Performing the Cyberbody on the Transnational Stage

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Familiar terms such as "being connected," "linked-up," "plugged-in," "interfacing," "projecting," and "making contact" share referents between social processes and computer technologies. As technologies have borrowed images from social behavior to describe electronic functions, such as the "handshake" to represent a recognition between systems, human interactions are currently being described by terms borrowed from computer functions. We have become accustomed to the use of the term "interface," a description of a connection made between systems, to include human interactions – as if they were electronic systems. The human mind no longer enjoys terms of transcendence to describe its place among systems, but has become, in the words of science fiction, "wetware," a water-based version of software. Deep in quotidian usage, lie buried the perceived notions that bonds between people are forged through and across technologies. *Contact*, as Jody Foster plays it, happens through giant, deep-dish ears, and in outer space.

These terms for meetings and unions suggest new forms of hybridity between people and "machines" (as they were once called) – cyborgean fusions, crossings between species in transplants, genetic forms of reproduction, and the crossing between sexes, through transsexual technologies. Our ethical terror of these new forms plays out in films like *Alien Resurrection*, whose heroine is a clone created to provide a womb for a monstrous alien, while our hopeful outreach toward global expansion and immigration is imagined through narratives like *E.T.* and his desire for his distant home.

These computer terms and science fiction tropes represent not only our anxieties and pleasures in confronting the effects new technologies are having upon our bodily and social organization, but also serve as tropes for the economic and social processes which accompany the global growth of new technologies. As Connie Samaras argues, in her article "Is It Tomorrow or Just the End of Time," the current craze around alien abductions and UFOs, with their narratives of abduction from the domestic space, sexual experiment, and insemination, reveal contemporary anxieties around the collapse of privacy, the end of traditional forms of insemination, and the contestation of traditional gender roles and

sex assignment (210-11).

The world wide web describes not only an electronic, virtual space, but also the new transnational practices of labor and capital that accompany it. The role of technology in forming new unemployment and employment practices has been a key player in creating transnational patterns of immigrant labor and capital. The current craze for flying saucers and alien abductions serves to both represent and mask these new forms of labor and capital transport. As virtual systems displace certain sectors of labor, the drive to relocate within their exclusive boundaries has even encouraged one cult of website designers known as Heaven's Gate to commit mass suicide. With Nikes on their feet (a sure symbol of First World success through oppressive Third World economic practices), wearing identical clothing (to signify they were "beyond" gender), with some male bodies having been surgically altered to make sexual practice impossible, and with a little change in their pockets, the Heaven's Gate web designers killed themselves in the hope of finding permanent employment somewhere behind the fleeting material body of the Hale-Bopp comet.[1] They were the first interstellar immigrants seeking work. Their example illustrates one deadly way in which changing fantasies around gender, sexuality, and technology are combining to transform lives.

Theatres of the Flesh

Growing up alongside this formation of a science fiction imaginary, is a new cultural imaginary of the body, which we might call "theatres of the flesh." Flesh, once perceived as the given envelope of nature, has now become a theater of operations.

In so-called "live" theater, traditional acting regards the body as an expressive tool for inner, psychological processes, as in Method acting. Gestural systems are devised to reveal the emotional impact of memory or desire as perceived through the body. The carefully-lit face of the actor operates as a register of internal processes. Today, this tradition of theater seems somehow dated. In the new technoculture, the body's own fleshly status serves to reveal how it is altered by, or operates in consonance with new technologies. An array of new performance techniques illustrates the widespread sense of the body as its own theater of change, through technology, rather than as a register of unseen, internal motivations.

Perhaps one telling example may be found in the work of the French performance artist, Orlan. Her work consists of a series of cosmetic surgeries designed to reconstruct her facial features to resemble so-called "beautiful" women in the history of art. Orlan's seventh surgery took place in New York in 1993. It was relayed by satellite to galleries around the world, where people gathered to

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1. The cult's website was www.heavensgate.com. It announced their immanent departure. Full coverage and history was provided at the Washingtonpost.com site.

communicate with the performer by phone, fax, and video satellite. During the piece, Orlan is dressed in a costume, as are the doctors and attendants. She reads from a psychoanalytic study on the body, while the doctors prepare. She entertains questions from those watching the satellite hook-up. Although the actual operation is not broadcast, photos of her bruised and healing face later record the progress of the change. These photos are then installed in the galleries. Orlan is staging technology's power to alter the body as a performance. "Live" performance, in this instance, means performing the technologized body, both through medical intervention and through telecommunication. The localized body is medicalized through reconstructions of the regime of beauty. Orlan performs the sense of the "medical gaze." Yet she also uses telecommunications as prostheses of the body to beam it out into sites of spectatorship and exhibition.

Linked to the performance of surgeries of the flesh, or these new theatres of the body, studies of the transsexual, or transgendered body insist upon the medical reassignment of gender as one of the most structurally definitive practices of our time. Susan Stryker, in her article "Christine Jorgensen's Atom Bomb," situates "transsexuality as a site of technological innovation in the mid-twentieth century, [which] foregrounds the question of how technological change, particularly in the biomedical realm, impacts the conditions of embodied subjectivity." Stryker goes on to define the transsexual body as "an operationalized surface effect achieved through performative means." In other words, the flesh serves as the threshold upon which subjectivity is produced through its interaction with technology. Subjectivity is external, then, rather than internal. The flesh does not reflect or translate subjectivity as an internal process, as in Method acting, or other traditional forms, but flesh actually produces a performative register of subjectivity as it is changed through technological interventions. The transsexual body replaces what Stryker calls "inner secrets," or the psychological, mental processes of internality with "internal secretions," proffering "estrogen and testosterone as deep truths of the body," rather than Freudian paradigms. There is a biochemical reconstruction of gender, here, through the ingestion of hormones, which displaces the internalized, subjective construction of gender that Freud would map in his developmental notions of the Oedipal process.

Now, one might say that theater and performance have been working to stage this encounter between body and technology since the early decades of the century. Marinetti, one of the founders of the Futurist movement, exalted the machine, as it was then known, in relation to the flesh, finally culminating in what he regarded as the transcendent arena of war. For the Futurists, the body was poised at the threshold of its celebratory destruction. The excitement and speed they so admired, were rushing toward that explosive effect. At the same time, the Expressionists set up the agonies of interiority, as caught in the spotlight of authoritarian regimes of objectivity. Science was the operating room in which subjectivity was tortured by objectivist structures. The diagonal lines that

cut across their stage sets mark the twisted state of the subjective, cut through by the machinic remove of the new technologies. In the film *Metropolis*, we see humans relegated to servitude to the machine. Bertolt Brecht, informed by these two movements, founded a theater that would assimilate science and technology back into human processes. Brecht eventually found, in the Marxist sense of materialism, a way to compound the opposing regimes of subjectivity and objectivity through the paradigms of labor and learning. For Brecht, the working body produced a social, perhaps collective subjectivity, as well as an agency for technology. His theater, then, moved not from the inside reality to the external, through expression, but from the outside condition, into an internal one. The body performed its social relations, emphasizing their incarnation in the fleshly materiality of the body. Nevertheless, the body remained intact. It performed its relation to technology, with technology still imagined as a machine or a tool. The body was not a theater of operations, but an agency for operations.

These are but a few of the performance strategies from the earlier part of the century which situated performance in relation to the rise of technology, up through its deadly transcendence in World War II.

Susan Stryker's transsexual critique takes up where these performances leave off—in the decade of the 1950s. Stryker situates the publicity around the transsexual operation of Christine Jorgenson alongside the reception of the atomic bomb. Earlier performances wrestled with machines as externalizing effects, produced against a backdrop of the internal as human: humans have feeling, while machines do not. Stryker insists that Christine Jorgenson's transsexual body revealed how medical technologies could redesign sex assignment, blurring the borders between social, interior processes, and technological ones. The body as exemplum of organicist ideals and humanistic values, which the Expressionists could stage in its agonized encounter with new technologies, had been tampered with all the way down into its interiority—its hormones, and of course later, its genetic structure. Understood in this context, the transsexual body and transgender politics organize a body that is already deeply intermingled with virtual systems in its composition. If Brecht understood the body as a register of the social through its proximate relations onstage and its gestures, the new transgendered body imploded the social codes of sex and gender into its very hormonal structure. Performance resides in the testosterone-induced growing of the beard, or estrogen-induced growing of the breasts. The body performs itself, its capacities in its tissues. Jordy Jones, one of the cyber-leaders of the transgender movement, has created a performance around his change from female-to-male entitled the "Injectable Man." In one sense, he performs his achievement by simply putting his bearded body on stage. In this way, the body performs itself as a theatre of change.

Kate Bornstein, another transsexual performer has produced a new piece, *Virtually Yours*, which places her body in front of the computer screen. She becomes involved with a computer game as a form of self-discovery. Her problem:

her girlfriend is becoming her boyfriend. Thus, Bornstein, a male-to-female transsexual finds herself in a relationship with a female-to-male transsexual. What worries the couple, is the fact that their homosexual, lesbian relationship is turning into an inversion of a heterosexual relationship. The one-time girlfriend begins to perform the sex of male to Bornstein's performance of female. The sex assignment determines the sexual definition of heterosexuality. Now, in the midst of this crisis of sexual performance, Bornstein finds guidance and solace through the computer screen. An interactive computer game provides an opportunity to analyze the emotional responses to the effect medical reassignment surgery has upon sexual practices.

Reviewing these performances, from Orlan's cosmetic surgeries through Bornstein's inter-transsexual relationship problems, we might imagine something like an axis of technology, running deep into the body as well as out through the internet. Following this axis, how might we reconfigure what we consider to be the body? And how does one perform that body?

In order to pursue these queries, I would like to consider a website that organizes a new interaction among the elements of body, gender, and performance.

The Brandon Website

The Brandon website offers a virtual space, where virtual bodies "trans" gender and technology. This website has been designed to somehow perform the representations of transgender bodies as well as the social violence against those bodies. Moreover, the Brandon website,[2] as Jordy Jones explains it, creates "cyber Brandons."

The name for the website is derived from the life and death of Teena Brandon, known in transgender circles as Brandon Teena. Brandon Teena was a twenty-one year-old who had lived his adolescent life as a man, making a spectacle out of his success in dating good-looking girls in small towns in the Midwest. In 1993, he was brutally raped and murdered by two men who had discovered "he was a girl," as they put it. His murder prompted a national move for protection rights by several agencies, such as the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force. The name of the agency suggests some of the identity issues surrounding the case: was Brandon to be perceived as a lesbian who lived as a butch, or as a transgendered person who lived as a man? The debate hinges upon the relevance of the biological body, in considering the signs of gender.

While the website alludes to the historical evidence surrounding Brandon Teena's death, it is not a website dedicated to Brandon Teena; rather it is a site where "multiple cyber-Brandons" appear, both in the site, and in the traversal of the site. The web designer, Shu Lea Cheang, a noted underground filmmaker, created a very complex website, that links discovery, rape, murder, transsex-

2. See the Brandon website at:
   http://www.banffcentre.ab.ca/ ~ cheang now Brandon@guggenheim.org

uality and gender through difficult navigation devices. It is neither obvious nor easy to traverse the site, nor are its significations direct in their referents. Each navigation is unique – foming a cyber-Brandon along its path.

Big Doll

One image within the site is identified as the Big Doll. The Big Doll, itself a secondary term of reference, provides a flashing glimpse of the techno-body of the late twentieth century, constructed through the lens of transgender discourse. Here we see fragments of a subcultural body marked by the practices of alternative sexualities; gendering inscriptions through tattoos, scarification, and piercings; newspaper headlines around Brandon Teena's violent death and legal proceedings; anatomical sketches, suggesting a scientistic discourse from an earlier era, and even trans-species genitals – pistils, and stamens. The cyber-Brandon animates along framed spaces like comix[3] – those underground books of images that inform much of the visual composition on the web. However, the frames do not delineate narrative moments, but appear as fields which situate morphing. Each frame provides several orders of images that, together, constitute multiple "dolls," or compositions of identification. What makes these images cohere is a field of allusions organized by several different kinds of codes – a cyber-Brandon is composed by the user who can traverse these codes and the flickering signifier the doll represents. Traversal by the mouse animates these image morphings, and, as the user begins to put together a field of identification, through a recognition of how these body practices, this trial, and medical technologies inter-relate, a cyber-Brandon is formed, or rather, is per-formed.

Roadkill

There is a locational referent in this website, signified by the image of a highway. The mouse moves up the screen, following the yellow line, as if following a road. This section is known as "Brandon's Roadtrip." The title of the section hints at the formation of the cyber-Brandon, who "trips" through this part of the site. The travelling cyber-Brandons encounter historical transgender figures, whose images lie splattered across the highway. History as roadkill.

When clicked upon, these figures reveal, for example, Herculine Barbin, a 19th-century French hermaphrodite, discussed in the work of Foucault; Jack Garland, born the daughter of the first Mexican consul to San Francisco, in the early 20th century, who lived his life as man; and the cross-dressed Venus Extravaganza from the film *Paris Is Burning*. As Peggy Shaw put it, when playing a trans-gendered Stanley Kowalski in the play *Belle Reprieve*: " I'm so queer I don't even have to talk about it. I'm just [...] parts of other people all mashed into one body [...] I take all these pieces [...] and I manufacture myself. When I'm

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3. Term used for underground Comics.

saying I fall to pieces, I'm saying Marlon Brando was not there for me, James Dean failed to come through [...]" (Case 1996: 177). Like Shaw, the cyber-Brandon "trans" body is constructed through traversing the images of Herculine, Jack, and Venus. To reverse Shaw's phrase, this is a process of "coming to pieces."

In this case, the performance is in the animation of these images through the movement of the mouse, while the user actively constructs identificatory processes across the images. While the identification is formed through allusion and metonymy, both social and eccentric processes, the movement of the mouse might be perceived as a disciplined motion, controlled by the design of the images as well as that of the mouse itself. The mouse both glides freely among images, and is also choreographed by the placement of those images.

The cyber-Brandon performs, then, through a kind of dis-association between manual gesture and psychological identificatory processes. Unlike the earlier performance techniques that sought some kind of consonance between bodily gesture and internal state, the cyber-Brandon is composed by the disciplined, repetitive motion of the mouse in relation to the metonymic and indirect floating, if you will, of the sign for self.

Now, this cyber-Brandon may also "play" these images in the flesh. S/he may be a practitioner of one of the bodily rites, such as piercing, or scarification, or more, inject his or her body with hormones, or more, have had a double lateral mastectomy performed on the body. (One part of the website has actual images of such an operation). If so, a certain mimesis might occur here, in the morphings. The person before the computer screen may experience something like a mirror effect, although even so, these images are nestled among other, more distant ones. Mimesis, if it occurs, is accidental, in the process of electronic representation.

As we have seen, the Brandon website creates a cyber-body through the lens of transgender identifications. In consonance with medical technology and gender play, this body traverses the axis in its own "trans" way. As Jordy Jones observed, "new cultural life forms are beginning to appear out there." His notion of a "cultural life form" is a brilliant composite of biology, culture, and technology.

"Out there," to Jones, is on the world wide web – a new worlding device in this sense – a sense the web encourages. By referent and production, the Brandon website is international. The referent, Brandon Teena, was from the Midwestern U.S. The site was first housed at the Banff Centre, an influential Canadian centre of new projects which combine virtual systems and art. The website designer, Shu Lea Cheang, is a Taiwanese educated in the States, well-known for her inter-ethnic films. But more, the site is now linked to several other institutions that arrange for it to become a performance site, or rather a magnet site for performances of cultural issues linked to transgender politics. The Brandon website is now situated at the Guggenheim museum in New York, which announced Brandon as "a one year narrative project in installments." It is also

linked to events located on a Dutch site, the Society for Old and New Media. It is also linked to the Harvard Institute on the Arts and Civic Dialogue, directed by the playwright and performer, Anna Deavere Smith. Smith's organization focused on the Brandon site in its first summer of creating a dialogue between the arts and the social by organizing a multi-site public event, as it was called, on August 5, 1998 at 8 pm. The event was called "Brandon's Virtual Court System," taking place at the Harvard Law School. Using documents based on real and cyber sexual assault cases, Shu Lea Chang and the theatre director Liz Diamond created a courtroom drama. Five actors from the American Repertory Theatre played the roles of the victims, with legal scholars playing the jurors. In May, 1999 the Dutch site provided the second such performance.

In other words, a performance of an international virtual "court of law" sits in session through a website. The liberative elements of such an event are breathtaking. First-rate legal scholars will perform as a jury, while actors perform, as characters, the facts of actual cases concerning sexual assault. This virtual court may offer what the actual courts do not, in equity and understanding. It may rehearse a change in the system.

However, beyond "democratic futures," what such events illustrate is the increasing sexualization of the civic and the social, both in courts and as traversed on the web. New transnational spaces are formed through emulations, or evocations of gender and sex. The web performs itself to the body through an interface organized by the discourses of sex and gender. While Smith's virtual court illustrates the founding of a liberative public space, it is a space built by and through the worlding devices of transnational capital.

The world wide web is both a colonizing and deterritorializing space, which often boasts that it "transcends" geographical boundaries, in a new, enthusiastically-embraced formation of community apart from traditional forms of territorial ownership. To some degree, as we have seen, this can be effective. However, the local is evacuated for citizenship in this "webworld," serving as what Lacan calls the "pound of flesh" that one must pay in order to enter this new form of the Symbolic. If, in Lacanian terms, castration is the price one pays in order to enter speaking and writing, this new form of the Symbolic requires "place" to be evacuated, in order to become a citizen of the "new world."

As "place" is evacuated, marked bodies perform the residual effects of territory and citizenship. As we will see, tropes of sexuality and gender are organized within trnansnational spaces to make the locations of new transnational capital seem familiar while they displace traditional national and local geographies. The reorganization of the "East" or Asian-Pacific territories through new globalizing practices offers one of the more vivid examples of how sex and gender are deployed to reconfigure and make familiar globalized space.

Transnational Uses of Sex and Gender

Mitsuhiro Yoshimoto, in his article "Real Virtuality," argues that this "dissociation of space from place [...] of time replaced by speed" make "image and

spectacle [...] [into] commodities, which can be consumed and disappear imme-
diately [...]" In turn, their digital reproduction renders "the material base in-
creasingly ephemeral"(115). Yoshimoto concludes that the digital image is be-
coming the basic commodity in the global economy (116).

What is important to our consideration today is how this transnational space
organizes around the discourses of gender and sex for its representation. In its
most liberative sense, it creates cyber-bodies who "trans" restrictive social
boundaries in their very composition. But this deployment of the discourse of
sex is also of use to the formation of transnational corporations, who must in-
vent a new sense of territory and identity for their labor and commercial profits.

Neferti Tadiar, in her article "Sexual Economies in the Asia-Pacific Com-
munity," argues that new labor and commodity markets are being formed
through what she terms a global sexual fantasy. Tadiar explains that new
transnational "economies and political relations of nations are libidinally con-
figured, that is, they are grasped in terms of sexuality" (183). This desire is
specifically heterosexual in its mode, enacted according to what Tadiar refers to
as the prevailing mode of heterosexual relations" (186). Therefore, in its com-
position, it creates both licit and illicit relations. Since heterosexuality has his-
torically claimed the privilege of marriage, it must bear the burden of the licit,
and the potential of the illicit (as Clinton has embodied). Moreover, hetero re-
lations have always depended on the "kindness" of the stable binary of gender.[4]

Turning specifically to the Asian-Pacific region, Tadiar notes that this region
once signified a threat to the global power of the U.S. The struggles of the Viet-
nam War, followed by economic growth and practices that threatened to make
the region more independent and powerful, made South-East Asia a signifier of
irreconcilable differences. Thus, a new dream of the region was required to
transform it into a part of the transnational pool of capital. The new region
dropped out national names to become "the Asian-Pacific community." Tadiar
argues that the new region was imagined through a sexualized representation of
a "marriage" brokered between the United States and Japan, with, in the licit
relations, Japan as wife, and the U.S. as husband (185-86). Yet within the
Asian-Pacific region, asserts Tadiar, Japan encouraged a performance of illicit
relations, in which Japan plays male John (emulating some occupational prac-
tices of American soldiers in the region) to the poorer countries. The relations
play through the image and the reality of the prostitute. As evidence, Tadiar
lists the 100,000 Asian migrant women who enter Japan each year to work as
"entertainers in the booming sex industry." Ninety percent of them come from

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4. "Kindness" is a send-up of Blanche's line from *A Streetcar Named Desire*: "I've always
   depended on the kindness of strangers." It is a campy line, very familiar in some cir-
   cles.

the Philippines, Thailand, and Taiwan (198).[5]

Alongside this material practice, which sexualizes economic power and makes underdeveloped nations into "hostesses," the labor conditions of women in free trade zones are constructed as a sexual masquerade. The work camps in the economic zones emulate the conditions of a brothel, where women (and only women) are forced to live where they work, putting in 60-80 hour weeks for little money. Tadiar concludes that the transnational zone is formed "not so much [by] nations acting like people, but [by] people embodying nations" (204). Deterritorialization finds a new ground in gendered bodies, which offers them up to transnational uses through scenarios of seduction and sexual practice.
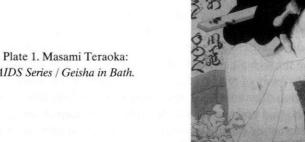
The painter Masami Teraoka offers a brilliant and witty artistic vision of the penetration of a feminized Japan by Western transnational capital. Teraoka uses traditional Japanese painting styles and scenes to ironize the penetration of transnational capital into that historical imaginary. In 1974, his series "McDonald's Hamburgers Invading Japan" placed french fries in the midst of a traditional Japanese woodblock. Teraoka then moved on to depict something more sexualized and gendered than the invasion of commodities.

Using images from ghost tales and Kabuki theater, Teraoka places condoms, the issue of safe sex, in the hands of a bathing geisha (Plate 1). This one, entitled "Geisha in Bath" paints the fear of AIDS, which even a thousand condoms can't quell. The geisha, the hostess in the "pleasure quarter" as Teraoka puts it, both feminizes and sexualizes the image of Japan here, with a fear of a deadly penetration, situated within its own traditional imaginary. Without trivializing the AIDS pandemic, these images may also be read, particularly in the light of his earlier work, as a form of revealing the sexualized nature of the transnational contact. In his notes to one of the paintings, Teraoka makes this sense even more viable, as he wryly attributes this thought to the geisha: "Hmmm. These condoms are so big - they must be for foreign visitors, they are too big for my lover."

Teraoka's next series, in the '90s, moves to the computer. In these images, the danger of sexualized transnational contact becomes a wounding of the gendered body (Plate 2). This watercolor, entitled "Eve with Three Blind Mice" situates the nude female body, hooked up to mice and keyboard, standing in front of the ruins of European culture. Japanese calligraphy, a form of writing, joins the architecture of the Coliseum, to frame the body. Wounded and green, the body stands in for material culture, ruined by new systems of virtuality. The nudity emphasizes the body as gendered, feminized, as a receiver – a receptor – of the systems.

Another piece, entitled "Adam and Eve/Mousetrap" (1995) likens the computer mouse to the vulture, strapping the mythological figures, Adam and Eve,

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5. I must say now that Tadiar's article was written before what is known as the "Asian financial crisis."

Plate 1. Masami Teraoka:
AIDS Series / Geisha in Bath.

Plate 2. Masami Teraoka:
Eve with Three Blind Mice.

our figures of the origins of gender and sexuality, to a tree (Plate 3). The mouse replaces the snake in the garden of Eden, wounding the bodies of original sin. With Japanese script in the painting, the world wide web is made to seem more like the world-wide carnage of the body, but particularly the gendered, sexualized body. The blank, bloodied computer screen hanging darkly as a fruit of the tree, is, perhaps, the apple. In other words, transnational, virtual systems strike at the very origins of the bipolar organization of gender and sex.

Together, Tadiar's article and Teraoka's paintings visualize the body as transnational zone through a heterosexualized version of the elements. "Trans" remains outside the body of stable gender, preying upon it, or using it to embody the sexualization of nations. The heterosexualized body differs in its effect from the trans-gendered body, in which the "trans" lies deep in the hormonal structuring, with virtual or cyber deterritorialization both within the body and the body within it. Using the trope of heterosexual relations, the transnational zone is organized through licit or illicit relations across the bipolar gender divide. If this is so, then what of its counterpart – the organization of transnational territories through representations of the homosexual?

Plate 3. Masami Teraoka:
Adam and Eve / Mousetrap.

Figures of Homosexuality in the Transnational Zone

In a dissertation on Taiwanese Lesbian Identities, Yengning Chao describes how the formation of lesbian identities was intricately interwoven with the building of a Taiwanese national identity. Taiwan was set up to create a new China, one that would distinguish itself from the "other" China – the communist China. Chao establishes Taiwanese identity as inventing itself within colonial occupations, from its status as an early colony of Japan to the place where Chiang Kai-Shek set up his exiled government, noting that Chinese culture, since the 19th century, has "been a product of transnational negotiations" (14).

Homosexual identities were made to play a dangerous role within these national conflicts. In 1947, the troubles between the various factions brought the imposition of Martial Law, which remained in effect until 1987. The Bureau of Journalism censored the media, while public gatherings were curtailed. Chao contends that lesbian identity could not be fully formed until the lifting of Martial Law, for in the anti-communist era overt gender crossing, asssociated with homosexual activity, fell into the category of "anti-social acts" (39). "Tomboys" were recognized as "Communist spies" (fei-tieh) by the police and mass media (39). Chao recounts a complex incident in which a woman wearing drag was arrested on the charge of treason. In other words, lesbian sexuality, accompanied by a transgender identification was considered "communist" – the bad binary opposite to the new Taiwanese identity.

Conversely, Katrin Sieg, writing about "Sexual Subjects of the Cold War" traces the construction of the notion of homosexuality between the divided Germanies: along the socialist/capitalist wall. Sieg notes that an early communist acceptance of "free love," including homosexual love, in 1879, changed to its condemnation by the German Communist Party (KPD). Within the identity formation of the German Democratic Republic, homosexuality was denounced as a "symptom of the degeneration of the fascist bourgeoisie" (Stümke, qtd. in Sieg, 93). Thus, the gay and lesbian struggle for visibility and representation in the GDR was considered unfaithful to the socialist state – a form of treason.

In both of these examples, we can see how homosexuality was made to play a role in national identity formation along the binary of communism and capitalism. Ironically, it was considered treasonous within Taiwanese democracy as well as within communist East Germany. The borders of national identity shored themselves up through the abhorrence of illicit homosexual identities that crossed gender, when walls of state were being erected through binary opposites.

Now, if once trans-gender identification lent itself to the melodrama of the Cold War, Chao goes on to illustrate how, in today's Taiwan, such identification may be considered part of a progressive, liberatory process. The emerging homosexual identity is not constructed as "lesbian," but rather, as a version of "butch-femme" role playing, that is, through the masquerade of the production of gender. At present, Chao identifies the terms "T" and "P'o" as representing the two lesbian sexual identities as performative (17). "T" originally derives

from the English word "tomboy," a word gay men used in gay bars to refer to masculine-dressed lesbians and "P'o" literally means "wife," understood, within U.S. discourse, as "femme." Moreover, contemporary T-bars are located within urban environments, often with Karaoke and TV screens in the bars (58). Thus, the origin of the term "T" is transnational, in its referent to the English "tomboy," while the bars, the performative sites for that identification, are also the site of the importation of several screens, from the Japanese Karaoke, to the TV window on the world. The liberatory identification is composed through a conjunction of national histories and transnational contacts.

Similarly, Took Took Thongthiraj finds that in Thailand, emerging homosexual identities are also not formed through any referent to "lesbian," but through what is called the "tom and dy scene" which is analogous to butch-femme (46). In both Taiwan and Thailand, then, we can observe the spread and resistance to the U.S. discourse for homosexual issues across nations. The transnational nature of the discourse of homosexual visibility is received as both liberatory and as a mark of U.S. cultural imperialism. This is a complex system of assimilation and resistance, in which sexual practices and gender identifications are put to use in the formation of national identities and profiles of the "citizen."

We might find a representation of this paradigm in the play *M. Butterfly*, by David Henry Hwang. Hwang navigates the space between French colonizing forces and the Chinese Cultural Revolution through a homosexual relationship, in which a cross-dressed Chinese man seduces a member of the French consulate. Hwang is clear in his play that the East is feminized in relation to the masculinized Western colonial forces. China is a woman, even as a cross-dressed woman, in the imaginary of the West, and the West's masculinity depends upon the masquerade for its power. But the portrait is even more complex. In Hwang's play, later made into a film, a Chinese man in drag stands in front of the Cultural Revolution, which sought to equalize gender roles. He plays the hyper-feminine woman to the colonial forces obscuring, or upstaging the experiment in gender equality that accompanied the cultural revolution.

Moreover, this cross-dressed man represents the allure of traditional and imported forms of performance, from Chinese opera to *Madame Butterfly*. When the French consul stumbles in to one of those performances sanctioned by the cultural revolution, he is revolted to see a "real" woman on the stage, displacing the trans-gender casting of traditional Beijing Opera. This revolutionary female subject of the cultural revolution fails to offer the colonial consul the seductive promise of more traditional Chinese inequities of power. Traditional gender and performance practices are made to appear more sympathetic than the revolutionary experiments. The character of Comrade Chin –a woman dressed in gender-neutral Mao fashion, constitutes the antagonist to this cross-dressed Beijing Opera performer in a dress. The communist Chinese woman, Comrade Chin, appears as masculinized, unsympathetic, cruel, and, as desexualized, dull.

Homosexuality is portrayed here as associated with the colonial and the decadent – with the West. By now, this is a familiar trope (that homosexuality is not an indigenous practice outside of the European context), but here this trope serves a complex interest. The international zone, even if colonial, is narrativized as more seductive than the national, communist one of the cultural revolution. Further, homosexual relations are made to reinforce traditional gender roles, set up against more progressive roles for women in the social sphere. Gender and sexuality are organized as the alluring interface with a transnational identification.

Thus, while celebrating the liberatory uses of new homosexual identifications, we may also wonder if they can be made to serve the formation of new transnational zones. They may be used to further cultural imperialism, as illustrated in the examples of discourses of emancipation derived from the U.S. They may also be used to promote a sense that a seductive, alluring assimilation of traditional gender roles can organize a new form of identification that resists local movements for change and identifies instead with a new so-called community of transnational interests.

Nevertheless, these same homosexual identifications may serve to alienate one from nationalist projects aimed at forming around strictly heteronormative values, as in the cultural climate organized by the Bush administration in the U.S. For example, in 2002, there is a drive to make welfare funds available only to married individuals. While other countries, such as Sweden, recognize homosexual unions, they may also find ways to organize the relationship between homosexuality and citizenship as a basis for the production of the normative middle-class.

Conclusion

Using strategies derived from the production and analysis of performance, I have proposed several examples to illustrate how new technologies and transnational interests are being received and promoted in the system of representation. Science fiction tropes can be understood as both masking and revealing our anxieties and understandings of new technological and employment practices. However, primary among the elements forming the new cultural imaginary, are those which organize the tension between representations of the body and virtual spaces. The cyborgean interface requires the adaptation of several discourses surrounding the body to be deployed toward soliciting identificatory processes within digital compositions. I have proposed that the discourses of gender and technology now construct the interface between people and these new spaces. Sexualizing and genderizing effects may produce a creative, even playful space where identifications may be explored. In this paper, the discourse of gender solicits identification through two forms: transgender identification through the Brandon website and bipolar, normative gender production in new transnational territories, even if produced through homosexual unions. The

Brandon website is a magnet site for the performance of trans-gender identification. It also offers a forum for testing the formation of civil and legal procedures through such identifications. In this way, the website presents a liberatory, playful space that can invite the performance of de-regulated gender crossings. Conversely, the bipolar gender effect that accompanies normative gender regimes, is seen to mark transnational incursions into national traditions, displacing the effect of the local with a new, transcendent, immaterial zone.

The discourse of sexuality takes two forms here: the heteronormative and the homosexual. As licit and illicit, the heteronormative paradigm can be used to transport economic alliances between nations that, in the end, produce a new territory defined solely by the movement of capital. The emergence of a homosexual discourse has been treated variously in different projects toward organizing a national identity. Used punitively in the era of the Cold War, a homosexual identification was seen as treasonous. Today, a new liberatory visibility may be gained through gender masquerade, while at the same time, serving the cause of cultural imperialism.

It is a very complex world wide web of associations that encourages a new global economic fantasy as sexual. Yet the critiques we have at hand do not intertwine these elements. Within the movement and theory of alternative sexualities, the study of transnational capital has not become part of the critique. Likewise, in postcolonial and transnational critiques, heterosexuality and tropes of the family unit are often presumed, with little sense of transgender identifications, or sexual practices outside the heteronormative ones.

Given these conditions of representation and deterritorialization, I would argue that only through a combination of the sexual critique and the transnational can we begin to perceive just how this new global fantasy is being constructed. The World Wide Web is a concept used to seduce nations into transnational cooperation with the First World as well as an internet composition. Through the above analysis, we can see how the address, WWW, creates an electronic universe that mirrors the imaginary of the transnational one. We are able to operate on the web because of the cultural imaginary already formed across various media and business transactions. Corporate in structure, the WWW offers representations of personal and social relations that encourage identificatory processes on the part of the user. Most of the figures of the web simply reproduce stereotypical notions of gender and sexuality to seduce users into collusion with transnational capital through these identificatory modes. The conflation of commodity fetishism with the codes of gender and sexuality promote a subject/object status for the web figures that seems familiar and available for the users. Elsewhere, I have argued that these are actually inter-fetish relations, posing as identificatory ones within web uses of the avatar.[6] In

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6. See my forthcoming article, "Digital Divas: Sex and Gender in Cyberspace," in the new, revised version of *Critical Theory and Performance*.

fact, the WWW could be perceived as an animation of logos, who are portrayed as gendered and sexual in order to seduce users into interacting with them. Still, some uses of the web continue to trace alternative spaces. The question remains, how will people be able to imagine an alternative to the status quo, given the prevalence and persistence of the corporate imaginary.

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