi-sensorial experience that operates at the excesses

of the unexpected. Nakadate makes history *go* in a transportive confluence of cultural histories. These transportations of her work go into, across, and around the performance of Asian Americana. My intention is to track the ways in which the activity of histories persist and insist through performing postmemory. Nakadate's work produces an affective experience of discomfort produced through the accumulation of historical moves to subjugate racialized femininity. And in disrupting and disarticulating these modes of static femininity and Asian hypersexuality, her work enacts a method of affirming femininity without accepting its subordination. She produces a surplus of history that draws attention to the everyday force of white masculinity and Asian femininity as made foreign and perverse. This unsettling provides the politics of her work that operate through production and uncertainty.

Preydatory Performance: from specters of the dragon lady to flipping surveillance

In coverage of her installations and works, critics and news media writers online and in print depict Nakadate as a seductress preying on lonely older white men. Critics continually ask her to justify the elements of what they term sexual exploitation in her work. I was at an artist talk about her MoMA PS1 exhibit in 2011 when one such question came about. The question was not evenly measured. It was brimming with sharpness and hurled at Nakadate with an expectation of triumph. I sat in my seat confronted with my own inclination to wonder at the ethical engagements between her and these men. I say confronted because, along political and artistic lines, Nakadate work aligns with my own support for freedom of sexual exploration, unlikely intimacies, and pushing at the bounds of expected aesthetics. So why then do room after room full of rapt attendees accuse — aloud or silently in their seats — Nakadate of being a sexual predator? I want to suggest that there are two important reasons that demonstrate the

continuing effects of the racialization of femininity and a possible tactic for unsettling the totalizing force of tropes of racialized femininity.

First, this section explicates the haunting present in Nakadate's work. I left the artist talk with no resolution of my conflicted feelings for Nakadate, and her work stuck with me. In the two years between when I sat in that room and when I began to write about Nakadate, the force of Nakadate's discomforting ethics clung to me with an unprecedented persistence. I mark clinging as representative of the specter of the dragon lady and the unsettling force of ambiguity. The discourses of predator rely on presenting Nakadate as immoral by virtue of her attractiveness as a form of seduction in relation to the conceived lack of attractiveness in her collaborators. In this section, I first turn to an analysis of these discourses in relation to the trope of the dragon lady.

Second, I look to elaborate the force of discomfort in Nakadate's tactics, which I argue are not that of a predator, but preydatory — practices in which she occupies the positions of both predator and prey. In the critical interpretation, Nakadate is sold as predator, making the dragon lady totalizing. Without rejecting power and seduction, I argue that Nakadate is also prey. Incorporating an awareness of her precarity is crucial to understanding the power differential that is societally formed and exposed in her art. Understanding this entanglement of both predator and prey is necessary to overcoming the singular perspective perpetuated by the dragon lady in favor of articulating the multiple and seemingly incongruous combinations responsible for the affective capacities in Nakadate's art.

Specters of the Dragon Lady: critical reception of Nakadate

Empress Tsu-hsi ruled China from 1898 to 1908 from the Dragon Throne. The *New York Times* described her as the 'wicked witch of the East, a reptilian dragon lady who had arranged the

poisoning, strangling, beheading, or forced suicide of anyone who had ever challenged her autocratic rule' ~ Sonia Shah (Shah 1997, xii)

While not all writing on Nakadate sees predator/prey relations as a categorically problematic convention of her work, most nonetheless see an unequal power relation in Nakadate's work in which she assumes relentless dominance. In an interview for *The Believer* magazine, Scott Indrisek frames the interview with a synopsis of Nakadate's art:

> *Laurel Nakadate collects men. The New York video artist has made her mark exploring the arcane psyche of a very peculiar archetype—the single man, the rural outcast, the lonely bachelor. As an M.F.A. student at Yale, Nakadate began enlisting older local men who tried to pick her up in intricately staged video projects that mixed voyeurism, comedy, awkwardness…*(Indrisek 2006) (italics in original)

The rhetoric contained above is subtle but hinges on forms of control and possession. The idea that she "collects men" evokes the idea of notches in a belt loop or tokenization. She is "enlisting older men" in the same way—through control and perhaps intimidation. Indrisek's interview presents a positive perspective on her work, and yet the initial framing portrays Nakadate as toying with the lonely bachelor. It does present a situation in which the tables of sexualization are supposedly flipped, but importantly the men are not cast as misogynists or predators in their own right. Instead, they are hunted. Moreover, the continued emphasis on their older age and their presumed loneliness, the men are cast as injured animals being corralled into the trap of young temptress.

Illustration 6: "June 14, 2010" (Tonkonow 2017)

In more overtly negative stances, critics enact a rhetorical deflection of their own discomfort by positing Nakadate as a self-absorbed artist ridiculing the masses. In a *New York Times* article, art columnist Ken Johnson notes:

> Some will call her a narcissist, an opinion not dispelled by a display of 365 large color photographs of herself crying — one for every day of 2010 — in most cases stripped down to her underwear or less. Since she is a fit and attractive woman in her mid-30s who has an M.F.A. from Yale and is now enjoying this retrospective, you might wonder what she has to be so lachrymose about (Johnson 2011).[27]

Johnson reinscribes the narcissism he initially displaces onto others through the use of "some"—"some people might say such a thing, but I am not necessarily agreeing." He diffuses Nakadate's display of sadness by glibly noting her fitness and attractive youth. The displacement of her feelings and her intentions is wrapped up in an implicit return to criticizing her art as solipsistic egoism – a showcase for showing the world how beautiful she is. Johnson's move is meant to function as an inherently justified dismissal framed in relation to the sexualization of

27 Due to his position at the *New York Times*, Johnson reaches a wider audience and thus is more influential than many critics. However, he is not divergent from much of the art news media coverage on Nakadate.

her beauty. In other words, Johnson uses the idea of her attractiveness as a reason to reject her art.

The problem here is not that Nakadate is crying. It is that she has not provided justification for her tears, by way of political alignment, biography, or circumstance. Moreover, her body in its youth and fitness provide reason to not cry. The juxtaposition implies that if she had done the same artwork as an old unfit woman, the justification for her tears would be implied in the form of her body. Nakadate does not complete a narrative or claim injury. She does not give a backstory to her art or a placard for each photograph of liquid sadness. The tears flow without explanation, creating a sense of floundering confusion for the viewer that cannot find the reason for the negative emotion. Without linear cause and effect her work is rejected on the grounds of creating paralysis through solipsism. However, Nakadate's so-called narcissism is premised on the idea that one cannot be without explanation, cannot indulge emotion. I want to be explicit that I think this only applies to negative emotion, particularly to sadness or grief. If Nakadate spent 365 days laughing, perhaps she would neither have been given the space for her art or the criticism that followed.

These assessments are not only given by men; in her arts blog Carol Diehl calls Nakadate's work with men "mean-spirited," commenting that Nakadate "has so much she must force herself to feel unhappy" making a "mockery of real sadness" (Diehl 2011). Diehl cites death as a worthy cause for tears, outlining it as something that cannot be glamorized and suggests that Nakadate should get a job because she is no Marina Abramović[28] (Diehl 2011).

28 Called the godmother or grandmother of performance art, Marina Abramović, with her critical and material success, is the often cited measure of artistic quality. The idea of measure is problematic given performance art's tendency to push boundaries. By creating Abramović as the standard for performance art, Diehl inscribes a formalist structure to the art genre, demanding that work must comply with what has already been accepted as influential performance work. For more on Abramović, see chapter three.

Abramović here stands in for the model of performance art, and also a person who after many years of negative reception has been fully embraced by the various facets of the art world. Diehl's comparison perhaps forgets this past but also indicates the ways in which much of Abramović's work is justified by her biography. When in "Rhythm 10" she risks stabbing her finger with each knife pass that plays at danger, her work doesn't make a "mockery" of pain because it is difficult to hear the name Abramović without an ensuing biography detailing her childhood in a strict nationalist home in ex-Yugoslavia.

Diehl's commentary on Nakadate not only demands justification for her tears but also suggests that tears are only called for in what constitutes "real sadness." Her rhetoric decries the excessive affect in Nakadate's work as necessarily creating an affront to acceptable emotional turmoil. In both Johnson and Diehl's writing, Nakadate fails to deliver on a demand for authentic emotional strife as the impetus for art-making. Such demands mandate that Nakadate is a fake unless she prove her acceptability through confessions of life experience worth tears. Tears are reserved for the worthy, as determined by a preset list of oppressions or losses. By confronting the viewer with indeterminacy, she indulges the experience of crying outside of reason. She is unreasonable. And, as such, Nakadate's work is met with self-righteous dismissal.

In the responses to the work "365 days: A Catalogue of Tears," Nakadate is framed as a predator of the onlooker's sympathies. Predatory framing marks her as untrustworthy, and her malicious intent is linked to both her body and her biography or lack thereof. Within the representational history of Asian American women as objects of desire, devious framing emerges as particularly problematic because it serves to mark the representational history as desirable and without negative consequence. Nakadate can be linked to a sense of desirability of her eroticized

form and simultaneously have that history serve as a marker of privilege. These constructions by critics become even more explicit in reference to the works that Nakadate performs with her interlocutors – older white men often described as lonely or pathetic. These descriptions serve to mark their bodies as at best sympathetic or at worst pitiful. It is this stark contrast between predator (Nakadate, the dragon lady) and prey (older white men, the victims) that is of note. The performances in question are video works. The men, who she met on Craigslist or in front of home improvement stores, are generally middle-aged. Nakadate at the time of the performances is in her early twenties. The videos take place in the homes of the men and often feature the two dancing to pop music, acting out scenes, or engaged in an activity. Nakadate does not have sex or sexual contact with these men and there is almost no touching between the two. They are nonetheless laden with the questions of sex, which has led many critics to accuse Nakadate of being a tease, a seductress, a dragon lady.

Illustration 7: Video Stills "I Wanna Be Your Mid-life Crisis" 2002 (Mutual Art 2017)

Johnson in an earlier article on “I Wanna Be Your Mid-life Crisis” frames Nakadate in terms of feminism. He writes, “The men in these and other scenarios look both amused and bemused, and the overall effect is both sad and comical. Ms. Nakadate may be asserting feminist self-empowerment and satirizing seamy sexual dynamics, but you can't help feeling sorry for the apparently harmless and lonely men whom she teases” (Johnson 2005). Johnson implies that

Nakadate's body is perceived in terms of "seamy sexual dynamics." Thus her work must take responsibility for her body's sexualization by society. Johnson casts the men who take pleasure in her body as pawns in her game of sadistic self-empowerment. His critique not only poses assumptions about Nakadate's intentions but also the nature of her interactions with her collaborators. In response to such criticisms, Nakadate recounts the way people approached her performances. "'You're a young girl, they'd say. Why are you toying with these weird old men? But those men were my friends. The videos question people's judgements about who should be friends with who. I think that's important'" (Morgan 2011). Nakadate demonstrates the widespread sentiment expressed in Johnson's rhetoric through her recounting of responses leveraged at her. Rhetoric here functions materially to not only persuade but form societal ideas (Biesecker and Lucaites 2009). While Nakadate presents an alternative framing of the men as sharing with her a concept such as friendship, the implied shared grounding is not reflected in either positive or negative arts coverage of her work.

The rhetoric contained within critics coverage of Nakadate demonstrate a gendered bias against her art painting her as the stereotypical Asian dragon lady. As the opening quote demonstrates, the dragon lady is viscious and unrelenting in her mercilessness.[29] From its origins, the idea of the dragon lady has morphed in the Asian American context into a mode of sexualized representation. Anna May Wong, one of the pin-up girls examined in the previous section, provides an example of how the trope of the dragon lady was solidified in Hollywood film. Celine Parreñas Shimizu argues that the image of Wong "shows the Asian-woman-as-dragon-lady as a sublime object of beauty hiding a grotesque interior" (Parreñas Shimizu 2007, 59). As

29 Sonia Shah's description of the Empress serves for her as an opportunity to reclaim the dragon lady and describe Asian American feminists as breathing fire.

Gina Marchetti explains, Hollywood has established a representation of Asian women as the romantic yellow peril, expressing "ambivalence about the inner virtue or genuine corruption of the 'fallen' woman'" returning continually to the construction that "the Asian woman is essentially a predatory 'dragon lady'" (Marchetti 1994, 65). The trope casts her as excessively sexual and controlling. Such rhetoric is more than a simple reproduction of the dragon lady. More than the racialized imagery perpetuated through media representation, there is a deflection at play on the part of the writers. I contend that deflection is rooted in the negative affective emissions in Nakadate's work. It is this discomfort bordering on revulsion that has framed the feminism of Nakadate's art that I want to take up as a haunting of of the dragon lady.

The unshakable feeling of potentially being confronted with something that threatens to rise up from the past is a haunting that offers a way to think not only death but also affective investments in the present. Writing on the role of the just intellectual of the future, Jacques Derrida compels the reader to learn from the ghost, "to learn to live by learning not how to make conversation with the ghost but how to talk with him, with her, how to let them speak or how to give them back speech, even if it is in oneself [...] they are always *there*, specters, even if they do not exist, even if they are no longer, even if they are not yet" (Derrida 1994, 176). Derrida offers us a way to think time out of linear chronology that does not necessarily posit the ghosts as specters of the dead – they may be from the not yet as much as the long past. The dragon lady as specter lives and haunts in ghostly histories and deferred images. Avery Gordon poses the question of discontinuity by asking, "[h]ow do we remember ghostly histories and their traces in our lives and in our ideas when our memories are *conspirators, collaborative agents and traitors*; when too many important *books* (in both the literal and metaphorical sense of the term) have

been *set aside*?" (Gordon 1999, 93). Haunting draws us to the very difficulty of that which has been written out, set aside and forgotten. Moreover Gordon reminds us that there is something sticky about the situation of one who would interpret – who would make ruly the unruly nature of ghosts.

I take up the concept of haunting to accomplish two things: to think through rhetoric in societal context, and to examine the rhetorics' relation to affect. First, haunting is a generative way to conceptualize the ways in which biased histories manifest in everyday language. The dragon lady is not being reproduced through a planned representation of Asian and Asian American women. Instead, it rises up in order to frame a woman marked by a difference that is culturally channeled through tropes of Orientalized sexuality. The accumulation of stereotypes is read into her work by virtue of her body as marked by her race and gender. Either she is meant to be cast as the passive lotus blossom, a sexually submissive Asian woman who can properly be incorporated into societal expectations, or she is read as the sexually extravagant dragon lady who cannot be properly corralled into societal expectation and therefore must be expelled. Devaluation as expulsion takes place through the rhetoric's creation of Nakadate as villain. As demonstrated by the climate of critical response, Nakadate's work is haunted by the past but also by the response to the stereotype that instills an implicit demand in the rhetoric — to do as one is politically expected to do. Oddly, there is a persistent form of racialized misogyny in veiled artistic critique that says, "you're not doing feminism right." This haunting is about the political acceptability of feminism, policing the borders of what actions are allowed in sexual self-empowerment.

Second, haunting is a felt conglomeration of multiple temporalities. Dismissive

discourses of Nakadate's work are not only a deferral of engagement but a response to the prolongation of affective interaction. Affective investments here function as the "body's ability to experience its intensity, to experience itself as 'more than itself'" (Callard and Papoulias 2010, 248). By following my affective investments, I realized that in truth I echoed the same claims of Johnson and others in my initial reactions to Nakadate's work. Upon first encountering Nakadate, I was compelled towards a dismissive attitude. After the 2011 retrospective of her work, I found myself unsure about the ethics of her work. The curators explain the exhibit, "Only the Lonely" as one that "brings together bodies of work that touch on voyeurism, loneliness, the manipulative power of the camera, and the urge to connect with others, through, within, and apart from technology and the media" (MoMA PS1 2011). Like Johnson's description of Nakadate, I found myself wrapped in the framing of her work as potentially manipulative. I felt held by her work, by my discomfort. And, in returning to her, my thoughts echoed as spectral voices, speaking in a voice I no longer recognized. Why had I victimized those men? Why had I cast her as the one with disproportional power in the situation? I had participated in the same liberal impulse to protect the men in the videos and photos by revoking the possibilities for their position as other than pathetic and in need of rescue from the clutches of Nakadate's art. Could the men be the ones getting sexual pleasure? Even if she is toying with them, might they want to be toyed with? Could the pairing not be one of mutual benefit? Could they be thought of as in a position of power over her — seeking her out, taking her into their homes, having her remove her clothes? Each of the multiple possibilities of agencies and complications are ruled out by reading the men as victims. What I seek here is to pull out the ways in which the sinking feeling of discomfort created in Nakadate's work continually returns to the critical question of her body

– fit, young, beautiful, undressed…

Thinking with Sianne Ngai's formulation that all racialized performance has an affect of what she calls ugly feelings (Ngai 2007, 12), it is possible to make the more explicit connections of affective response to the ways in which Nakadate is rhetorically framed explicitly by her gender and implicitly by her mixed race heritage. Palpable sensations of discomfort surround her artistry. She transports onlookers into an unclear field of experience. Accordingly, there is something honest and perceptive about much of the rhetoric around Nakadate's work. When *The Guardian* marks her interview with the description of "disturbing videos" (Morgan 2011), they are not simply making a judgment call but perhaps pointing to what it is that Nakadate's work *does*. It disturbs notions of gendered, raced, and aged relationships. The disturbing quality aptly likens her work to a muddy pond put into motion by a wading body. The once clear water becomes murky, and even though it will settle, the composition of the pond is permanently altered. The rhetoric around Nakadate demonstrates the desire for clarity and consistency. Nakadate's art not only puts motion into static and sedimented notions, the effect lingers and marks the encounter indelibly. In these sometimes ugly transportations, the movement of Nakadate's art emerges in felt experience.

Flipping Surveillance: the experience of entrapment

In order to offer an answer to the questions about power, victimization, and manipulation posed in relation to the haunting affect of Nakadate's work, I turn to her art as enacting a form of tactical surveillance. Haunting demonstrates the ways in which the specter of the dragon lady clings to interpretations of Asian American women and points to the sense of sticking power that the negative affect of her art produces. If the rhetoric around Nakadate's work marks her as a

predator while demanding that she return to the position of prey, then Nakadate's technological practices position her as prey that wants to be hunted, caught, and consumed. The process is more complicated than one or the other, and I opt to call it "preydatory" to draw attention to its implied quandary. As Michel Foucault teaches us, visibility is a trap (Foucault 1977). Taking up applications of Foucault's work to raced bodies, Nakadate compels me to ask about the prey that wants to be trapped. How then does visibility play a role in providing the end which is always implied as unwanted? If visibility is inevitable, then is it possible to use visibility to snare more than oneself? What is the tactic of preydatory performance?

Lisa Nakamura points to the importance of countering scholarship that assumes race- and/or gender-neutral power dynamic in surveillance. It is from the starting point of power that I assess the surveillance in Nakadate's work. I offer flipping surveillance as a tactic in Nakadate's work that pushes against the status quo capture of women's bodies of color through technologies of surveillance. Flipping surveillance is not free from the trappings of more insidious forms of control and categorization present in surveillance; it is of course entangled with them. As Nakamura discerns "surveillance does more than simply watch or observe bodies. It *remakes* the body as a social actor[…]There is no form of surveillance that is innocent" (Nakamura 2015, 221). Nakadate's remaking of social actors makes use of surveillance by flipping the script of gendered and raced power dynamics.[30]

Flipping surveillance is not a singular 180 degree turn. It is instead a tilting-of-axis that complicates the roles ascribed to the players, rewriting their roles as complex, intimate, and murky. Surveillance invokes roles of innocence and guilt. It is most often theorized in terms of

30 For additional reading on race and gender, see the recent black feminist cultural studies project taken up by Simone Browne in *Dark Matters: On the Surveillance of Blackness*.

power differential, even in counter tactics. For instance, "sousveillance" is increasingly notable as a means of countering surveillance. "All such activity has been surveillance: organizations observing people. One way to challenge and problematize both surveillance and acquiescence to it is to resituate these technologies of control on individuals, offering panoptic technologies to help them observe those in authority. We call this inverse panopticon "sousveillance" from the French words for "sous" (below) and "veiller" to watch" (Mann et al 2003, 332). Unlike sousveillance, I forward flipping surveillance as an ongoing disruption of power positions that practices forms of surveillance through aestheticized tactics. I read Nakadate's work as flipping these above and below dynamics through an aesthetic relocation of surveillance. Through an ongoing collapse of predators and prey, I suggest her work enacts the ways in which innocence and guilt, captive and captor, do not operate as mutually exclusive or exhaustively descriptive categories.

Themes of surveillance are recurrent throughout Nakadate's work. She has, for example, engaged in what she refers to as a surveillance project that operates along lines of what might be called stalking:

> I worked on a project where I'd record the outgoing messages on men's [answering] machines. This was before everyone had cell phones, so I was calling a lot of people's homes. The thing about giving out your landline number—which is not something I'd recommend anyone doing—is that you can do a reverse search to find the address. So I found where these guys lived, and I'd spend an entire day following them. I'd sit across the street from their house and wait until they came out in the morning and then follow them. I never did much with the project but I felt like it was something I needed to do. I'd follow them and take pictures, like surveillance pictures. They never knew or found out. Some of them had jobs, sometimes they'd just be hanging out, driving around. There are a lot of grainy pictures from far away of men just sort of living, doing their man thing (Indrisek 2006).

Nakadate's surveillance project takes place as a form of more easily defined hierarchy, not unlike

traditional understandings of surveillance. Spying enacts a violation of assumed privacy, the unintended consequences of giving out your phone number. I argue that this use of surveillance more accurately enacts the critiques leveraged against Nakadate's work insofar as she, in keeping her distance, takes without giving. However, the project Nakadate describes is unlike the work about which critics seethe. By coming into proximity with the men she only watches in this project, her other works don't recreate surveillance – they flip it. And in flipping surveillance, she also changes the dynamics of predator and prey.

Most of Nakadate's work around practices of surveillance happen in situations of oscillating power networks that are discontinuous in their exchanges and enactments. These practices offer examples of tactical media uses that actively engage in ongoing artistic but uncertain employments of surveillance through typical methods in atypical circumstances. To be clear, these projects do not deter state or corporate surveillance. The resistance at play is a mundanely powerful one. Nakadate performs such tactics in order to deconstruct mainstream visions of the heterosexual pairing; these pairings, for Asian American women, are formed by the accumulation of the specter of the dragon lady and the passive lotus blossom. Just as the immigration checks at Angel Island confirmed Asian immigrant women as threat and sexual object, so too do the hauntings of these tropes. The lived experiences that stem from these histories, in representational and immigration history, are deeply material. Unlike what Torin Monahan describes as the failed resistance in aestheticized anti-surveillance camouflage (Monahan 2015), Nakadate's work is not about hiding. It is about being seen, or rather it is about drawing attention to the ways in which certain bodies are already made to be seen. It is here helpful to turn to the work of José Esteban Muñoz on disidentification as a remaking of toxic

identities (Muñoz 1999, 185). Remaking demonstrates the situation of minoritarian populations which are made subject to the burden of liveness (182) and made to perform for the amusement of the dominant power bloc (187). By recording her already present demand to be live entertainment for the dominant social location of white men, Nakadate employs components of disidentification to reorder the logic of visibility. While it could be argued that any use of surveillance, even under the banner of resistance, reifies the system of corralling marginalized populations to be made countable and therefore subject to the exercise of state and corporate control, such a line of argumentation depends on negating the lived reality of mundane forms of surveillance on the bodies of women of color. Further, such daily occurrences of patriarchal watching and ordering sometimes work in tandem with larger structures of surveillance. The commingling of the mundane and the institutional is particularly true in Internet surveillance on the gendered raced body. In other words, the watching and controlling methods of surveillance that occur at the quotidian level are the primary targets that I argue Nakadate is flipping.

Illustration 8: Lucky Tiger #8 2009 (Saatchi 2017)

Returning to the “Lucky Tiger” series, Nakadate’s photographic disruption of moral masculinity is set by smudged heavy fingerprints that cross her face and frame her body to each side. The detritus of the body interrupts and remains, insisting, but the what of its insistence is unclear in the photo itself. While the photograph outside of the given context of her performance may pose Nakadate's normatively attractive form as the victim of objectifying sexual practices that enable patriarchy to relegate women's bodies to a place of subjugation, the presence of the fingerprints linger to present an indexical glance at what else is happening in the performance. Nakadate flips the tables of the consumption of her body by choosing the posing and the terms of her consumption by men; she does so by mobilizing movement and process in a seemingly static medium. At truck stops she offered a stack of photos of herself posed in soft porn figurations

while scantily clad against various backdrops of Americana; however, in order to partake in the viewing, the men had to agree to coat their digits in fingerprinting ink, thus marking their participation in the performance through a permanent remainder of their traceable identity. The use of fingerprinting is meant to make the partakers aware that they must submit to being surveilled in order to surveil her. Examining the photos of a scantily clad woman, whether out of curiosity or for masturbatory purposes, is a mundane act. By casting it within a dynamic of surveillance tactics, Nakadate's art highlights the presence of the bodies that are made to be seen and sees the traces of the bodies made to see, entwining their fates in the act of bodily interaction, a proximate hand to hand tradeoff that makes close the process so often divorced from a sense of warm bodies.

Nakadate's use of fingerprinting not only flips surveillance, it flips the racialization of fingerprinting. Nakadate's work makes strange the intimate stranger, the men she shares her body with in photographic exchange. But, the idea of the stranger is haunted by the concept of the foreigner. The placement of fingertip to ink pad and the documentation therein predominantly conjures the jail, the prison, the criminal record. Inky documentation of criminality is founded on the desire to eliminate the Asian predator. Fingerprinting bears a racialized legacy of documenting the foreigner, as the contemporary technology of fingerprinting arose out of the U.S. Customs Service. It originates as a tool to control the Oriental threat of Chinese immigration through Western ports (Cole 2002, 121). Nakadate's work calls upon the idea of suspect identities in fingerprinting in a manner that rewrites the implied racial or ethnic suspicion of the technology's origin. In looking to immigration surveillance as a historical point of origin, the photographic series can serve as the contemporary disruption of such a legacy. She disrupts it

not simply by using it, but by implanting some of the predatory threat implied by her racialized body on those who desire it.

This surveillance is both tactical and tactile, evoking a sense of intimacy so often lost in the idea of watching, surveilling—both terms implying the distance of the vantage point. The fingerprinting creates a sense of haptic perception infused with desire. As curator and art writer Rachel Cook describes "The images possess an almost unbearable tension – while they suggest an American coming-of-age road trip, an adventure of self-exploration, they unlock inherently unpleasant human desire to possess through the pawed black ink marks" (Cook 2010, 48). The act of surveillance heightens the sense of desire through the unbearable, which Lauren Berlant and Lee Edelman remind us is linked with enjoyment (Berlant and Edelman 2013, vii, 28, 51) and sex (113). Possession here points to the ways in which the smudged fingerprints seek to hold and perhaps keep for a time. Berlant argues that the having is still unbearable, defined by its simultaneous being apart. "Racism, homophobia, misogyny, erotophobia, class antagonism, and then the random encounters on the street that become, through repetition, meaningful, intimate, touching, freaky: art here slows down and opens up time to the beat and membrane in which all of that upheaval, misery, intimacy, and clarity in the ordinary is lived" (46). Recalling the classed form of hypermasculinity present in Americana as solidified in the long-haul trucker, Nakadate's circulation of her image as Asian Americana here is made into a collaborative performance through surveillance. The act of touching and leaving marks slows the relational divide and makes momentarily intimate the desire to possess to turn on and captivate. Smudges go beyond the textural and the sense of touching to form a political instantiation of documentation and the subjectivity of being watched, tracked, and followed. I suggest, the form of surveillance unsettles

Nakadate's primary position as performer and through the fingerprinting the men perform not only a form of heterosexual lust, but also make evidence our own unbearable tensions of desiring and being set apart. She transports those who encounter her work to a place that may not be desirable but nonetheless is all about desire.

Nakadate's work in these pieces is characterized by low resolution videos, scratches ("Trouble Ahead, Trouble Behind"), and smudged fingerprints ("Lucky Tiger"). Further, her work initiates an amateur aesthetic, now popularized by YouTube, but predating the advent of the site. Her work is perhaps better seen in relation to amateur pornography or home videography. The aesthetic qualities feature flickering, blurring, and a sense of unrehearsed expectation. The mutable qualities of her captivating art thus reflects what Helen Grace describes as:

> non-official images, in which amateur, 'prosumer' and professional practices of image-making blur in a manic over-production, which, rather than increasing the importance of the visual, tends if anything to reduce it. This is because the image becomes less important than the act of production*or the act of 'capture'*as a register of affective engagement in a moment of expressiveness (Grace 2007, 470).

While Grace describes maker culture online and ultimately is interested in the disappearance of the product in favor of the experience of making, she also highlights part of the aesthetic and process that characterizes Nakadate's work. Although Nakadate displays her work, the ephemeral nature of the experience is highlighted in the amateur aesthetic in that the making of the capture contains the source of the affective investments and effects. In the interface of performance and technology, and in the play of "amateurism," Nakadate is committing to the sensation of free fall and to the touch of failure. The amateur quality to her works is about relinquishing absolute control and finding performance in the risk of failure, the process of making together. The sense of togetherness is highlighted in the focus on touch and the sensory qualities of her performance

work. Because her work is unscripted and evokes a sense of raw content, it redirects attention to the event encapsulated in the video-making rather than the outcome of the video as a whole.

Laurel Nakadate's femininity is disarming, but moreover it causes a state of discomfort in the viewer. Her art contests notions of hypermasculine morality in Americana through the transportation of her body across the country's landscapes and landmarks. These transportations are found in the content of her photography but also in the context. Asian Americana mobilized in her artistry comes with a political lack of intention that I argue is generative for thinking through raced and gendered bodies under the weight of societal expectation. The transportational feelings of her work add to a sense of being taken to destinations unknown. Her work lingers in these mundane but unpleasant feelings of sadness, loneliness, and unnameable affects. But there is also levity. Levity is not mockery; rather, her relationships with older men as acted out through a dance of predator and prey enact becoming one another. These transportations are meant to be felt as process in her amateur aesthetic but are taken as techniques towards intimacy.

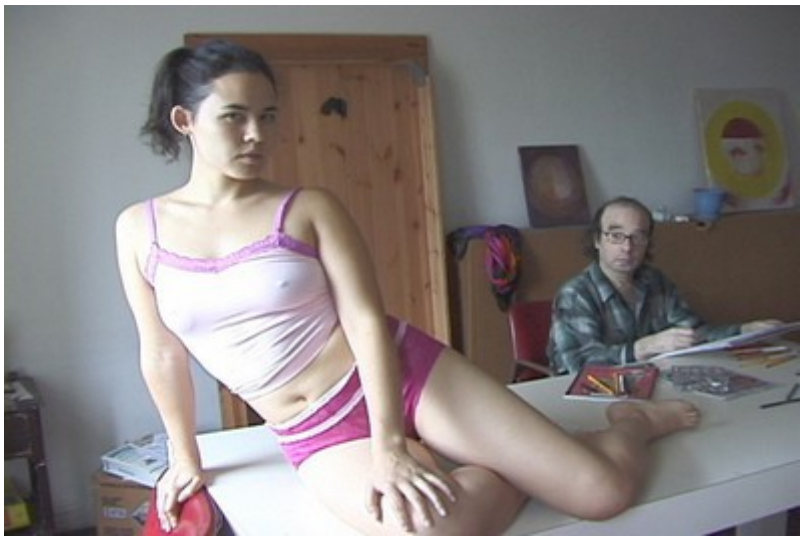

Illustration 9: Video Still "Lessons 1-10" 2001 (Tonkonow 2017)

In the video work “Lessons 1-10”, Nakadate agrees to pose as a life model for a middle-aged white man in his home, under the condition that she can videotape their sessions. She offers her live performing body in exchange for surveillance. In the works, she acquiesces to his wants, posing her body as he desires, wearing what he instructs. In one session she sports an undressed navel and nipples peeking through girlish pink, lace-lined lingerie. She looks into the camera while the man in the background stares at her. Who is the voyeur? The camera and performance work together to create multiple panes of observation, infused with power. The viewer takes in the scene through the camera’s frame, at a distance to judge and consume. Nakadate returns the camera’s gaze, meeting it forcibly with her own, asking to be seen and to see, posing her body to be consumed. The man orchestrates the scene and captures Nakadate’s form as his own for his art. In another session, the man asks Nakadate to come in roller skates, panties, and pigtails. The topless Nakadate rests her pouting face in her hands before a pile of gas station mini donuts, laying on her stomach, her skates are heavy in the air, tugging at her ankles. The scene brings up the age differential between the man and Nakadate, who now looks so very young, dressed as a hypersexual child. The sense of discomfort in the picture brings out an element of surveillance that goes beyond the gaze of the camera. Is the recording about security? I don’t think so. She has no actual guarantee of security. It is not hooked up to a live feed that might provide the threat of retribution for harm. The man might simply see it as a tool of fetish. Might it be a way to stave off the feeling of danger that a young woman could experience in agreeing to enact the fantasies of a stranger in his home? Perhaps, but only insofar as the camera has the power to make one feel watched. The camera functions as co-performer in “Lessons 1-10”. Surveillance itself becomes a player in the stranger intimacies of Nakadate’s work.

Dwelling on the role of the camera, capture takes place at multiple levels. There is the capture of the camera. It takes from the setting a framed bias, reinscribing it as the whole of the moment as knowable. In the capture of Nakadate's body, the mode of understanding comes as captivation. She is alluring. She is meant and made to be alluring. And moving outward from the technologies of capture and the manifestations of their content to the context of their social effect, Nakadate's capture takes place within a raced and sexed history of knowledge making and identity formation. Recasting surveillance as a mediator between Nakadate and the men who want to view her body marks the camera as complicit. Both works feature soft pornographic or suggestive and sexed poses. Bringing these poses into interactive situations with men, Nakadate's video work is about her presence in their domains. Nakadate always gives up the home field advantage in her work, and the risks are much higher than losing a game. She explains that the risk is essential to her process:

> I did a project where I went and walked around a truck-stop parking lot and videotaped myself dancing with men in the cabs of their semis. I definitely am taking risks, but I think something really great can come out of putting yourself in an awkward situation. A lot of people think that the work is about mocking or making fun of things, but a lot of it is about discomfort and making myself as uncomfortable as the men feel, or putting myself in a situation where I'm revealing my loneliness as much as they're revealing theirs (Indrisek 2006).

Her documentation of these encounters is what I argue forms the use of surveillance tactics. She documents through fingerprinting, observes and contains through her cameras. However, the closeness of her involvement in these situations is one of the most prominent flips of such practices. She puts her body on the line. More than being present, she is close to, proximate with. What does Nakadate's practice of intimacy do to flipping surveillance? What does sharing loneliness mean in the context of being watched and accounted for?

For one, it begins to move beyond the exploitation theory promoted by critics of Nakadate. Throughout the framing of Nakadate's work with men, critics argue that she is manipulating men, but Nakadate's visibility tactics make capture more complicated. Demonstrating the interplay of power relations as oscillating, Nakadate describes her process as making herself prey:

> I wait to be approached. I want to be the one who's hunted, I want to be the one who they take interest in—because if they're not interested in me, they're probably not going to be interested in being in a video. I also like the idea of turning the tables—the idea of them thinking that they're in charge or that they're in power and they're asking me for something and then I turn it on them, where I'm the director and the world is really my world (Indrisek 2006).

Nakadate takes advantage of her position as prey, which must be accounted for if thinking of her work as predatory. Rey Chow, although writing in the postcolonial context, offers a valuable mode of thinking through the process of being prey. In recounting theories of the trap, Chow argues that the "missing link is the prey's experience of *being* captured;" the "hunter's carefully conceived, preemptive plan, as embodied in the open trap, is now folded into another space and time that comes into being through entrapment, while the prey's past and present actions take on, belatedly, a new, additional significance as self-entanglement" (Chow 2012, 46). Nakadate relishes in the experience of being hunted, and it is a reformulation of her status as both captivating and captured. It is not about embracing the sexualization of one's own body; rather, it is seizing the opportunity to unfold the cultural histories that make entrapment the condition of bodies like hers. She enacts a self-entanglement to counter the ways in which relationships can displace the limitations of ways that bodies are made to be desired. Nakadate's work displays an unrefined intimacy. Her performance work contains an unpolished appearance, evoking a sense

of continuation and raw materiality. It is in part these unfinished seams that make her work engaging. Tactile surveillance works to affectively engage the audience.

Touching is necessarily intimate and co-participatory; it is an invasion of discomfort insofar as it impinges on one's bodily envelope. The cultural histories of Nakadate's work are in part felt in the vibratory effect of the multiple temporalities taking place in Nakadate's photography work. These felt effects derive from the practice of touching – something that occurs after the image has been marked by the lens of the camera, drawing attention to the photograph as unfinished, in flux, and subject to performance. These practices of fingerprinting and scratching-out enhance the tactility of the forms as a means to complicate the image and its reception. Stills such as "Pretty Baby #2" play on the subtleties of the sexualized female form in soft-lit poses and the violence that comes through the obfuscation of Nakadate's identity by scratching out the details of her face. In a form of obfuscation, the artist invokes the sexed body as the means of conveying the performative image. Nakadate invites the voyeur with soft lace interrupted by the rude blackout scratches over her face.

Illustration 10: "Pretty Baby #7" 2005 (Mutual Art 2017)

In “Pretty Baby #7”, Nakadate lays awkwardly across a hotel bed, undressed down to a pair of lace panties. The sheets are wrinkled, the blankets are pulled into a haphazard heap, and she is sprawled out across an uncertain grouping of pillows. She appears to be laying with her hands behind her head; however the black scratches make it difficult to discern much above her bare breasts. The tangible and erratic scratches echo the sense of the scene. It is as Carol Mavor describes, “printed with eroticism” “distinctively fleshly, dreamy, blurry, delightfully sloppy, otherworldly” (Mavor 1995, 25). Mavor’s analysis of the victorian girl is peculiarly fitting in analyzing Nakadate’s exploration of sexuality and girlishness through touched photographs. Mavor suggests that the performative qualities of the photographs of Lewis Carol’s little girls are made felt through his arrangement (29), and that they expose how he is caught in their glances, “in an act of blushing and non blushing at the same time” (42). Nakadate’s art reworks the

tactile, the amateur site of the little girl, by making explicit the connection between girlishness and sexuality and the entwinement of touching and being touched in the performance of photography. Nakadate's works are, as Mavor suggests, pleasures taken, in the acts of taking pictures and taking pleasure in photos, calling us into connection through being touched, showing how we perform with them and they perform with us (118-119).

Touch here mars and marks but does not do so without relationality. Erin Manning argues:

> We move to touch and touch to move. Touch operates as a technique of the moving body, inciting it to direct its movement. The direction is relational, it is towards. Touching towards means igniting a relation that does not occur between subject and object, but toward the between that Simondon calls the margin of indetermination. To situate touch in the margin of in determination of the relational "between" challenges the sensory-input model of the senses. Here, touch is not received, it is enacted. To touch is to activate relational movement-toward (Manning 2009).

Accordingly, the crude formation of granulated images and heavy hands of fingerprinted men mark each work in differing but resonant ways. The technique of touch sparks a movement towards response and connectivity. As Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick teaches us, the intimacy of touching feeling is based on haptically experiencing sensations *beside* the understandings that inform and direct our reading (Sedgwick 2003, 8). It is a textural affect (13) that has emerged from my encounter with Nakadate's photographic work. In touching, she creates a technique of movement towards intimacy in the photographs and with the participant viewer. Scratches, smudges, and streaks of ink do not constitute a simplistic exchange, but one that is instead simultaneously in the moment and marked by the memory of countless moments before it. The photograph is considered to be a moment caught in time, but the art Nakadate presents is not the isolated moment of the photograph. She instead circulates the photograph into performance

through touching; tactile surveillance marks the photograph in travel, in transit, and in the transportational experiences of the those who have partook. The performance that extends out from the photograph creates a collaborative meeting between bodies and technology that catalyze in the multiple temporalities of Nakadate's art. The photo conjures the instance of its making, the process of its being touched, and the wider social setting in which that touching is known.

The relationships she establishes with the men in her video work are sometimes fleeting and other times sustained over years of shooting. The men, largely middle-aged and white, project a contrasting form to her own:

> I guess the main thing I'm looking for is someone who seems like they have a space in their life for me. Maybe it's the same thing you look for in relationships. Looking for someone who has a space in their life or who can look at you for longer than a minute. A lot of people have said that the main thread in my work is loneliness or just wanting to create a world with someone who doesn't really have much in their life, so maybe I'm looking for someone who's lonely and wants to try to create something with me (Indrisek 2006).

What entangles the bodies that otherwise diverge from association is a willingness to be captured by both parties, a choice to hunt and be hunted. Nakadate's work is best understood as moving beyond a stance of safety and danger into a blurred space of intimacy through practices of surveillance. Her preydatory performance shifts power from hierarchy to mutable strains of connection and disconnection. By creating an exchange of surveillance – watching for being tracked, observing for capturing – Nakadate makes evident the quotidian demands on the bodies of women of color. In making surveillance serve a function of dismantling its veil of covertness, she takes away the places in which mundane surveillance hides in plain sight. Her work of conflating capture and being captive infuse transportations of the bodies through technology into performance. These stranger intimacies invoke an affective response that lingers beyond the

scene, pulling history and the not-yet-known into the ongoing present.

Chapter Two – *Trans*mediations of e-Feminacy: Regurgitations of transnational drag between boys and men

Femininity has a normative hold on the bodies of women as a form of cultural-political inscription. As an analysis of Nakadate's work suggests, and following what Judith Butler argues, the gender script may be "anxiously repeated" (Butler 1993, 51). Nakadate's work produces a form of transportation that, in its renegotiation of expectations of femininity, emits a negative field of intensities. I forward trans affect as a movement that unsettles normative expectations of femininity. In this chapter, I consider how trans affect moves through the leaky conduit of *trans*mediations. Transmediations provide occasion to examine the enactment of culture as well as the technological processes that enable them. Specifically, I take up the seeping technologies of feminine expectation through the bodies of men and boys.

In chapter one, I track the lingering affects of the racialization on femininity as marked on the bodies of women. In this chapter, I delve further into the relation between bodies and the practices of gender, focusing on how race radically transforms not only the ways in which expectations of gender are codified but also the linkages of gender expression to gender expectation. Whereas the normative view links masculinity to men, American perspectives have built on and "anxiously repeated" the Orientalist construction of Asian men as feminine. Through fissures of cultural transmission, I argue that femininity in relation to the trope of the effeminate Oriental male does not operate strictly within existing paradigms of normative thought. Moreover, these openings – that is, the places where derivation meets the demand for conformity – are also not inversions or rejections of trope; rather, they are temporal shifts that provide spaces

of reflection. In this chapter, I seek to explore how Asian men and boys embracing femininity interacts with the trope of the effeminate Oriental male.

David Hwang's play *M. Butterfly* is an exemplary case of the collision of queer expression and Orientalist tropes. As scholars of *M. Butterfly* have taught us, its performative play of gender risks reinscription while also providing a critique that engages new modes of response. Dorinne Kondo writes, "The creative subversiveness of Hwang's play best emerges in contrast with the conventions of the opera *Madama Butterfly*, to which it provides ironic counterpoint […] Hwang reappropriates the conventional narrative of the pitiful Butterfly and the trope of the exotic, submissive 'Oriental' woman rupturing the seamless closure and the dramatic inevitability of the storyline" (Kondo 1990, 7). Kondo argues that it is through such subversive reimaginations of trope that Hwang's play illustrates the ways in which gender is not a category in advance of race and culture; rather gender analysis alone fails to account for the perpetuation of the notion that the Orient itself is a woman inextricably linked to racial systems of domination through geography and colonial histories (Kondo 1990, 25).

M. Butterfly is preceded by a long history of Western construction of the "Oriental" man as sexually deviant by way of absence of sexual drive – deviant, that is, not as the oversexed oriental woman but as the undersexed oriental man. The Orientalist trope, locked into societal thinking through literature and media representations, is linked to negative femininity or the redoubled identification of a feminine gender with a female body/sex, replicating a normative association of gender to genitalia.[31] By constructing the "other" as feminine, an underlying fear is

31 For the purposes of this dissertation, tropes can be considered a literary artifice that encodes a particular notion, in this case an identity, in a repeatable and therefore naturalizable concept of the notion. In other words, the trope makes a distinct notion of an identity in codified terms that is embedded throughout a history of literary usage. The specific trope I will be analyzing is that of the effeminate oriental man. I read this through Queer Orientalism largely to situate it in the field of queer theory in addition to its place in Orientalist studies.

exposed in white patriarchy.

Karen Shimakawa, building on Kondo's analysis, argues that the stereotypes perpetuated in *M. Butterfly* risk reification in order to confront dominant culture, housed in the audience, with "progressive politics of the performative acts of gender/ethnic identities" (Shimakawa 1993, 362). In line with Shimakawa's analysis, this chapter argues that the reemergence of Orientalist tropes of effeminacy cannot be met with dismissal. To universally reject the figure of the effeminate Oriental male is to reinscribe normative understandings of gender, sex, and sexuality. Instead, I want to consider the possibilities for what Nguyen Tan Hoang calls a "politics of bottomhood that opposes racism and heteronormativity without scapegoating femininity" (Nguyen 2014, 14). As David Eng observes, some Asian American writers, of whom the *Aiiieeeee!* group are emblematic, have sought to combat the stereotype of the feminized Asian man by promoting an alternative masculinity that upholds misogyny and homophobia (Eng 2001, 210). I join Nguyen and Eng in seeking a non-oppositional stance toward feminine Asian men. However, to embrace the femininity of Asian men as inherently queer also risks misunderstanding the processes of racialization at play in notions of femininity. As such, this chapter works to examine the feminine assemblages of Asian men's bodies in relation to race, sexuality, culture, and nation.

The racialization of femininity in Nakadate's work operates in specific relation to cultural histories of Asian immigration in the United States and the formation of Asian Americanness. Immigration histories demonstrate that even in the context of Asian American analysis, the bounds of geography and culture are not clearly delineated. This chapter takes this entanglement into an examination of the collisions of Asian femininity as culturally specific expression and

American constructions of Asian femininity as trope. In order to accomplish this, I examine *trans*mediation with attention to femininity on the Internet as a site of globalized cultural translation. In particular, this chapter pairs an examination of two artists, Ming Wong and Luo, in order to demonstrate the divergences and particularities of various modes of Queer Orientalism —an imbalanced and oscillating exchange between the East and West as fractured power entanglements that manifest in complex manifestations of queer self expression, Empire, and misinterpellations.[32]

Ming Wong is a Singaporean director, performer, and curatorial artist based in Berlin, Germany. He was trained in Chinese calligraphy at Nanyang Art Academic in Singapore and holds his Masters in fine art media from the Slade School of Art in London. In Wong's early career he wrote for English-language theater in Singapore, which included the book for *Chang & Eng* (1997) a musical theatre production about the conjoined twins from whom the term "Siamese twins" arises.[33] The contemporary work, on which I focus in this chapter, centers on melodramatic reinterpretations of film. In these works, Wong enacts the technique of miscasting actors whose identities and/or social locations mismatch the original actors. Wong's work miscasts world cinema roles primarily in terms of race and gender. He predominantly casts himself or other men as the women in the cinema he reinterprets, inviting racial and gender

32 To the best of my language-limited capabilities, the boy lives in Taiwan, evidenced by an interviews and news coverage in Taiwan; he appears to have been 9 years-old in 2010, and his first name is Luo (羅). I have not confirmed this data as fact.

33 This musical sets the tone for the ways in which I look to analyze Wong's work in relation to transnationality and cultural transgressions. In content the musical situates the transnational narrative of spectacle around Thai American twins Chang and Eng Bunker whose story troubles ideas of exploitation and stereotype. The musical itself complicates the notion and cultural boundaries of translation, the English book being written by Wong who spoke Cantonese in the home and Mandarin in Catholic school. Further, the musical pulls the act of cultural and linguistic translation into the political, as it was the first English-language theater permitted to be performed in the People's Republic of China.

misrecognition and mis/disidentification. Wong's installations have been featured internationally to wide critical coverage and little academic attention.[34] He folds performance, technology, and bodies into his artistic practice. The sense of disrupted expectation generated by Wong's miscasting relies on a stark contrast between the actors' bodies and the rest of the production's fidelity to the original films; lines, costuming, and stage dressings maintain precise parallels to the originals. The technological process performs alongside the bodies by forming more than one moving screen image through multi-media installations. In addition to translating film into miscast multi-screen, multi-media installations, Wong converts many of his pieces into split screen videos that he posts through his website to the Internet video sharing site YouTube.com. Wong, in the context of his larger body of work, can be said to be enacting a queering of the Chinese cinematic canon, largely by miscasting the roles of women with East and Southeast Asian men performing in drag.

I consider two Wong pieces commissioned for the Singapore Pavilion at the 53rd Venice Biennale (2009). The first is "Life of Imitation" a racialized gender recasting of a scene from the Hollywood film *Imitation of Life* (1959) by Douglas Sirk. The video version plays on a 13 minute loop. In this piece, Wong miscasts Singaporean men from the nation's major ethnic groups — Chinese, Indian, and Malay. The men perform as women in that they enact a femininity in resonance with the women previously cast in dress, voice, and mannerisms. Wong's variation of drag lacks the exaggerated presentation of camp but maintains a quality of melodrama in choice of content. The original features an African American mother and her

34 In beginning this project, I had encountered no scholarship on Wong. Since beginning the dissertation, two academic articles that I know of have been published on Wong. One covers two artists from the Singapore Pavilion Installation at the Venice Biennale and the other examines an installation of Wong's work "After Chinatown" in the United Kingdom. See Teo 2015 and Zubillaga-Pow 2015.

white-passing daughter, and the scene Wong recreates is a conversation (in English) between the two, in which the daughter defines her whiteness by a complete break with her mother, asking, "And if by accident we should ever pass on the street, please don't recognize me." Wong's miscast performers move between roles across screens, meaning that the visual effect of the ethnic differences is in flux – sometimes the mother is Malay and the daughter is Chinese and other times the Chinese mother and the Indian daughter exchange the dramatic dialogue. As a result, sometimes the darker skinned performer plays the daughter who declares, "I'm white. White!"

The other piece to which I turn is "In Love for the Mood," which recasts race and gender in a scene from the Hong Kong film *In the Mood for Love* (2000), directed by Wong Kar-wai. The video version plays a 4 minute loop. In this piece, there is only one performer visible in the scene – a white Western woman. She plays both the Chinese man and the Chinese woman in the scene. She performs as woman and as man in a drag of both race and gender. Unlike the "Life of Imitation," which deploys racial miscasting without race drag, "In Love for the Mood" seeks to present the performer as Chinese. That is, "In Love for the Mood" enacts race drag in addition to gender drag, indicated perhaps most notably by the browning of the white actress's skin with makeup to portray a Chinese man. The scene depicts a lover's quarrel and builds on a level of melodrama found in the source material but also consistent throughout Wong's work. While only the woman is shown, Wong maintains an off camera role, feeding the performer her lines in Cantonese. The multi-screen format in this piece shows the performer in various stages of rehearsal, trying to perform phonetically a language she does not understand.

Through an examination of the translation of medium and the perpetuation of trope, I

analyze the political capacities and limitations of miscasting in Wong's work as dependent on the entanglements of performance, body, and technological medium. I argue that the bodies cast and miscast in relation to transnational power dynamics expose how transmediations can serve to override the function of content when it operates in murkier subject matter, making performance and bodies central to our analysis of technological medium.

Alongside Wong's work, I analyze the Internet performances of Luo. He is a Taiwanese child who performs in drag and posts the videos of his performances online. He has appeared in competitions, talk shows, and continues to post his digital performances. Luo reenacts dance sequences from female pop artists, set to the original tracks. His debut (at about age six) is perhaps as telling of his age as his latter works are of his virtuosity. Talent marks his performances as notable and his age provides an opportunity to examine the entanglements of sexuality and gender. Luo's youth make him subject to standards of proper sexualization, as indicated in Internet-based responses to his gendered and sexed performances. The videos are set in the quotidian space of the home and tap into a sense of heightened femininity associated with the figure of the pop diva. The experience of the everyday and the extranormative make his work exemplary of a sort of fabulous mundane, which rearticulates the role of amateur artistic expression. His performances range from Marilyn Monroe impersonations to renditions of Christina Aguilera's burlesque.

In particular, I focus on one performance for which Luo has gained the most public attention in Taiwan, China, and the United States. The performance video is a reperformance of Taiwanese pop star Jolin Tsai's video "Honey Trap" (2010). The video has given the amateur performer a touch of fame, demonstrated not simply by the reposting of his videos but also by an

interview conducted by MTV Taiwan, coverage by news agencies/on game shows, and invitations to perform on stage in front of Jolin Tsai and a panel of other people in the pop industry in Taiwan.[35] In the video, Luo performs the choreography of the original video; dance is the primary directive of the video, a single long take of Luo dancing to the full song. To the extent that he sings along, he does so only incidentally. The other element of the video is attire, which is what more readily brings the video into the realm of drag. The outfit resembles one worn by Tsai in the video and consists of very short tight black shorts and a white halter-style tank top with two sets of horizon slashes down the front. Through the slashes, Luo's midsection is visible along with the black bra he is wearing. He also wears a necklace and bracelet. I argue the drag in Luo's video is subversive to normative gender by aligning with everyday sexed fashion. The video is set in the home, or what appears to be the home peeking out of the sides of a pink sheet backdrop adorned with a scattering of large sequins. Luo's work in particular points to the translation of culture as integral to understanding the translation of medium. In the context of the idea of the effeminate Oriental male, Luo pushes at the culturally contingent and quotidian understanding of femininity and sexuality.

Wong and Luo translate femininity onto differently raced, gender, and/or sexed bodies. Together Wong and Luo proliferate and subvert, or rather indicate the entanglement between subversion and complicity in relation to the ways in which racialized femininity have come to be enmeshed with the bodies of Asian men. What emerges in common out of these mediated performances is transmediation. They translate filmic works into performance media that

35 "[壹級娛樂 MTV 台 10 點]Jolin 現身 小小胖連話都說不清楚.mov," Last Updated September 2010, YouTube, Accessed December 2011, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gAqSm6IK8ME&feature=related & "男童星超夯！9 歲羅非尬蔡依林舞蹈暴紅" Last Updated September 2010, YouTube, Accessed December 2011, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hyosUgJDlyA&feature=related

foregrounds the transfer of medium – the medium of the body and the medium of reception. In the section "Transmediations of Transnational Drag," I examine the concept of transmediation as it relates to Wong and Luo's work. This larger section contains five shorter segments, the first two of which, "Queerly Transmedial: Wong's Life of Imitation" and "Queer? Ku'er?: Luo and Taiwanese Subculture Online" examine the queer expression in Wong and Luo's transmedial performances. I argue that transmediation draws attention to the importance of situating the queer force of their performances transnationally. Next, in the section "Transmediation from algorithmic culture to cultural digestion," I extend transmedial theory through an understanding of cultural norms and their power to disrupt intention. In accordance with cultural digestion, I analyze the transmediations that might go awry in translated contexts or on translating bodies. In "Expelling Femininity: Luo's Transmediation on American Humor Websites," I examine the reception of Luo in the United States and the role of effeminophobia in rewriting his performance. Turning from the incidental translation to the intentional, I return explicitly to the problem of the trope of the effeminate Oriental male in normative contexts in "Consuming Cantonese: Transmediating Whiteness in Wong's 'In Love for the Mood.'" In order to address the limitations that the latter reception entails, in the concluding section "e-Feminacy: Queer Orientalism and nauseous reception online," I advocate nausea or delay as a reading tactic that can counter unintended moves towards dominant Western heteronormative framings.

Transmediations of Transnational Drag

Transmediation finds traction in various interpretations of media and technology studies.[36] At a basic level, transmediation is the process of translating content from one medium

36 Transmediation has its roots in education studies.

to another. Wong created his work as an interactive multi-screen and multimedia installation at the Singapore Pavilion at the Venice Biennale and then converted it into a composite video for YouTube posting. The transition from the original to the Internet video requires an act of medial translation. Henry Jenkins' work on transmedia storytelling demonstrates the linkages of multi-platform popular culture through the example of the film *The Matrix*. What Jenkins contributes to the examples of Wong and Luo is that even in their particular iterations, each transmedia story makes a "distinctive and valuable contribution to the whole" (Jenkins 2006, 95). Transmediation offers active roles to multiple players by engaging across media with varied participants (102).[37] Transmediations do not constitute isolated instances of medium shift but are enmeshed in a larger context of the content in question. Context shifts as medium shifts, which necessarily affects experiences of content. Moreover, the movement Wong and Luo make to the popular form of the Internet video begins to embed transmedial qualities into both everyday practices and professional media making.

The transmedial affects of Luo and Wong's work in translation reflects their relation and distinction from one another as, respectively, quotidian and professional. Luo's work is what might be called amateur, in that he is not established in art institutions nor does he have any formal training in dance or short film making. Luo is also a child; his expressions are everyday lived experiences of gender performance set to the Internet, enlarging the terrain of the mundane. Wong is easily recognizable as a professional artist. He intentionally queers Hollywood and Hong Kong cinema. Wong's professional choice can thus be analyzed as voluntary. With Luo, the question of intent is somewhat more uncertain; however, his expressive pleasure indicates that at

37 Transmedia stories are "media mix" Japan (Jenkins 2006, 110)

the least he is enjoying his drag performances.

Transmediation accounts for the practice of making media as engaged with, repeating, and distinctive from other media. It collects the accrued meanings of remediation and intermediation. Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin argue that remediation indicates a valuation of upgrading older media to newer ones (Bolter and Grusin 1999). The act of translation from one medium to another begs the question of valuation as presented by Bolter and Grusin. In particular, for Wong and Luo, I examine transmediation with an emphasis on the move to digital connectivity. How might we understand the translation from film to Internet video? Is there an implicit value in what can be said to be new media? In my extension of their work to particular practices of media making, I argue that the newer forms are not necessarily improvements. Bolter and Grusin see intermediation as an entanglement (107) which, when picked up in the work of Katherine Hayles, takes on a relational quality that demands the acknowledgment of co-constitutive force. Hayles writes, “Computation is not peripheral or incidental to electronic literature but central to its performance, play, and interpretation” (Hayles 2007, 99). Hayles' argument for an interlocking approach to the study of process and effects is applicable to how transmediation functions more broadly. The centrality of the medium shift is felt in and becomes inseparable from the content.

Wong’s works feature print, digital, and analog media, in which he translates the medium of film into art installation. These media are then translated from the museum to the Internet in a straightforward application of transmediation. But in light of Bolter and Grusin, Wong's work questions the telos of media forms, in that the multimedia installations are the core of his art while the video postings seem secondary. Extending the complexity of a non-telelogical

transmediation through Hayles demonstrates the ways in which this relationship between primary and secondary is more about an interconnected experience of medium translation.

Luo's work engages in a more complicated application of transmediation. At a basic level, Luo translates the medium of the music video into a reperformance Internet video. Of greater interest is the cultural translation that occurs in the digital domain. Luo's videos are originally posted to video-sharing sites used primarily in Taiwan and China. Yet a major interpretive shift occurs when Luo's video is taken up in the United States context on humor websites. These distinctions provide two expansions of the concept of transmediation. First, he does not initiate the translation. The translation is enacted by other users, involving the many players that Jenkins' work outlines. However, these are largely unintended and perhaps unpredictable players whose involvement initiates the shift from medium to medium. Second, Luo's medium is arguably unchanged, as it is a digital video posted online in both contexts. However, in the shift from Taiwanese Internet video sharing sites to American ones, the cultural shift enacts a translation that highlights technological form, making it available to a transmedial analysis. Moreover, the shift occurs in the types of sites on which the video is posted, which alter not only the cultural context but also the framing of the content, functioning as a medium-like platform for information sharing.

Rey Chow suggests that intensification is a core quality of transmedial character (Chow 2012, 185). While the word transmedial appears in the title of Chow's book, it only makes one brief appearance in the text. If I might extrapolate from her brief mention, intensification provides an alternative way of thinking to Jenkins' critique of upward valuation in transmediation that also incorporates the sense of accumulation spread throughout the thinkers in

this section. Intensification is the arc that connects the various media; it is the accumulation of enmeshments amongst the various component processes in transmediation. Intensity provides a sense of linkage between transmediation and larger cultural contexts. The context most germane to Wong and Luo's work is the circulation of the figure of the effeminate Oriental male. The intensification of femininity demands entangled histories and cultural analysis. In order to assess the transmedial work at play, I account for the accumulation of interpretive frames. Transmedial analysis is an intensification of transnational and transcultural translation that enables a productive analysis of queer expression of femininity in light of Orientalist tropes.

Queerly Transmedial: Wong's "Life of Imitation"

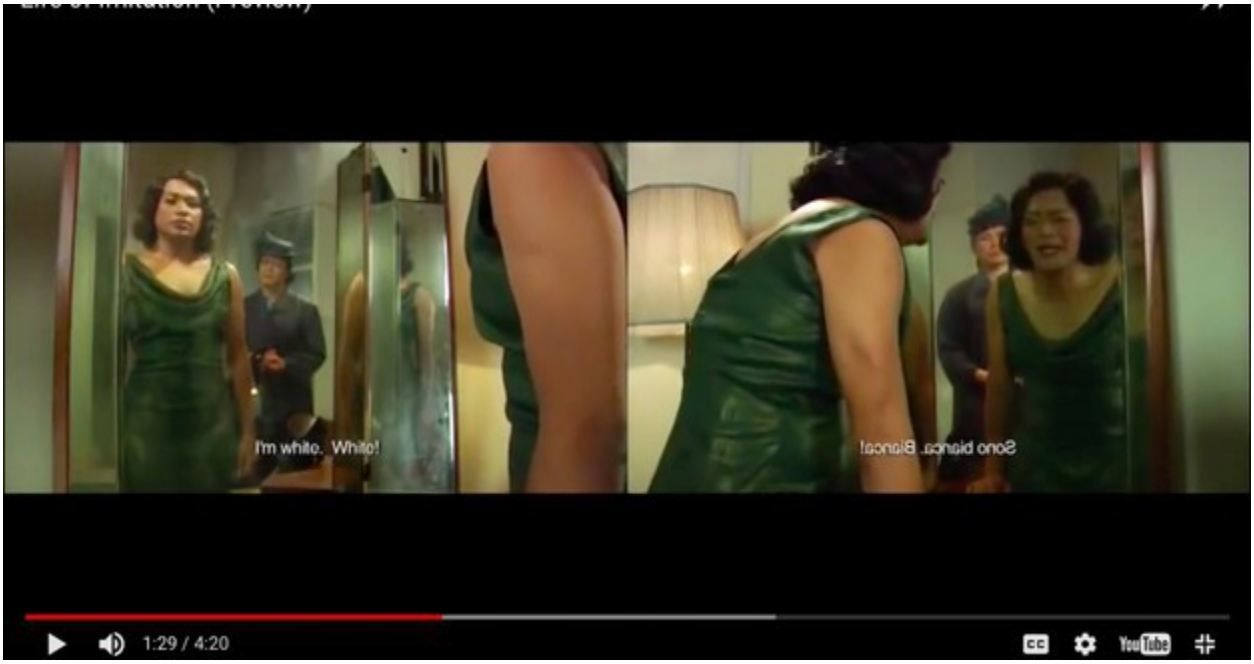

Illustration 11: Screenshot "Life of Imitation" 2009 (Wong 2017)

In "Life of Imitation" (2009), the transmedial qualities that Wong enacts through miscasting erode the boundaries of gender, race, and nation. The Sirk film scene on which Wong

bases his piece is a climactic transition point in the movie. The character Sarah Jane, who passes for white, rejects her black mother in a search for white assimilation and acceptance. Wong's miscasting uses scene cuts to repeatedly shift the starkness of the Sirk narrative, changing the Singaporean men from mother role to daughter role at each opportunity. The ethnically Chinese, Malay, and Indian performers (Sebastian Tan, Moe Kasim, and Alle Majeed) shift the perspective of the racialized nature of the scene with such rapid movement that the question of race becomes increasingly difficult to pin to skin color and narrative arc. The men who perform the mother and daughter roles evoke a strong sense of everyday femininity through dress, hair, makeup, and action. Wong's re-vision of racialized femininity follows into a form of drag that is visually subtle, disrupting normative conceptions of gender quietly. The translation of the installation work to YouTube video highlights the contrast by posing the screens side by side, forming a split screen view that amplifies the sense of oscillation and normative resistance. So then, how might queerness be functioning in relation to transnational racialization in Wong's work?

The queer force of drag is clearly influenced by Western queer theory, and yet the composition of the scene also translates the cultural context in medium shift to emphasize the queer force as Singaporean. The elements of queer theory are most easily accessible in the video posting description on Wong's website, taken from the Biennale exhibition catalog.[38] Russel Storer describes the composition and narrative of the scene:

> Facing a mirror (a recurrent motif in melodrama), [Sarah Jane] proclaims her whiteness, but she can't quite look at herself. In Ming's version, none of the men are white either (nor black for that matter) and furthermore, are in drag: 'passing' as women, imitating a gender not prescribed as their own. Yet, as Judith Butler has argued, we can think of drag not as an imperfect copy, but rather a performance that "implies that all gendering is a kind of impersonation and approximation. If this is true, it seems, there is

38 Russel Storer, Repeat After Me

> no original or primary gender that drag imitates, but gender is a kind of imitation for which there is no original" (Wong 2017).

The quote comes from Butler's "Imitation and Gender Insubordination" originally given as part of a 1989 lecture at the Conference on Homosexuality at Yale University (Butler 1991, 17, 29). Wong's use of Butler's quote suggests an engagement with queer aesthetic resistance and a reflective understanding of the force of drag. But this nod to Western theory by no means situates the performance as an example of American queer theory or as a unified global queerness. Eng-Beng Lim's idea of glocalqueering is here useful.[39] In analyzing the question of queerness in

39 Lim's term glocalqueering, for me, evokes the reconfiguration of the term globalization into glocalization by the journalist Thomas Friedman. This idea notes the shift in power dynamics that occur through Western dominance in globalization to culturally specific and peripheral practices that then are taken back to the global context, and it is perhaps fitting that Friedman uses Indian cultural practice in media making as his example. Friedman embraces the terms within a pro-capitalist model of economics. My extension is meant to draw this out as a problematic nuance of thinking about the relationship between the local and the global. I think Friedman's term highlights the dominance that glocalqueering might push back against without, as Lim works to avoid, falling into an East vs West dichotomy. However, both terms could use more specificity in thinking about the transnational elements at play in these specific instantiations of global/local expression. Lim analysis on this transnational dynamic is necessary for thinking about Wong's performance as transmedial intensification.

The translation of the Wong piece from installation to Internet alongside the translation of gender and race create nodes of intensification that reconfigure interpretations of racialized queerness. Friedman famously argues that because of globalization, the world is flat (Friedman 2005). He indicates that the Internet, specially the open access to the Internet, is one of the primary means of this idea of flatness, what he calls Flattener #2 Netscape. The Internet, however, is not a universalizing flattener, as many media scholars have argued. What does occur in the transmedial transfer of Wong's work is an increasingly American audience, given the US-based website domains that feed Wong's online posting. What occurs is in resonance to Lim's term of glocalqueering with a turn to the transnational. This transnational emphasis in the global reference is something that I could call a translocalqueering if it weren't quite so clunky a neologism. My point here is not to offer a more accurate term than Lim but to emphasize the transnational elements that arise in relation to online transmedial intensification. Lim does offer a reading of Malaysian-born and San Francisco-based (until his 2015 death) artist, poet, and performer Justin Chin, which I would argue begins to tie together the transnational and glocalqueering In reference to a Chin show, *Go, or The Approximate Infinite Universe of Mrs. Robert Lomax*, Lim argues that "transnational cruising for love turns Suzie Wong from sex symbol to desperate housewife, a queer deformation that wrests the native woman out of her false, colonial romance while providing a platform for G.A.P.'s exposé of the white man's dirty bestial love" (E.-B. Lim 2014, 151). G.A.P.s (Gay Asian Princesses), for Lim, demonstrate a queer transnational linkage between the American expression of Asian America and the global inheritances of colonialism in transnational modernities (164-165). Lim's term glocalqueering alongside his analysis of Chin's performance demonstrate the multiple sites of accumulated meaning at play in queer (Southeast) Asian performance in relation to transnational exchange with Western theories and geographies. As such, San Francisco and Singapore demonstrate what Richard Florida describes as spiky cities (Florida 2008).

In contrast to Friedman's idea that globalization has made the world flat, Florida argues that global urban centers are rather spiky, creating nodes of connectivity in a globalized world. Florida's offering attends to the differentials in access and effect with an emphasis on urbanization. In the case of Wong's transmedial performances of drag, this spiky element is productive in attending to how glocalqueering is accessible in concentrated zones of differential power. Wong's "Imitation of Life" produces a queerness that relays

Singaporean performance culture, he argues for an “understanding [that] works within the milieu of queer globalizations and diaspora while attending to the ways in which non-Western homoerotics are racialized by (auto)exotic and (neo)colonial epistemologies, ethnographies, histories, and different genres of queer performance” (E.B. Lim 2005, 387). Wong's miscasting expands the complex entanglement of queer expression. In “Life of Imitation,” Wong is supported by an understanding of Singaporean culture through performance. The transmedial nature of this performance reaches across transnational diasporic and racialized locations through a critique of static identity.

Illustration 12: Screenshot "Life of Imitation" 2009 (Wong 2017)

Transmediation is central to how Wong's glocalqueering functions. The transmedial elements in Wong's making of the installation facilitate the disruptive force of questioning racial otherization and gender non-conformity. Wong describes his work as a disarticulation of conventional filmmaking. “There is the breakdown of illusions in the editing, directing, acting,

transnational emphases in a seemingly global context. This is most strongly communicated in the ways in which drag is specifically enacted on bodies of shifting ethnic origin.

styling, etc. Beyond questions of ‘language’ and ‘identity’, is the question of what is filmic language, and what is the role of the audience, questions that are asked in film and performance circles as well. How are we supposed to act or react to a film installation? Where am I supposed to look at?” (Ting 2009). Wong's mention of illusions describes the smooth operation that allows one to practice an immersive suspension of disbelief in cinema. Contrastingly, Wong instantiates hard cuts that create seams in the video installation. This practice is exaggerated in its numerous uses. This proliferation of hard cuts in relation to transmedial racialized drag discomposes the fluidity of narrative. The story is ousted from the Hollywood filmic moment that Sirk provides about the American anxieties of a white-passing woman rejecting her black mother. What emerges instead is many stories about the complexity of racial and gender identities, the practices of passing and not passing, and the limits of bounded nationhood. The hard cut as a mode of exchanging the bodies of the performers is further heightened in the translation of the media in installation to the medium of the Internet-based composite digital video. The hard cut is composed in a split screen emphasis that draws attention to and intensifies the cuts. These practices of transmediation affect the viewer's uncertainty, leading to Wong's question, “what am I supposed to look at or react to?” The effect of these transmedial intensifications is to disrupt the script of race, gender, and nation.

The transmedial qualities of the hard cut create an experience of stuttering. The cut is a way of connecting two continuous strips of film. It can be soft, a smooth transition, or hard, an abrupt transition. The hard cut's abrupt transition creates awareness of the cut. The cut in Wong's case does not serve to advance the narrative arc. The scene remains the same, the characters do not evolve, they stay, but their bodies change in the unformed form of vacillating ethnicities.

Wong's cut creates discontinuity in a singular scene but doesn't create the stutter on its own. It is the combination of hard cut and the ethnic transformation of the performers that cause the sense of the stutter. “Life of Imitation” takes place in one location, a hotel room, and is a “real time” conversation between characters. The cuts break up and disturb the whole. Since the screens play in simultaneity, the voices echo. The split-screen in the online video furthers the stuttering by adding a layer to the scene rather than conveying something else of the narrative or directly doubling the scene. The effect is a sonic and visual echo from and to, what I call transmedial stuttering.

These discontinuities interrupt the viewer's experience of the scene. They create an example of aesthetic queer temporal disorder akin to what Elizabeth Grosz calls nicks – “cuts, in instances of dislocation” that “disrupt our immersion in and provoke our conceptualization of temporal continuity” (Grosz 2004, 5). Through his use of these techniques, Wong's work perform an affective experience of time lag and temporal jarring. Wong's process resonates with André Lepecki's description of kinesthetic stuttering and the critical anxieties that arise from the stop and go of a “hiccuping” choreography (Lepecki 2006, 1). Conventionally, dance projects a rhythmic or smooth interpretation of a choreographic script. Wong's delivery instead falters at the moment when the rhythm finds it's groove, disrupting the expectation of a smooth scene. The irruptions and tics of the stop and go where continuous flow is expected create critical anxieties by detouring anticipation. In the case of Wong, the hiccuping choreography or the kinesthetic stuttering is both in media editing and in the bodies themselves.

The hard cuts alone would do little to disrupt the scene except that with each hard cut the ethnicities change across the screens with the performers taking on each role – the mother and

daughter in multiple screenings. Wong's glocalqueer miscasting occurs through a stuttering transition that upsets gender, ethnicity, and culture without an identifiable directive. This chain-reaction of stuttering transition causes a quick switch and a break up that constructs the narrative message not as simply delayed but as repeated excess. The influx of the bodies bring the transnational diasporic to accumulate and overflow from the form of the transmedial stuttering. Accordingly, stuttering aligns with the embodiment of multilingulism (Tsuda 1986, 41). Stuttering is a productive way of attending to how translations and transitions are not deficiencies but operate in critical excess of the problematic urge towards conformity and continuity. I suggest that Wong's stuttering media performance offers an opportunity for critical engagement. The form not only emphasizes a critique of normative continuities, it disables the idealized seamlessness by which sex and gender repetitions pass for real.

Wong dislocates the narrative of race and nation through his tactic of queer irruption. His racial miscasting is influenced by the question of what it is to be Singaporean. Wong explains that there is a form of “racial consciousness” institutionalized in Singapore, particularly in response to the race riots of the 1960's. State emphasis scrutinizes attendance to the “categories CMIO (Chinese, Malay, Indian, others) [which] became ubiquitous in social administration. Racial and religious issues are scrutinised closely in the arts, even today” (Ting 2009). Wong moves these categories out of compliance. They instead form irruptions of ethnic bodies in drag that subvert the observance of racial quotas. The cut fractures the containment of multiculturalism. They instead proliferate bodies as Wong throws a multiplying, consolidated knowable Singaporean identity into disarray. Wong continues: “I don’t know what it means anymore to be a Singaporean. Things have always changed and are changing, the 'landscape' and

the 'mindscape'" (Ting 2009). "Life of Imitation" asks what is it to be Singaporean, while also asking, as the Sirk film perhaps does, what does it mean to be American?

Racial difference constitutes non-whiteness in the United States, which is how the hyphenation of difference appends race to Americanness, reifying American as white.[40] When Sarah Jane looks into the mirror and cries out "I'm white!" she is claiming the privileged status of being an accepted American, being able to choose freely. The proclamation is only necessary because she is not white. The price of passing for a person of color is that she must reject her blackness. This terrible cost demonstrates the power of the national claim to identity. It is a mistake to read Wong's work as mapping the U.S. context of black/white relations onto the ethnic context of Singapore. Wong's work instead queers the ways in which normative passing occurs transnationally. As Wong's performers oscillate in the mirror, vocalizing the dire situation of difference, they attune the viewer to the multiplicity of ethnic identity as a destabilization of self. The mirror shows us how others see us. As the performers cut from scene to scene manifesting ethnic instability, they also destabilize the ideal form here represented in the idea of whiteness. If miscasting unsettles the locus of racial difference through medial stuttering, then I read the prospect for drag to be a transnational practice of intensified glocalqueering remains.

Wong's version of drag in "Life of Imitation" invokes the problem of passing at the transnational intersection of gender expression and racial consolidation. Wong's disruption mobilizes a chain reaction of stuttering from gender non-conformity to ethnic proliferation to national blurring. My reading of the work suggests that passing disrupts, as the title suggests, the everyday as imitation. How are life and imitation indistinguishable, co-constitutive, and mutually

40 See chapter one on an application of Chow's analysis of the hyphen in African-American and Asian-American as ways of setting racial difference apart as less American than the default non-hyphenated identity of (white) American.

enforcing? Wong's perturbance of these boundaries are enacted through imitation as the body in its capacities of expression, rather than as a critique of imitation as a copy. Reflecting on the ethnic collapse and gender fantasies of casting practices in transnational film, Song Hwee Lim asks "Is the trans- in transnational the trans- in transgender?" (S. H. Lim 2007). In repeating the question that forms Kwame Anthony Appiah's essay, "Is the post- in postmodernism the post- in postcolonial?" (1991), Lim situates the query in relation to Western theory and Asian modernity, concluding that the trans in transnational is situated by the context of its presentation. In other words, the disruptive force of trans- is contextual and subject to dominant frames of interpretation. For me, Wong's work pushes Lim's question to enact the ways in which the trans of transnational is entangled with the trans of transgender. Trans in both offers resistance to normative gender or capitalistic flows of the nation state, but this dissent is also subject to dominant contextualization. I argue that the "Life of Imitation" upsets and discomposes these frames of interpretation in the specificity of its medial performance of miscasting. These trans movements work together, stuttering, cutting, and perturbing the direction of power that emerges from transnational or transgender in a dominant frame. The majoritarian view of these concepts homologize one onto the other—West to East or man to woman. Wong's work troubles these movements through a practice of fragmentation and movement. His work evokes a medial quandary of gender disruption, and by inflecting the body as a site of performative queer expression and national/racial/ethnic anxiety, queerness is as Lim suggests locally interpreted through ascendant forms of transnational understanding.

Recalling the situation of *M. Butterfly*, the trope of the effeminate Oriental male might invoke a queer expression while also reifying a normative audience's tendency toward totalizing

typification. Wong reorders the thinking of the trope in “Imitation of Life.” Rather than ascribing femininity to the Asian body, Wong's miscasting uses drag to question the consolidation of a Singaporean identity in relation to larger questions of passing, acceptance, and normativity. The transmedial qualities of Wong's work enable and intensify the agitation of binary modes of the racialization of femininity. The nature of non-professional work and the processes of transmediation at play shift from questions of intentionality to process. Luo defers transmediation because Luo, unlike Wong, does not actively translate his work through the Internet. He is instead translated by others engaged in the medium. Luo's expression of drag and the cross-cultural translation of his performance give rise to processes of transmediation in which the Internet is central.

Queer? Ku'er?: Luo and Taiwanese Subculture

Illustration 13: Screenshot "Honey Trap" Reperformance 2010 (YouTube 2010)

In Luo's performance of Jolin Tsai’s “Honey Trap,” the drag aesthetic is complicated by the taboo of his age. At the time of the performance, he appears between age seven and nine. His age is particularly important in accordance with the idea that children are “too young” to understand the implications of gender and sexual identification. In addition to the revealing attire, the pulsing pop music lends itself to sexy dance moves—placing his hands on his

“breasts” and his lower genitals or dipping down with both legs turned out (second position grand plié). Luo's dance moves are patterned off the choreography of the Tsai music video, prompting one fan to post a side-by-side comparison.[41] The side-by-side reveals that the young boy, in addition to producing a pleasing aesthetic of movement syncopated to the music, is impeccably executing the choreography in the original music video by Tsai. Luo originally posted his video to the Internet in the Taiwanese context. The video was later posted by someone who worked for the website CollegeHumor to the American context, where it was then taken by another person to YouTube.com.[42]

The Internet brings Luo's performance video into a context of transnational transmediation. It makes sense that Luo would find acceptance for his drag online, as much of the subcultural association of gender non-conformity in Taiwan occurs through Internet-based performance.[43] The political climate of gender- and sexuality-acceptance in Taiwan is highly restrictive; Taiwan practices a “state driven heteronormativity that inscribes a moral order against the homosexual male” (Huang 2011). While Taiwan does not have explicit laws against homosexuality, same-sex sexual behavior is “liable to prosecution under laws regulating 'public obscenity,' loitering, hooliganism, and so forth” (Berry and Martin 90). In Dennis Lin's study of

41 “Original official video with Little Asian Boy Dreams of Being Sexy Female Pop Star honey trap,” Last Updated September 2010, YouTube, Accessed December 2011, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NvOth8ZjHRA

42 YouTube.com was the second site in the U.S. to which the video was shared. I situate the posting as the U.S. given the domain registration, language, and user origin. The first site on which the video was shared was CollegeHumor.com. I assess these specific implications in the following section on cultural digestion.

43 It seems necessary to footnote the scholarship I engage on the question of gender non-conformity in Taiwan. Nearly everything I cite in this section comes from the footnotes of these scholars works. This is in part perhaps due to the fact that the scholars chose to footnote much of the cultural background description. But, I also found myself fascinated with the footnotes as the greatest points of connectivity to Luo. The content in the footnotes does not appear to have any independent scholarship or elaboration, at least in English language writings. Also, it is perhaps notable that Dennis Lin worked with Josephine Ho.

"sissies" online, he argues that the Internet provides a place where effeminate men from a range of genders and sexualities are able to perform sissiness (Lin 2006, 270). Lin notes that Taiwanese male queer communities have "locally rearticulated" the English term 'sissy' (or its abbreviation "*CC*") "as referring to 'non-conforming' gender and sexual identities and representations amongst effeminate gay men and male-to-female transgenders" (270).[44] It is consequently unsurprising that Luo finds a subcultural appreciation for his drag online. The Internet functions subculturally in Taiwan. Thus, José Esteban Muñoz's description of queer performance as subculture provides a useful fold.[45] As Muñoz describes, "Minoritarian subjects need to interface with different subcultural fields to activate their own senses of self" (Muñoz 1999, 5). The interface of the screen connects and forms non-normative sexuality and gender conforming persons through Taiwanese subcultural circuits. Josephine Ho argues that "Taiwanese trans subjects have found some empowerment through the internet where they can locate otherwise inaccessible information and otherwise inaccessible friendship, as well as professional-sounding identity terms that could help with their self-representation" (Ho 2006, 232). In the case of effeminate expression online in Taiwan, a sense of locality bears heavily on geographical proximity. While the engagements do not operate through shared physical space, connectivity is formed through shared cultural space. Luo's posting participates in the visual expression of his subcultural connectivity. The Internet-based performance of sissiness also bears elements of

44 The term is complicated in it's rearticulation given that it is also used by "anti-sissy gay men" as a form of ridicule but is increasingly embraced "by those male queers who become unwilling and/or unable to perform accredited masculinities and 'gay-masculinised sexualities'" (Lin 2006, 270-271). Lin argues that "the term 'sissinesses' denotes 'queered effeminacies' amongst male queers, in contrast to 'desexualised and increasingly destigmatised effeminacies' represented by those self-identified heterosexual men who attempt to distance themselves from sissy queers" (271). This term also has links to the illegality of sex work in Taiwan. Even though sex work is outlawed, "it prospers in many forms and sites" In relation to the prevalence of "third sex" sex workers, Josephine Ho indicates that "transgender gays (drag queens or sissy gays) are often treated with contempt even though they are the ones most directly facing the blunt force of homophobia" (Ho 2006, 240).

45 For a classic example of subculture, see Dick Hebdige's 1979 book, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*.

Lim's term glocalqueering, in that *CC*s rearticulate an English term into a local and transculturally-informed expression of queerness. Transnational nodes of connection through the Internet point to the importance of glocalqueering in an effeminate subculture. Accordingly, it is necessary to investigate how queer terminology differs in the Taiwanese Internet subcultural context versus a Western view of globalized exports.

Notably, the term transgender in Taiwan does not follow United States usage, where it has a more narrow application. As Ho notes, "in the Taiwanese context, gender-sexuality rights groups have created the term 'trans-gender' (*kuaxingbie*) in the year 2000 as an umbrella term that would cover all subjects of gender variance in an effort to rally unity and solidarity for a yet-to-develop transgender movement" (Ho 2006, 239). *Kuaxingbie* thus applies to gender non-conformity more generally, including male effeminacy. The dissonance between *kuaxingbie* and transgender comes, for example, in describing a sissy or an effeminate gay man. In the U.S., transgender would not describe a gay man with feminine patterns of speech. However, because *kuaxingbie* is meant to generate political coalition between disparate subcultural groups, it does reach into new domains of naming. As such, it follows to examine Luo's performances as *kuaxingbie* expression. I suggest that this trans quality inheres throughout a culturally specific understanding of Luo. However, even as the umbrella offers a broad reach, it does not address the compounding dimension of Luo's age.

As a child and as an amateur performer, Luo's taboos of dangerous sexualities and the uncertainty of drag's force surround him. Mary Zaborskis concept of "age drag" attends to the issue of childhood. Zaborskis argues that age drag is a destabilization of the temporal expectations of sexuality caused by the uncomfortable and subversive truths of children's out-of-

time performances of gender and sexuality (Zaborskis 2015, 117). Zaborskis uses the example of girls performing "womanhood" in pageants (118). She contends that the visual practice of rejecting such gender performativity as hyper-sexualization misses the subversive queering of time that exposes the demand for children to be asexual in spite of their circulation of "white, heterosexual, classed notions of beauty and gender" (126). Luo's sexiness is disjointed from normative claims on his sexuality and gender identity. I wonder how the subversive queering of time is amplified in the dance moves of Luo, performing womanhood through the soft body of a boy child. Zaborskis shows how child drag in an exaggerated form of femininity makes the lines between child and adult uncomfortable. It might be accurate to indicate that the borders of sexuality and age are always in flux. Carol Mavor, for instance, describes in relation the Victorian girl as "both sexual and not sexual" (Mavor 1995, 20). I see Mavor's girl child as always already participating in what Zaborskis describes as age drag. She oscillates between the "pure little girl" and what Sigmund Freud and Michel Foucault call "the cult of the little girl," in which the girl child is overtly sexualized. "She was thus both woman and not woman; she played safely and dangerously" (Mavor 1995, 20-21). The question is not whether children are formed in an uncertain flux between sexuality and asexuality – they are. Instead, it is imperative to ask: how do the corralling of identities function and how might they be exceeded? What is of course distinctive about Luo is that he is not a little girl in age drag – he is a little boy in age feminine drag, entailing another set of questions altogether.

Queerness is bound up with the problem of Luo's drag practices. As Eve Sedgwick argues, the boy child is subject to a phobia around the expression of femininity. Luo's femininity, unlike that of a little girl, does not have an acceptable limit. While the little girl might raise a

sense of discomfort in a gradational scale of sexualization, the power of effeminophobia is to shame the imbrications of boy child, feminine gendering, and sexual expression between gender and sexuality (Sedgwick 1991, 20). Femininity is disallowed in any measure, which puts Luo at the limits of drag. Because drag evokes the figure of an adult, age drag begins to get at the elements of Luo's expressive body and revealing clothing. However, sexuality is also hidden from sight with the boy child; the cult of the little boy is more secretive than that of the little girl. The general presentation of the little boy is meant to be divorced from sexuality, where the girl's age drag is expected and regulated. As femininity in girls is leveraged towards notions of womanhood, Sedgwick argues that the feminine boy child is necessarily associated with discourses around the adult gay man (21).

Queerness is a term that is limited in its transnational reach. In relation to Asia, this complexity is extended to the problem of Western cultural domination. Scholars such as Ara Wilson argue that the term queer in Asia necessarily carries with it a Western hegemonic element (Wilson 2006).[46] Similarly, Howard Chiang and Alivin K. Wong argue against a queer transnational approach because of it's positioning from the United States or West (Chiang and Wong 2016). I offer an alternative way of thinking transnationally with Luo. In accordance with Wilson, I assess and work to counter the Western hegemonic force involved in the term queer as culturally dominating. Further, I work to forward the specific regional context of Luo, as Chiang and Wong promote. The transnational approach is requisite to understanding Luo's queer expression due to the transmediations that carry Luo's work into U.S.-dominated areas of online

46 Wilson ultimately argues that approaches that emerge out of U.S. ethnic studies problematically reinforce this power dynamic. I am aware of the nationalistic formation of Area Studies in the U.S., and my position as an American scholar who has been trained in both Asian Area Studies and U.S. Ethnic Studies. As such, I actively promote scholarship counter to these origin stories. Wilson is based in the United States, Chiang is based in the United Kingdom, and Wong is based in South Korea.

video sharing.

Transmediation in the case of Luo necessitates a focus on how cultural translation occurs across Internet-based domains. In order to accomplish this, I contextualize the queerness of Luo's drag. The question of accessibility to interpersonal subculture seems less about geographical limitation, given the size of Taiwan generally. In the case of Lin's study, many of his informants lived in Taipei (Lin 2006, 288). Additionally, cultural norms of public expression radically constrain public expression of non-conforming sexuality and gender. I have not encountered scholarship on the question of the child and femininity in the Taiwanese context; however, a footnote in Ho's writing points to the ways in which childhood stretches beyond the limits of age when it comes to lineage and the gender non-conforming body. She writes:

> [Because] surgeons who perform body modification procedures could, under Taiwanese law, be sued by the patients' parents for malicious mutilation against their (even fully grown) children, no surgeon would perform SRS procedure without the patients first acquiring written approval from their parents. With age-old Chinese belief in family lineage and the traditional duty of bringing forth off-springs, parental approval has become a formidable obstacle for trans subjects. (Ho 2006, 241).

Luo as a gender non-conforming child clearly bears closely on questions of how age plays into the regulation of gender and sexuality. As Sedgwick's imperative suggests, the reception of Luo's performances as gender variant might readily be connected to *CC*s and trans adults.

The transnational connection in the term queer is particularly apt in the case of Luo. As Wilson notes, Taiwan has been exceptional in its embrace and use of the term queer (Wilson 2006).[47] Queer in the Taiwanese context has multiple translations. One is "*guaitai* (怪胎, literally "monster/ abnormal fetus" or "freak")" (Chen 2011, 388). *Guaitai* expresses the disruptive sense

47 This is not to forget the ways in which the term queer even in its widespread use often functions as Li-fen Chen argues, as a marker for the elite (Chen 2011, 396).

of queer, but is far less popular than its predecessor *ku'er*. A phonetic transliteration of queer, *ku'er* "is also a semantic approximation of 'queer' into Taiwan's cultural context" (387). *Ku* is a transliteration from the English of the word "cool" and has been "widely used in Taiwan's youth culture since the 1980s" (387). *Er* means "child" (387). Li-fen Chen argues that *ku'er* "may be best rendered as 'cool babe'" (387). I suggest that *ku'er* might be productively (mis)read in relation to Luo's drag performances, expressing the cool of popular culture and tapping into local and international pop music. Based on my approach, his location as a child then serves as the turning point of his queer transformation from normative popular culture to gender disrupting subculture. *Ku'er* marks how Luo is queerly expressing himself through drag in a way that draws on a transnational exchange of language and meaning that is nevertheless recognizable only in the Taiwanese context. The transmedial nature of his coolness and child status shift in cultural context.[48]

Still, Luo's imbrication of gender and sexuality are not definitively on the side of *ku'er*. *Ku'er* and *CC* have the connotation of strong ties with homosexuality. Some men in Taiwan identify and express as feminine but are not homosexual, nor do they necessarily identify with *kuaxingbie* (transgender), which provides a more general umbrella for gender non-conformity. These effeminate heterosexuals call themselves "Tender Men." As Lin describes, "they are inclined to rearticulate their effeminacies as kinds of gentle, tender qualities in men" and as with "many heterosexual feminists, those tender men maintain that it is gender rather than sexuality that becomes the key issue with which they should engage themselves" (Lin 2006, 285). The Tender Men distinction notably separates out the ideas of the feminine male from the

48 I attend to the U.S. constructions of his performance in the latter section on transmedial cultural digestion.

homosexual male. Accordingly, Tender Men throw a wrench into the American interpretation of drag, queer effeminate expression, and feminine men more generally. As Lin continues, Tender Men make great efforts to distance themselves from local queer activist work, as "they attempt to represent kinds of desexualised effeminacies" (285).[49] The decoupling of gender and sexuality follows exclusionary logics that have, according to Lin, "increasingly demonstrated negative attitudes towards transsexualism and transvestitism" (285).[50] The discourse of Tender Men importantly diverges from U.S. categories of gender identification and points to the tension that arises between gender and sexuality in the case of racialized femininity. Luo's transmedial performance poses a proliferation of effeminacy that simultaneously mobilizes and questions the productivities of queer naming.

Transmediation from Algorithmic Culture to Cultural Digestion

My engagement with transmediation emphasizes cultural shifts online in both the work of Wong and Luo, requiring a more flexible understanding of transmediation. I accomplish this by mapping transmediation from algorithmic culture to cultural digestion, following Hayles' theorization of intermediation. Transmediation provides a multifaceted way into thinking about the complexities of Wong and Luo's work as shaped not only by the performances but also by the technological forms and fleshy bodies through which the performances are enacted and received. Andrew Dewdney's take on transmediation posits the term as useful in describing the process that happens when a spectator processes transcultural art from her/his own subject position

49 Perhaps not as an example of general acceptance, but of public visibility, the founder of the Tender Men Rights Association, Tony Chen, "became famed for his public proposal of marriage to the [then] vice president" Hsiu-lien Lu" (Lin 2006, 285).

50 "For instance, Chen has claimed that sex change is a way to self-annihilation rather than happiness (Su, 2002)" (Lin 2006, 285).

(Dewdney 2011, 107-109), remarking that "Transmediation and transvisuality could represent a paradigm shift for curation, audience development and cultural policy in the art museum, if the desire and will to find a way out of the old maze of the insistence on the autonomy of art and its distance from everyday life could be sufficiently met" (111). Picking up on Dewdney's application of transmediation to the arts, particularly in the transcultural context, I elaborate the term to work through the ways in which translation occurs at multiple levels in the movements of and engagements with medium switching. Translation highlights medium as multiplicities of function and meaning.

Translation in the age of digital media is increasingly approached as a given. Scott Kushner argues that Internet translation problematically promotes the machine as independent from the human. According to Kushner, the result is an interpretation (and perceived experience) of media that serves to "cultivate an image of automated, frictionless translation" (Kushner 2013, 1242) and the dream of automatic translation (1252). Kushner, moreover, forwards that Internet translation is an apparatus of globalization that promises to make continuous discontinuous data through the machinic power of algorithms (1242). However, this process demands subcontracted human labor that functions as a subroutine, revealing the function of binary code to be a leaky, dependent system (1244, 1254). In examining the processes of transmediation that end on the Internet, it is necessary to enliven the process of algorithmic analysis. In both Luo and Wong's work, translation is integral to interpretation. For Wong, language, culture, and identity are translated through elements of editing, filming, subtitling, and conceptualization. In a less pronounced fashion, Luo's performances also translate identity, language, and culture. In spite of the active role of translation at work, translation in the digital sphere is overshadowed by the

fantasy of automation. In other words, translation is reduced to its technological presentation as divorced from human bodies. For Luo and Wong's performances, the idea of frictionless translation obscures the bodies at work in website programming and video sharing.

In its transition to the Internet, Wong and Luo's videos are reconfigured not only in their actual digitization, but also in the context of algorithmic culture. The algorithms themselves perform in that they contribute to the regulation of sites as well as the perpetuation of video through linking users to video-sharing websites. However, this computational quality does not operate outside the leaky system of human bodies and global cultural consumption. Kushner's analysis highlights the disjuncture between perception of algorithmic translation and the complex forms of embodiment through which algorithms function. Digital code in all of its energies and actions is a globalized process that is messy and bodily. As Wendy Hui Kyong Chun argues, the Internet and digital networks are inherently leaky (Chun 2016, 4, 102-3). Code does not flow smoothly through impenetrable channels. It oozes through engagements with bodies. Chun marks friends and social networks as some of the most porous media by muddling the boundaries of anonymity and identity, public and private (103). As Bolter and Grusin point out, transmediation can imply an inherently progressive move, from lesser forms of media to more advanced forms. These advancements proclaim a further differentiation of the human from the purely technological. The fantasy of a realm of pure technology relies on problematic assumptions of code, by which the laboring bodies upon which the system are dependent are made invisible in favor of the impermeable, frictionless machine.

The work of Luo and Wong demonstrate the play of culture across medium translation and enacts capacities of the body and performance to exceed and complicate the bounds of

technological medium. They do so in an age when the translation of culture is increasingly happening online. Performance work is now primarily translated through video perpetuation, conjuring the notion of Internet virality, in which technological processes of transmission exceed themselves as touching and invading. Virality is the leaky intensification of a visceral bodily process. As impinging bodily invasion, viral metaphors echo the transnational mediation of the Asian body as source of contagion, from Bird Flu to SARS. As Aihwa Ong argues in her study of Singapore as a locus of preventing the "leaking of tropical diseases into the rest of the world" (Ong 2016, 196), "the expectation of Asia-sourced diseases to globalize rapidly has required a technical reconceptualization of the region" (194) around the anxiety that "viruses don't carry passports" (Ong 2016). Virality points to the ways in which transnationality is rarely about the legal bounds of what the nation state allows. Transnational culture exceeds borders. Body-to-body contagion floods the idea of online videos.

Attending to networks of transmedial virality means revisiting the primacy of code in video sharing with a heightened sense of socio-historical awareness. Technology, as many scholars have taught us, is reflective of the normative sphere of the social. Algorithms, likewise, are not neutral. In thinking about the replication of ideology, Astrid Mager's analysis of search algorithms as reflective of capitalistic formations is helpful for framing how Luo and Wong's work is already caught in a system in which privatization and innovation enact and stabilize a "dominant 'frame of meaning'" through co-participant formation (Mager 2012, 782). Algorithms are not entirely predictable either. In order to demonstrate both how algorithms are not predictable performances and how those unpredictabilities can illustrate normative cultural bias, I turn to the example of a sorting algorithm that performed an erasure of gay and lesbian

expression.

In the Spring of 2009, an algorithm that sorted books on Amazon classified gay and lesbian literature as "adult." The word adult here stands in for a pornographic filter meant to eliminate its contents from general traffic. The tucking away of the unseemly equated non-heterosexuality with perversion. The books that were included in this excision were not simply erotica or even romance novels. *Conduct Unbecoming*, for example, is a history of gays and lesbians in the military. The Amazon sorting example shows how algorithms perform beyond their intention, but not necessarily outside cultural norms. Ted Striphas uses this example to argue that algorithms are now able to change the keywords that define culture (Striphas 2015, 396). Unpredictability is created by selective keyword programming that instills heteronormative values into the system. Correspondingly, virality carries algorithmic unpredictability, not only through the video in question, but also through the general online perpetuation of dominant narratives on gender and sexuality. The aberrations of these norms in both Wong and Luo's art demonstrate why it is imperative to consider virality within a process of what I call transmedial cultural regurgitation. As Kushner warns, algorithmic culture enables a "computational logic [that] pervades contemporary culture" and "shapes the possibilities of life itself" (Kushner 2013, 1243).

Implicit in the language of contagion and virality is a fear of contamination by the unknowable uncontainable. The ensuing formation of discourse provides an opportunity to reflect on the racialization of femininity. In this vein, I look to processes of cultural in/digestion as mechanisms by which to analyze the transmedial circulation of trope, not as the smooth machinic operation of replication but – paralleling the function of transmedial process as framed

in Kushner's analysis of translation – as messier and more embodied.

Expelling Femininity: Luo's Transmediation on American Humor Websites

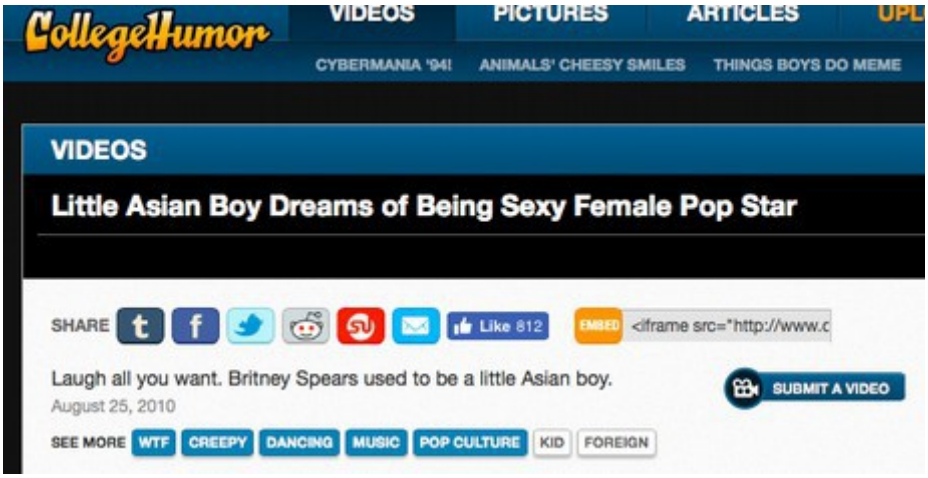

Illustration 14: Screenshot of CollegeHumor website (CollegeHumor 2010)

Transmediation's dominant cultural tendencies put strain on queer resistance. Because the Internet more easily enables a performance to be copied and redisplayed, it leads to uncertain outcomes. In Luo's case, I read transmedial cultural consumption as an expulsion of femininity through laughter. "By relying on the recombining of cultural codes to generate and regenerate novelty and new grounds for media content to traverse, comedy is *the* prime mode for transmedial mobility and what we might now describe as media virality" (Gurney 2011, 12). Remembering the Taiwanese subcultural context, I examine the facets of this derision of Luo's drag performance in the United States as a transmedial entanglement of Internet performance.

I focus on the framing of Luo's reperformance through the reposting of his original video on the website CollegeHumor.com.[51] The video was originally posted by Luo and later reposted

51 "Little Asian Boy Dreams of Being Sexy Female Pop Star," Last Updated August 2010, CollegeHumor, Accessed March 2011, http://www.collegehumor.com/video/6270084/little-asian-boy-dreams-of-being-sexy-female-pop-star The website's content appeals to humor as a means of producing fans; this humor is modeled largely around politically incorrect images which are often directed at the privileged figure of the educated, white, middle-class, heterosexual male. This video is one of many in which identity as queer or other is the basis for humor and popularity via reposting.

on the U.S.-based humor site in August 2010. The video was posted to YouTube in September 2010. On YouTube, the video is one of many of Luo's performances, including other videos featuring burlesque set to Christina Aguilera and impersonations of Marilyn Monroe. The video performance of his reproduction of "Honey Trap" by Tsai was posted at various video sharing websites with the title "Little Asian Boy Dreams of Being Sexy Female Pop Star," a label given to the video by the website *CollegeHumor*. The humor on the site is meant, as the name suggests for college-aged (men). The website is based in Los Angeles and owned by IAC, which purchased the company from the creators Josh Abramson and Ricky Van Veen in 2006. Upon graduating, Abramson and Van Veen set the tone for the joke site out of their own college experience, establishing the site for people whose sense of humor matched their own. The website makes good on its target audience and attracts a predominantly American college-educated male audience (Alexa 2017).[52]

On *CollegeHumor*, Luo's age functioned alongside his soft, if not pudgy, body in relation to his virtuosity as impetus for the video going "viral." While his original postings in the Chinese language context were more properly aligned with supportive reception that might be conceptualized as empowering and inspirational – a part of a *ku'er* subculture, the introduction to English-speaking audiences in the U.S. context were framed in terms of mockery. How is performance authorship therefore affected by the medium? Does "virality" eradicate ownership and frame, or how might the perpetuation and replication of his online video indicate alterations

52 According to the Amazon company service, Alexa.com statistical tracking, 40.6% of visitors come from the United States, with the United Kingdom and Canada coming in second and third place with less than 10% of visitors each. The U.S. overall ranking is 1,759, and the global rank is 4,140. The male visitors rank above the Internet average and the female visitors rank well below Internet average. Graduate school education is about equal with Internet average. College education is well above average and no or some college is below Internet average.

to meaning? Considering the everyday nature of self-posted videos, what are the slippages between the performative and performance elements at play? These questions are picked up in the frame of the joke.

The idea of virality is itself linked to humor. According to David Gurney's analysis of viral videos, comedy is an integral component of virality and functions closely within the practices of participation and transmediality (Gurney 2011, 4). Transcoding allows for high variability in viral video culture, demonstrating "why tranmediality is able to reside so resolutely at the core of viral video comedy" (10). American reception of Luo demonstrates the cultural linkage of laughter as participatory with normative culture that perpetuates hate and fear through a comic deferral. Laughter functions as a form of transmedial innoculation, a strategy of maintaining normative dominance. As Suzanne Scott argues, "transmedia stories present an opportunity to push queer readings or queer characters to the periphery of the narrative, allowing for a concurrent acknowledgment of the homoerotic subtext that inspires slash fiction and a ghettoization of such readings, isolating them from the primary commercial text the fandom revolves around" (Scott 2010, 32). While Scott's analysis is not about viral videos, it highlights a problematic trend of heteronormativity in the core of participatory cultures of transmediation. Thus, the context of the video is co-constituted by the medial process in such a way that the queer potential of Luo's drag is easily overridden.

The discomfort illustrated in comments underneath the video postings and the sites themselves elicit a particular quality of mockery. After *CollegeHumor.com*, Luo's video was posted to YouTube.com. One of the earliest uploads was by a user named *I love all, no homo*, who kept the title "Little Asian Boy Dreams of Being Sexy Female Pop Star" with the added

explanation, “I saw this on the collegehumor website and couldn't stop laughing” (no homo 2010). The comments range from violent (“someone kill it with fire) to regulatory (“the dancing is great, but maybe try some different clothing?”).[53] In assessing some of these comments, it is of course important to note that some commenters do not mock Luo and indeed look to critically engage on his behalf against the homophobic and transphobic comments. These commenters look to engage in a sort of social justice by offering pro-Luo, pro-queer, and pro-trans statements, but do so with the numbers against them. In an analysis of the “structure, discursive framework, and content of YouTube response,” Aaron Hess argues “that digital activism is limited in the sea of responses, replies, and often dismissive and overly playful atmosphere found on the video blogging site. While YouTube does not offer a place for effective deliberation, it does invite entertainment and playful parody, perhaps even political parody” (Hess 2009, 412). Serious engagement amounts to little when the valued currency of YouTube comments is humor.

I turn to the comments as a mode of audience analysis that is fraught with the medium of the Internet. The comments should be understood in relation to at least two categories. The first is the general audience for the video. So long as a viewer has a YouTube account, they can make comments. I was initially reluctant to do an analysis on online comments, primarily because of

53 I focus primarily on the top comments in my analysis. These are the comments that have garnered the most attention from other users, whether or not those users also engaged in commenting. The comments in general pick up on these themes. There are also a fair number of users who defend Luo as virtuosic or in relation to others claims about sexuality and gender expression. Some of the thematics I don't pick up on here include a debate on whether or not Luo is actually a boy or a girl, questioning of the relation of the video to pedophilia, and the recurrent use of the words faggot and fag. Another line of comments surround Luo's weight and generally involve fat-shaming. Many of these comments tie fatness together with effeminacy, arguing that his weight is tied to his gender aberration. Some of these comments even work to suggest a transnormative body for Luo: “He need to exercise, get a boob transplant, and plastic surgery if he wants to be a girl” User: *Winnie* 2013. “Kill it with fire” is from user: *Francis Sicat* in 2013. The phrase is one common amongst Internet users to display a profound sense of disgust; also user: *SuPeRPiiG* “kill it” 2013. In the multiple cases of the use of the word “it,” commenters seek to remove a sense of human intelligibility from Luo, making the advocacy of his murder justifiable. “The dancing is great...” from user: *GiddiE* in 2013; also user: *Mariel Crystallie* “pro dancer!!...just wrong costume ;)” 2013.

the second category: trolls.[54] It is more difficult to see trolls as representative of general audience. A troll in Internet parlance is an online persona that actively seeks to ridicule, mock, and attack. Some trolls operate within specific domains and with particular objectives, but an often unifying factor is laughter. “Lulz,” a corruption of the “laugh out loud” acronym “lol,” are the troll's *raison d'etre*. This is a laughter distorted – arrived at from the sincere suffering of others. As one troll outlines in a *New York Times* interview the rules are “simple”: “1. Do whatever it takes to get lulz. 2. Make sure the lulz is widely distributed. This will allow for more lulz to be made. 3. The game is never over until all the lulz have been had” (Schwartz 2008). In important ways, Luo constitutes a telling target for Internet trolling. As Whitney Phillips argues in her ethnographic study of trolls, “trolls take active, gleeful measures against rhetorical others – namely, 'soft,' feminized thinkers. For trolls, softness implies anything emotive, anything less than perfectly rational; they see strong negative emotions like sadness, frustration, or distress (referred to collectively as 'butthurt') as flashing neon target signs” (Phillips 2015, 125). Luo's femininity – his physical and sexual softness – becomes the site of generative attack for trolls. And the ensuing quality of being “butthurt” is fuel for trolls. “Butthurt,” as a term of distress is meant to evoke the image of patriarchal penetration. Further, it functions as a dismissal of emotions associated with being feminine, here equated to penetrability. I suggest that in the case of Luo, the presence of trolls cannot be disassociated from general audience, entangling forms of ridicule that emerge in the U.S. context of viewership.

Many of the comments are about the context of his age in relation to the drag performance, with many of the users supposing what Luo's parents must be like or what they

54 In workshopping and presenting earlier versions of this work, people continually asked me about the online responses to Luo's video in the U.S. context.

should do.[55] User *Zavier Legin* writes "this is what happen when the mom wants a girl and gets a boy :P"[56] The colon and capital "P" at the end of the statement represent a silly face, tongue out, framing the comment as humorous. The comment closer serves as a deflection of gender complexity. Laughter also serves in the comments as a mode of shaming. User *skeetajohnson* declares, "if this was my son, I would laugh straight in his face and ask him why the hell he thinks this gay shit is cute. I wouldn't be mad, but I would laugh as hard as I am now. This may be mean to some of you, but fuck it." Laughter here functions as a mode of derisive disgrace. The point of laughing in his face is met by the force of taking on the parental role, homophobically mocking a child into normative submission. In both cases, the users use humor in opposition to hate or seriousness as a way of casting judgment without "being mean," offering users a thin veneer of cover for obvious vitriol.

"Joking" comments make race inherent to Luo's drag performance. User *Adriana Pulley* asks, "Was this filmed in an Asian child sex slave place or something? o.o."[57] The closing "o," period, "o" is meant to create two eyes wide open, evoking a shocked or surprised look. The commenter looks to recreate the moment of raising one's eyebrows at the end of a joke to elicit a shared sense of humor. "o.o" is an elbow nudge to other users to laugh at Luo's drag performance, secure that laughter to all of Asian gender and sexuality, and to mock Asia as an

55 "if he's transgender, fine - whatever. but for ANY child of ANY gender to be dancing like this is very wrong on too many levels. lil one: whether you're a true female or not, you're still a child - BE a child! worry about gender and sexuality when you've got minor details like making it to age of majority and graduating high school out of the way!" User: *three norns* in 2013; also "I'm guessing his parents think its ok to raise their kid dressing up as a girl with a woman's bikini under a girls shirt and dressing him like a gay guy! Poor kid he thinks is fun but when he grows up his gonna hate his parents and commit suicide.. Hope by then u guys are still proud!!" User: 1958escamilla in 2012.

56 2013; also, user *haya valentinogaravani* in 2013 "he is going to grow up to be gay because of his stupid parents."

57 2013

othered place of sexual deviance and unfreedom. The idea of Asian control and totalization is picked up by other users as well: "This what happens to North Korean kids under new government" *Felix Coto* 2014.[58] North Korea subsumes Asian identity as a totalitarian regime, making gender-aberration a form of rebellion that is meant to ridicule its production and connection to race. Another commenter writes "lmfao. what is up with asian men and dressing up like britney spears???"[59] "Lmfao" is shorthand for "laughing my fucking ass off" moving from the common lol to a heightened sense of laughter. Excessive ridicule is common thread in the comments—laughter beyond everyday humor. Laughter then sutures the identity of the Asian male to the white woman (American pop star Britney Spears) as an aspirational goal.

These comments use laughter within the frame of cultural indigestion. Whether troll or general audience, the comments converge on Orientalist, homophobic, and transphobic forms of regulating the child's body. Luo performs well. This is the source of the problem, in that the dominant cultural context of the U.S. has to account for what should be a failure of gender performance. Luo's dance moves are compelling; they are sexy dance moves. In part, it is his ability to execute moves "made for a woman" that make heteronormative viewers uncomfortable. The dominant American audience then links his feminine actions to his race. The sentiment is in part demonstrated by the vague tags on the posted video—"little *Asian* boy." The racial marker serves to underscore his Asianness as important to the context of the video and also to connect Asian boy to "sexy female." It is important to remember, with Phillips, that trolls are often "engaged in a grotesque pantomime of dominant cultural tropes" (Phillips 2015, 8). The elements of disgust serve to reproduce, ridicule, and regurgitate the effeminate Oriental.

58 Also, "asians are gay dancers?" user: *motor on two wheelz* in 2013.

59 User: *mrzroyalcupcak3x* in 2012

Pantomime or "authentic" belief, these comments serve to set a toxic atmosphere on YouTube that further entrenches the structuring of the video by *CollegeHumor*. Phillips displays a relatively sympathetic angle on trolls as symptomatic of broader cultural ideologies:

> Trolls are agents of *cultural digestion;* they scavenge the landscape for scraps of usable content, make a meal of the most pungent bits, then hurl their waste onto an unsuspecting populace – after which they disappear, their Cheshire cat grins trailing after them like puffs of smoke. They may not know it, they may not intend to, but deliberately or not, these grotesque displays reveal a great deal about the surrounding cultural terrain (10).

What a survey of the comments on Luo's video suggest is that the function of satire is collapsed into the general mode of normativity – that trolls are virtually indistinguishable from those who hold the power in the surrounding cultural terrain. At best trolls fatigue those who set about swimming against the currents of hate, fear, and judgement that are dominant in YouTube comments.[60] The act of word vomit on the part of trolls and general audience alike serve to reify the sedimented notions of the trope of the effeminate Oriental male in a way that highlights the undigested fragments as elements of cultural otherization and subjugation.

Partially enabled by cultural digestion, homophobic responses may arise when those means of assigning value to the original music video become problematic or untenable. The viewer prefigured by heteronormativity is unable to recognize or make intelligible the sexiness of the clothing and choreography of Luo's performance, despite the similarity of those aspects of his video with the traditionally-sexy music video that they are based on, without encountering a certain sense of perversion marked by the boy's age, gender, and body. The unsettling of

60 I understand that Phillips is providing an alternative to the colloquial way of thinking about trolls as hateful bullies online. I also think her work contributes to an under-theorized area in the field of Internet studies. However, I think it is important to not let their intents override their actions. Even if trolls think they are doing a service to the world by mocking sensitivity or displaying the ignorance of others, they do so in a swarm of others whose beliefs are validated in such a way that encourages them and others to join in the game of feasting on the weak, feminine, and soft as Phillips puts it.

traditional normative models causes a degree of confusion in the normative viewer, who perhaps realizes the possibility that femininity is something which can be performed by individuals who seem to defy common conceptions of the feminine – a realization which implicates the viewer's own conception of identity. For the fan of the video who embraces the content of Luo's performance, it is received positively, perhaps in an aspiring quality. Still in Luo's fan, there is a move to make meaning of the video, posting the tropes as positive or negative.

Regurgitation is how these tropes reemerge – in the case of the video itself, pieces of the tropes reemerge through his sexiness, his femininity, his youth, and most importantly how all of these things are filtered through the race of Asian as a stand-in for the Oriental other. The act of the click, whether it be via mouse or touchpad, is in a sense one of the potential moments of regurgitation on the part of the viewer; the act of sharing through the click is the very literal perpetuation of the material form of the tropes. Further, there are multiple incarnations of regurgitation, expressed through functions of the computer mouse/touchpad click in relation to value convergence, such as the "like" response on Facebook and other forums or a thumbs down on search engines or platforms designed to feature websites, videos, memes, etc tailored to user interest based on assigned value to past visited URLs. Filtering algorithms and sharing patterns suggest that Luo's video would maintain in culturally similar nodes.[61] Because Luo's video was brought to the United States context on a joke website, the sharing and filtering patterns ensure that the video will largely be exposed within similar circles, consolidating laughter as the primary mode of engagement.

61 For more on the personalization of the Internet, see for instance Eli Pariser *The Filter Bubble: How the New Personalized Web is Changing What We Read and How We Think* 2012. Also analyses on the largest OSN and VSS in China, demonstrate high social similarity for video recommendation (Ma et al 2014, 676). This suggests that in Luo's original context, video sharing would maintain similar to the original upload as well.

Comic reception of Luo's video displays the link between laughter and cultural in/digestion. The humor of the reception of the video offers an important component of analysis in regards to the process of vomiting in Kristeva's theorizing of abjection as a formation of the self. Kristeva explains that laughter is a mode of displacing the processes of abjection (Kristeva 1982, 8) – an act of desperation (51). As an attempt to stave off death, laughter functions to confront the moment of proximity with the object that brings the process of abjection about with a deferral of misdirection. For viewers who follow the type of response embedded in the website's goal of producing humor through a particular perspective, they are then integrated into a type of regurgitation, a laughter, that attempts to repulse any moment of identification with the young boy and his sexy dance moves. The laughter is the moment of pushing away the boy in the video and all that he represents – freedom of bodily expression, desire to be like the sexy female pop star. It is a push that also seems to confirm a fear of psychic connection or self-recognition in the video.

As this project is specifically interested in performances of racialized femininity, Kristeva's theory of abjection is best read through the work of Shimakawa, who has extrapolated the process of abjection as a way of understanding the Asian body on stage. Bringing together Kristeva and artist/scholar Richard Fung, Shimakawa argues that the eroticized Asian male exemplifies the status of the abject. The Asian male suffers from a process of abjection in relation to his sex and sexuality, as one who lacks something "down there" and yet is also posited with a contradictory double feature of violence and fear, which confirms the making of the split subject in the Asian male as a process of abjection (Shimakawa 2002, 16). Shimakawa argues that the space in which such bodies function is "always already densely populated with the

phantasms of orientalness though and against which [the performer is understood and must struggle to be seen]" (17). For Shimakawa performance is an especially "fruitful site" given that abjection "is at once a specular and affective process," emerging around relationships between seeing and being seen and between feeling and seeing (19). The argument is written in the context of the Asian American body, and while Luo is not Asian American, Shimakawa's analysis applies in at least two ways. First, the West-East reception of the effeminate Oriental male predates the United States. Second, Shimakawa's analysis is valuable in American framing and applies insofar as there is a particular reception of Luo's body as Asian by American viewers.

In the case of the video, the reception moves as an act of double deferral, as illustrated by the *CollegeHumor* byline to the video: "laugh all you want, Britney Spears used to be a little Asian boy." The double move is to first assume laughter and then deflect the implications of such laughter's relation to the formation of self, or the impinging closeness of self—the "panic of becoming like her." In these moves, the strength of the trope is doubled in order to displace the feminine other as other and not me. Further, the strengthening (Britney Spears used to be a little Asian boy) is also an interlude to the perpetuation of the cycle of laughter to stave off the proximity of self to the other. It equates Luo with becoming not merely woman but *white* woman. Growing up to be a female pop star is echoed in comments on YouTube such as "u guys r all idiots..this was lady gaga before she became famous and lost weight.."[62] The line is meant to function as assimilation and otherization, eliminating the capacity for Luo to exist as a feminine Asian boy.

Moving away from the psychic reading, disgust theory acknowledges a similar type of

62 User: omfgitzalex in 2014. This comment like many others also works to shame the chubby aspects of Luo's body.

effect in laughter. Winfried Menninghaus extends this argument into the context of disgust and contamination, which offers another valence to the question of humor. He explains:

> All theoreticians of disgust are, at the same time, theoreticians of laughter. The 'vital sensation' of disgust might well be considered a property no less characteristic of humanity than the capacity to laugh – a property, in fact, that represents the negative complement of laughter. The sudden discharge of tension achieves in laughter, as in vomiting, an overcoming of disgust, a contact with the 'abject' that does not lead to lasting contamination or defilement. On the other hand, laughing at something, as an act of expulsion, resembles in itself the act of rejecting, of vomiting in disgust. Disgust, which undergoes a countercathexis (or a sublimation), and laughter are complementary ways of admitting an alterity that otherwise would fall prey to repression; they enable us to deal with a scandal that otherwise would overpower our system of perception and consciousness (Menninghaus 2003, 10-11).

The two – laughter and vomiting – have the same function. The disgust of the video comments mobilizes laughter as a protective move in order to maintain the perpetuation of normative society. It is the ability to laugh that serves to keep the contaminant as other and to reify the dominant model of normative being as the right and good way of existing and enacting behavior in cultural intelligibility. The expulsion of the feminine racial other through the act of laughter subverts the impending moment of coming too close to radical alterity – a moment that may come to demand a type of ethical response, or rather a moment that would demand that the subject make a change, to do or to think something in a way the current state of being does not allow, at some level to destroy the self as it is.

Consuming Cantonese: Transmediating Whiteness in Wong's "In Love for the Mood"

Illustration 15: Screenshot "In Love for the Mood" 2009 (Wong 2017)

Transmedial cultural digestion illustrates the collision of performance, technology, and trope in Wong's online posting, "In Love for the Mood."[63] The posting features three split-screen versions of the same scene, all with individual soundtracks, playing simultaneously.[64] In the original Biennial installation, the piece was spatially oriented on three separate screens facing mirrors (Wong 2011), while the video posted via his website pairs all three in one viewing. Additionally, the original installation included billboards by Neo Chon Teck, rare screen memorabilia, and photographs of cinema palaces.[65]

It is important to acknowledge the distinctions between the live original and its posted video form online, as Wong has noted that the piece loses much of its spatially oriented meanings in the video version and is meant to be viewed in its original (now past) context (Wong 2011). However, I think that there is something significant about Wong's choice to post a video in lieu

63 The exhibit won a Special Jury Mention award.

64 "In Love for the Mood" video preview, Ming Wong, Accessed December 2011, http://www.mingwong.org/index.php?/cv/in-love-for-the-mood-video/

65 Teck is, according to Wong, "Singapore's last surviving billboard painter."

of these factors, as many other performance artists choose to abstain from sharing transmediated ephemeral works. The conscious choice of posting a video demarcates it as an example of voluntary transmedial regurgitation. The video, like much of Wong's work, miscasts—by casting his revisitations of other works (in this case the work of Hong Kong filmmaker Wong Kar-Wai—*In the Mood for Love*) with actors of different races and genders than the original work. Wong's action demonstrates an awareness of the strictures of gender and race on sexuality and identity, but in contrast to the viral video in the first case study, Wong's video installation exhibits a choice on the part of the artist to disturb normative body conceptions and associated relations at play. This demonstrates both an awareness of the types of tropic associations of racialized and gendered bodies and also a decision to put into action a method that rejects the strict association. While not functioning as a strict critique of Wong's piece as a replication of the tropes of Orientalism, my analysis serves to explore the ways in which traces of tropes of Queer Orientalism still remain after his intended process of disjuncture.

Each screen in the video portrays the white performer (Klaune Sanders) as the Chinese man and woman role-playing a conversation (the lover standing in for the woman's husband) on how the woman should tell her husband that she knows he is having an affair (as well).[66] As the woman, the actress has light colored skin and is wearing a Chinese Cheongsam—a traditional style dress with embroidery and a high neck giving way to a slim fitting silk dress. As the man, she is wearing a simple white button down shirt and her skin has been darkened. In each portrayal, the actress is mimicking Cantonese with Ming Wong out of view of the camera (yet within earshot of the boom) feeding her the lines. She does not speak Cantonese, and thus the

66 In describing Sanders, Wong refers to her as Caucasian. In her acting profiles online, she is listed as white or white/Caucasian.

early outtakes demonstrate a very poor grasp of the language, filled in by moments of uncomfortable laughter. Each screen in the video shows a different progression of the filming – the beginning in which she struggles, the middle in which she shows some improvement, and the final result in which she could pass for a Cantonese speaker. In the early scene, full of mishaps and the evidence of out-of-placeness, the video is subtitled in Cantonese, highlighting her inability to communicate the language. In the second, the subtitles appear in English, reflecting the two major languages in Hong Kong and the relation between the language barriers of East and West. In the final scene, further complicating the language conveyance, the subtitles are in Italian, as the exhibit was in Venice, Italy.

The scene points to the partial nature of Cantonese cultural digestion. Wong works to embody and make apparent the act of translation. The original film scene is about meaning, honesty, communication, and understanding; the translation is about performance and practice. It makes explicit the process and sonically draws attention to Wong's off camera labor as the translation generator. He *feeds* the performer lines. As a non-Cantonese speaker, she is *consuming* Cantonese, not speaking it. Consumption is visually manifest through the three-screen subtitling. Sanders' performance is about perfecting the illusion of mastery and the form is about showing that for what it is. The final takes are subtitled in Italian, the language of the host country, the middle in English, and the first in Chinese, already staging a reflection on dialects origins in the Singapore pavilion with Cantonese being replaced by Mandarin as a governmental form of linguistic control.

Wong's reflections on language position his relay of Cantonese as a form of cultural identification. Wong states, "I am sad that my Cantonese has degenerated, and its typical that in

subsequent generations, dialects have been lost. I see this as a loss of identity, it cuts me off from earlier generations, the gap is wider" (Ting 2009). Noting that the passing of his grandparents prompted the passing of his fluency, Wong points to performance as the prompt for recuperating that loss. "When I started writing for the 'English' language theatre in Singapore, [I found] idiosyncrasies [of language] to be a tool to get straight to the solar plexus of an audience, a form of identification which is at once emotional and deeply embedded in one's psyche and being" (Ting 2009). In digesting the cultural force of language in Wong's medial performance installations, the act of translation works as a mode sharing cultural practice. However, the mode of feeding lines as repeated across the screens serves to invite a form of cultural consumption that demands reflexivity.

Illustration 16: Screenshot "In Love for the Mood" 2009 (Wong 2017)

Wong's practice of feeding the Western actress Cantonese lines functions as a linguistic miscasting weighted by the racial power dynamic that occurs through her whiteness. Unlike the transnational miscasting in Wong's "Life of Imitation," "In Love for the Mood" enacts a form of yellowface, engaging a racial power dynamic as a layer of the process that requires unpacking. The racial power dynamic casting from African American to Malay, Indian, and Chinese is not

replicated in a form of blackface. Instead, the shift of ethnicity recasts the inflection of the question of race. However, in “In Love for the Mood,” Sanders, a white woman performer, darkens her skin to portray the Chinese man. While her attire signals her as a Chinese woman, the move to cover over her whiteness evokes the problematic conflations and histories that might arise from such a figuration. Wong notes that he wanted to cast a Caucasian actor because the Venice Biennale has a primarily European audience, and he extends the rationale to his choice object, arguing that Wong Kar-Wai's film would be the Chinese film best known by a European audience (Ting 2009). The move to make the audience comfortable works in potentially disparate ways from cultural awareness to overidentification. I wonder, what does the casting of a woman, a white woman, do differently in relation to Wong's queer tactic of disrupting Chinese cinema through miscasting? How does the shift from installation to the Internet affect the content or the experience of the art?

Illustration 17: Photograph "After Chinatown" 2012 (Wong 2017)

Illustration 18: Photograph "After Chinatown" 2012 (Wong 2017)

Taking a detour into another work, Wong's recreation of Roman Polanski's film *Chinatown* (1974), "After Chinatown" (2012), provides a counter example. The piece features him as both the male protagonist and his femme fatale. Jun Zubillaga-Pow argues that the piece demonstrates a struggle of nation and state, yielding "trans-aesthetics [which] coheres with the aspirations of decolonial and queer politics against the reification of the trans subject—in dress, gait and speech—as a dystopic symptom arising from the neoliberal policies of cultural privatisation and globalisation" (Zubillaga-Pow 2015). My argument for Wong's work resonates with Zubillaga-Pow's article; however, I am particularly interested in a work in which Wong deviates from casting racial minorities and men and instead casts a white woman in place of a Chinese man and woman. I argue that "In Love for the Mood," in the context of Wong's larger body of work, reconfigures the directional flows of power in relation to both decolonial and queer politics and thus demands further reflection. Akin to how the queer expression in Luo's video cannot overcome the cultural framing in the U.S. context, I suggest that Wong's piece is transmedially open to normative practices of cultural in/digestion.

To be clear, I do not think Wong's work is inherently problematic. Indeed, his performance practices make apparent the labor of feeding Cantonese that disrupts the easy

digestion of translated media work. However, I think the queer force of miscasting requires, in the case of "In Love for the Mood," the spatio-temporal design of the installation. The installation does two important things that are removed in the online posting. First, it is installed on a loop in an exhibition space that draws out the experience of encountering the medial performances. The loop is enhanced by the engagement with the multi-media aspects that encourage audience participants to examine the role of cinema and art in producing a "Chinese" experience. Second, the screens are arranged in relation to mirrors. As onlookers pass through the exhibition, they encounter their own reflections, implicating them into the scenes and screens. The forced encounter offers the affective experience of delay that opens up a greater variety of interpretation and critical inquiry. These elements are lost in the transmedial Internet display. Instead, the idea becomes subject to a quick watch, fast forward, and glancing interpretation.

In dealing with issues of gender, sex, and ethnicity in relation to translation and Chinese culture, Wong's piece takes on a material base that is entrenched with tropes of queer oriental identity—he has ingested, digested, been nauseous, and chosen to reportray, to regurgitate these tropes through a de-situation of fixed-identity reference-points. At some level, the ingestion functions at a very broad breadth of life experience and artistic analysis, illustrated by his tactics of inversion and miscasting in relation to previously established filmic and art works. The tactic dovetails with the digestive function of internalizing them as a part of Wong's body of work, while the nauseous stage is the affective experience of those elements digested, which quickly transitions into finding implications in such works, creating the impulse to vomit up the former in the shape of miscasting.

The ensuing question in relation to transmedial cultural indigestion is: what does this process ultimately *do* in relation to the reemergence of tropes? In one sense, it is a way of displacing propriety. However, there is also the option that these are only purportedly rejected and instead incipiently recreated, such as in trying to avoid the image of the effeminate Asian man, replacing him with the hypermasculine man with no hair. Does Wong's practice enable the hyperbolic, or is the abject status retained and reincorporated? I argue that it is a complication involving a similar reemergence through the figure of the woman as the Oriental man – no longer the man as feminine but the woman as the Asian man. While much more nuanced, the response is likened to the byline in the viral video: "Britney Spears used to be a little Asian boy." Instead, the little Asian boy grows up to become a white woman, impersonating a Chinese man. She is not registered as strange insofar as she is reminiscent of the tropes of Oriental queerness—the Oriental man is like a woman, and moreover his relation to the woman in question only serves to underscore his inability to penetrate her, his inability to be the white heterosexual masculine male because he is too like woman, and in this case, is equal to woman. In other words, the performance does not produce a sense of nausea as much as it reflects a preexisting nausea – the fixity of identity and the foreclosure of alternative conceptions of gender and sexuality – and then passes through nausea to the strategy of miscasting. In attempting to replace problematic tropes by displacing, rejecting, and regurgitating those tropes, Wong's performance perhaps gives in to the impulse of the spasm too quickly, preserving pieces of undigested tropic material. The elements of the former understandings of identities that he attempts to subvert are displaced and pieced in a matter that is now linked to him as a subject. From his work, we see splinters and shards of partially digested filmic and artistic works saturated in his own insides—the turmoil

made material that he felt in relation to the normative model. Vomit demonstrates a deeply fragmented stew of performance that still engages in the cycle of regurgitation of tropes of Oriental Queerness. My argument does not condemn Wong's actions, but is rather a cautionary tale of the impulse of transmedial cultural indigestion. In fact, Wong's installation generates what I consider a strategy for resisting dominant representations of the effeminate Oriental male, which I outline in the following elaboration of nausea.

e-Feminacy: Queer Orientalism and nauseous reception online

In this concluding section, I promote the practice of delay or nausea as a means of embracing the performances of Wong and Luo while short-circuiting the ways in which new media enable the trope of the effeminate Oriental male to be further embedded in American transmedial cultural digestion practices. In the conclusion of her book *Racial Indigestion: Eating Bodies in the 19th Century*, Kyla Wazana Tompkins argues that the "mouth is a stage for… *queer alimentarity*: a space where nonnormative desires can be played out" (Tompkins 2013, 185). What makes the other delectable and threatening all at once is codified in the imagined projection of who they are intrinsically, a repeated figure of knowable markers and unknowable intention. Tompkins outlines queer alimentarity as both radical and problematic in the pleasures it allows. In the doubled site of resistance to and reinscription of normative claims on raced bodies, Jacques Derrida's direction of the question from whether or not to eat to how to eat well (Derrida 1995) offers an extension to transmedial in/digestion, as an active process of internalization and externalization of the tropes upon which the eating of the other is premised. Many scholars have written about consumptive practices of the other; my work here seeks to examine transnational transmediation as integral to cultural in/digestion. The question is not

whether or not to create art or to perpetuate the trope, but how to do so well. I take the question to drive my analysis of cultural digestion and regurgitations of trope found in transmediations of effeminacy online, the confluence of which might structure the idea of e-Feminacy.

e-Feminacy describes the specific function of the online medium in translating performances. The Internet creates outlets for queer subcultural affiliation and artistic expression; however, these same spaces are easily translated to zones of the Internet that make the works susceptible to homophobic and transphobic Orientalism. The confluence of possibilities produces a Queer Orientalism that confounds the limits of the trope of the effeminate Oriental male between and beyond queer resistance. e-Feminacy acknowledges the points of cultural struggle that arise through but are not predetermined by the medium of the Internet. e-Feminacy is about the asymmetrical cultural exchanges of the medium of the body in relation to the medium of the Internet. In these shifting nodes of transnational transmediation, context shifts the impact of resistance in relation to dominant frames of meaning. These dominant structures are not immovable but instead operate organically through processes of regurgitation that function through eating the other, cultural digestion and indigestion, and the product of emesis or vomit. In process, the function of nausea becomes a site of reflective capacity that operates within Wong's and Luo's medial performances.

As exemplified through the viral video of “Little Asian Boy Dreams of Being Sexy Female Pop Star” and Ming Wong’s “In Love for the Mood,” transmediations serve as productive modes through which to engage Queer Orientalism on the Internet. Transmediation demonstrates that tropes are never simply replicated as the same; instead the process of ingestion, digestion, and regurgitation change the tropes, altering them by adding bits and pieces

of the performer, viewer, and culture in question.

If the problems of transmediation occur through dominant cultural in/digestion, I offer the process of staying nauseous – ruminating in the space of discomfort for as long as possible. Nausea as strategy is specific to reception online. Nausea is a difficult reading strategy. This should not mean that nausea is untenable as a way of reading, in particular because the stakes are so high; we should not dismiss it due to its temporal instability. It is its instability and unknowable duration that makes it so productive. To draw it out as long as possible is the challenge. And perhaps in that long delay, there will be strategies that arise to alter the ways in which the trope is considered in the regurgitation that follows. The difficult space is the ethical one in this reading, and my hope is that it is a disruption of the transmedial virality of tropic videos. I situate staying nauseous, or letting the object exist within you without fully incorporating it, as a means of letting the queer resistance of the pieces reemerge.

Jean Paul Sartre's description in *Nausea* describes the state of affection like a filth that cannot be washed away:

> I felt a sharp disappointment in the sexual parts, a long, disagreeable tickling. At the same time I felt my shirt rubbing against my breasts and I was surrounded, seized by a slow, coloured mist, and a whirlpool of lights in the smoke, in the mirrors, in the booths glowing at the back of the café, and I couldn't see why it was there or why it was like that. I was on the doorstep, I hesitated to go in and then there was a whirlpool, an eddy, a shadow passed across the ceiling and I felt myself pushed forward. I floated, dazed by the luminous fogs dragging me in all directions at once […] Then the Nausea seized me, I dropped to a seat, I no longer knew where I was; I saw the colours spin slowly around me, I wanted to vomit. And since that time, the Nausea has not left me, it holds me (Sartre 2007, 18-19).

This disagreeable tickling sensation is compounded by a confusion that affects the body somatically, visually; the nausea has a force all its own to grab hold of the individual, dragging the individual where it pleases. The nausea lingers and does not leave. For Sartre this

inescapability is horrific, an existential crisis. For me, it is indeed horrific and a crisis of subjectivity; however, instead of attempting to escape or to wallow in the morose, I advocate that we embrace it and *hope for* inescapability.

As Sartre's analysis points out, the state of being within nausea is one that feels inescapable, and it is important to realize that perhaps "counterintuitively, nausea is more difficult to treat than emesis" (Horn 2008, 431), which compels the nauseous subject to seize hold of the opportunity to vomit, to release the horrible sensation of nausea. This compulsion is in line with the evolutionary biological perspective forwarded by Menninghaus; in contrast, what I am suggesting is to go against what according to such readers might be in one's "nature." Georges Canguilhem reminds us that the normal and the pathological are creations of the health sciences meant to demarcate the stability of physiological states, and as such the abnormal is none other than another normal state. It has no qualitative relation to health; it is a matter of repeatability of frequency of occurrences (Canguilhem 1991, 227-229). This is not to say we are all normal, or that because the abnormal is constructed, the implications are less felt; it is rather that we must keep in mind this constructed history in the rise and perpetuation of labeling conditions "abnormal" in order to move towards a new advocacy away from the "whole" subject. Such a move embraces a debilitated stage, a debilitated body, and perhaps a debilitated subject, without writing/making (un)intelligible such a body in the language of normalcy. This debilitated subject is one that is not fully formed, enfeebled from reaching its whole sense. It cannot clearly demarcate itself through knowing and thus cannot fully know others/objects, which prevents the debilitated subject from passing judgment and making meaning.

The whole subject is one that conjures the Cartesian subject; in a move away from this

privileged subject, nausea serves to interrupt the process of subjectification in vomiting as described in Kristeva. In relation to abjection, the subject remains an unfully-formed "I," and in stopping the action that is integral to subject formation, the nauseous reader is a partially-formed subject, a debilitated subject. It is important to enfeeble the subject in this way in order to move towards a partial and unstable starting space for rethinking the affective state of experience, rather than positing knowing in reading. In other words, there is an opportunity with the unfully-formed "I" because in not fully knowing itself, in not fully being able to distinguish that which is not I from I, it opens a space of uncertainty that can be seized to rethink bodies and states of being that have previously been codified with immovable meaning. Stemming from a critique of normalcy as such, disability studies scholar Lennard J. Davis argues that the unstable subject position involving disability can be a starting point for ethics (Davis 2002, 23), and it is in this space of an uncertain, unfully-formed subject, that I advocate we dwell through a state of nausea. In relation to Queer Orientalism, nausea is a productive spatio-temporal tactic for resisting the dominating power of "compulsory able-bodiedness, heterosexuality" (McRuer 2006, 1-33, 199-208) and assimilation.

Rei Terada explores the pressure to view objects in a value-laden manner that understands a universalized societal acceptance of the fact/value convergence in such a way that conscripts normativity onto those within society (Terada 2009, 5, 10-11). However, Terada observes that there is a slight time-suspension that occurs in the convergence of facts to values; it is in this space of delay that a phenomenophile can dwell. Terada acknowledges that the figure of the phenomenophile has often been criticized or viewed as one who is forced to be apologetic due to the force of pressure to have always already formulated an answer (a value-laden response) when

called upon; the phenomenophile instead "tries to avoid that moment by lingering in object perception, looking away at something too slight to present a demand – some wavering reflection or trick of light" (18). It is important to keep in mind that this delay is not simply indecision as such; it is a critical lag time that opens up the possibilities for moving beyond the fact/value problem. Terada continues, "The phenomenophile's suspensions and imagined suspensions of fact perception imply critical insight, as though they were proto-assertions of something that could be coming to be and does not yet have the liabilities of anything that is" (33). This delay opens up the possibilities for understanding how staying nauseous as the partially-digested object threatens to rise up can be a time of critical insight on the ways in which tropes are ingested, digested, and regurgitated in a cyclical fashion that comes to be pervasive in society, accepted as a particular fact/value convergence that is still continuously and anxiously repeated. Terada acknowledges that the time that phenomenophilia embraces is not always short – that the duration may even be infinite; however, it is important to understand that perhaps it is this type of delay that is necessary in order to avoid coercion (201-202) and the continuation of normative understanding of how bodies ought to be and are by virtue of inheritance. Moreover, this extension of time, whether infinite or only fleeting, is preferable to the "few seconds of tolerance we usually give ourselves" (204). In much of Terada's writing, she is perhaps referring to a millisecond delay; to dwell in nausea is to draw out that space as much as possible.

Nausea forms an intervention in dominant cultural interpretation through a liminal affective state. Time-lag delays the subjectification that produces bodies. Viewers read queerly, nauseously, to embrace the debilitated subject. Nausea is a temporal lingering. The delay can occur quickly (as a blur) or slowly. When embraced as a way of approaching the trope, nausea

presents as a productive interruption and delay. For Luo, the possibility opens up space for his readers to pause and delay and not to click, not to comment, not to move away but to sit in discomfort and not knowing, whether that be pleasurable or horrific. For Ming Wong's work, there are multiple possibilities for nausea to work. One is in the gallery space, but there is also potential in the online space to situate disorientation and delay as a means of staving off meaning-making and closed knowability. It is a particular way of dwelling in the delay that disorients one to the tropes, offering up time for critical insight that allows the reader to dwell in the nausea as long as possible.

Taking into consideration the ways in which the phenomenophile is able to offer critical insight, there are three questions of particular interest for this project in relation to phenomenophilia. First: how is the time delay productive for staying nauseous? Understanding that there is a time delay in fact/value convergence is the first step to being able to break down the ways in which understandings of tropes are naturalized; thus, taking advantage of the critical power imbued in the time delay between things as they appear and things as they are and should be, must be, is what staying nauseous – embracing the nausea as experience – should model itself after. The implications for staying nauseous lie particularly with either delaying or breaking down the perpetuation of the cycle of normativity – breaking down the ubiquitous perpetuation of the tropes at play.

Stemming from this concept, the next question is: in what ways might the time delay as a means of disrupting the fact/value convergence be productive in understanding tropes as neither positive nor negative? To deem a particular trope negative or positive and thus engage in condemnation or the celebration of acceptance is to strengthen the bounds that keep the relation

between ethnic bodies, gender, and sexualities tied to normative understandings that make them knowable as that which is categorizable. It is this fact/value problem that allows for violence more than the resistance of the convergence itself; therefore, staying nauseous can offer a way of approaching tropes of Oriental Queerness experientially, dwelling in them as we see them and how they make us feel without declaring a particular value to what that experience means.

Lastly: looking to the specific framework of the case study videos as representative of a durational performance, how is it that phenomenophilia can be useful in determining the status of the object as a reader? It is important to note that I have been discussing the process of cultural in/digestion and the reading of videos almost interchangeably; however, I do so to acknowledge that they are inextricably linked to one another and mutually co-constitutive, both contributing to ingestive and digestive processes that readers engage in as they study these tropes. While our regurgitations, as scholars, may present themselves in the form of ink on paper or digital uploads, they engage in the type of performative element that video-work does insofar as they present, make words do things, and stimulate conversation (and hopefully critical engagement), as well as catalyze mappings of the interactions between the digital and the humanities. In this way, it is particularly important for the academic reader of the video or the artist-academic to stay nauseous. For scholars, the strategy of reading in a manner that seeks to stay in nausea is particularly important to pulling away from the desire to erect new modes of value and meaning as the "correct" alternative to the existing object of critique. In fact, positing such alternatives is precisely the perpetuation of the tropic material in fragmentation or inversion. Instead, it is the process that should take priority; scholars should seek to maintain the affective state as long as possible, drawing out the nausea as a phenomenophile.

Thinking of phenomenophilia as a means of remaining in the nauseous state, I turn to Sara Ahmed's theory of disorientation as a way of understanding how staying nauseous can be productive insofar as it serves as a means of disorienting oneself in relation to the tropes examined herein. Ahmed's theory of disorientation, which she lays out in her book, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*, is particularly productive in that she accounts for the subject matter of the tropes of Queer Orientalism—providing readings of both queerness and Orientalism in relation to how one orients oneself and how queerness itself might serve as a means of deviating from the fixity of stereotype/trope/normative conception. Beginning with the concept of orientation – invoking the Orient as spatialized otherization and sexual orientation as a marker of difference – Ahmed describes that it is what allows us to "rethink the phenomenality of space – that is, how space is dependent on bodily inhabitance" (Ahmed 2006, 6-7). Orientations allow us to take up space so long as they take up time (20-21), which is where I want to dovetail the compatibility of disorientation with the time delay in phenomenophilia. Orientation is a process of aligning the body and space (7), of how we begin, and of the familiarity of bodies and their dwelling places (8). Thus, orientations "towards objects affect what we do, and how we inhabit space" (28), which ultimately decides the ways in which our actions unfold and how our bodies can interact with first the space around us and then, by extension, those in the aforementioned spaces.

It is first orientation that delimits the flexibility of bodies, as they are tied to what Ahmed refers to as being in or on line, a notion of fixity (14-15) that in turn hails people vis-à-vis their scripted identities and directs bodies thusly (15-17). As with the viral video case study, ideological force is ever-present in both enactment and reception. Ahmed's reading of

disorientation allows for a specific strategy of resistance in relation to the ways in which the Orient has been characterized as other. Reminding us of Said's description of the placeness and meaning imbued in the term Orient, Ahmed denotes the Orient as more than the East, as a fetishized place of the lack that is also full of meaning, as not Europe, and that is constitutive of a particular relation of submission to the Occident or West (114). In this way it is still the West that prefigures the understandings of the East. Thus, the demand for disorientation persists. Ahmed argues that in order to provide a reorientation, our strategy must also involve disorientation (20). This disorientation, theorized in terms of queerness, is a move that is off-line (71). It is this strategy that I believe allows for a reading of transmedial cultural indigestion in a way that can simultaneously acknowledge the ways that tropes can perpetuate harmful fixities of orientalized identity in submissive relation to the West while also providing a mode of resistance rather than rejection through an understanding of orientation in relation to nausea. Just as nausea produces a feeling of discomfort and unease, "Disorientation as a bodily feeling can be unsettling" (157) and it can leave the person feeling a sense of indeterminacy, which is where the critical importance of phenomenophilia enters as a way of understanding how the two can inform one another's strategies.

Nausea allows the reader to delay the click, to resist the desire to simply move on by "liking," commenting, or assigning value to the affective state. Nausea remains of primary importance for understanding the reactions of viewers who often express confusion or discomfort in response to Luo's performance. When the digestive process breaks down the information, nausea functions as a sensation; this sensation can give way to assigning meaning to the digestive processes that affect the body to which they have entered. However, it can also function

as the pause in Terada and the disorientaion in Ahmed that open up a possibility for affective limbo. Nausea functions as that delay that moves away from fact/value convergence. This is the ethical space provided within the process of cultural indigestion that allows for the reader to resist the production of tropic content through the conduits of the Internet.

Returning to the distinction between the installation of "In Love for the Mood" and the split-screen version posted online, there is a differential possibility for the strategic resistance of the affective state of nausea. Wong's statement that his work is intended for installation hints at an important distinction between the material perpetuation of online videos and spatialized installation works. Perhaps when there is less of a distinction between object and viewer, the psychic relations and impulses become muddled differently. In this way, I hope not to extend my above analysis to his work as a whole; it is instead specific to the formation of the work in online spaces, which are governed by dissimilar spatialities. Nausea offers a counter to the dominant frame of meaning making that overtakes many online spaces and moves queer expression towards heteronormativity.

Chapter Three – *Trans* Asian: Yozmit's New Liberal Entanglements of Gender

"I want to be a performance scientist" (Yozmit 2014).

Chapters one and two share at least two major movements that collide in chapter three. First, the movement of femininity demonstrates the linked codification of gender expression to race across differently gendered and sexed bodies. A second move from woman to man translates "woman" into man, resulting in the hypersexualized woman (chapter one) and desexualized man (chapter two). In both cases, the trans movements variously reiterate the normative structures they simultaneously unsettle. The artists in this dissertation engage racialized femininity beyond the divides of good/bad and authentic/inauthentic femininity. Nakadate's art works through transportations, challenge limitations of prescribed sexuality without rejecting sexuality or femininity. Putting culture and technological form into motion, the politics of Nakadate's work relies on relationships between camera, performance, and the past's hold on the present. In the work of Wong and Luo, the trope of Asian male effeminacy is rearticulated through the lens of queer Orientalism, resisting the totalization of racialized femininity. Queer Orientalism attends to transmedial differences in reception and enactment of male femininity, highlighting the importance of medium from the body to the computer screen. Thus, in both chapters, prescribed expectations of racialized femininity are not rejected per se. They are embraced, toyed with, and queered. The affirmation of femininity confronts the sociocultural prescriptions of gender, sex, and sexuality by throwing the binary assumptions of racialized trope into confusion. In other

words, both chapters demonstrate how trans affects resist normativization—not as opposition, but as contextual collisions of performance, bodies, and technologies.

Chapter three examines Yozmit's work. Yozmit is an artist based in Los Angeles, who mixes burlesque, Victorian costume design, ancient practices of Buddhist chanting, pop music, and performance art. Through these varied yet connected performance approaches, Yozmit focuses on technique and technology in and as performance. Like the subjects of chapters one and two, Yozmit engages visual culture and video practices in relation to new and emerging media and technologies. Nakadate's art in chapter one demonstrates early new media practices in that she delivers the YouTube aesthetic before YouTube, the selfie before ubiquitous self-photography. She was an early adopter of Internet-based relationships. Chapter two functions in the midst of Internet culture. Wong's postings on YouTube and Luo's self-expression through video-sharing posit the Internet as a norm and as the driving force of self-making. While the artists discussed in the first two chapters engage primarily in technologies of visual representation – the material photograph, the viral video – Yozmit's art emphasizes technologies of prosthesis. Yozmit uses the body as a medium for technological engagement. Forming assemblages of silicone-molded breasts, iPad lips/vulva, and organic flesh, much of Yozmit's work deploys techniques of self-making that move away from an instrumentalization of technological objects into detachable, re-attachable elements of self. I argue Yozmit's work is a transitive transitioning that enacts process, rather than instrumentalization, in disruptions of intended and societally-compiled use.

My reading highlights disruptions of technique and technology that come largely in Yozmit's performance of gender. Yozmit engages the elements of racialized femininity evoked in

chapters one and two. As a woman and a man, Yozmit's femininity is framed by both the hypersexual demands explored in chapter one and the desexed assumptions addressed in chapter two.[67] This is not a doubling as much as it is a rearticulation. Yozmit's non-binary, gender non-conforming body necessarily invites an engagement with transgender scholarship. Importantly, however, Yozmit does not identify as transgender. Transgender, for Yozmit, evokes a telos by which she would be seen as a man who became a woman. Yozmit presents as feminine and identifies with fluctuating pronouns as both man and woman. Being both, then, Yozmit is simultaneously subject to transgender framings and resistant to the limitations of a wholesale application of transgender theory to her work. She self-defines as "new gender," an appellation on which I elaborate in the subsection "Sound of New Pussy."

I propose "trans Asian" as a scholarly approach, not as a prescribed form of naming or categorization.[68] Based on Yozmit's description of transgender, I position trans Asian against a teleological movement of gender (i.e., Yozmit did not move from being a man to being a woman or from being defined by society as a man to self defining as a woman). It is important to note that Yozmit participates in activism for transgender civil liberties, and in that move, she does in part articulate an affinity to trans*, just not transgender as a label.[69]

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67 Following Yozmit, I will use both she and he as gender pronouns interchangeably throughout.

68 I choose not to hyphenate the term trans Asian in resonance with the critiques of Asian-American as a hyphenated term (see chapter one).

69 Yozmit identifies first as a performance artist, singer, and costume designer, then clarifying I do a little but of transgender civil rights activism as well (Riviera 2010). Trans* is sometimes marked simply as an open invitation to the prefix trans, but has also been specifically theorized as a term to address the potential limitations of transgender. As such, trans* can refer to non-binary gender identity, transsexuals, gender non-conforming persons, or myriad understandings of non-normative gender. See for instance "Asterisk" by Avery Tompkins in TSQs inaugural issue on keywords (Tompkins 2014). "Introduction: Trans-, Trans, or Transgender?" (Stryker et al. 2008) is also a productive source on the sense of the prefix in concert with transgender or gender non-conformity theories.

Stemming from the second major collision of the chapters – Asian and Asian Americanness – "trans Asian" also transnationally addresses the gap between transgender as a category and Yozmit as man and woman. In addition to the openness of trans*, for which many scholars have advocated a non-binary gender analysis, trans Asian gets at the specificity of racialized femininity. I propose this as a way to think alongside and across, rather than against, transgender theory. As Susan Stryker explains, "Transgender theory and activism call attention to the operations of normativity within and between gender/sexual identity categories, [and] raise questions about the structuration of power along axes other than homo/hetero and man/woman binaries" (Stryker 2008, 149). Hence, I build from and with transgender to trans Asian because it attends to the assumptions that come with naming and to the specificities of transnational Asian and Asian American formations.

The transnational movements of culture, bodies, and politics establish the racialization of femininity across bodies as a constitutive marker of the entanglement of the Asias *in* America and the Asias *with* Asian America. Chapters one and two point to the importance of trans Asian. In chapter one, I addressed the residue of transnational immigration politics in contemporary expressions of femininity in the work of Laurel Nakadate. This enduring ephemera is the cultural accumulation of disintegrated and disassociated Asian America. Focusing on the sticking capacity of material histories alongside the haunting affective power of Nakadate's work, I argued that Asian Americans are linked to the racialized and gendered pasts of Asian America, as are contemporary racial politics to the nostalgia of white masculinity. In chapter two, I turned to the contemporary moment of this transnational movement of Asian bodies in and around the American context. Wong and Luo's performances are facilitated by asymmetrical digital

exchanges, marking transnational Asian America with sedimentations of past generations (through technologies of remembrance and tracking) and assemblages of globalized mobilities (through the Internet). These interpretations and constructions of Asia thus inform a view of Asian Americanness through the Trans-Pacific conflation of bodies. These elements of trans Asian are emphasized and brought to the fore by Yozmit. Yozmit is based in Los Angeles. He emigrated from the Republic of Korea as an adult. As such, Yozmit's Asian American identity is caught not simply between South Korea and the U.S. but in a trans Asian exchange of multi-nation politics, transnational mobility, myriad cultural expectations, and the vast extents of diaspora. Thus, trans Asian serves to address the complexity of non-binary gender, transnational diaspora, and also the movement across performances of technology.

Trans Asian points to the transnational flows and globalized interconnections in which sexuality and gender are constituted. But as Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan note, approaching questions of identity as globalized misses the ways in which global identities and technological practices are asymmetrically experienced in relation to transnational power structures (Grewal and Kaplan 2001, 663, 671). Likewise, thinking of diaspora as global connectivity does not address the limits of mobility on specific bodies. Trans Asian is thus also about pointing to the mobility and immobility of bodies as a major contributing factor to the ways in which Asian American studies is enhanced by a transnational focus. The movement of Asian bodies demands an account of neoliberalism. As Aihwa Ong's *NeoLiberalism as Exception* argues, by bringing together the ideas of neoliberalism and exception, scholarship can better attend to disparate constitutive and contingent biopolitical modes of governing across Asia and between Asian countries and the United States (Ong 2006, 6-7, 13). Ong's work breaks down

the myth of globalization as the free-flow of bodies. Instead, neoliberalism operates by creating exceptions, curating which bodies move, how they move, where they land, and what options are available on their precarious arrival.

Ong's analysis is itself a form of trans Asian scholarship, as it examines the contexts of various regions and nations of Asia, the unequal exchanges and exceptions of Asians in the United States, and the relationships of the U.S. to various Asian countries. However, where Ong's focus is on the intersections between capital and sovereignty in relation to regional economic and political policies, my analysis takes up neoliberalism through gender non-conforming bodies. Specifically, I examine aesthetic practices and self-making in relation to political discursivities. Trans Asian interfaces neoliberal conduits of mobility with the immobilizing securitization of bodies that operate outside gender intelligibility. As Paisley Currah and Tara Mulqueen indicate, the U.S. System of airport securitization is increasingly interested in a form of biopolitical control that can "know" gender beyond forms of discursive identification (Currah and Mulqueen 2011, 568). This move to biometrics indicates both the ways in which trans Asian mobilities are framed by ideals of passing or blending in, and the demands placed on the body to remain or become mappable within a gender binary. This connection necessarily brings policies that police the expression, intelligibility, and movements of gender non-conforming bodies to bear on specific instantiations of individual practices and biopolitical effects. By exploring these larger policy effects in the case of Yozmit, I seek to tie together aesthetic expression with transnational politics. Doing so enables an examination of the affective capacities of trans performance.

The title of this chapter, "*Trans* Asian: Yozmit's New Liberal Entanglements of Gender"

emphasizes the relation between trans Asian and neoliberalism, not only as a concept of governmentality, but also as a form of liberal entanglement under the moniker of the new. As the neo in neoliberal suggests, the break is not a radical one, but only a continuation of liberal forms of understanding. The new in this chapter functions to tie together the various ideas and processes that Yozmit engages in relation to gender: new media, new materialism, "new gender", and new liberalisms. The chapter begins with "Cutting Trans Luminosity," which contextualizes the politics of new liberal entanglements of gender as trans Asian. In it, I demonstrate the problematics of those politics through a reading of a scene featuring Yozmit cut from the documentary about Marina Abramović, *The Artist is Present.* This reading emphasizes the progressive narrative of trans inclusivity as a means of covering over trans Asian. The remainder of the chapter focuses on Yozmit's techniques of gendered, liberal self-making alongside his engagements with technological objects and the body, or technologies of the self. I outline two such examples. In the first, "Sound of New Pussy," I analyze the influence of queer Buddhism in relation to sound and gender alongside Yozmit and the iPad as wearable technology. I argue this techno-diasporic queering of Buddhism points to the importance of trans Asian analyses of gender non-conformity. In the next section, "Silicone Embodiments," I examine the materialist theoretical offerings of Yozmit's performance practices in live burlesque shows and related videos. Yozmit's use of silicone evokes the trans Asian context of biomedia and the tensions between surgical and non-surgical body transformation. I offer "siliconicity" as a means of theoretically engaging trans Asian ethics within a neoliberal context of remaking the body. Together, "Silicone Embodiments" and "Sound of New Pussy" emphasize techniques and technologies of what might be considered neoliberal self-making. I argue that these practices of

confessing gender are reasons why neoliberal critique cannot take the form of dismissal, given that the same bodies who engage in neoliberal self-making are often at greatest risk of biopolitical control in the service of unintelligibility and expendability.

Cutting Trans Asian Luminosity

In this section, I address what I call the mundane politics of the cut. I am interested in how everyday and seemingly banal practices of framing through the cut constitute larger frameworks of exclusion under the guise of acceptance. This excision of trans Others works to constitute progressive inclusivity. It is a practice that does not overtly reject trans bodies but instead accepts while obscuring them. Discourses in the United States about transgender and gender non-binary issues continually espouse a narrative of progress and inclusion. These progressive politics cover over the cuts necessary to maintain normatively desirable inclusion. This mode of partial inclusivity maintains subjugation of different bodies while inuring the state, institutions, and individuals from critique. In other words, the narrative of progress deflects from the continued control of populations through selecting ideal candidates for micro-expansions of rights. These expansions are made through the cut, and one of these cuts is the trans Asian cut. Specifically, I focus on a cut scene from the 2012 documentary *The Artist is Present* as both exemplary of this political cut and also as a primer on Yozmit's body, technique, and performance perspective.

Yozmit was one of 40 artists chosen to reperform works in the 2010 exhibit *The Artist is Present.* The three month exhibit, curated by Klaus Bisenbach, was a retrospective of the performance works of Marina Abramović at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City. It featured a new piece by Abramović in which the artist sat in a chair, nearly motionless, during

museum hours. Across the table from the artist was an empty chair that museum-goers waited in line to sit in and engage with the famous performer. Abramović's influence in performance art and even in media art more generally is undeniable. The self-professed grandmother of performance art, Abramović is the subject of numerous books. She runs the Marina Abramović Institute that enacts the "Abramović Method" and is generally recognized as one of the most respected contemporary performance artists, to the extent that she has become something of a standard-bearer for the politics of embodied art.[70] Her performances and the accumulation of their influence map the terrain of the contemporary performing body. The exhibit, in addition to the new piece, both titled *The Artist is Present*, centered on installations of reperformance and performance documentation. The installation included large-scale projections of video documentation of Abramović's solo work and the "Relational Works" (1976-1988) with her former lover and performing partner, Ulay (Uwe Laysiepen). Accompanying the videos were also photographs, sound pieces, and objects of historical relevance to the performances, such as the vehicle Abramović and Ulay lived and performed in for much of the partnered pieces. The MoMA retrospective serves to make Abramović's works canonical, demonstrated in part by the language used by the MoMA website to describe the exhibit. "This performance retrospective traces the prolific career of Marina Abramović (Yugoslav, b. 1946) with approximately fifty works spanning over four decades of her early interventions [...] the exhibition includes the first live re-performances of Abramović's works by other people ever to be undertaken in a museum setting" (MoMA 2010). The reperformances featured artists reenacting some of the "Relational Works," including "Imponderabilia" (1977) and selected solo pieces, including "Luminosity"

70 The critical comparison of Nakadate to Abramović by Carol Diehl in chapter one demonstrates how Abramović can serve to dismiss other performance artists as lacking.

(1997).[71]

In *Performing Remains*, Rebecca Schneider argues that the 2010 *The Artist is Present* exhibit serves to call attention to questions of performance and its relation to replication. Abramović's retrospective directs us to questions of how performance bears on repetition, not because reperformance is a new concept or practice, but because its notoriety influences contested shifts in thinking about the museum space and the copyright of performance (Schneider 2011, 3-7). Schneider indicates that while Abramović once opposed reperformance on the grounds that it produced theatricality, she has now become the model for reenactments of performance art (4-6). The exhibit enacts the complexities of staging performance in the museum space and the differences that arise with various bodies performing the same pieces. These distinctions are made artifactual in the documentary *The Artist is Present* (2012). The film tracks the behind the scenes planning and enactment of the exhibit with a focus on Abramović's biography, personality, and artistic process. It documents the reenactment artists, whom Abramović brings to her home for an immersive experience in the Abramović Method. Among other things, the artists walk backwards with a mirror in the woods, swim naked in the lake, and face one another in an exercise that resonates with the encounter offered in the signature piece of the then upcoming MoMA exhibit. The documentary splices in images and scenes of the reperformances alongside Abramović's new piece. The film is also a reperformance, but one that shifts the medium from the body to screen. It is the distilled repeatable version of the events that comprised the exhibit. The documentary presents the preserved idea of the exhibit. In the change

71 The piece, "Imponderabilia," originally performed by Abramović and Ulay features the two nude in a doorway. People are then encouraged to squeeze between the two to enter a new space. The piece was one of the most visible during the MoMA retrospective given the interactive nature of the nude bodies. It received public backlash from conservative opponents.

from body to film, *The Artist is Present* requires significant editing, and much is cut. I argue that one of these cuts is emblematic of a liberal progressive narrative of inclusion that simultaneously enacts the mundane excision of the trans body.

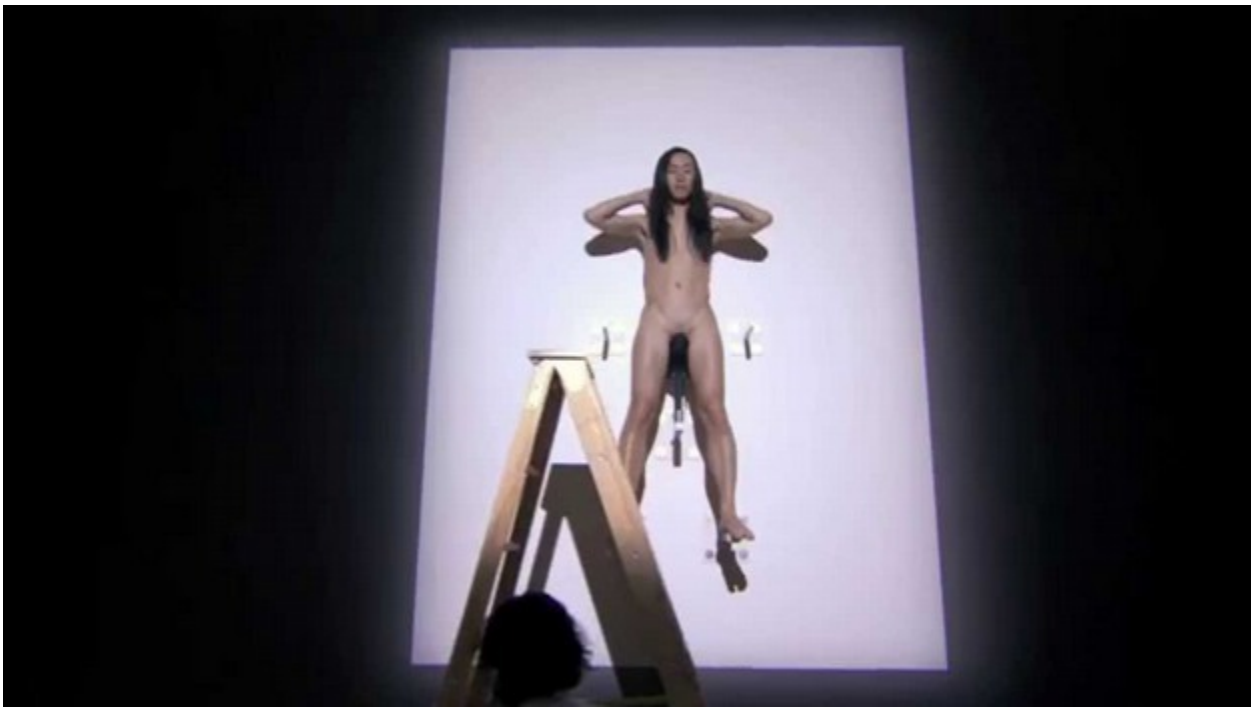

Illustration 19: Video Still Cut Scene from The Artist is Present 2011 (Yozmit 2012)

A cut scene from *The Artist is Present* depicts Yozmit as trans. In it, Yozmit says that he was originally cast in two pieces but that in "last week's rehearsal all the sudden I want to do 'Luminosity'." In "Luminosity," one of the solo pieces featured in the retrospective, the performer (originally Abramović) is nude and suspended against a wall supported primarily by a bicycle seat with feet resting lightly on holds. The performer's arms are free-moving as the arms of a clock or in a balletic rising and falling. Many of the pieces throughout the retrospective feature nude performers but none put the body on display lifted up and away from the viewer, fully exposed. As Yozmit indicates, "It was all woman cast. It was very obvious. I want to be in it first of all for that reason. Because I see myself as a woman." When Yozmit expresses herself as

woman she works from the starting point of not being accepted as woman, with nudity being the ultimate form of distinction. As she notes, "When I started dressing up, when I started doing drag – so called – I felt like really truly myself." Women's clothes provide a means of expressing as woman and sometimes of being perceived as woman. As Yozmit has not had any surgical or hormonal interventions on her male body, his nudity maps onto a form of masculinity.

The cut scene shows the conversation Yozmit has with Abramović to get permission to perform "Luminosity." After initially consulting with an assistant to Abramović, Yozmit is brought to Abramović for the final casting decision. The conversation is brief:

Y: So, yeah just work it out so toss my penis up make some pouch on the seat…

MA: I would love it. I think it's great idea. It's like androgen. Let's do it.

What is missed in my transcription is the speed and tangle of words that transpires in the interaction. Yozmit is ready to explain and is explaining as Abramović quickly moves to accepting the change in casting. Yozmit moves in to say "yes" to each phrase Abramović utters perhaps before she has considered them; long before the "s" of the "yes" falls, Abramović has moved on. And in a rush of inclusion and acceptance, the scene is over. Abramović is disinterested in whether or not Yozmit considers herself woman. Visually, "it's like androgen." The decision is made, and Yozmit can perform in the all-woman cast piece. But Yozmit also anxiously continues to explain how she might comport her body to be woman. Perhaps Yozmit insists on continuing to explain herself because he knows that the lived reality of inclusion does not come so swiftly and easily as Abramović's words indicate. Even though she is not prodded by Abramović, she is prodded by his own need for self-justification, stemming from the accumulation of trans acceptance as necessarily contingent. Inclusivity is always precarious.

Later in the scene, Yozmit continues, without any apparent prompting, to work to appeal for normative demands of the trans passing body. In rehearsal, Yozmit works to achieve the vision of woman as male. By being both, by evoking both and perhaps neither in their normatively established mutual exclusivity, Yozmit calls upon an image from his childhood of a Buddha in a temple in Korea. This serves to provide a personal connection to the piece, which also frames Yozmit's inspirations beyond the gender binary, which I will discuss further in the section "Sound of New Pussy." In the cut scene, Yozmit explains, "I'm going to be naked but I'm gonna like tuck my penis under, so I kinda look like a female on the bottom but still flat chested." Yozmit lays her long hair over each non-breast. He covers and comports his body in order to conform to the presentation of femininity. If Yozmit was female-bodied, the same flat-chested appearance might be fetishized as a girlish expression of Asian femininity, akin to the hypersexuality of Nakadate's youthfulness. Instead, Yozmit is caught in what Susan Stryker and Nikki Sullivan describe as somatomorphic technologies that demonstrate the ways in which the enfleshment of the body is "always already torn, rent, incomplete, and unwhole" in ways that stem from liberal demands of individuality (Stryker and Sullivan 2009, 61). Yozmit thus has a greater demand to conform to the imaginary body of woman through the demands for conforming to liberal individualism.

The cut scene shows nothing nefarious or exclusionary. Cutting the scene could be justified for reasons such as detraction from the main narrative or time constraints. It is a mundane cut for these reasons. The problem is that such cuts support normative conceptions of gender. These cuts are so routinized that even in the face of acceptance, Yozmit continues to justify, comport, and seek out inclusion. This cut is so normalized that it detracts from the variety

expressed in the exhibit in favor of the distilled document. In the scenes that the documentary shows of reperformances, the artists are paired male and female, like for like, following the premiere modeling of Abramović and Ulay. The scenes of "Luminosity" feature unmistakably feminine and female bodies. The documentary makes these cuts as a mundane practice of streamlining the narrative, and whether conscious or not, the visual register that arrives is of a normative gender and sex association. I point to this excision as one that is not unique to *The Artist is Present*. It instead follows from a social and political context that quietly cuts the undesirable trans body while affirming its inclusion.

Yozmit's cut scene is illustrative of larger moves of inclusive and progressive politics. Liberal practices of incorporation of the citizen Other in the United States have increasingly turned their attention to gender non-conforming persons. In 2012, Vice President Joe Biden had a conversation with the mother of Miss Trans New England, which apparently prompted him to issue the statement: "Transgender rights are the civil rights issue of our time."[72] As Jasbir Puar remarks, this utterance is "encoded in the rhetoric of recognition, [which] seemed logical from a now well-established civil rights-era teleology: first the folks of color, then the homosexuals, now the trans folk" (Puar 2015, 45). Given: 1) the teleological approach and 2) the context that Biden made the comment in response to a conversation he had with Miss Trans New England's

72 This message was echoed in the magazine cover of Time featuring Laverne Cox next to the headline: "The Transgender Tipping Point: America's Next Civil Rights Frontier." In part because Cox is black, this phrase serves as an alignment of anti-racism in order to displace the struggle against racism through post-racial fantasy. Like Biden's statement, the phrase evokes anti-racism in that it calls upon the history of the American Civil Rights movement, but then works to cement a narrative that racism is in the past, securing the comfort of a post-racial society. Reading like a letter to progressive America, it conveys the message that the time of blackness as a subjugated position has passed into the time of transgender inequality. It is right to establish the timely need to address the structural and everyday discriminations that face transgender folks, but it does so by simultaneously displacing the struggle for racial equality. When the realities of transgender discrimination, such as the spike in murders of transgender persons, call upon politics to address the two in tandem. 19 of 21 documented 2015 transgender murders were committed against transgender women of color. And here the issue of blackness is palpable. The vast majority of these women were black.

mother, the announcement serves to make two cuts: 1) to cut away from race and 2) to cut away the unpretty. By "unpretty," I refer to the demands of feminine beauty standards, which are always marked by the former cut. By marking transgender as the civil rights issue of our time, Biden creates a political narrative that advances logics of "wait your turn" and "move on." This serves to cover over the intersection of race and gender by disarticulating their imbrication, and it ultimately holds up the idea of transgender while displacing transgender bodies. Even as Miss Trans New England is brought into a narrative of inclusion through her crowning achievement in trans beauty, she is supplanted by the figure of the political child through her mother's ability to connect parent to parent (mother to father Biden) and parent to potential parent (mother to American society). It is imperative to realize that these progressive politics are not universally promoting transgender civil rights; they are political moves of selective inclusion in favor of civil rights for *some* transgender folks. Thus, it is imperative to ask, "which bodies?" have access to these progressive politics? Moreover, the bodies that constitute "some" thus require cutting away the unseemly trans bodies. For these reasons, I join with C. Riley Snorton and Jin Haritaworn in grounding my analysis in trans of color critique to examine the ways in which the devaluation of trans of color lives occurs (Snorton and Haritaworn 2013, 67).

Editing for film necessitates the cut. So why then might it matter that this scene was cut? Because, the scene, in content, serves as evidence of trans acceptance. Yozmit was accepted, allowed to perform in the exhibit. But, the documentary passes over the scene and does not show Yozmit perform "Luminosity." It shows female-bodied women perform "Luminosity." It secures the scene's content, which functions like Biden's call for transgender rights, but it does so at the cost of the cut. The cut scene professes inclusion and simultaneously hides the trans body. And

the cut falls along racialized lines. The liberal narratives of transgender progress serve to invalidate the position of cutting trans Asian luminosity. As Puar expresses, the "cut" of racism is not made only through disciplinary categories of race but, more perniciously, through biopolitical control aggregates of population" (Puar 2015, 62). The inclusion happens rhetorically and by carefully controlled corralling of bodies, only serving to further support a cut of the trans body of color from view. The two categories, race and gender, cannot of course be untangled, and that is perhaps the point. The racialization of femininity prompts the cut.

This cut demands political consideration. It does not make the documentary precisely because it is political. And not because there are no politics in the documentary but because the politics have to be carefully managed. Cutting Yozmit short-circuits the potential force of racialized trans femininity; it does not disrupt the status quo, it reinforces it through the protection of liberal progressive inclusion. In expressing his desire to perform the piece, Yozmit explains, "I think there are a lot of people like me. Especially in Korea. So it will bring some light into the world. Luminosity… a lot of meaning to me. So I want to project that light, the light not from the pain, but from the beauty." But the scene doesn't make it to the projector. In what Sarah Kember and Joanna Zylinska refer to as "'doing media studies' otherwise," (Kember and Zylinska 2012, 201) they argue that cutting media is an ethical and political act and that we must strive to "cut better" (204). This imperative gets to the distinction in the cut of Yozmit in the film and the cut of trans bodies of color in liberal politics generally. For the film, the alternative is to cut better. But in society, what ethics might be found in cutting better? I suggest that inclusion should not learn to cut better. Instead, we must be willing to see the cut for what it is. Assessing how it functions is vital is working to enact political resistance.

Yozmit and Technologies of the Self

Trans Asian provides a theoretical opening to explore the transnational imbrication of systems of power and liberal self-making. I suggest that Yozmit's technologies of the self are resistant to normative gender demands while also being precariously situated within the neoliberal agendas of strategic and partial forms of inclusion. His work makes it necessary to address the tensions of political resistance with liberal entanglements. As trans Asian, Yozmit enacts technologies of the self that resist and are captive to systems of power that promote transnormative demands. This section works through two examples of technologies of the self in her work: "Silicone Embodiments: From Plasticity to Siliconicity" and "Sound of New Pussy: the Buddha and the iPad." Each of these subsections relates technologies of self to liberal and new liberal culture, society, and politics.

Michel Foucault explains the ways in which the making of a new self entails performing normative practices. In "Technologies of the Self" (1984) Foucault focuses on two forms of technology: "technologies of power, which determine the conduct of individuals and submit them to certain ends or domination, an objectivizing of the subject" and "technologies of the self, which permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immorality" (Martin et al. 1988, 18). Yozmit's performances are structured by technologies of power from legal restrictions to cultural norms and engage in technologies of the self by forming a sense of transformation towards a new state of being. The enforcement of gender conformity occurs through technologies of power that enact the static binary of man/woman as correlative to male/female. These forms of domination are, today, caught in a progressive narrative of trans

inclusivity that works alongside legislative and social apparatuses of unintelligibility. This chapter outlines these liberal entanglements through the functioning of diffuse networks of power, which also allow for the very technologies of the self that Yozmit performs.

Sound of New Pussy: the Buddha and the iPad[73]

Illustration 20: Photograph "Victorian Spaceship" (Yozmit 2017)

"The Sound of New Pussy" is the title of a Yozmit song about gender non-conformity. Yozmit performs the song live and in the accompanying music video. The song opens with a single line of a Buddhist sutra, chanted in Korean. The Korean language frames and opens the piece. It is also occupies the least amount of countable time. It instead functions to infuse Buddhist elements into the song. The verses are comprised of a self-made language that Yozmit constructs from Korean phonemes. Yozmit refers to this as a language of her own making that attends to the constraints of language. She speaks about this intervention within the context of his

73 For Yozmit, Gwaneŭm, the bodhisattva about which much of this section is dedicated, is the Buddha. However, this is technically inaccurate. Thus, the title of this section might also read: "Sound of New Pussy: the Bodhisattva and the iPad."

gender non-conformity and transnational position in the world. The chorus line is in English repeating: "sound of a new pussy, this is the sound of a new pussy, pussy, pussy."[74] The three languages create a trans transnational movement, from mother tongue to language of her new home to a language meant to exceed the binary of gender.

In live settings, Yozmit performs the music video in altered yet reverberant ways. The visual elements of the live performance conjure the imagery and costuming of the music video. Moreover, the illustrations (images) in this section are taken from photographs of Yozmit's other work, not the music video itself, although some of the same imagery and indeed same clips are present in the music video. In this way, the viewer can see how the themes of "Sound of New Pussy" persist throughout Yozmit's work, crossing and sharing beyond any given performance piece.

The video opens with a hooded figure making their way through an industrial stairwell to a room wallpapered with a Victorian print. The figure ducks out of the video frame to give full zooming focus on Yozmit. She is dressed in neo-Victorian fashion and says, "Ladies and Gentleman, this is Yozmit." The camera moves through the picture frame, into a scene that echoes the curtain opening of a burlesque show. The parting curtain features Yozmit in a futuristic take on feminine gilded Victorian fashion. She begins to ritualistically and musically chant and break into the chorus, as two masked male-presenting performers, whose arched backs mimic an exaggerated hipline, emerge from her skirt.[75]

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74 The structure of the Korean base of the song with an English chorus is resonant with contemporary Korean popular music, K-pop, which echoes Yozmit's time as a pop singer in Korea before immigrating to the United States. Further, the unintelligible lyrics based in Korean phonemes push beyond but in resonance with the contemporary strategy of affected voice in K-pop. This practice of heavily affecting the voice recently emerged in K-pop, estranging non-native and native speakers alike from understanding the lyrics.

75 Masks are a repeated theme in Yozmit's performance work. At times, this mode of masking is meant to highlight the no-form, which Yozmit explores in relation to her Buddhist practice. This mask-oriented performance is also

The drums come in, sparking the music in a new direction that is more energizing and intensifying. The drums are electronically generated, approximating wooden percussion like a wood block or marimba. The drums resonate but have a comparatively swallowed sound, as with temple blocks used in religious ceremonies across East Asia, including in Korea. This seemingly organic analog sound is pitch-shifted down into a low frequency and filtered through digital distortion. The combinatory action of the ancient and the emerging is at the heart of the music composition and performance of the piece. As the producer Alek Sandar describes, “On the musical level, Splendid Sounds' music producer Alek Sandar further enhances the holy meaning of the Pāramitā by a special "Divine Dub Version" combining traditional Buddhist chanting and modern Dub Step Elements” creating “unprecedented sound, leaving behind rules in music making, disregarding norms in commercial song production and forming a new resonance combining our future and our past” (Sandar 2017). As the ancient/digital drums come in, the scene shifts to Yozmit in a face-covering gown walking through the desert.[76] The desert images predominantly switch between two Yozmits. This faceless Yozmit alternatively wears a red and white and black and white gowns, the latter of which undulates with plastic dome-capped alien forms. The Victorian prints and the alien figures are juxtaposed against the desert scene, bringing historical influence, futuristic fantasy, and natural setting together in an exploration of new pussy.

A cyborg version of Yozmit, clad in asymmetrical silver material designed to give the sense of metal armor, emphasizing adjacent shoulders and legs, performs as the lead singer. His breasts are pointed and highly structured, and a halo-like accessory of black patterned material

resonant with many practices of masking across East and Southeast Asian traditional theater.

76 The desert scenes are shot on site at Joshua Tree National Park.

frames her face from behind. Yozmit's arms take the lead in creating a dance that is sharp and definitive. Each close up on Yozmit's face expresses intensity. The figures are dissolved and brought together intermittently through video editing. The video is characterized by practices of frequent dissolves and new scenes. The figures of the Victorian lady and the alien creature find sonorousness through these editing techniques. As if to draw attention to these tactics, Yozmit's cyborg form multiplies through split screens, posing, one after the other, three versions of her. The three Yozmit cyborgs make up a wall of dancers that fill the screen and emphatically perform.

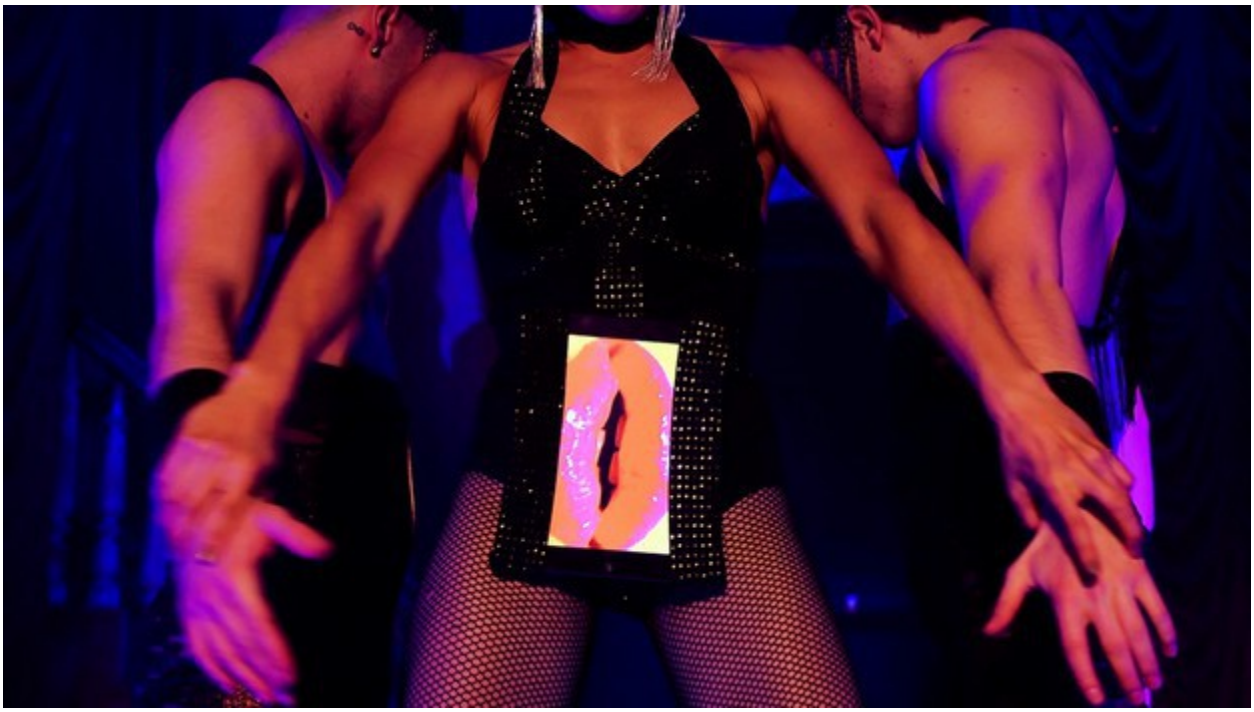

Illustration 21: Photograph "Nuclear Pussy" (Yozmit 2017)

As the music video continues, the burlesque stage reemerges, holding Yozmit and her accompanying dancers. In a cabaret-like style, they dance together with a sensual attraction. The dancers bare their chests, evoking masculinity through toned muscles and flat presentation. Their faces are often obscured, at least partially, by adornments or masks. In one scene, the male-

presenting dancers place their hands on Yozmit's pelvic region. When they remove them, they reveal that a computer tablet is now strapped to Yozmit with vertically flipped mouth lips. Where Yozmit's bodysuit once showed a smooth crotch, sleekly dressed in black, the tablet's prominence with pink lips is a jarring addition. The lips draw attention to themselves and correspond to a slight change in mood in the music video. The dance party emerges in club sounds, while the labial expressions double the vulva's lips and the mouth's lips. Yozmit joins the tablet lips with horizontal lips over her own mouth on a smartphone. The iPad and the iPhone become prominent and featured performers in their own right as the lights fade. Now against a dark and indistinct backdrop, the digital lips maneuver with Yozmit's obscured dancing body.

In another set of scenes, Yozmit dons a white gown, reminiscent of bridal wear, which she forcefully and artistically strips off to show a black leather corset. She peels away purity and embraces his burlesque sexuality. Throughout the video, Yozmit's movements are deliberate, sexual, and emphatic. He appears to be trying to compel the viewer: this *is* the sound of new pussy. In one of the last scenes, what is ostensibly the new pussy itself appears in the opening room, facing the mirror. The new pussy has little form other than the red vertically-flipped lips meant to evoke labia. A gray material comprises a soft vulva-esque backdrop which fades into a black covering. The new pussy is recognizably performed by a human in costume, similar to puppeteers who can be seen against the backdrop.[77] In the final scene the red and white faceless Yozmit emerges from the sea, walking to land. And as she continues to emerge from the ocean as an uncertain feminine form, she throws the Venus parallel into confusion. In closing, a transparent double of her image overlays the scene.

This section articulates two seemingly disparate sources of self-making: Buddhism and

77 For instance, as in Bunraku (文楽), Japanese puppet theatre.

computer tablets. Focusing on "Sound of New Pussy," I outline the ways in which the "new" functions. Picking up on the way that new is mobilized as an extension of the old and a break from the past, I examine new media and new gender in relation to what I describe as a queer diasporic Buddhism and what Yozmit refers to as the sound of a new pussy. I argue that the new in Yozmit's work emerges as a mode of re-articulation within a trans Asian politics of performance, technology, and the new liberal self. If the current and dominant domain of gender presents a binary choice between man and woman corresponding to male and female, then perhaps resistance to this structure of gender demands something new.

As scholars of new media teach (Chun 2006 and Gitelman 2008), the rush to the new is often characterized by a frenzied obsession that is actually grounded in the past. The new here serves as a marker of resistance rather than a societal rupture or revolution of gender. Instead of as an isolated visual or sonic performance, I consider how the "Sound of New Pussy" approaches self-making within the constraints of politics and culture. This form serves to mark the "new" as vital in Yozmit's work, forming what José Esteban Muñoz refers to as a queer futurity, an alternative to the toxicity of the here and now (Muñoz 2009).

Queer futurity is most readily associated with Lee Edelman's psychoanalytic reading of the figural child as the emblem of the future, of politics for the future. Edelman posits queerness as incompatible with temporalities of the future and becoming. He argues that instead, queerness is an embodying, focusing on the present (Edelman 2004, 24-25). For Edelman, queerness is associated with a sense of counter-politics that does not support the framing of any future, for the future is always the domain of the body deferred, the place of the not-yet here child to be adult.[78]

78 Picking up on an extension of this rejection, Judith Jack Halberstam endorses a negative model of queer time and space that posits that queer uses of these modes take form "in opposition to the institutions of family, heterosexuality, and reproduction" (Halberstam, 1). Halberstam goes on to elaborate that "'queer time' is a term for those specific models of temporality that emerge within postmodernism in which queer people engage and it

In framing reproductive futurity as mutually exclusive with queerness, Edelman rejects the child, arguing that the "sacralization of the Child thus necessitates the sacrifice of the queer" (28). In this way, he is interested in what queerness *is* in relation to temporal situation. As such, this rejection of the future as the domain of the heteronormative agenda comes to outline much of the orientation of queer politics in the wake of the impacts of HIV/AIDS. It has moreover framed much of the scholarship on queer time and space as part of a presentist politics.

Muñoz accepts the critique offered up by Edelman without the necessary implication of it as a rejection of futurity. He frames his own examination of queer time as one that strongly rejects reproductive futurity but reformulates Edelman's position, contending that "queerness is essentially about the rejection of a here and now and an insistence on potentiality or concrete possibility for another world" (1). In suggesting this examination of queer temporality as a "flight plan" (189), Muñoz is interested in the political potential of the future (87), in a "utopian function [that] is enacted by a certain surplus in the work that promises a futurity, something that is not quite here" (7). In response to Edelman's presentism, Muñoz counters that the "present is not enough. It is impoverished and toxic for queers and other people who do not feel the privilege of majoritarian belonging, normative tastes, and 'rational' expectations" (27). By looking ahead as a way to combat the problems outlined by Edelman, Muñoz rearticulates queer

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also describes the new understandings of space enabled by the production of queer counterpublics" (6). As such, these modes are linked to a contemporary formation of subcultural practices on the part of queers. Picking up on such practices within art, Halberstam sees technotopics as a form of transgender aesthetics in which there is a "dance of decay and growth" (115), which elaborates her position of a "stretched-out adolescence" (153) that is not only practiced in queer counterculture but also through various incarnations of other subcultural practices of extended adolescence (175). In focusing on the ways in which youth need not be about age, Halberstam poses queer temporalities and queer places as reconceptualizing the adult/youth binary "in relation to an 'epistemology of youth' that disrupts conventional accounts of youth culture, adulthood, and maturity" (2). For Halberstam, queer time and place are about a sense of youth that is in no way limited by the aging body, reconceptualizing Edelman's rejection of futurity by elongating the past/present. Overall, Halberstam's position does not diverge from his but is instead additive in explaining the subcultural connections of queer temporality.

time as a progressive politics that does not hold to the past or present insofar as they do not embrace a utopian turn to queerness no longer subjugated by normative forces of discipline.[79]

Trailing Muñoz's emphasis on gender queer futurity, Yozmit's art looks to the horizon, playing with and off of futuristic aesthetics and emerging technologies. However, these elements of futurity are met with equal force by centuries old religious practices. Yozmit enacts a queer temporality resonant with what Elizabeth Freeman outlines as "nonsequential forms of time" (Freeman 2010, xi). Freeman highlights queer temporalities as "visible in the forms of interruption" and "points of resistance to this temporal order that, in turn, propose other possibilities for living in relation to indeterminately past, present, and future others" (xxii). Yozmit's new pussy performs into Freeman's description of queer temporality by interrupting and irrupting time. Yozmit's practices engage this temporality without a definitive orientation towards the past, present, or future, layering them upon one another.

Buddhism, as temporally disjunctive, is integral to Yozmit's technologies of the gendered self. I am most interested in how Yozmit materially engages her Buddhism. As such, I am not making general claims about the nature of Buddhism in relation to gender and sexuality. While traditional religious studies scholarship primarily seeks to interpret texts, I join with scholars who increasingly look to material practices as "not secondary to a religion but [as] primary aspects of it" (Morgan 2017, 15). I analyze Yozmit's material practices as valuable to thinking about how forms of Buddhism might manifest in diaspora and queer or gender non-conforming culture. This analysis takes up medium analysis, which Morgan argues is central to thinking through material practices of religion (16). As Yozmit's medium moves from body to

79 Instead, locating queerness into a specificity of time and history, Muñoz is concerned with the problem of the atemporal white gay subject (94). In this case, queer futurity also functions to combat the displacement of time, given such dislocations benefit to certain bodies over others.

technological apparatus, she thus enacts a queer diasporic Buddhism – that is, a Buddhism that embraces a queering of gender not as tangential to religious practice but as stemming from it. Further, I articulate Yozmit's practices as caught amongst transnational cultural and legal contexts, emphasizing the role that diaspora plays in her Buddhism—as belief and body. Material religion, as Manuel A. Vásquez argues, is about more than belief, but it is also a move away from subjectivism and essentialism (Vásquez 2011, 4) that focuses instead on material consequences (5) and processes (8) in relationship to the centrality of the body (11). This centrality of the body posits performance as a primary means of expression.

Throughout Yozmit's performance practices, she turns to the Buddha as a source of inspiration and mode of living. In her explanation of why she was interested in performing Abramović's "Luminosity," Yozmit explains, "I see some image of Buddha" "when I was growing up, like, I go to this temple, and see this, like, statue of Buddha" "it's neither male nor female." And, in remarking on the physical pain of tucking his penis in the piece, he offered Buddhism as a way of coping with the emotional or psychic pain of "living this life with my gender." Buddhism thus forms not only Yozmit's mode of thinking beyond the gender binary, as a projection of the possibilities of the body, but also, as a sense of the everyday realities of living life as societally and culturally unintelligible.

Yozmit performs her personal practice of Buddhist chanting.[80] In the opening to her music video, "Sound of New Pussy," he chants in Korean the title of the Heart Sutra. In his translation of and commentary on the Heart Sutra, Reverend Dosung Yoo refers to it as a thunderous silence (Yoo 2013). In setting the tone for "Sound of New Pussy," this thunderous silence marks the tension of contradiction. How indeed can silence be thunderous, a phenomenon

80 Yozmit is a Zen Buddhist practitioner and draws upon Mahāyāna Buddhism.

only understood through booming sound? How can there be a sound of new pussy? The two collide in paradox and the inconceivable. Simultaneously, the Heart Sutra is a deeply mundane practice of the body. It is the most common sutra chanted in East Asia, many practitioners chanting it daily as a mode of embodying and becoming its message. I suggest that the words of the Heart Sutra contest the limitations of form outside the gender binary:

> The Bodhisattva of Great Compassion, when deeply practicing prnaja paramita, realized that all five aggregates are empty and became free from all suffering and distress.
> Here, Shariputra, form does not differ from emptiness, emptiness does not differ from form. Form is emptiness, emptinesss is form. The same is true of senstations, perceptions, impulses, consciousness.
> Here, Shariputra, all dharmas are empty; they do not appear or disappear, are not tainted or pure, do not increase or decrease.
> Therefore in emptiness, no form, no sensations, no perceptions, no impulses, no consciousness. No eyes, no ears, no nose, no tongue, no body, no mind; no form, no sound, no smell, no taste, no touch, no object of mind; no realm of eye, ear nose, tongue, body, or mind consciousness.
> No ignorance, nor extinction of ignorance, no old age and death, nor extinction of them. No suffering, non cause of suffering, no cessation of suffering, no path; no wisdom, no attainment with nothing to attain (Yoo 2013, 5-6).

The sutra marks a form of no-self as being free of suffering and distress, not as a promise of this life, but rather a move toward attainment. By working the ideas of emptiness and form together, the sutra can be interpreted as a critique of the link between sex and gender, which moreover displaces the structure of binary distinction altogether. Form is the literal body parts and their respective expressions. The sutra repeats “no body, no mind,” disarticulating the idea that these components of the human self, conventionally distinguished in the West, can be at odds. The sutra thus empties the cultural forms of valuation, offering a way of operating queerly, not in opposition to existing forms but by moving away from form as value. This idea of form is not limited to materiality, offering an alternative to the normative conceptions of gender within the

heterosexual matrix as discursively proliferated. As Yozmit explains, for her, for him, gender is more spiritual than physical (Yozmit 2011).

As the book *Queer Dharma* suggests, Buddhism is often cited as the world religion most compatible with homosexuality and cross-normative gender association (Leyland 1997). This is not to suggest that homosexuality and gender non-conformity are widely accepted amongst Buddhists. Across various Buddhisms, the religion is generally neutral or ambivalent to homosexuality (Cabezón 1997, 30, 38, 40), and lay practitioners of Buddhism do at times explicitly condemn homosexuality (35).[81] Given these elements, Roger Corless suggests that the practice of queer Buddhism is a queering of Buddhist doctrine and established practice (Corless 2004, 237). Even as much of queer Buddhist scholarship is by and about white western Buddhists, I extend Corless' description to suggest that diasporic queering is at work in the practices of Yozmit. In describing her gender, Yozmit points to the enticing experience as a child of visiting the Buddha statue that evoked the emptiness of gender form — neither male nor female — she also cites the pressures to conform to cultural norms in South Korea as part of the reason she immigrated to the United States. Yozmit's Buddhism, gender, and sexuality are thus configured by a transnational movement of diaspora. The childhood memory of a Buddhist temple frames his sense of identification as tied to Korean culture, while Korean conservativism serves as an impetus for her to move elsewhere. Yozmit's trans Asian connectivity of Buddhism demonstrates the queer diasporic transnational practices of reorienting gender.

While most of the scholarship on the question is specific to sexuality and not gender expression, the two are sometimes appended to one another in relation to Buddhism, such as in

81 I offer one reading of a diasporic queering of Buddhism. I do not suggest this reading is the only or pervasive experience of Buddhism across the world.

the Thai context (Jackson 1997). Ann Gleig's ethnographic research in the U.S. points to the ways in which material practices disarticulate religion as normative in relation to sexuality and gender. Marking the connectivity of queer bodies to suffering, Gleig notes that her interviewees felt that their identities as subjugated made them receptive to the idea that life is suffering. Gleig's research gives support to my reading of the heart sutra in that she indicates that many queer Buddhists pointed out that "their queer identity both as a phenomenological lived experience and as a theoretical discourse was a very effective 'way into' Buddhist teachings of impermanence, no-self, and emptiness" (Gleig 2012, 207). Gleig locates these connections as a non-essentialism in queer theory and Buddhist philosophy. "Some felt they had personally experienced the truth of no-self and the insubstantiality of phenomena through their fluid experience of gender and sexuality. In the words of one interviewee, "'Being gender-queer is an experience of the non-essentialism of Buddhism – through my own changing experience of gender, I feel I understand the Buddhist notion that the self is fluid and conditional'" (207).

For Yozmit, the "Sound of New Pussy" enacts the fluidity of gender identity located in Buddhist deities. He articulates this by explaining that in "Buddhism, there is a bodhisattva/deity called 'Avalokitesvara' ('kwan se um bosal' in Korean), and that this being appears as a man or a woman and sometimes appears as a dog or a chair" (Yozmit 2015). Avalokitsvara, a male bodhisattva in India, transformed into Kuan-yin, a female bodhisattva in China after the Sung Dynasty to the present (Reed 1992, 159, 160).[82] From the Chinese context, the bodhisattva moved to Korea and Japan. In Korea Guanyin becomes Gwaneŭm or Gwansae'eŭm (Baker

82 Kuan-yin is the Wade-Giles system of Romanization, Guanyin is the pinyin. Given that it was developed by a group of Chinese linguists and is generally the current international standard, I use pinyin romanization when not quoting an author otherwise employing Wade-Giles.

2006).[83] The mystery of the bodhisattva's gender transformation may puzzle historians, but it resonates with the ways in which Buddhism, as as an inter-Asian process, performs various transgressions.

Yozmit's connection to the vastness of the bodhisattva's form points to the message of the heart sutra as beyond form. Kuan-yin appears in a multiplicity of forms—as a goddess springing from a clam and a thousand-armed and thousand-eyed deity (Reed 1992, 161). This expansion of body and form pushes beyond the gender binary and beyond the body as limit. In the Korean context this multiplicity of form is expressed in the Buddhist monument Sokkuram, the bodhisattva is expressed as 11-headed (Harrell 1995, 327). Some scholars argue that the Korean adoption of bodhisattvas is derivative from the Chinese context. This is largely true as Gwaneŭm is predominantly expressed in identical or highly similar terms to Guanyin. However, I would like to draw attention to one notable distinction in the Korean documentation of the miracles of Gwaneŭm found in an appearance of the bodhisattva as an 11-faced dancing nun who heals through performance (Sou 2008, 69). Gwaneŭm appears as many in one, exceeding the limits of the body. And the miracle is catalyzed through the act of dancing, through performance.[84] Thus, I suggest Gwaneŭm elaborates the gender disruption of Guanyin into a healing connectivity with performance that operates not only beyond the binary but as a multiplicity. Whether borrowing from Hindu deities, as Dorothy Wong suggests is the origin of the bodhisattva's many limbs and faces (Wong 2008, 176), or breaking away from traditional notions of gender and class distinction, as the stories of the bodhisattva's Korean origin suggests (Sou 2008, 58-59), the bodhisattva breaks with religious and cultural norms. In this origin story and others like it,

83 Also Kwanŭm in Wade-Giles.

84 This story of Gwaneŭm is the impetus for a set of Buddhist nuns who dance. I think the connection might serve for a direction for further research.

Gwaneŭm appears as a young woman with no class or status. Daniel Sungbin Sou's analysis indicates that the story is likely false and misbelieved by Koreans (59, 62); however, I am not interested in the historical truth of Gwaneŭm, only what s/he does and how that serves to manifest as a form of gender subversion through difference and affirmation. While it might be tempting to use the trans word transcendence here, liberation is more suited to the context of the bodhisattva. Gwaneŭm has the ability to escape the cycle of embodiment but chooses to stay in the multiplicitous body in order to exercise and teach compassion in the world.

Just as Gwaneŭm disrupts the sedimentation of gender expectation, s/he also approaches the body through a sonic alternative. In the transition from Avalokitsvara to Kuan-yin, who sometimes appears as female and sometimes as other entities, the name translation also shifts from "the lord who looks down" to "one who observes the sounds" (Reed 1992, 160). In Korean, the translation is "S/he Who Listens to the Cries of Humanity" (Baker 2006, 19). This gender shift is matched by a shift from the ocular to the sonic, from distance as a way of seeing to the touch of sound. As Yozmit elaborates, "This sound from a new pussy is the sound from this ancient deity or goddess from the Orient and his/her message is about … compassion;" "Yozmit is channelling that being. That is the core essence of 'Sound of New Pussy'" (Yozmit 2015).[85] Yozmit produces new pussy as the cry of humanity. I suggest that this sonic orientation is about the constraints of language. The speaking and cultural practices of language serve to reinforce the gender binary and conformity to racialized femininity. What Yozmit does in "Sound of New Pussy" is about vocality in sound. The voice is "*what does not contribute to making sense.* It is the material element recalcitrant to meaning, and if we speak in order to say something, then the

85 Yozmit's use of the term channelling hints at Korean Shamanism as a possible influence for her performance work.

voice is precisely that which cannot be said*"* (Dolar 2012, 541). Yozmit chants the title of the Heart Sutra (in Korean) at the opening of the song and the chorus explains (in English) that this is the sound of new pussy. The verses, however, are vocality that exceed the sense making of gender. They are comprised of a language that Yozmit invents and they sonically serve to unsettle the phonologocentrism of gendered language. In the techniques of Buddhist chanting and the philosophical approach of a genderqueer Buddhism, Yozmit enacts the sound of new pussy as a break with the confines of form through a trans modality, moving across forms and beyond form. This trans Buddhism is also located in the historical and transitory moves of Buddhism from the Asias to the West and across Asian countries, as demonstrated in the (mis)translations of Avalokitsvara.

Stemming from Yozmit's Buddhist trans Asian connection, the sound of new pussy is also about the new – new gender and new media. Yozmit describes the sonic reference as the "sound of a new woman or new gender" (Yozmit 2015). The bodhisattva's multiplicity of forms inheres in Yozmit's process of naming. The interview is in Korean, but Yozmit speaks "new gender" as transliterated from English, not in English, but as an English loan word. The use of "new gender" is not an institutionalized loan word, for instance the way transgender, *teuraenseujendeo* (트랜스젠더), or queer, *kuieo* (퀴어), are. Yozmit's intervention is to call upon the term "new gender" to make its way into Korean language as a phonetic loan word from English and not as a translation. That is, she does not replace the words "new" and "gender" from English with the translations in Korean; instead, Yozmit brings the English into Korean. Specifically, Yozmit does not use it as foreign words, in which the phrase maintains its English phonetic structure, but as integrated loan words, which take the general sounds of the English word and transmorph them

phonetically into the structure of spoken Korean. The practice of integrated loan words is more complex than accent, as the words take on the qualities of Korean. As a loan word, it would likely be heard as Korean/unintelligible to a non-Korean speaking English speaker.[86] Yozmit reforms as a word that is taken from English but no longer holds to the rules of the English language. The loan word now takes on the structures of Korean pronunciation, even as the sonic qualities are borrowed. I read "New gender" as offering the possibility of a Trans Asian assemblage of linguistic disruption. While no current scholarship exists on this type of subcultural naming practice of genderqueer or non-normative gender identification in the Koreas, one possible analog in terms of resonant meaning and translation comes from the Japanese context.

Sonja Pei-fen Dale's study of *x-jendā* tracks the usage of the term in its subcultural and Internet rise with Japanese gender non-conforming persons. The "x" stands in to signify neither female nor male or to contest the gender binary, while *jendā* is an English loan word for gender. Dale argues that while comprised of loans words from English, *x-jendā* is an original Japanese term, as it does not transliterate an existing English term and is used in Japan exclusively (Dale 2012). As such, Dale does not write the term as x-gender. Dale's analysis holds in relation to Yozmit's subcultural use of new gender in the use of English loan words contrasting Korean origins and use. The interview that I am citing was already subtitled, so I am only repeating the spelling of new gender as the subtitled translation suggests; however, as with *x-jendā*, *nu-jendeo* might more readily demonstrate Yozmit's linguistic intervention. Both terms point to the trans Asian translation at work in naming gender non-conformity in a relation between the West and

86 Specifically, a non South Korean Korean speaker, given that the use of English loans words is almost exclusively a South Korean practice, which also extends into the diaspora.

Asia, creating not simply an exchange, but instead creating a transnational excess of either point of origin.

As new gender, Yozmit performs her form through digital apparatus. Yozmit explains, "I consider myself as a new gender. I am a man, and I am a woman. And, there's no gender binary or division. This new gender is not bound by any restrictions" (Yozmit 2015). Embracing the body as more than bound by flesh, she enacts new pussy through a strap-on tablet style computing device, the iPad. As Guanyin is said to observe sounds, the Buddhist trappings of Yozmit's sound of the new pussy yoke the visual and the sonic. The iPad displays a pair of moving lips, speaking lips, that are turned into a vertical formation, calling upon the linguistic and visual alignment to the labia specifically, and the vulva and vagina more generally. If, as Jacques Rancière argues, one speaks oneself into politics (Rancière 2004), then what might these digital, labial lips be saying? They enact a form of the political aesthetics to which Rancière alludes without prioritizing, as Rancière does, a stable identity. On the contrary, the speech of Yozmit's lips upends identity. Performing as disruption, the iPad vulva is ripe with digital failure and force. The force is largely a visual connectivity to sound and body but not in the traditional sense of representation. Forces function in the plural, as forces and flows of experience, each marked by contingencies that manifest as failures – particularly, the failure of the technological object.

The failures of the vulva iPad emerge in happenstance. At a live performance at New Music Seminar New York 2012, Yozmit brought her new pussy to perform amongst myriad costume changes. During the changes, some stray touch or unplanned caress sent the screen blank. Upon noticing the blank screen, Yozmit momentarily navigated the audience to the

personal and yet deeply mundane home screen before reactivating the lips. Such disruptions are also embedded in the technology itself. During a question and answer session of "Trans-Subversions in Global Media Networks" in 2011, Yozmit highlights the incapacities as failures of expectation. Declaring "my pussy will speak" she places the microphone to the iPad, touches it, and the lips begin to move. "Can you hear it?" Amidst the murmurs of the audience, there also seems to be a sense of striving, striving to hear the lips speak themselves. Finally, the attempt to hear is broken by a "no." Yozmit hesitates and says "Actually, um…" The laughter of realization hits the room, and Yozmit finishes "she's kind of shy." To more laughter, Yozmit states "I will speak for her." Throughout this failure of expectation of the lips ability to speak themselves, Yozmit highlights the productivities of the detachable vulva. These productivities manifest as visual irruptions and remaking the ordinary. It is in this sense notable that Yozmit performs with the most ubiquitous technological objects of this day and age, the computer tablet and the smartphone. These failures are techno-performative failures—the failure of speech to do or technology to perform.

If Yozmit's conception of the new invites a query on queer futurity and her enactment of Buddhism invokes a queer diaspora, it follows to ask, are his technological failures queer? In *The Queer Art of Failure*, Halberstam examines failures as occurring within "a range of political affects that we call *queer*" (Halberstam 2011, 89), indicating that we live in a world in which the dominant social cultural systems "tether queerness to loss and failure" (97-98). This idea applies to Yozmit's work only insofar as the question of failure is interrogated within the move to make oneself otherwise. Tina Takemoto cautions, "As we continue to explore the artistic potentialities of queer failure and learn new ways to fail better, we must also remain vigilant in reminding

ourselves that it certainly does matter who and what is being done (or undone) when we endeavor to queer failure and fail as queers" (Takemoto 2016, 88). The forces and failures of Yozmit are a productive engagement of capacities and their uncertainty rather than a demand on genderqueer bodies to fail or an unreflective celebration of the failures that inhere when bodies act outside of normative structures.

Yozmit's new media practices as they fail and resist are met by new language. At least three new languages or linguistic practices emerge through "Sound of New Pussy": *nu-jendeo,* the iPad lips that might speak, and the language only Yozmit speaks. Additionally, Yozmit brings the new with the old. The opening lines are chanted in Korean (the title of the Heart Sutra), and the chorus is sung in English: "This is the sound of a new pussy." The rest is meant to highlight the new and perhaps not yet here form of Yozmit. As she explains "I am Yozmit and I am a man and a woman. And, I do believe that having both is divine. So, I channel this creature called Yozmit, who is both" (Yozmit 2011). Marshall McLuhan argues that media technologies have become extensions of man (McLuhan 1966). Taking McLuhan with a cyborgian feminist sensibility from Donna Haraway, Yozmit can be understood as extending herself through technologies (Haraway 1991). However, this extension is not marked by permanence or irreversibility. By working herself together within geographically and temporally contingent modes of influence and direction, Yozmit emerges as less a self-made subject and more as a trans Asian assemblage. In thinking the problem of queer identity and subjecthood or the lack thereof, Puar argues that assemblage "recognizes other contingencies of belonging" that may not readily function as identity politics (Puar 2007, 211). This is useful in analyzing Yozmit's practices of self in that they join and work together multiple criss-crossing identities, some of which may be

at odds with one another. To describe queer diasporic Buddhism is to assemble contingent forms of belonging that are, according to some members of the those communities, incompatible. Assemblage better attends to the ways in which Yozmit's material practice of religion might be deemed incompatible with Buddhism by those who mark sexuality outside the bounds of religious teachings. Yozmit's enactment of trans Asian assemblage demonstrates the limitations of positions such as woman or man as identifying locations from which to draw out politics. Likewise transgender, as an identity for Yozmit, represents a category that does not open onto the possibilities of his Buddhist instabilities and emptying out of self or the impermanent joining with new media technologies. I present trans Asian as resonant with the processes of transnational enactments of gender deviation in which intensities congeal and break apart again in the mobility of Yozmit's work. Impermanently fusing singularity and collectivity and the old as the new, I read the performance of "Sound of New Pussy" as potentially disrupting the divide between organic and inorganic, operating machinically to forward Yozmit, the divine figure that performs beyond structural exclusivity.

As the heart sutra teaches, "all dharmas are empty; they do not appear or disappear, are not tainted or pure;" "no body, no mind; no form, no sound, no smell, no taste, no touch, no object of mind." And as Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari posit, the body without organs (BwO) "is already underway the moment the body has had enough of organs and wants to slough them off, or loses them" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 150). If the BwO "is what remains when you take away everything" (151) – the knowable wholes of body, mind, form, sound, smell, taste, touch, and object of mind, then that which remains through the sound of new pussy is the circulations of intensities. Yozmit's enactment of and with the Buddha and the iPad calls upon a

trans Asian body without organs, a becoming imperceptible to the forms normative to gender, and an assemblage of no-self. Puar terms the idea *"Becoming trans,"* which "as opposed to trans becoming, must highlight this impossibility of linearity, permanence, and end points" (Puar 2015, 63). The no-self of the heart sutra's teaching happens through the non-telelogical performances of Yozmit's sound of new pussy.

It is important to note that this instability is not political solvency but only possibility in the face of precarity. As such, Yozmit's work does not provide a directive on how to move beyond gender; there is no operative "should" in this model. I am interested in what Yozmit's performances of techniques and technology are *doing*, rather than how they can be remodeled. I argue that the newness of the pussy operates within the current paradigms of gender binary as emergent and reemerging disruptions, not because they are the only way in which gender may be disarticulated from its binary form, but as an instance of process that entangles gender in a transnational network of assemblage. The new thus functions as a working together of technologies, temporalities, performances, and liberal ideas of self-making. As Puar cautions, "But none of this is to obscure the fact that becoming has become a zone for profit for contemporary capitalism, for neoliberal piecing and profiteering, a mode through which profit is being aggressively produced. And as such, all theorizations of becoming are generated through and within the geopolitics of racial ontology that it inhabits." (Puar 2015, 63). My analysis is meant to highlight the geopolitics of racial ontology that it inhabits. At the same time, I want to recognize that Yozmit is an unfused cyborg, a trans deity, and a figure of the ways in which becoming trans manifests through the connectivities and discontinuities of trans Asian movements and stutters. More than exemplifying aspects of what might be called a Buddhist

Deleuzian enactment, Yozmit's work entails the capacities for theorizing the lived politics of trans Asian bodies and the demands for feminine perfection.

Silicone Embodiments: From Plasticity to Siliconicity

Carrying from the felt sonic practices of new pussy, the new body, new media, and new gender persist in Yozmit's silicone performances. Silicone, when approached from a new materialist perspective, offers a material connection from a (relatively) new material. Silicone as what I call siliconicity effectively theorizes the transnational influence of bodily making at work in cultural and political controls of trans Asian bodies.

Illustration 22: Photograph "The Dinner" (Yozmit 2017)

Silicone is a central player in Yozmit's performances. Yozmit has been a headline performer at The Box in New York and London, which describes itself as "theatre of varieties." In these performances, Yozmit performs with silicone. Specifically, he makes silicone breasts and

penises from molds, which she then wears over her chest and penis. This use of silicone points to the illumination of the body as made, as Yozmit does not distinguish between her anatomical features and her applied body parts. He makes silicone the breasts *and* the penis. By joining with silicone over her own penis, she blurs the easy distinctions of a male body, which might come from only affixing silicone breasts (marking the penis as natural and the breasts as made). Instead, the performances feature silicone as part of the interpretation of body as uncertain and unfixed, enhanced through the opacity of the silicone attachments in dim lighting. Yozmit's silicone body performs ambiguity as a process, repeatedly shifting the intelligibility of the gendered and sexed body.

In one silicone performance at The Box in New York, Yozmit emerges from inside a vaginal opening of fabric. This grand entrance marks the first moment of seeing Yozmit's silicone body and later gives way to Yozmit's own act of birthing by "delivering" a microphone from her vagina. Yozmit's "birth" echoes the ways in which the persistence of the new places her in a queer of color temporality. Yozmit further enacts a queer temporal shift through siliconicity. While rejecting Edelman's critique of how reproductive futurity configures the child as the possibility of political futures, Yozmit joins with Muñoz in his refusal to "give up on concepts such as politics, hope and a future that is not kid stuff" (Muñoz 2009, 92). Tearfully remarking on her place as the fourth generation in which only one son has the duty to carry on the family name, Yozmit reconfigures the debate: "but in the bigger picture me as an artist can show something really beautiful to the world. [Pause] I can be a child" (Yozmit 2012b). From the pregnant pause, Yozmit's emergence as the queer child is only non-reproductive in the biological sense, as Yozmit situates his art through him as the child, the beautiful thing she can give to the

world. The queerness of this act is highlighted in the performance when after removing the silicone penis, Yozmit's sexually submissive man-toy slowly and erotically pulls a cord from her vagina, finally yielding a microphone. The visual effect is that Yozmit births a microphone, giving life to music. The technicalities of the act are likely performed by strategically strapping the cord and microphone on Yozmit's back. The act is reminiscent of Carolee Schneeman's *Interior Scroll* (1975), during which Schneeman pulls a scroll from her vagina to read to the audience. As with Yozmit, Schneeman locates her writing in her body and her sexuality; however, the imperative distinction is that Yozmit has no vagina. She must create the vagina and imply the womb on a physical body that has no such reproductivity.[87]

Literalizing Muñoz's argument about the importance of performance for queer futurity, Yozmit produces performance as trans futurity, rather than his body as the perfected ideal trans body. This is a distinctive move from thinking of the trans body as futurity. As Puar asks, which bodies are able to garner the ability of futurity through the transnormative body? She argues for "the transnormative body that 'pieces,' the commodification not of wholeness or of rehabilitation but of plasticity, crafting parts from wholes, bodies without and with new organs" (Puar 2015, 54). I contend that rather than posit the transnormative body, Yozmit performs futurity as siliconicity. I offer siliconicity as a concept that embraces a Trans Asian starting point for thinking through the demands of the trans body and trans futurity.

Siliconicity as a theory derives from Yozmit's performance practices with silicone. Silicone is the driving force of these burlesque shows. I argue it functions as a visual site of gender disruption and is the mode by which the performance transgresses gender/sex certitude.

87 I read the microphone brith as vaginal, given Yoxmit's emphasis on "new pussy." The piece could resonantly be read queerly in relation to an anal birth.

Yozmit presents the silicone body as one that is not affixed to the sexed body as knowable or totalizing. Performing both silicone breasts and silicone penis, Yozmit does not let the image of the silicone body linger for too long. To the extent that either are perceived as natural, Yozmit throws the body into constant upheaval. If one silicone body part at first appears more natural than the other, it is the breasts. When Yozmit first emerges from the womb of fashion, her breasts appear to be large but plausibly sized, whereas the penis is exceptionally long. Its length is showcased through stroking. This exaggeration is further noted when the penis is stripped away to reveal what appears to be a fleshy vulva with well manicured pubic hair. Yozmit's assistant proceeds to enact (or mimes) oral sex on Yozmit, which matches the sexual caresses of the silicone member earlier in the performance. These acts parallel sex acts, sexualizing the body as both silicone and flesh. And, if the performance ended there, it might seem that Yozmit's performances could be read as marking her body as woman only. However, near the end of the performance, Yozmit bursts forth out of the silicone breasts, with a flat chest, an act that is repeated across multiple performances. The body first marked by silicone as having breasts and a penis, is shown to have a vulva and no breasts. The move is not cathartic, as a truth or telos, but is instead marked by indeterminacy.

These performances of silicone rely on the context of American burlesque. Outside the context of the United States, burlesque more readily describes a form of literary parody. American burlesque, on the other hand, is a parody that, as Linda Hutcheon describes, plays alongside society (Hutcheon 1985, 53) rather than against a specific site of criticism, and is markedly associated with strip tease, arousal, and sexually suggestive dance.[88] The transition of

88 Hutcheon argues that the etymological opening of parody comes from para meaning both "counter" and "beside."

Victorian burlesque to American burlesque is one that maintains the force of the transgressive while shifting the mechanism of that trespass to sexuality. The term burlesque derives from the Italian *burla*, meaning ridicule or mockery (OED 2017). The joke in American burlesque is always risqué. As Liz Goldwyn describes in her popular account of American burlesque queens, "American burlesque gained momentum in the late 1800's, when cities were flooded with immigrants who lacked a common language or form of communal entertainment […] burlesque was born as an alternative to the theater of the bourgeoisie" often characterized by "overt female sexuality" (Goldwyn 2010, 1, 8). American burlesque became popularly affiliated with aestheticized dance in the primary form of cabaret in the late 19th to the 20th Century. When burlesque was made legal again after a decades long ban, it was described by the *New York Times* as "unvarnished salaciousness" (Zolotow 1956). The variety show known as burlesque in the U.S. has been met with scandal, illegality, and more recently resurgence. Yozmit finds a home in this resurgence, which taps into the history of unvarnished salaciousness, strip tease, and the body as medium. As Jackie Willson argues, contemporary burlesque aligns with performance art, building from artists such as Carolee Schneemann, tapping into what she describes as a highly sexualized form of feminism (Willson 2007, 13, 63-70).[89]

89 What Wilson describes as feminism, some might more readily describe as postfeminism, particularly given that she forwards the empowerment of sexuality for the pleasure of men throughout her book.

Illustration 23: Photograph "Gift" (Yozmit 2017)

As I read these performances, Yozmit enacts burlesque as performance art in the specific context of gender disruptions. Burlesque's history points to disrupting expectations of gender propriety, and I suggest Yozmit pushes that into beginning to disrupt the very notion of gender as binary. In describing these performances, she remarks that people love to see a body with “both” (Yozmit 2012a), a body that carries both dominant markers of gender on the sexed body – breasts and a penis. In the context of burlesque, the pleasure of gender uncertainty is unsurprising, given that burlesque’s origins in the United States continued European class critique with an emphasis

on the risque, pushing the envelope of vaudeville into the lurid acts of taking it off (Zemeckis and Starr 2013). Burlesque, like other theaters of its time, has a sordid history with race, featuring black-face and minstrel shows. Where my reading of Nakadate points to the disruption of race in the history of the All-American feminine beauty of the pin-up, Yozmit's trans Asian burlesque activates technology and technique to a racial self-presentation, dislodging the racial hierarchies of burlesque. By bringing to the fore the body as assemblage, I locate silicone in a movement beyond the codification of gender binary. I argue that siliconicity provides a specifically trans Asian engagement with gendered self-making. My theoretical contribution is in homage to Catherine Malabou's theoretical approach to plasticity**.**

Malabou's theorization of plasticity provides a strong initial link to the function of silicone in Yozmit's work. According to Malabou, "form is plastic" (Malabou 2010, 1). In Yozmit's performances, silicone, and sometimes plastic, becomes the visual form of her body. The resonances of plasticity come from Malabou's formulation of how form is changed. For her, "plasticity refers to a dual ability to receive form (clay is plastic) and give form (as in the plastic arts or plastic surgery)" (Malabou 2011, 63); this dual ability stems from the capacities of plastic itself (Malabou 2010, 67). Malabou asks whether form can transform itself. She articulates the concept of plasticity through the relationship between form and difference with attention to three philosophical forms of negativity: dialectic, destruction, and deconstruction (28-29). In tracking the metaphoric shifts from Hegel to Heidegger and through Derrida, Malabou asks what role transformation plays in and through these historical and theoretical periods of negational thought. Plasticity, as the literal and figurative essence of plastic, signals for Malabou "transforming transformation and understanding that alterity arises from this intrametabolic

upheaval" (43). Malabou's emphasis is on form and its capacity for change, not as a difference of self but within and in relation to self. Whether she is applying this to the subject, a body, or a brain, her emphasis remains on the plastic capabilities of form which range from "the capacity to annihilate the very form it is able to receive or create" (Malabou 2008, 5) Malabou extends her analysis through plastic objects able to receive and retain form, the brain as plastic from embryo to synapses and capacity for repair, and *plastique* "an explosive substance made of nitroglycerine and nitrocellulose" (5). Plasticity is a form with the capacity for transformation.

Plasticity, as Malabou theorizes it, has strong points of resonance in analyzing Yozmit's performance and technology work. Yozmit injects flexibility into forms of performance. She is marked by a transformative understanding of the form of gender. And he molds, shapes, and shifts forms within performance through technological objects. But Yozmit's material of choice is more often silicone than plastic, providing a site at which to consider and complicate Malabou's notion of plasticity. Building from Malabou's insights, I argue that Yozmit's performances of silicone point to useful figurative aspects of siliconicity.

In his burlesque-inspired video, "Bath of Dionysus" (2010), Yozmit plays on silicone, plastic, labial lips/lids, and bodily excess. The video opens with Yozmit's eye, which turns vertically, closing and opening into a fade of Yozmit appearing through the parting of fabric. Dressed in yards of black fabric with a leather corset, a large band of black fabric across her forehead, and crowned with a matching stuffed teddy bear, Yozmit moves erratically – an overflow of movement paired with sonic shifts in the music. The video visually mixes frequent hard cuts and closeups with slow fades. Yozmit disrobes as a male-presenting figure rises from behind her wearing only a white mask, white gloves, white knee-high socks, and white briefs.

Yozmit now dons plastics and silicones in a semi-transparent gown design. Unlike some of Yozmit's other burlesque performances, the lingering shots show the plastic breasts to be hollow, showcasing Yozmit's flat chest. This scene is interspersed with several costume changes. In one, Yozmit is struggling amidst oddly placed mannequin and doll parts, in a full body, face-covering, black bodysuit. From the face of the suit, a long tube of fabric emerges, evoking a flaccid phallic appendage. Another shows him in black lingerie and fishnet stockings, continually framing and emphasizing her pelvic region. And, in a third, Yozmit is in a leather dominatrix-style outfit with criss-crossing straps and decorative studs. The final image is of a golden Yozmit, dressed similarly to her co-performer – masked, gloved, and in a matching corset and exaggerated gold member that extends from about twelve inches to an accordion four feet. She masturbates with her gold appendage and touches herself across the various scenes.

Yozmit confronts onlookers with elongated silicone penises and plastic/silicone breasts that convert into bowls of creamy liquid, bringing sexual fluids and milk into one. Pouring slowly and continuously into Yozmit's mouth, these fluids come forth from silicone bodies, marking each with a sense of contribution to and reformulation of flesh. I posit that these images tie together siliconicity with the "Sound of New Pussy's" queer diasporic Buddhism. Yozmit becomes the silicone bodhisattva in that he embodies the "Great Mercy" of Gwaneŭm who gave birth to a baby she saved from war, breastfeeding it as protection (Sou 2008, 67). The video opens and close with Yozmit's eye, emphasizing the body in its multiple femininities, which is to say in forms that evoke labial qualities without necessarily being the labia.

I turn to Malabou as a theoretical interlocutor because Yozmit's work with silicone (and plastic) is continually transforming, transformative, and transgressive. In Malabou's theory of

plasticitiy, she connects transformation to a reading of Heideggerian metamorphosis (Malabou 2010, 28) and differentiation in Derrida's writing on *diffèrance* as variation (47-48). In both cases, she argues the form is not changed (25, 37, 47), by which she means that the form is transformed. She marks change here as a shift from one thing to another and transformation as a shift that occurs within form. Malabou methodologically elaborates form across theoretical shifts in philosophical traditions of negation and dialectic. As I pick up on her theory of plasticity, I do so in a way that emphasizes what plasticity enables and does, rather than as an intervention into reading Heidegger or Hegel, on whom Malabou focuses.

Transformation for Malabou functions as a differentiation that is at once on the inside and, given the negative as a form of differentiation, the form or self in relation to the outside or other. The emphasis of plastic marks these relations as "supple," which clarifies Malabou's sense of plasticity as open and yet formed. Plastic has form in that it cannot become something radically different, but can shift in its pliability. Malabou reads Hegel's philosophy as a "*plastic* system," which in its supple form is "capable of welcoming whatever arrives, including, perhaps, the other of history" (34). She extends this supple expression as a distinction between philosophical thought, emphasizing a "porous" connectivity between Heidegger and Hegel (38). The supple and porous qualities of plasticity as transformational aligns with Yozmit's performances as self-making. Yozmit works out the supple qualities of silicone in order to draw out the porous limitations of the gender binary. As Malabou indicates, identity construction, self making is about "multiplying the masks or processes of 'deterritorialization' of the body" and "if sex were not plastic, there would be no gender" (Malabou 2011, 138). Yozmit's performance work marks the transformational quality of plasticity and the multiplicity of expression. Yozmit's

artistic practices also demand a contextual approach, which is why in resonance with Malabou's theorization of plasticity, I offer siliconicity. I argue that silicone, with its imbrication in and allusion to transnational networks of plastic surgery, its destabilization of the organic/synthetic distinction at a chemical level, and the historical accident of its misnaming, more readily point to the entanglements of culture, politics, and law at work in framing the transnational trans body. As such, silicone is a more apt trans Asian theoretical address of issues central to Yozmit's work.

Trans is embedded in the concept of silicone at the level of chemical materiality. Yozmit's performances mark silicone as an indeterminate connectivity.[90] By embracing silicone as form without committing to it as the limitation of form, Yozmit's work activates silicone as trans, as moving across and beyond the configuration of the body's limitations. Yozmit's gender identity is pronounced because it is misunderstood in its visual apprehension within given social and cultural constraints. Silicone too is marked by misrecognition, even within the field of production: "These first new materials were called silicoketones or 'silicones' by analogy with ketones R-(C=O)-R' in the organic area. Structural studies, however, showed that they did not contain the Si=O double bond. Thus, the silicone name is a misnomer, but it has persisted, at least in casual language. However, those in the field prefer the terms 'siloxanes' and 'polysiloxanes'" (Mark et al 2015, 2). This misrecognition forms the naming and the reception of silicone within practices of misunderstanding and the attribution of inherent qualities. Silicone exemplifies a deep disjuncture between form and naming. Trans is also framed in the misrecognition of materiality codified in naming gender as sex figured by an interpretation of visual anatomy. Silicone's misrecognition importantly persists. Therefore, I advocate siliconicity

90 For another perspective on the connectivity of performance and silicone in relation to surgery see the work of Nina Arsenault and the book *TRANS(per)FORMING: Nina Arsenault An Unreasonable Body of Work*.

as a material misrecognition of trans bodies, aligning “it’s a ketone!” with “it’s a boy!” Holding to the cultural name silicone rather than the scientific polysiloxanes serves to make linkages between the cultural imaginary created by silicone and the materiality of the substance.

Silicone is the commingling of natural and synthetic material and is apt for trans theorization in its non-dualistic permutations. Silicone **(**Si=O) is Silicon (Si) bonded to (=) Oxygen (O). Its chemical materiality creates its unique organic and inorganic capacity for transformation. Trans mixing importantly signals a move away from naturalizing form. Trans bodies resist distinction between the organic or inorganic, particularly when the latter is categorically subordinated to the former. Siliconicity produces a shift away from the preferential classification of organic form. Silicone at the material level is constituted by the sense of plasticity that Malabou highlights, without some of the limitations (which I will discuss further below on ethics): “Polysiloxanes are much more flexible than their organic counterparts” (Mark et al 2015, 93). Further, silicone has a high degree of permeability (95), which distinguishes it from the plastics on which Malabou bases her theory. Silicone gives and receives form but also is not inured from commingling with that which it is not. There is also a strength in silicone that does not allow it to simply be subsumed by the organic. The low degradation of silicone is why it is particularly useful in medical implants (98). From prostheses to artificial skin, silicone is a scientific wonder for bodily assemblage. The scientific materiality of silicone provides a chemical basis for articulating the productivity of siliconicity as a trans theoretical thread.

Based in this scientific orientation, silicone has strong surgical connections to demands and practices of trans Asian bodies. Yozmit emigrated from the Republic of Korea as an adult, in part due to discrimination based on his sexuality and gender identification (Yozmit 2012a,

Yozmit 2012b). Before 2013, in order to legally change one's gender identity in Korea, the government required genital alteration through sex reassignment (Um and Park 2016). These laws are echoed throughout East and Southeast Asia. As such, sex reassignment surgeries have constituted the bar of legal acceptance. Toby Beauchamp notes that sex reassignment surgery functions as one of the dominant forms of state transgender surveillance (alongside psychiatric care) (Beauchamp 2013, 357). Beauchamp contends that non-participation in the medico-legal forms of surveillance, or going stealth, is only an option for those who have the advantage of whiteness (Beauchamp 2013, 364-365). Beauchamp's analysis from the U.S. context is productive for a trans Asian analysis in two ways. First, Beauchamp articulates an important analysis of trans bodies of color in the U.S.. Second, trans Asian analysis in particular demonstrates the heightened ties of gender change from birth assignment to surgical intervention because of heightened transnormative pressures in East and Southeast Asia. For those like Yozmit who opt out of this system, the stakes of bodily comportment are higher and necessarily racialized.

In examining the stakes of siliconicity, I argue that it is imperative to locate Yozmit's performances within transnational cultural histories and contemporary practices of the trans body and silicone. These trans Asian exchanges of the demands for surgically altered bodies are not only legal and discursive but also embedded in the practice of sex reassignment. In particular, they are fueled by both an expectation and a fantasy of Asian as trans perfection, by which I mean the body that fulfills the racialization of femininity. This expectation does not arise out of a particular country's formative practices, but rather through transnational exchange and transplanted expectations.

The operative trans Asian body first emerges in a transnational connection to the United States. In 1953, Xie Jianshun was dubbed in Taiwan the first Chinese transsexual. Xie Jianshun was referred to as "Chinese Christine," meant to reference "the contemporaneous American ex-GI transsexual celebrity Christine Jorgensen, who had traveled to Denmark for her sex reassignment surgery and gained worldwide familiarity immediately afterward due to her personality and glamorous looks, reflected the growing influence of American culture on the Republic of China at the peak of the Cold War" (Chiang 2014, 185). The case articulates how demands for beauty on the trans operative body follow cultural forms of soft power and influence solidified by the U.S. The case of "Chinese Christine" indicates the influence of U.S. military presence in establishing cultural practices of the trans body as always already trans Asian. The headline "'Christine Will Not Be America's Exclusive: Soldier Destined to Become a Lady,' exemplifies Xie's transformation into a transsexual cultural icon" (Chiang 2014, 186). The headline also demonstrates a reflexivity about the entanglement of gender in transnational conceptions of ownership and self-making. Yozmit is caught in this history and the contemporary demand for feminine perfection.

Surgical practices of passing are, for many, a way of expressing physically what they want and know otherwise. However, it is important to draw out the ways in which these surgical demands are also complicit in forms of Orientalism. Thai Gender Reassignment clinics, popular both as inter-Asian and Western destinations, operate within a larger image of the Oriental body as the feminine par excellence. As Aren Z. Aizura demonstrates, Orientalizing tourism is bound to neoliberal practices of subjectivity in a transnational extraction of surplus value (Aizura 2011, 162). These practices operate within the larger context of East to West and West to East

exchanges of feminine beauty standards. Like Chinese Christine, surgical norms in Asia were discursively articulated to Western likeness, and Asian plastic surgery practices have been shaped and influenced by the West, especially American governmental and military policy.[91] Yozmit's practices of silicone are caught within these asymmetrical exchanges of feminine beauty, but also rearticulate options for the body and silicone that exceed the demand for permanence and gender/sexed perfection. Siliconicity provides a material theory that attends to both the possibilities of assemblage and the limitations of biopolitical control and surveillance.

There is a strong culture of plastic surgery in Korea, and it differs in cultural acceptance and definition from the United States. Many Koreans, particularly those who live in Seoul, consider eye, nose, and lip alterations commonplace. One of the most common surgeries is often referred to as "big eye" surgery, describing an operation that pulls the skin tighter around the eyes and adds height to the eyelid presentation, or more colloquially and problematically, it is a surgery to remove the "excess skin" on the Korean eyelid.[92] These practices reflect an ideal feminine beauty. The question of whether or not the ideal is a Western one is complex, but well-founded. The surgery menu, for instance, at the prominent Seoul clinic BK Donyang distinguishes between the "Asian" and Western" eyelid (DiMoia 2013, 209-210). As part of normalizing practices of permanently achieving such ideal beauty, in 2006, the Korean Supreme Court ruled that transgender individuals could be legally recognized as the gender they are rather than the one assigned at birth if they underwent sex reassignment surgery (SRS). This shifted in

91 Dr. David Ralph Millard, a surgeon for the U.S. Marine Corps, would literally change the face of plastic surgery in Korea, popularizing eyelid and nose surgery, to move away from what he called the distinguishing features of the Oriental face (DiMoia 2013, 177-179). See also for instance Ara Wilson's argument about American military influence in Asian biotechnologies in the chapter "Medical Tourism in Thailand" (Wilson 2010).

92 Korean War Brides have described this surgery as easing their transition into American life (DiMoia 2013, 190).

2013 when the court ruled that SRS was no longer mandatory. Still, this legal pressure is prevalent across Asia, with regional counterparts enforcing similar laws. I suggest that the existing culture of plastic surgery in countries such as Korea, along with the legal norms of surgery for gender transition put great pressure on Asian and, by diasporic extension, many Asian Americans to undergo surgery to reach trans bodily perfection. Reflecting a context in which removal of "excess skin" is a normative correction of excessive Asianness, bodies such as Yozmit's operate as an excess of gender that is transnationally situated between legal and cultural norms of identification of trans bodies.

Malabou's concept of plasticity evokes the naming of "plastic surgery," while silicone is most strongly associated with its implementation. Silicone's prevalence in cultural association with plastic surgery provides another connection between the idea of plastic and the function of silicone. More than plump lips, it is the primary mode of reshaping bodies from breast/pectoral to testicle implants. I argue that Yozmit's use of silicone molds is activated and read within the trans Asian cultural linkage of trans bodies to surgery. His use of silicone is inside systems of beauty idealism while remaining non-conformist. Yozmit's use of silicone disrupts the demand for surgical alteration while simultaneously marking the connection. This use of silicone is amplified when "the overt and excessive presentation of femininity and gender coding in burlesque actually invites us to revisit cultural conventions" (Nally 2009, 640), in Yozmit's case unsettling the respectability associated with the transnormative body. Yozmit pushes at and seeps through the limits of surgical silicone practices by invoking them through the performing body, activating the performance of the technology of silicone itself.

These surgical practices also point to a longer problem of whether the search for feminine

perfection is both marked and undone by leakiness. Yozmit embraces the leakiness of the body, drawing attention to the fears of leaking silicone and thereby pointing to the precarity of leaky bodies within a system of liberal panic. By liberal panic, I mean the ways in which progressive liberal politics mobilize fear about that which threatens to contaminate both the body politic and the body itself. Plastics and silicones exist together within a web of liberal panics and fears; however, silicone more readily demonstrates the contingent nature of fear and desirability. Plasticity is in many ways the description of soft plastics – flexible plastics. This flexibility comes from plasticizers, which make plastic more supple, but which also tend to leach and generate fears of contamination that are often racially-loaded. Akin to what Mel Y. Chen describes with the 2007 lead panic (Chen 2012, 160), concerns about plastic have largely been attributed to overseas (particularly Chinese) manufacturers. As with lead paint, leaky plastic has largely been a source of fear for white middle-class mothers, in this case concerned about plasticizers in baby bottles, and it is a fear which posits the figure of the (white) child as the vulnerable site of contamination. Chen argues that this narrative force serves not only to paint Chinese workers as the source of contamination but also to displace concerns about the toxicity that faces black children in the United States. This liberal panic thus shifts consumption away from plastic products as sources of toxic leakiness, but then what is the consumptive alternative? Along with the rise of wood toys for children, silicone has become the toxin-free alternative. So as silicone makes its rise as a liberal haven from plasticity, I argue that siliconicity points to the nature of liberal inclusivity as always partial, always contingent.

I offer siliconicity as a demonstration of the shifting narratives about liberal fears of leaks; siliconicity is not a remedy to the liberal panic over plasticity. On the contrary, silicone

brings to the fore the ways in which such panics are both transnationally located and unstable. This instability is not random. Fears over product safety point to the ways in which that which is deemed the safe alternative one day is easily the target of mothers groups the next. Silicone brings to the fore the ways in which those practices are also heavily affected by the drive for perfected selves and perfected lives. The strength of the Si=O bond imparts considerable thermal stability, which is why silicone presents a seemingly leak-proof alternative to rubber duckies and teethers. However, silicone does not manifest in singular form. Remembering the "poly" of polysiloxanes, it is multiple in its forms and formlessness.

The most prominent counter to the image of leak-proof silicone is its role in breast enlargement. Silicone in plastic surgery began as a liquid injection-based procedure which, after 1965 FDA classification as a new drug, became the dominant form of breast enhancement until further health concerns led to the invention of the sac and more pointed FDA regulation in the eighties (Haiken 1997, 247-258, 278). The sac is meant to hold the silicone in abeyance from the body – to keep the body intact and distinct from the leaky substance. Silicone is itself a signifying stand-in for the hyper feminization of the body through breast enlargment, achieving the "natural" look over saline-based implants. Silicone is a site of fear that comes with the desire to achieve the ideal feminine form, making those who overcome such risks, *Silicone Survivors*.[93] Silicone is dangerous in its potential to be a leaky container of femininity. This is a risk that has prompted demands for protection and regulation.[94]

What sense of regulation does Yozmit's performance stir up and fly in the face of? First,

93 *Silicone Survivors: women's experiences with breast implants* by Susan M. Zimmerman (1998)

94 *Silicone Spills: Breast Implants on Trial* by Mary Stewart White 1998 and the Uniter States Congress questioning takes on such issues (Subcommittee 1991).

Yozmit's silicone performances move towards embracing a leaky body. This embrace is against the desire to contain the body and draw lines that limit the body's capacities. Second, Yozmit's work draws out the idea of toxicity through siliconicity. Toxicity of leaking silicone is socially constructed as valuable only through liberal panic. By reorienting silicone away from liberal progressive priorities, panic can be seen as contingently located in power that only is deployed to protect a selective portion of the liberal citizenry. Third, Yozmit's performances with silicone bring this leakiness to the fore by heightening the imagery of taboo bodily leaks – breastmilk and gender-indeterminate cum. The body – particularly the feminine body – is after all always already leaky. Elizabeth Grosz argues that the female body is seeping, leaky, and that the fluids and emergences of such a body are seen as contaminating (Grosz 1994, 195). Yozmit aligns with this leakiness to disrupt the classical vision of the body as self-contained. The emphasis on leaks draws attention to the importance of understanding who gets the benefit of panic. It is not the trans Asian body. Siliconicity brings these contradictions to the fore and into questions of relation and power.

Returning to the specifics of Malabou's work on plasticity, I consider how siliconicity might enable an ethics that Malabou argues is foreclosed by plasticity.[95] I want to recover this sense of Derridean ethics because it offers a way to think about the affirmation of Yozmit's body in relation to siliconicity. Derrida suggests an unconditional hospitality in which "you don't ask the other, the newcomer, the guest, to give anything back, or even to identify himself or herself […] you give up mastery of your space, your home, your nation" (Derrida 2002, 70). A Derridean ethics seeks the unbearable and the im/possible process of embracing that which is

95 To be clear, this is a Derridean ethics that is premised on the embrace of alterity rather than universal maxims drawn from conceptions of morality.

uncertain and possibly full of risk (Derrida 2003, 129). To welcome the other is requisite to an ethics that derives from contemporary political insecurities and terrors, standing in opposition to borders, boundaries, and demands for sameness. Yozmit's body as leaky, as trans, as feminine, as multiple is marked by a difference that threatens to disrupt the order of the singular, countable, and singularly-intelligible individual. As Arjun Appadurai reminds us, like Mary Douglas' theorization of dirt as "matter out of place," foreign minorities conjure fear in an era of globalization because they are out of place, impinging on a sense of contained nationhood (Appadurai 2006, 44). Yozmit's work displays and enacts the seeping, leaking, mobile bodies that constitute what I want to call trans Asian bodies. If we see Appadurai as describing the problematic of the fear and violence that can come with the demand for global conformity and intelligibility, what Derrida offers is an extension of Yozmit's performance into ethical practices.

In order to draw out this possibility of ethical affirmation, I diverge from Malabou on the question of plasticity's predetermined form. In relating her scholarship to Derrida's work on an ethics of alterity, Malabou writes that plasticity forecloses such a relationality with the explanation that Derrida necessitates a willingness to embrace the unknown, the indeterminate other. Malabou sees this embrace as incompatible with plasticity's allegiance to a particular interpretation of form. Working against Levinas and Derrida (Malabou 2010, 45-51, 71-77), Malabou defines plasticity in its flexibility, mutability, and transformational capacity. Levinas argues that the Other cannot be plastic or a portrait (46), and Malabou resists this indirectly by tracking the collapse between trace and form. At the heart of this move in Malabou is an emphasis on the ability of plastic to function as plasticity. When Levinas argues that the Other is not in plastic form, he means to highlight the other as active rather than as a static image.

Therefore, Malabou's break with Levinas is an emphasis on the mutability of plastic itself rather than a defense of the preformation of the Other as an ethical encounter. The flexible and the mutable is carried through siliconicity.[96] However, Malabou ultimately decides that plastic retains too much form to be compatible with Derridean ethics. She argues that her advocacy of plasticity is incompatible with Derridean hospitality due to its presentation as form. As she explains, "plasticity never present's itself without form" and hospitality requires that otherness be beyond form (74).

Siliconicity works to inject a lubricating formlessness to plasticity in order to think through how both are about relation to alterity. Siliconicity picks up on Yozmit's chant of the Heart Sutra to move away from form as singular and predetermined. She moves towards becoming otherwise. This process of becoming provides an alternative to plasticity that orients the embrace of radical difference. I suggest that form as a description of the political limitations of ethics rather than as a prescriptive ideal form of ethics is, in the case of Yozmit, the most viable theoretical opening. Silicone, like plastic, can be formed— it does not exist in perpetual indeterminacy—but it also presents in unforeseeable formations, as with silicone oil. To the extent that hospitality is about a radical openness to the unknowable other, siliconicity provides an uncertainty of form that is not a melding of murkiness but a permeable substance, myriad in its expression. Malabou's reading of form and ethics through plasticity is productive in thinking through Yozmit as an aesthetic expression of silicone.

Siliconicity is about the process, not the product. The product can be used as a form of subjugation and configuration. The process of siliconicity is demonstrated in Yozmit's

96 I acknowledge Halberstam's critique of flexibility as transgression (Halberstam 2005, 18). I argue that flexibility is not inherently transgressive, nor is it equally available to people to enact. However, minoritarian uses of siliconicity can serve to disrupt normative regulations of the trans body.

performances. It is not a fully figural representation of self and other but an embodiment that rethinks the limits of the body. At risk of making an untenable philosophical leap in terms of philosophical lineages, I suggest Malabou's reading of plasticity has much to offer an affirmation of the body otherwise.[97] While Malabou finds herself caught between two no's – the no of dialectic and the no of deconstruction (62) – I wonder how plasticity as siliconicity might say yes to rethinking the philosophical relation of graphic and embodied transformation and how it might be a political and ethical yes to alterity. Siliconicity, as a theoretical approach, says yes to Yozmit — yes to her body, yes to his body. This yes to trans Asian performance is against the "no" of transphobia and the partial "yes" of liberal selective inclusivity. It is an affirmation of non-normative bodies and practices as minoritarian. As Deleuze and Guattari note, "It is important not to confuse "minoritarian," as a becoming or process, with a "minority", as an aggregate or a state" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 291). It is not because Yozmit *is* beyond the gender binary – it is *how* she is beyond the gender binary that is an expression of siliconicity. Through performance and the materialization of the body, Yozmit activates leakiness to flow from the fissures that are already present in the gender binary. I argue that Yozmit's work enables an affective politics that embraces the trans body. Siliconicity functions outside the totalizing demand for conformity through surgically perfecting the ultimate silicone body. Whereas majoritarian practices of silicone correlate to idealized feminine perfection, Yozmit's siliconicity reconfigures the culturally normativizing force of silicone to form politico-ethical resistance.

Re-Orienting Technologies of the Self

I use Trans Asian to complicate the state discursive practices of partial inclusivity,

97 I suggest that perhaps the connection is untenable given the theoretical disagreements about dialectic thinking. I look to align siliconicity with an affirmative starting point rather than negativity as a condition of distinction.

because neoliberal mobilities always involve more than one state. And, given the ways in which Asian American identity is constituted as Asian, the states in question are many, in that the biopolitical forces of the United States and various Asian states come to form the cultural climate of performing gender otherwise. Thus, Yozmit negotiates gender identity as a technology of the self shaped by myriad transnational moves to make individuals, as Foucault argues, "pertinent for the state" thereby strengthening "political marginalism" in the name of "utility" (Martin et al. 1988, 152). These forces of utility frame my elaboration of Yozmit's workings of self-making through technologies in broad and technical senses. Technologies of the self in the Foucauldian sense draw attention to the ways in which performances of gender are necessarily about crafting the soul in relation to the forces of state power; they also highlight a complex usage of the term technology. In ordinary usage, technology is remanded to thingness (Slack and Wise 2005, 95). This is a tempting definition in relation to Yozmit's practices of using Apple iPads as strap-on vulvas. However, it is not the object in its isolated or intended purpose that is significant in this technology of the self. It is the assemblage of becoming trans Asian that is at play.

I suggest that the process and the thing must be considered as entanglement. As Grosz explains:

> Technology is that which ensures and continually refines the ongoing negotiations between bodies and things, the deepening investment of the one, the body, in the other, the thing. Technology is not the supercession of the thing, but its ever more entrenched functioning. The thing pervades technology, which is its extension, and extends the human into the material. The task before us is not so much to make things, and resolve relations into things, more and more minutely framed and microscopically understood; rather, it may be to liberate matter from the constraint, the practicality, the utility of the thing, to orient technology not so much to knowing and mediating as to experience and the rich indeterminacy of duration, to a making without definitive end or goal (Grosz 2005, 143).

Yozmit, in engaging technological things as media for specific expressions of himself, ensures

and refines the relationship between thing and body. He orients technology to experience and the rich indeterminacy of duration – to a making without a definitive end or goal. Through these affirming and self-making practices, Yozmit performs and is performed by technology. Through silicone sexual-technological prosthetics, Yozmit practices extensions of human into material. These technological protractions are, for Yozmit, trans Asian acts of gender. The addition of silicone breasts or an iPad set of lips to her crotch assemble a failure of the normative conceptions of thing and body. Fundamentally, then, Yozmit's work is not about utility; it moves away from the idea of gender achievement as telos. In presenting an alternative to a telological understanding of transgender, Yozmit's trans Asian practices demonstrate the limitations of the gender binary, rather than exchangability within the gender binary. Yozmit's performance work is pushing at the limitations of technology, with technology, through technology, into open, processual indeterminacy.

Foucault's question of the utility of the body to the state here resurfaces in thinking through Marcel Mauss' description of the techniques of the body. Mauss links thingness to the body by stating the "body is man's first and most natural instrument. Or more accurately, not to speak of instruments, man's first and most natural technical object, and at the same time technical means, is his body" (Mauss 1973, 75). Technique offers a way to rethink technology. With the thing, it is easy to slip into what the thing can do for you. An instrument is after all an object made useful and further employed in its utility. So, whether body or object, control is maintained in teleological propriety. Yozmit works against these forms of control by disarticulating the body as structured through sexed techniques of normalization in her improper use of the thing. Mauss acknowledges the sexed instantiation of the techniques of the body (76)

and is pointing to such practices as ordinary, normative, marked by *habitus*. So in conveying an ideological structure of the everyday, Mauss marks the techniques of the body as in line with modes of control through utility.

Yozmit's aestheticized everyday practices rearticulate the digital technologies from their potentially technodeterminist context into operations of self transformation. In asking "What in us is being prosthetically rendered in technological development?" (Grosz 2005, 143) Grosz points to the problematic telos of technology not only as a utility but as a mode of determining beyond the technology as thing. What Yozmit's technologies of self do is operate outside the majoritarian practices of self – enacting a becoming otherwise, a becoming which is always minoritarian (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 291). This performance of no-self thus activates a trans Asian alternative to Foucault's reading of technologies of the self.[98]

98 And, as Yozmit points to the tension of the liberal in entanglements of gender, she too indicates the ways in which these processes are affectively formed and demanded. In her intervention into contemporary affect studies of biomedia and new media, Patricia T. Clough explains, "I want to take the affective turn beyond the body-as-organism" by elaborating the "historically specific mode of organization of material forces that the biomediated body is, both in relationship to what I will discuss as capital accumulation in the domain of affect and the accompanying relations of power in the shift that depends on a certain deployment of racism" (Clough 2010, 208). Yozmit demonstrates that her body is necessarily caught up in the forces of the biomediated body and the demand for affective labor to secure the affective capacity of bodies for the state. He does not produce the affective form of inclusivity for biopolitcal control and through the demands of the biomediated body, instead Yozmit "misuses" new media to make apparent the logic of demand. These forces are thus at least partially thwarted in their determinism of racialized femininity.

Conclusion – *Trans*mutations of the Racialization of Femininity: becoming animal, becoming thing

Asian Americans and Asians in the American context continue to be configured by tropes the Orient as woman, marking their bodies as feeble, passive, untrustworthy, and other. Through diaspora and migratory fluctuations, this continuation moves across the bodies of men, women, and non-binary folks to suture static femininity to race. Western configurations of masculinity project Asian female otherness manifest in passive femininity as an element of malicious seduction. American interpretative contexts script femininity transcendentally across geographies to conjure Asian men and boys as, in effect, women in waiting. Through transnational American and Asian exchanges, racialized femininity demands Orientalized womanhood and effeminacy on trans and non-binary bodies.

I do not suggest that Nakadate, Luo, Wong, and Yozmit are able to reconfigure Western configurations of the feminine Orient. To argue this is untenable. The limits of this dissertation lie precisely in this impasse. Constructions of racialized femininity are sedimented and established over time, through myriad networks of power in constant repetition. I have worked to place each artist in context to demonstrate the force of these constructions as continually pervasive. While I work to affirm the possibilities of each artist, I do so within the understanding that each is fighting an asymmetrical battle. Moreover, the subtleties and complexities through which Yozmit, Wong, Luo, and Nakadate work are not well suited to rupture. They require an attentive perspective that is not afforded by dominant society and normative interpretations. They require affirmation as mode of engagement. I have sought to enact such an affirmation of their

possibilities for Asian and Asian American femininity otherwise. The ways in which these artists work is through micro-snags and seeping fissures of a massive seemingly impenetrable ongoing history of feminine subjugation carried by patriarchy, racism, and phobic normativities. Therefore, I do not suggest that these artists have succeeded in dismantling the systems of problematic configurations of racialized femininity. Instead, in doing the work to read critically, I engage historically and embrace femininity otherwise. I argue the artists in this dissertation offer possibilities for theory and for tactics that might begin to do the work necessary to work against the totalizing racialization of femininity.

If then, we take Nakadate, Luo, Wong, and Yozmit at their best, they vex the historical configurations of racialized femininity from which they arise. If the media and the performance are able to best exercise their possibilities, the trans affects that Nakadate, Wong, Luo, and Yozmit offer work to destabilize the stasis that enables the subjugation of Asian and Asian American femininity. These destabilizing performance practices function through affirmation of Asian and Asian American femininity. Their works thus trouble the idea of a singular corrective to racialized femininity. The changes and reconfigurations across the chapters work to affirm femininity. Trans affects moves across and beyond the tropes of racialized femininity to unsettle their logics, practices, and repetitions. Moreover, trans affects in these artists' works demonstrate the political capacities of performance and technology as mutually constitutive.

As performance and media technologies work together, they also reconfigure the possibilities of engagement. I have largely focused on screens throughout this dissertation—the screen of the video in museum or home and the screen of the tablet. If these performances took place outside the screen they might offer more tangible forms of resistance. If Nakadate might

bring the intimacies she holds in aesthetic abeyance to the audience, the effect would undoubtedly be unsettling in different ways. If Wong and Luo were not subject to the homophobic reading of mainstream Internet culture, they might offer more in the way of queer affiliation. If Yozmit might express publicly what is enscreened, she might differently disrupt the transnormative body. However, screens are necessary sites of exploration as they increasingly are the interfaces of society. I have also sought to suggest that the screen is simultaneously a partition for experience. Thus, the screen widens the audience and narrows the possibilities. While Nakadate pushes at the limits of the screen into intimacies, she also is constrained by it's limited engagements. The screen likewise is through the internet Luo and Wong's mode of expanding audience, for better and worse. What Wong's installation works offer in excess of the Internet cannot be recaptured in the YouTube.com postings. And in the case of Yozmit, the capture of the screen holds as evidence of her participation and erasure. In each case, the performances and media technologies push at such limitations, but not to break free, only stretch and challenge. Each artist carries these constraints through their trans affective possibilities for disruption.

Nakadate's work in chapter one practices temporal and physical movements that activate the histories of racialized femininity in a disrupted “now,” that in so doing, loses a momentary present and the defining edges of its relation to time. Nakadate stimulates American empire beyond itself, making the inheritances of immigration history palpable and questionable. Trans affects linger and persist throughout her work as uncertainties. Nakadate's transportations mobilize technological media and histories in performance, transforming the relationship between the sedimented trope and feminine sexual expression into a place of active excess. I

suggest that this sexuality is both imperative to understand Nakadate's work as working against a rejection of Asian American femininity and towards a disruptive affirmation. Rather than offer an authentic version of femininity, Nakadate's work overflows the boundaries imposed on femininity by Western masculinity. She leaves herself and mythic masculinity exposed, working intimacy into strangeness in such a way as to reconfigure those networks of power and media that have captured the Asian woman's body as currency and unidirectional visual pleasure. This exposure is a vulnerability of critical capacities as well, in that it risks the normative interpretation that reestablishes her body as an object. I contend that this seeming limitation is actually a productivity, not in its effectivity because it may and often does fail, but because it works in the midst of repeated failure for a possibility at unsettling the status quo.

As discussed in chapter two, Wong and Luo stress the ways in which shifting landscapes of technology, embodiment, and culture mutate resistance and dominance. Wong queers the image of racialized femininity through drag, and Luo puts the dynamics of queer drag into transnational dialogue. Wong proliferates miscasting to unhinge dominant cinematic representation. Transnational transmediations demonstrate the importance of Wong's spatial performance practices in prompting viewer reflexivity. Luo's drag highlights the short distance between gender non-conforming subculture and heteronormative ridicule. As such, Luo prompts the need for transnationally contextual viewing practices. Together, Wong and Luo offer a trans affective queerness that demonstrates how transmediations become necessary practices in thinking through queerness and its potential in performance to disarticulate a uniform effeminacy from Asian men's and boy's bodies. As with Nakadate's tension between misogyny and feminism, Luo and Wong demonstrate the tension between queer expression and effeminaphobia. They risk

homophobic response through queer expression, and the media by which they perform bring them into closer proximity with subjugation. The Internet expands and proliferates in such a way that the context of resistance is easily overtaken. This is not a reason to stop queer expression online, only to reconfigure our reading practices to medium.

In chapter three, I show how Yozmit's performance art multiplies gender and changing the substrate of the racialization of femininity. “Trans Asian” points to the shifting geographies and governing powers that determine the intelligible body. To the contrary, Yozmit propagates her body through practices of self-making that challenge the directionality of transnational power. In a complex assemblage of emerging technologies and performance, Yozmit enacts bodies resistant to the gender binary and transnormativity. Trans affects in Yozmit's work press cultural tensions and erratic flows of femininity through the leaky boundaries of nation, flesh, and time. The tensions of Nakadate, Luo, and Wong are at times pulsing in Yozmit's work. However, the more pervasive tension that Yozmit's resistance runs up against is between the neoliberal self manifest in partial inclusivities of trans bodies and the gender non-conforming body. The technologies that Yozmit employs are simultaneously tools of control and possibilities for resistance. Yozmit's practices are in part enabled by the same forces that make her body precarious. As with the other artists, this is a reason to work through the difficulties of this tension. By simpling moving to the easy critique of neoliberalism, the reader misses the possibilities of Yozmit's body otherwise.

The effect of racialized femininity is the same amongst Nakadate's body as woman, Luo's body as boy, Wong's cast bodies as men, and Yozmit's body as man and woman. Through dominant constructions, their race is sutured to femininity. This myth of innate femininity serves

to demand their bodies as passive receptacles for Western power. However, the practices and processes that enact this effect differ in relation to the materiality of their bodies. Dominant Western perceptions make their bodies passive through hypersexuality (Nakadate), desexuality (Wong and Luo), and a desexuality that marks hypersexuality as latent and unobtainable (Yozmit). These distinctions point to the ways in which the artists contribute to an important thread across bodies that nonetheless requires distinctions in medial performance tactics. Yozmit cannot destabilize Orientalized women as Nakadate can, because Yozmit has not attained womanhood in the eyes of society. As such, for example, Nakadate's strategies are not able to traverse bodies. This is the limitation of the medial performance tactics. Yozmit, if performing as Nakadate does, enacts a different configuration of trans affects. Luo if performing as Yozmit does, runs up against different boundaries and modes of control. My approach to racialized femininity across differently sexed and gendered bodies is not meant to flatten the materialities of bodies, only to point out their entanglements. In so doing, we can begin to find resonance amongst discontinuity. These resonances and trans aspects begin to yield new political articulations.

Working through Nakadate, Wong, Luo, and Yozmit's performances of feminine Asian/Asian Americans, I have mined “trans” as 1) a way to mark the techno-mutability of sex/gender in diaspora, 2) a lever on various (and potentially more) forms of transitivity in sex/gender performance, and 3) an alternative trope for sexed/gendered performance tactics that mobilize, animate, and exceed given structures of heteronormativity and its performative (citational) re-visions. Accordingly, I see the dissertation as making contributions to the fields of communication, sexuality and feminist studies, and transnational Asian American studies.

I offer medial performance as a way to think through important entanglements that are currently under explored in the field of Communication. Performance studies and media studies both have strong connections to the field; however, given its emergence in the 1980's, performance is the late comer to the discipline. As Shannon Jackson traces in her essay “Rhetoric in Ruins,” performance studies, in Communication, emerges out of oral interpretation lineages that have long been legible in the discipline (Jackson 2010). However, performance studies are still broadly illegible in the field. Media studies, on the other hand, are increasingly synonymous with Communication or at the very least ever-expanding in their reach. Medial performance attends to the ways in which performance is integral to to thinking through the content and technological processes of media.

To take the thread of digital and emerging technologies as an example, the dissertation demonstrates how new media forms perform, are performed, and how performance and performativity relate the medium and content relationship. In chapter one, I demonstrate how Nakadate is an early adopter of Internet relationships and the YouTube and Selfie aesthetics. Digital culture in Nakadate's work complicates the relationship between users and technological objects. Medial performance thus arises as an integrative mechanism for understanding new media in society and sociality. Medial performance as a mode of analysis for new media studies is best illustrated in chapter two, in which I demonstrate how context, programming, and medium translation collide in performance. As the Internet is increasingly a site for performance of self and gender performativity, it is necessary to consider the ways in which medium performs and how that performance affects and is affected by bodies and culture. Emerging technologies, such as the computer tablet as I approach it in chapter three, point to the ways in which the

distinctions of theatrical performance and everyday performativity might also be inadequate to attend to the crossings of medial performance.

Medial performance emerges out of controversies in performance studies and contributes to what has largely been an absence in media studies. As a way to define the study of performance, ephemerality and liveness have emerged as the two dominant descriptors of what performance *is*. Two of the most prominent and influential examples are found in Peggy Phelan and RoseLee Goldberg. Phelan argues that the power of performance is its resistance to capture —performance disappears (Phelan 1993). Scholars have since pushed back on the reach of ephemerality. Philip Auslander through direct critique of Phelan (Auslander 1999), and Rebecca Schneider through a modification that performance remains, even in its reperformance or record (Schneider 2011). More specific to the type of performance that I outline in this dissertation, Goldberg hesitates to give a succinct definition of performance art, but deploys liveness as its unifying marker (Goldberg 2004). As a move away from these debates, Diana Taylor has stated that she is less interested in what performance studies *is* than what performance *does* (Schechner 2014, 13). I want to suggest that what performance *does* is what it *is*. Looking back to Phelan and Goldberg's descriptions, medial performance is already there. Phelan's *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* already turns to medial performance in its content, analyzing photography and film. I highlight these media forms as co-constitutive to the performance elements Phelan analyzes. As examples of performance – that is live – art, Goldberg turns to work imbricated with technology, such as Laurie Anderson and the Wooster Group, and work that occurs through the video monitor.[99] Medial performance attends to the multitudinous,

99 Laurie Anderson's work functions through technologies of sound distortion and feedback loops, and the Wooster group integrates technological practices of live mixing and sound recording with screens and medial representation.

concurrent, and entangled performances that occur in the live body, in the video loop, through the technological object, and more. Put otherwise, instead of discounting the media elements as external or corrupting, medial performance embraces media *and* bodies as performing.

These examples largely stem from work in performance studies because media studies has paid little attention to performance. Even as performance colloquially insists as a descriptor of effective process (e.g. how the program performs), performance scholarship or attendance to how media and technology perform have not found a foundation in media studies. To the extent that performance emerges as a component, it is often peripheral. A notable exception is Adrian MacKenzie's article "The Performativity of Code: Software and Cultures of Circulation." MacKenzie's article argues, as an end point, that an application of performativity enables media studies to think about code politically (MacKenzie 2005). MacKenzie predominantly focuses on an application of Judith Butler's reading of performativity to his case study of Linux. Medial performance elaborates *process* and indicates the broader implications of rethinking performance as more than efficiency. Medial performance also reaches to and beyond performativity into thinking about the performance of the media generally, emphasizing what media *do* beyond their intended function and programming. As such, medial performance offers tools for communication studies work that engages questions of mediation, technological practice, programming, representation, temporality, and fleshy bodies.

In addition to communication, this dissertation contributes to broad questions in the fields of critical sexuality and feminist studies. Nakadate, Luo, Wong, and Yozmit have offered some possibilities to the question: what might a queer feminist ethico-political approach to the racialization of femininity do? In this dissertation, I have sought out how affective capacities

enable queer feminist politics and ethics otherwise. Accordingly, I join with Lynn Huffer's scholarship in *Are the Lips a Grave?: A Queer Feminist on the Ethics of Sex* (Huffer 2013). Huffer's title combines Luce Irigaray's emphasis on a feminist reading of the two lips with Leo Bersani's question: "Is the Rectum a Grave?" posed during the height of the U.S. AIDS crisis. In other words, Huffer pairs the ethics of sexual difference with queer politics. Penelope Deutscher summarizes Huffer's position well, even if Deutscher ultimately critiques Huffer's ability to enact the ethics Huffer proposes: "feminist and gender studies have emerged as more sympathetic to the field of ethics, by contrast to the strains of queer theory consistently more wary of the moral domain. In promoting a greater engagement by queer theory with the ethical register, Huffer is particularly promoting a more careful delineation of the ethical from the moral" (Deutscher 2016, 137). Deutscher continues to explain that queer theory anti-moralism results in what Huffer describes as another moralism that fails to distinguish ethics and morality from one another, which "has meant that the transformative potential of alternative traditions of ethical thought has been overlooked" (137). Through the work of Nakadate, Luo, Wong, and Yozmit, I have attended to the questions of politics and ethics as they arise in cultural context. Thus, this dissertation serves as an extension of Huffer's work on the one hand, through practices of medial performances enacted by bodies, and on the other hand, through an attention to the specificity of Asian and Asian American femininity. Huffer's important readings draw attention to literary and legal texts, and I see this dissertation as moving towards a queer feminist ethico-political emphasis on process, embodiment, and affirmation.

Femininity is the key configuration in the feminist, queer, and trans elements of this dissertation. In line with this, I contend that the dissertation works to recuperate the denigrated

sites of femininity. Contemporary emphasis in critical sexuality and feminist studies on masculinity has emerged alongside a decoupling of femininity from the overlapping fields of studies. Whereas work such as Judith Jack Halberstam's Female Masculinity (1998) has made important breakthroughs in thinking of masculinity in relation to queer feminism, Yozmit, Wong, Luo, and Nakadate enact the ways in which femininity functions across and in excess of gender and sex distinctions, that is trans affectively. I highlight how femininity continues to function queerly, disruptively, and in other complicated, seemingly subordinating ways. The medial performances herein serve to embrace femininity without necessitating scripted codes of normative femininity on the bodies of women, men, and transgender people. Therefore, I argue femininity remains relevant for thinking through queer feminism after and alongside the turn towards masculinity within women's, gender, and sexuality studies programs.

Specifically, I see the dissertation contributing to scholarship on Asian and Asian American gender and sexuality. My research makes three particular contributions: thinking across bodies, drawing from bodies, and tracing these bodies transnationally.

In the dissertation I offer a comparative approach to gender and sexuality across Asian and Asian American bodies. Asian American gender and sexuality studies, is formed in influential works such as, David Eng's *Racial Castration: Managing Masculinity in Asian America* (Duke University Press 2001) and Celine Parreñas Shimizu's *The Hypersexuality of Race: Performing Asian/American Women on Screen and Scene* (Duke University Press 2007). They examine representations of Asian American femininity on men (Eng) and women (Shimizu). In this dissertation, I have contributed to the connectivities and discontinuties that form in thinking about these femininities across men and women. Moreover, my research on

Yozmit takes up the increasingly palpable trans of color issues through this comparative analysis of Asian American gender and sexuality. The racialization of femininity demonstrates the modes by which gender and sexuality works across women, men, and those who defy the gender binary.

Yozmit, Luo, Wong, and Nakadate provide affirmative alternatives to dominant mechanisms of representation of Asian and Asian American gender and sexuality. Where prior studies have tended to track representation, I privilege performers and media makers as a sources of possible resistance to the dominant forms of representation. By turning to the trans affective capacities of the artists work, I have sought to provide a survey of tactics that engage femininity, rather than reject it. Nakadate, Wong, Luo, and Yozmit through medial performance disrupt the problematic forms of racialized femininity without turning to a version of authentic femininity or rejecting femininity.

My analysis of resistance functions through an extension of transnational Asian American studies. In this dissertation, I have combined Asian American studies with Asian studies, not to collapse their distinctive importance, but to demonstrate the ways in which Asian America is transnationally informed through immigration, diaspora, and cultural influence. With increasing media connectivity and mobility of bodies, I argue that this approach is necessary to attend to the ways in which America becomes a site of racial collapse—that is through the configuration of the identity category Asian American. The move to collectively associate distinctive cultures affects both the fourth generation Asian Americans from various ethnic backgrounds, as well as the newly immigrated members of the diaspora. Moreover, this effect functions as an exported interpretive lens that corrals non-American Asian bodies into Asian American representational history and its cultural effects.

The contributions of this dissertation in turn raise the following – among other – questions for further research.

The artists I have chosen for this dissertation all approach femininity and medial performance in what I have argued are trans affective ways. Nakadate, Wong, Luo, and Yozmit. Much of my examination of their artistic practices has touched on various elements of their biography and life narrative. As such, one important future direction for this project lies in the ethnographic. In order to offer an open conversation on the questions of identity, I will look to interview each of the artists, giving them a platform to take up a self-description in relation to the thematics of the racialization of femininity.

For me, these artists provide political resistances to femininity as subjugation; however, in no way constitute an exhaustive list. In thinking about future scholarship, their work necessarily asks, which other Asian and Asian American artists have taken up femininity and medial performance work? And, to what effects or affects? How are those performances distinctive? And, what might they bring to bear on thinking through trans affects?

In addition to the artists covered and absent from this dissertation, this project compels further questions about the relations amongst identity, reception, and motivation, which might provide future avenues for research. In discussing this project with a scholar of race and performance, I was pressed on three questions: Are these works *by* Asian and Asian American artists? Are these works *about* them? And, are they *for* Asian and Asian American audiences? As a starting point, I have analyzed work *by* Asian and Asian American artists, but the questions of *about* and *for* lead to contested answers. While I am not compelled that these works need to be *by*, *for*, and *about* Asian and Asian American performers and media makers, I do think that the

effects of those no's or yes's would be productive lines of future research.

Another question that the thread of trans affects in medial performance brings about is: what is the phenomenological status of technology in performance? Many avenues for answering this question exist, and I am most drawn to Susan Kozel book *Closer: Performance, Technology, Phenomenology*. Kozel does an exemplary job of combining scholarship in performance and technology studies. Working from her own dance practice as engaged with technology, Kozel promotes a phenomenological method. Building from Kozel's work, this dissertation raises an important direction for further research: the question of difference. Kozel's phenomenological approach incorporates technology but brackets identity and difference.

Of all the directions that might be generated from this dissertation, I am particularly vexed by how the extent to which the pressure Nakadate, Wong, Luo, and Yozmit put on human bodies invites supplementation by non-human bodies. Taken together, “trans” and bodies in the work of Nakadate, Luo, Wong, and Yozmit show how the racialization of femininity functions across differently gendered and sexed bodies. This dissertation has focused on Asian and Asian American human bodies, but begs the question of how other bodies – non human bodies – are entangled in these processes and how performance and technology work might disrupt those sedimentations. Thus, in conclusion, I want to more thoroughly ask: what *is* a body in the context of racialized femininity? How might the entanglements of the racialization of femininity and medial performance relate to animal and object studies?

Becoming Slug: packs, bodies, and loops

Illustration 24: Photograph "The Slug Princess" Installation (Greer 2017)

To take one, thought-provoking example, I turn to a feminine slug—a prototypically feminine slug, a princess slug. "The Slug Princess" is an installation by the Degenerate Art Ensemble (DAE), part of a larger exhibition of their work from March 19 to June 19, 2011 at the Frye Art Museum in Seattle, Washington.[100] The installation is comprised of two major elements: a crocheted work and a video projection. The mixed material, wearable work spatially precedes

100 "The company's name refers to one of the 20th century's most important and galvanizing art events: the 1937 Degenerate Art exhibition, which presented six hundred fifty works purged from German museums because they did not support the ideals of National Socialism. The group selected this politically charged moniker partly in response to the murder in Olympia [Washington] of an Asian American youth by neo-Nazi skinheads. For DAE, reviving the term degenerate art also indicated a commitment to internationalism, interdisciplinary practice, intellectual rigor, and open expression that expands political, ideological, intellectual, and artistic boundaries" (Frye 2011). Ming Wong's "Life of Imitation" was also showing at the Frye in 2011 from January 22nd to February 27th.

the video projection in the installation. It is worn by a human-form that stands mostly erect and is posed, as if, in motion. The piece, which is described as a headdress, is by no means a traditional garment. Yellow spirals and topographies flow and diverge in tangled networks of yarn that sometimes converge into recognizable form. The knit headdress travels in countless directions, somehow assembling as a wearable fibrous entity that covers the mannequin from head to ground, spreading out, away, and behind the figuration of the human. In slumped orbs, green knit "cabbages" surround the slug princess headdress, exceeding the objects they intend to represent in mass, shape, and affect. The video projection is a looped performance of DAE performer, Haruko Crow Nishimura in the headdress.[101] The projection runs from ceiling to floor and spans the semi-enclosed space in which it is displayed. In the video, Nishimura walks, then crawls – slowly, awkwardly – through a forest. She also eats whole cabbages, supporting the procedure with mouth, foot, and appendage, throwing the function of her body parts into question.

"The Slug Princess" enacts a Deleuzo-Guattarian becoming animal that transmutates the ways in which animality is constitutive in the racialization of femininity. As Deleuze and Guattari argue: "Becoming-animal always involves a pack" "a multiplicity" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 239). The banner of becoming-animal is "I am legion." DAE is a pack. DAE is and are a propagation of artists working together. They enact legion. Led by a pack of collaborators, co-artistic directors Nishimura and Joshua Kohl, DAE occasionally has work-specific collaborators, such as the Kronos Quartet in 2013. More often, they engage a rance of artists in continual, ongoing, and fluctuating process. Their current collaborators include (and

101 Nishimura is originally from Japan and now based in Seattle. She is co-artistic director of DAE with Joshua Kohl. DAE shows their work in the United States and Europe, often in collaboration with a wide range of artists and makers. In addition to wide-ranging shows and installations, their piece "Red Shoes" received the Music Theatre Now Award from the International Theatre Institute at Swedish Biennale.

surpass): architect/designer Alan Maskin, costume designer Alenka Loesch, dancer/singer Dohee Lee, performance artist/expressionist/songwriter/shape-shifter Okanomodé, and sound artist/installation artist Robb Kunz. For the broader exhibition at the Frye, they listed the biographies of fifteen artists and the names of around 200 artists. The multiplicity of DAE is integral to the ways in which “The Slug Princess” exceeds its planning as a techno-performance piece and breaks into becoming slug. The wearable piece created by collaborator Mandy Greer weighs on Nishimura's body, causing her to hunch over and crawl, pushing her body into slow contact with the earth, as the flowing garment slows her forward progress, snagging and undulating over the uncertain terrain of a forest. As Greer's creation collides with Nishimura's body and the practice of the dance, they enact becoming slug.

Illustration 25: List of DAE Collaborators at Frye Exhibit

What are the trans affective capacities of bodies—animal, thing, or otherwise? Deleuze and Guattari focus trans affectivity as capacity, on what the body does or can do. Thinking through Baruch Spinoza's on the body, they write, “We know nothing about a body until we know what it can do, in other words, what its affects are, how they can or cannot enter into composition with other affects” (257). Nishimura's becoming slug is not imitative (305). It is not mimetic. Rather, it functions in the way of displaced doing. Deleuze and Guattari describe this in the example of putting one's shoes on one's hands to move, to do as a dog: “I must succeed in endowing the parts of my body with relations of speed and slowness that will make it become

dog, in an original assemblage proceeding neither by resemblance nor by analogy" (258). The headdress engages an active bodily process of moving as a slug, rather than looking like a slug. Nishimura's body begins as her body as human begins, upright, but it is pulled down and made slow by the collaborative force of the wearable piece. As such, DAE enacts "affects that circulate and are transformed within the assemblage: what a horse [slug] 'can do'" (257).[102] This assemblage of affects pushes beyond the limited capacities of the screen, offering new productive entanglements to this dissertation.

Animals are entangled in the racialization of femininity throughout the chapters of this dissertation, expressed in the form of butterflies and dragons. Where in "The Slug Princess" animacy invigorates new possibilities of assemblage, in each of the previsou chapters animality is latent. The dragon lady and the butterfly haunt Nakadate and readings of Luo and Wong as emblematic of Orientalized femininity and effeminacy. I could further extend the image to the transnational relations discussed in chapter three through the economic metaphor of the Asian mini-dragons or sometimes Asian Tigers (Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea, and Taiwan) that mark the expansion of inter-Asian neoliberalism.[103] Animal symbolism persists throughout Asian American gender construction and Western fantasies of the East, as Mel Y. Chen, in *Animacies: biopolitics, racial mattering, and queer affect*, seeks to make available "animalities that live together with race and with queerness, the animalities that we might say have crawled into the woodwork and await recognition, and, concurrently, the racialized animalities already here"

102 This quote is taken from Deleuze and Guattari's rereading of Sigmund Freud's case study Little Hans and the horse.

103 The four economies tend to be bound together, as they all were damaged during the 1997 Financial Crisis and emerged with high growth rates through rapid and focused forms of industrialization. This metaphor has been extended in various diminutive forms to Southeast Asian economies and is framed in relation to Japan and China as the major economic forces in the region.

(Chen 2012, 104). Chen points to the ways in which these racialized animalities have long been symbolically at play in Asian American history from 19th Century depictions of Chinese men as rats (110-111) to the reinforcement of yellow peril through animalistic metaphor.

Illustration 26: Photograph of Xu Bing's "Cultural Animal" (Xu 2017)

Chen offers this history as a way to extend queerness into thinking how these animalities inhere in racial depiction, focusing on a reading of Xu Bing's performance installation “Cultural Animal” 文化动物 (1994) at the Han Mo Art Center in Beijing, which featured a live pig and mannequin in positions that evoked queer bestial sexuality. The pig was covered in inked nonsensical Roman letters; the full body of the mannequin was similarly tattooed in jumbled Chinese characters. The piece was a part of a larger project entitled “A Case Study of Transference.” According to the Xu's website, “The intention was both to observe the reaction of the pig towards the mannequin and to produce an absurd and random drama—an intention that was realized when the pig reacted to the mannequin in an aggressively sexual manner” (Xu 2017). The photographs, which were a component of the piece, indeed evoke the difficulty of the

concept of transference, imbricating species, languages, and taboos. The piece more generally enacts the unexpected excesses of performance with non-scripted bodies. The pig at times caresses the cheek of the mannequin with his snout; while at other times, the pig aggressively mounts the mannequin. The sensuous experience is inked by the cultural confusion that images the seeming sensibility of each language. Amidst the movement of the pig and the rubbings of the ink, the mannequin is motionless, bearing a look resigned openness. His eyes are closed, with a slight furrowing of the brow and calm downturned lips. The performance piece enacts crossings that reorient the historical symbolic force of racialization and animality. These forms of species and cultural miscegenations evoke for Chen a theoretical turn to the terms transnational, transgender, and transspecies (144-148). In so doing, Chen provides a starting point for examining the resonance of trans affects to racialized animality.

Chen's examples importantly display two features of the ways in which racialized animality occurs. On the one hand, animality functions as a subjugating metaphor. Animality is mobilized to make humans lesser, "as an animal." In these cases the mobilization of animality is about making bodies illegible and thus more disposable. On the other hand, animality might, through medial performance, infuse queer relationality into a history of fixed racialized/feminized species distinction.[104] Building on this, what my project asks differently is, how might trans function beyond symbolism and in excess of animal-human relations? As Deleuze and Guattari indicate, becoming animal is not an affiliation (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 238). Thus, in order to address the resistant possibilities of animality in relation to racialized femininity as subjugation, it is necessary to address animality in its border crossing

104 Chen also analyzes Nagisa Oshima's 1986 film *Max, mon amour,* reading race into the piece. The film is about the romance with a chimpanzee Max declared by British Bourgeois woman, Margaret (Chen 2012, 137 -143).

entanglements with human bodies. Xu's “Cultural Animal” inadvertently engages acts of bestiality that begin to do this work by crossing the human animal and non-human animal boundary. I look to hold onto but push beyond this queer affiliation into becoming animal.

DAE's techno-performance crosses the lines between species, going beyond relationality to becoming animal. As with the transportational quality of Nakadate's camera work and the nauseous delay drawn from the work of Luo and Wong, DAE creates flows of temporality that approach Yozmit's queer crossings from and beyond the horizon. DAE's becoming animal offers an instantiation of trans affective experience through an enactment of transmutation. Beyond even what Deleuze and Guattari describe as the affective experience of becoming animal, the medial performance of DAE's “The Slug Princess” operates through the video loop. It transects human, animal, and technological. The looping video, as with Wong's installation work, creates a spatio-temporal contraction and elongation of the experience of time in relation to viewing. Time play breaks the chronological experience of straight time and time as mastery by turning to temporal experience as questioning normativity.

“The Slug Princess” creates a productive indeterminacy through a disruption of gender, sex, and species form through what Siane Ngai designates as “stuplimity.” Ngai's punning contraction of stupidity and sublimity works in relation to Deleuze's thinking on repetition and difference. Ngai poses the idea of stuplimity as beginning with “the dysphoria of shock and boredom” and culminating “in something like the 'open feeling' of 'resisting being'—an indeterminate affective state that lacks the punctuating 'point' of individuated emotion” (Ngai 2007, 284). Ngai characterizes this affective openness as stupefying: it stops the viewer in their/her/his tracks. This imposition of the affective state cannot be overcome through the

exercise of reason (270).[105] Departing from Kant's description of the sublime, Ngai turns to the uglier, less awe-inspiring, and perhaps more debase forms of aesthetic encounter. This is the collaboration of the stupid with the sublime. Stuplimity operates outside reason and sublimity but in alliance with their processes. On the day that I attended the DAE exhibit, I got "stuck" at "The Slug Princess," lost in the stuplimity of the loop. Beyond what might be called aesthetic arrest, "The Slug Princess" made me stupid to the world around me with no deep reflective process.[106] It was not a thoughtful awe; it was a sublimity that emerged in a form of cultural stupidity—that is, I stopped practicing cultural logics and aesthetic consumption.

My friend Anjali pulled me out of the stupor and brought me through the rest of the museum, while I affectively lingered in the loop. The experience exceeded its immediate affective experience, moving into and through my own trans affective stuplimity. In this case, Ngai's concept of stuplimity raises yet another question: what are the relations amongst the looping, trans affects, and becoming slug princess? I would like to suggest that the loop comes together with the medial enactment of becoming slug in such a manner that performs into stuplimity. Stuplimity, in this case, creates an opening of an affectively stupid or illegible (per Xu) space/time alternative being/becoming.

The loop of course is not unique to the installation and is a common feature of museum pieces. The looping is magnified by the scale of the piece and the architecture of the room. And, the performance, the becoming animal itself, creates a *sluggishness*. Ngai describes that

105 This delay of reason aligns with Rei Terada's notion of phenomenophilia's move away from fact/value convergence. See the concluding section of chapter two, "e-Feminacy," for elaboration on Terada's phenomenophilia.

106 Aesthetic arrest as described in James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. For Joyce, the encounter of aesthetic arrest is about being enraptured with beauty, standing in an awe. The painting's wonder makes one stop in their tracks.

sluggishness works out of the boredom of repetition, which I argue is created through the loop of the becoming slug. The slug princess' slowness, played in the loop creates a "Stuplimity [that] reveals the limits of our ability to comprehend a vastly extended form as totality" (271), in that the loop opens up becoming animal, not as a finite thing, but as an ongoing, cycling process. From this *sluggish* stuplime, trans affects work across species, platform, and the racialization of femininity. In so doing, becoming slug princess opens up the racialization transanimalities of femininity through medial performance.

Becoming Silver Platter: Oriental objects and cross-racial thing theory

The movement of the racialization of femininity across bodies raises the possibility of another becoming minoritarian, that of the thing, the object. Oriental fans and geisha robes have long served to suture Asian and Asian American femininity to an assortment of commodities. For instance, Celine Parreñas Shimizu examines the history of pornography, arguing that accoutrements, ornaments, and décor make Asian/American sexuality (Parreñas Shimizu 2007, 102-139).[107] In the anti-miscegination era of pornographic film, objects provided the proof of racialized femininity. Parreñas Shimizu argues that because "the genital difference of the Asian woman in the body of the white woman in yellowface is not racially visible, the meat shots themselves require the presence of Oriental objects along with the genitalia in order to establish visible racial difference" (127). Objects in this sense stand in for and visually capture Asian and Asian American gender and sexuality, supplementing the kind of sexual objectification Tan Nguyen describes in his assessment of how Asian American men of various sexualities are reduced in filmic pornography to their bottoms, the bottom encapsulating the object of Asian

107 As with some other scholars, Parreñas Shimizu's uses Asian/American to describe Asian and Asian American bodies/identities.

male gender as a site of subordination (Nguyen 2014).

I turn to objects and things, the seemingly non-animate, to raise further questions about the cross-racial connections in this dissertation and where they might go. Accordingly, I close with an analysis of Wu Tsang's documentary film, *Wildness* (2011). The film is about a predominantly Latinx trans bar, frequented predominantly by transwomen in Los Angeles, California. Tsang, a trans artist, produces, directs, and co-writes the film, which follows Silver Platter. The Silver Platter is the name of the bar, which becomes a character and narrator through the film. The documentary is lead by and tracks the Silver Platter and "her children" through the advent of nights of "wildness," planned by Tsang and other queers of color. These nights include a weekly performance event and party, which bring with them a younger, more diverse group of attendees. These new queers "revitalize" the Silver Platter, while perhaps also displacing, at least in terms of feeling belonging, the regulars. The new influx of students and others also brings media attention, some of which destabilizes what Tsang describes as the "safe space" of the Silver Platter. The wildness that Tsang and her friends bring spins out of control, spurring divergent responses from the regulars, from protest to embrace. The wildness eventually subsides, and the nights cease, returning the bar to its original patrons.

Wildness as medial performance activates becoming thing. The Silver Platter is the name of the bar, but she is also a character in the film. Silver Platter speaks for herself, sometimes in disagreement with Tsang, who is the other primary storyteller. Silver Platter narrates in Spanish, while Tsang narrates in English. This language divide is echoed in the relationships between Tsang and non-English speakers in the film, notably a woman named Erica. Tsang is drawn to this divide as an extension of never learning Chinese from her father.[108] Language, alongside

108 I use the pronoun her in line with the bio section of Tsang's website. Most of the articles and coverage of Tsang's

generational difference and expression of gender or sexual non-conformity, create the poles across and beyond which the experience of wildness moves.

These dynamics raise many questions for me. How does race play into these moves of trans and queer subculture? Specifically, what are the relationships between Asian and Asian American and Latinx/a/o and Chicanx/a/o? And, ultimately, what about Silver Platter—how does she complicate the moves and relationships across race and subculture?

Cross-racial entanglements encompass all of the work examined in this dissertation. In chapter one, I examine pin-ups girls of color as racial supplements, highlighting connectivities and distinctions between Asian American and African American/black representation tactics. In chapter two, I analyze cross-ethnic Chinese, Malay, and Indian entanglements in the Singaporean context relative to black/white relations in the United States. And, chapter three poses the trans of color body as excluded from transnormativity, making bodies of color more precariously situated within selective inclusivity. Prompted by the questions that arise out of *Wildness*, it seems critical to also ask how are Asianness and Asian Americanness entangled with brownness? What are the implications – political and ethical – that arise from their conjunction?

In José Esteban Muñoz's keynote at the 2013 Feminist Theory Workshop at Duke University, he described a conversation he had with Tsang at the New Museum exhibit "The Green Room" in New York:

> Wu talked to me about how he once used the word the brown to describe what was happening in the space in an online forum, which led to his being criticized in the comments section. He was sarcastically asked if Asian was brown now. I hope I've made it clear that in my deployment of the term, Asian could potentially be just that. Not in a way that inhibits us thinking of critical Asianness or even yellowness, but brownness that

work I have encountered use the pronouns he, his. As such, I cite all work on Tsang with the pronouns included in the writing.

> is co-presence with other modes of difference, a choreography of singularities that touch in contact but do not meld. Brownness is not meant to do anything but coexist with blackness, Asianness, indigineity, and other terms that have manifest descriptive force to render particularities of various modes of striving in the world (Muñoz 2013).[109]

Muñoz deflects the move to criticize Tsang as brown. Instead, he opens up brownness through the specificity of Tsang's relationality with the brown commons of the Silver Platter. In this configuration, a form of co-presence emerges. Spatiality is central to Muñoz's extension of brown. It is through the commons, the shared space of the Silver Platter, that Tsang is brought into a realm of brown. What might it mean to think Tsang not in relation to yellowness, but in relation to brownness? This question requires, I think, a step to ask the question more widely. What are the resonant Asian alignments with brown elsewhere?

What I might call Asian brownness emerges in scholarship and this dissertation in multitudinous ways. In his study *Global Divas: Filipino Gay Men in the Diaspora,* Martin Manalansan notes that a number of gay Filipino informants expressed a "cultural affinity with Latinos," perceiving "*Asian* to mean East Asians—Japanese, Korean, and Chinese" (Manalansan 2003, 128). At a Q&A for her MoMA PS1 show in 2011, a man who presented racially Asian, stood and stated that Nakadate did not look Asian; she looked Latina.[110] Focusing on the shifting transnational American landscape of securitization, Kumarini Silva argues that "brown, as a metaphor and as a somatic marker, is discursively deployed to reproduce and reinforce existing relations of power through 'legitimate' means" making it possible for anyone to be brown at anytime (Silva 2016, 13). In part, Silva's work extends the lineage of brown, "long the domain of Latino/a and Chicano/a identities in the United States," to South Asian bodies (45). In this light,

109 Transcript my own

110 Also footnoted in chapter one. The man appeared to be East Asian specifically.

Manalansan's Filipino declaration of Latino affiliation and Nakadate's misread body, demonstrate the complex relations of what Silva describes as a distinctions between identity and identification. These examples move away from the context of established identity categories. Identification, instead, becomes primary. In the case of Manalansan's informants identification is a choice, an affiliation, while identification is hoist upon Nakadate.

Asian brown functions at myriad levels. Manalansan points to Colonial context as a source of shared Catholic mimicry that comes to form cultural identity. In other words, the driving force of Filipino brown is a cultural one. Surnames and Catholic practices are resonant, not with other Asian countries, but with other countries who exist in the postcolonial traces of the Spanish empire. Filipino is thus "browned" by history.

Nakadate is "browned" by racial epidermal schema. Her skin comes into the room before she does. In contrast to theory of the corporeal schema, Frantz Fanon argues that the limits of Maurice Merleau-Ponty's idea is it's universal positing of the body. Accounting for the experience of race manifest in skin color and appearance, Fanon builds his concept of racial epidermal schema through his encounter on a train in France, in which a child utters "look mama, a negro!" He writes, "In the train it was no longer a question of being aware of my body in the third person but in a triple person. In the train, I was given not one but two, three places" (Fanon 1994, 112). Through the epidermal schema, Fanon's body is made multiple, that is it is fragmented into more parts than the white universal body Merleau-Ponty poses because of Fanon's black body as interpreted by the white child. Fanon describes the experience as generating the horror of white colonizations of the black body in his own body through the demand of being hailed "negro": "I was responsible at the same time for my body, for my race,

for my ancestors. I subjected myself to an objective examination, I discovered my blackness, my ethnic characteristics; and I was battered down by tom-toms, cannibalism, intellectual deficiency, fetichism, racial defects, salve-ships" (112). I want to suggest that Nakadate's being called Latina splits her body through the racial epidermal schema, but unlike the example of Fanon, the split away from ancestry. Where Fanon's experience was clearly delineated in the colonizer colonized relation, the example of Nakadate seems to be working to dislodge her from Asianness by aligning her with Latin American visuality. Moreover, she was confronted, with what seemed like the expectation to defend herself. This makes the force of racial epidermal schema unclear. In the case of Fanon, the force of the inheritances as racial subjugation are called forth in the white child's initial exclamation and also in the naming of fear that follows "I'm frightened." The child directs the phobic connotation in the naming of Fanon's body as negro. Nakadate's identity as multiracial Japanese American and her name secure her identity alongside Asian Americanness, while visually she is cross-racially entangled.

Perhaps as a collision of the Manalansan and Nakadate examples, South Asian brown seems to unfold in the visual register of brown skin and the symbolic cultural experience of the context of U.S. securitization, which constructs the brown threat, enveloping all South Asian bodies into Islamaphobia through practices of state identification. Coming back to Tsang and *Wildness*, is Tsang's affiliation with brown Latinx bodies sufficient to bring him into the brown commons? I think that more than coalition politics are at work here. I look to Silver Platter as a techno-performance of racialized femininity that might join with the above examples in making cross-racial entanglements. Specifically, I propose that Silver Platter demonstrates a tactic that makes productive cross-racial entanglements by short-circuiting the power flows of racial

subjugation.

Illustration 27: Video Still Wildness 2012 (Tsang 2012)

As a body, Silver Platter enacts a vibrancy. The Silver Platter is a bar. But, in the medial performance, Silver Platter enacts excesses and flows that create, for Muñoz, the brown commons within her walls.[111] I would add that this vibrancy also demonstrates the liveness of those walls, and how they might cross into an enchanted assemblage of matter.[112] In *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*, Jane Bennett forwards the idea of *thing-power* as having agential capacities to form a "confederation of human and nonhuman elements" that build on Spinoza's affective bodies and Deleuze and Guattari's theory of assemblage (21-24). Through an "agentic swarm" (32) *thing-power* acts. I suggest that the Silver Platter has a trans affective

111 "a place, a space that holds and shelters brown life within its walls" (Muñoz 2013). (transcript my own)

112 As I recall, during the Q&A of the keynote (there is no video footage of this to my knowledge), a conversation arose about whether or not the brown commons was assemblage. Munoz was hesitant to call it assemblage, but did seem, to my perception, compelled by some resonances that Michael Hardt indicated between Munoz's description and assemblage thinking.

capacity of *thing-power.* In the opening of the film, the viewer encounters handheld camera footage taken from a car as it moves through city neighborhood buildings and spaces to a collision of sounds, broken by a voice—a warm, feminine voice with gravity, speaking in Spanish. The voice exists in a world of lights and things, out of which Tsang emerges. Tsang's voice joins Silver Platter, describing the feeling of enchantment with a look of longing, affiliation, and uncertainty. The scene fades to black and then starkly, we see, for the first time, Silver Platter, and she is burning bright through a neon sign that asserts itself against the background. The Silver Platter's force of the thing is not from the anthropomorphic decision to give Silver Platter voice.[113] Rather, the *thing-power* is the impetus for the animation.

The turn to thing theory offers is a way of conceptualizing the cross-racial entanglements of Asian and Asian American femininity *and* effeminacy *and* queerness *and* transness that conjunctively disperse across bodies.[114] Bennett's thing thinking suggests that the political possibilities of object studies might reside in the unsettling of the "*hierarchal* order of things" (12)—the hierarchy that operates through power to subjugate racially by making human bodies like the animal, into the thing. Bennett proposes that we read difference horizontally, rather than vertically.[115] Reading across, provides an emphasis of crossing that exceeds the logic of bounded hierarchal order; that is: reading difference horizontally enacts a trans affective practice. This practice might suggest that Tsang's brownness is created out of the Silver Platter's force as thing, rather than because Tsang joined coalitionally with the people at the club. Silver Platter, in other

113 Bennett contends that "a touch of anthropomorphism" be productive in recognizing the vibrancy of matter (Bennett 2010, 99).

114 See Deleuze and Guattari 1987 for analysis about conjunctive on pages 25, 70-72, 98-99, 142-143.

115 Even if, as she remarks, "my conatus will not let me 'horizonatalize' the world completely" (Bennett 2010, 104).

words, is what browns Tsang. Her force brings him into her brownness. This is perhaps supported by the way in which Tsang describes the Silver Platter as magical, as a gravitational force. Horizontal differences become intimate through shared investments in affirming trans and queer bodies of color. Silver Platter is one example of how medial performance becomes the means by which this subcultural practice is shared beyond itself, offering a glimpse into the making of racialized femininity as cross-racial entanglement. By turning away from inanimacy as a marker of non-value to *thing-power*, the equation of bodies with things/objects loosens its association with disempowerment. This is of course is limited in its theoretical capacities, but what Silver Platter demonstrates is how that power functions and creates beyond the normative functions of racial, sexual, and gender exclusion.

As I pursue directions for further research towards which Yozmit, Luo, Wong, and Nakadate compel me, I want to claim transmutations as an extension of trans affective tactics. Transmutations operate beyond the poles that separate bodies in binary through excess and overflow. Transmutations take up the varying speeds of the middle, the processes of crossing. Through these interim actions, transmutations evoke spaces of indeterminacy and discomfort, creating a non-teleological trans that activate through the affective experiences of performance/technology. Transmutations is an invitation that emerges from the trans affects of this dissertation. Transmutations take up the resonant elements of specificity across the chapters and offer a diffusion and concentration of trans elements (*trans*portations, *trans*mediations, *trans* Asian) I have thus far discussed.

Transmutations is a speculative gesture for how the artists herein might engage in changing contexts, forms, and bodies. Edward Said claims speculation as a necessity: "Because

we must deal with the unknown, whose nature is by definition speculative" the process is "no more than probability and no less than error," even "when we become certain that what we are doing is quite possibly wrong *but at least a beginning* has to be studied in its full historical and intellectual richness" (Said 1997, 75-76). I take Said's claim on speculation as an offering for how this dissertation should end, as a beginning, and with the beginning, that is with Said, whose work has flowed throughout the pages as source. In these last few pages, I have found that, through speculation, trans affects open onto transmutations and so to a beginning that has to be studied in its full historical and theoretical richness.

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