

other. They had had each other for some time now.

Finally, she asked him, "Would you quit smoking for me?"

He paused and looked at her with a soft smile before responding. "Of course, darling."

He put his cigarette out on the bed frame. "You are my only vice."

GENDER & ETHNIC STUDIES

Fragmented Reality in *Resisting Interpellation*: Femininity, Cinema, and the Workplace

Raine Roberts

The following is an excerpt from a longer piece. For full text, please visit https://scholar.colorado.edu/concern/undergraduate_honors_theses/f7623d209

ABSTRACT

Powerful women are generally misrepresented and underrepresented in films, both behind and in front of the camera. It is difficult to rise to the top of an industry when a stigma of inferiority follows you everywhere you go. *Resisting Interpellation* addresses the struggle to be taken seriously as a minority in a corporate environment. Our main (unnamed) protagonist, a young, mixed-race woman, attempts to start her first day on the job with ease and without negative judgment. Set in current times, she meets with her supervisor who provides her no useful information for the job that she is about to begin. As the format of the screen changes with the fragmented ways a woman can be viewed in an office, she learns that you cannot control the ascription assigned to you. She must grapple with what is reality and what is perception.

The film will explore the dynamics of an internal space and the positionality of gender in the workplace. Ultimately, she will achieve closure and success at the end of this film, making a stand within her own internal space, within the frame. Though the film takes place in contemporary times, it does have aspects and references that are applicable to any given time in American history. It will address the misleading representation of women in

films.

This film will pay homage to female-orientated films—films made by women about women. Films like *Wendy and Lucy* (Reichardt, 2008, USA), *In A World...* (Bell, 2013, USA), *Erin Brockovich* (Soderbergh, 2000, USA), and *SKUNK* (Silverstein, 2014, USA) will help hone the message and the intended perspective of this paper. Films such as *The Thomas Crown Affair* (Jewison, 1968, USA) and *A Place to Stand* (Chapman, 1967, Canada) will provide reference and influence to the format of the film. In addition, through this film, I look at perceived lack of legitimacy targeted at women's work and women's interests.

The accompanying essay will delve into the perceived lack of legitimacy associated with female-oriented films. A connection to the broader social issue regarding women in the professional sphere will support the claims of perceived lack of legitimacy. It will discuss the historical context of women in film, and how they came to be a forgotten contribution to film history. Finally, the essay will discuss the implication of rhetoric used in 'mansplaining' and in general conversation with, and about, women. This essay's purpose is to create a comprehensive and relatable rhetorical dynamic to propel further questioning of one's own conversational practices and one's

perception of feminine legitimacy.

[...]

LITERATURE REVIEW

Resisting Interpellation is generally non-narrative, though it does have some narrative aspects in it. Finding a way to create a visual and auditory story without using the classical narrative structure of most mainstream films leads to its own creative problem solving. As reference, I looked into books that talked about women in the workplace, or addressed aspects of it. *We Should All Be Feminists* by Chimamanda Ngozi-Adichie (2017) and *Men Explain Things to Me* by Rebecca Solnit (2015) provided resourceful tools to talk about feminism in workplace environments. They addressed issues like 'mansplaining' and the nature of femininity in a masculinized corporate world. 'Mansplaining' can be defined as an explanation of something by a man, normally to a woman, in a patronizing tone—the man's conversational tone may be a conscious or unconscious decision. Ngozi-Adichie, for example notes, "To be 'taken seriously' is masculine by nature" (Ngozi-Adichie, 38). Women have to dress like men in order to be taken seriously, "to be legitimate" (Ngozi-Adichie, 38). These sources reinforce the notions and mainstream corporate thoughts on femininity that helped shape *Resisting Interpellation*'s costume design. Women need to dress like a man (i.e. pant suits, ties, button down shirts) to be seen as credible, so our main protagonist wears masculinized outfits in certain versions to convey professionalism and sophistication.

Narrative films that influenced the themes and message behind *Resisting*

Interpellation include *In A World...* (Bell, 2013, USA), *Erin Brockovich* (Soderbergh, 2000, USA), *SKUNK* (Silverstein, 2014, USA), and *Wendy and Lucy* (Reichardt, 2008, USA).

These films have a unique way of showcasing the power of gendered dynamics within a workplace or out in the world. *In A World...* uses the film industry as its target, featuring a female protagonist who navigates through a male-dominated voice-acting industry. Her desire to be a known voice in trailers becomes harder as she is confronted with male obstacles, including her own father. Much like in *Resisting Interpellation*, the main protagonist strives to achieve power over her inner space, devoid of views of the disciplined feminine body. In *SKUNK*, the female protagonist's dog gets stolen after a sexual experience with a guy who gets embarrassed and blames her for it. She sets on a journey to rescue her dog from this guy, ultimately achieving getting her dog back and a personal reward. Our unnamed protagonist in my film 'journeys' through the office as she is being subjected to untrue versions of herself. It is a harsh experience, and this makes it feel as though she is isolated in this space. But, once she overcomes the difficulty of these gazes, she accepts herself by expanding her panel to full-frame, taking up all the space on the screen and taking the space in her mind.

In continuation with the style of the filmmaking, I looked at formats within narrative and experimental films alike to hone in on how I wanted the frame to look on the screen. The fragmented reality of the framing notes the splitting of the protagonist's self-image and maintains this sense of isolation within a panel. Films like *The Thomas Crown Affair* (Jewison, 1968, USA) and *A Place to Stand* (Chapman, 1967, Canada) incorporate this paneling

and framing of the image. Done by the work of Pablo Ferro, *The Thomas Crown Affair's* polo scene spans and jumps space and time. Certain panels repeated over the screen put an emphasis on the action happening. Characters are isolated within a certain frame, making note of their reactions. This is a fantastically edited sequence that evokes the fast-paced play of a polo game. In *Resisting Interpellation*, the eyes are doubled up and repeated over the frame to emphasize the gaze; our main character is isolated in different frames to note her reactions and actions. *The Thomas Crown Affair* was a huge influence on the accentuation of certain frames repeated over and over on the screen. *A Place to Stand* provides a slightly different influence on my film; it shows the same action, but for different angles. For my film, I integrated this effect by utilizing the different angles, but with different versions of the protagonist as well. *A Place to Stand* influenced my film in a way that made me think outside the box in terms of angles and actions, on what I can show and from where.

Originally, *Resisting Interpellation* was going to be structured as a narrative short film. I had written a script and designed a general shot script, but once I had finished my BFA capstone film I realized I would rather tell this story through non-normative ways as opposed to a strict narrative structure. Thus, I began designing ways in which I could tell this story, through non-traditional ways. In *Women Filmmakers in Early Hollywood* (2008) and in *Be Natural: The Untold Story of Alice Guy-Blaché* (2018), Mahar and Green speak of the female filmmakers who made a large amount of nickelodeons. What differed the female filmmakers from their male counterparts was their attention to storytelling, as opposed to

the spectacle picture shows. These female filmmakers were very innovative and inventive. They would color on film celluloid, make cuts and edits, and they even achieved a synced-sound experience for audience members (Green, 2018). They created new ways to tell a story on film. Nowadays, it is nearly impossible to do something that someone has not already done before with film, but these vignettes and nickelodeons of the early female filmmakers had me thinking about ways to tell a story quickly. Drawing from these shorts, I utilized what I read to make each of the paneled versions of our main protagonist in *Resisting Interpellation* its own stand-alone vignette. ANALYSIS OF RESISTING INTERPELLATION From the fragmented visuals to the droning audio, *Resisting Interpellation* has many moving parts all at once. To make sense of it all, I will be discussing the varying aspects of my film and how it relates to a workplace environment. With the opening of the overwhelmingly deep voice of the supervisor, we immediately get the sense of being surrounded by a male presence. His image fills the screen, taking up all of the space. Bartky (1988) talks about the spatial awareness of women and men within an environment, especially in the workspace, "Women are far more restricted than men in their manner of movement and in their spatiality" (Bartky, 66). When I hear this, I think about Jim from *The Office* (Daniels, 2005-2013, USA) as he constantly leans back in his chair, elbows out creating a large winged-like spread. In my film, when you see our main protagonist, she is already in a panel, just in a portion of the screen. This frame visually demonstrates she has not yet been given the room she is allowed, embodying Bartky's position regarding the restricted nature of women's

movements.

Women's spaces are also more frequented by others. Other coworkers feel that they can reach across their desk to grab a pencil, as also seen in *The Office*. Pam, the receptionist, is shown behind a large reception desk where others intrude on her space to make copies, grab supplies, lean over to talk, etc. In my film I wanted to show that the protagonist's space will always either have someone else in the panel, or will have some other panels overlapping each other. When we first see our main protagonist, she is with two other frames, one being a "Be Yourself" poster—which is there for irony—and another being a cluttered desk with the focus being on the phone—suggesting a receptionist's duty, like Pam from *The Office*.

When certain audio cues kick in, they are droning and non-diegetic. The droning audio does not come from anywhere in particular; instead, it is there to represent her internalized soundscape. It feels like waves, going in and out, as if she is attempting to block the perceptions of her and her body, but the forces—the eyes—keep coming back. It also creates an ominous environment of hidden dangers—the feeling of being looked at, being judged for no particular reason other than because she is a woman. This droning is overlaid with sounds of the office and the echoed, condescending expectations of the supervisor. Beginning with the office noises: the stapler, printer, and keyboard. These sounds serve the purpose of reinforcing the monotonous nature of a 9-to-5 office job. The sounds are slowed to a point where they seem unrecognizable. Again, this is to evoke her internal soundscape as she starts becoming more of an anchor of narrative as opposed to being thrown about in sequential panels.

With the echoed voice of the supervisor, they slowly turn from an external space into an internal one, supporting the notion of the protagonist taking control of her environment and trajectory.

To begin talking about the panels of her on screen, I want to point out the varying sizes and placements of the panels. At the end of the film, the protagonist's "True to Self" version (which is the most accurate version of our main character within reality) is boxed into the lower right corner. The framing reveals her and the supervisor far away in depth, but also shows that the "True to Self" panel is not widely regarded nor brought to the forethought within her mind. It is the very act of sitting down, seeing her space, controlling her trajectory and narrative, which brings the panel to center and also allows for an increase in size. Though still fragmented, and surrounded by eyes, the main character consumes her space to fill the screen and ultimately anchor her narrative. A full frame is the norm for most film formats—rarely do we see a split screen nowadays—so this expansion into full frame reinforces the fact that she is now in control of her own narrative.

My film is set in contemporary situations and workplaces. It draws on the gendered power dynamics that are represented in workplaces, whether in corporate jobs or on-set film studios. *Resisting Interpellation* creates an atmosphere of isolation, uncomfortability, and vulnerability. The way it panels the female body is representative of how the female body is portrayed in movies, in media, and in society—it is an extreme example of objectification, and purposefully so. There is a constant juggling of roles and perceptions, yet this is out of one's control. To take control, or anchor the

narrative, is what is most difficult to achieve in any internal space. Thus, the last shot of the film is the most important for us, for her, and for the internal space of consciousness. Films that showcase this process of realizing and conquering the internal consciousness are rarely seen in female-oriented films. Though they do exist, they are few and far between. *SKUNK* depicts the main female protagonist winning her confidence and trajectory of her narrative with the reward of getting her dog back. The same goes for *Wendy and Lucy* and *In A World...*, the female characters conquer their internal space to create a freedom of thoughts, away from judgments and negative impressions from others. *Cléo from 5 to 7* showcases the gazes and the impressions of others on Cléo; she is used to being looked at, but in a climatic scene she challenges the gaze. Instead of being complacent with being looked at, she returns the gaze of the onlooker and thus changes her perspective both internally and externally. Our main protagonist in *Resisting Interpellation* similarly sifts through the eyes and alternative versions of herself within the panels that she is aware of and wishes to eradicate. Once this has been achieved, she can then start to return the gaze outwards—to be looking, as opposed to being looked at. Finally, she will be able to take her internal narrative and achieve a sense of control within an environment made to erase and ignore her.

[...]

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Queer Futurity and Hybridity in *Arrival* and *Embrace of the Serpent*

Emma Breitman

The following is an excerpt from a longer piece. For full text, please visit https://scholar.colorado.edu/concern/undergraduate_honors_theses/05741s686

[...]

Introduction

On July 18th, 2006 Vice President Mike Pence addressed Congress to argue against same-sex marriage. Pence has been known to be fervently anti-LGBTQ and a supporter of “Focus on the Family,” a Colorado Springs-based conservative organization that is not only pro-life, anti-LGBTQ, but also pro-medical/psychiatric intervention for LGBTQ identified persons.¹ The organization is one that frequently pathologizes queer populations, so it is no coincidence that on July 18th, 2006 during his speech, Pence said the following:

I come today to defend that institution that forms the backbone of our society: traditional marriage. Like millions of Americans, I believe that marriage matters, that it was ordained by God, instituted among men, that it is the glue of the American family and the safest harbor to raise children...I believe first, though, marriage should be protected, because

it wasn't our idea. Several millennia ago the words were written that a man should leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife and the two shall become one flesh. It was not our idea; it was God's idea...Marriage matters, according to the researchers. Harvard sociologist Pitrim Sorokin found that throughout history, societal collapse was always brought about following an advent of the deterioration of marriage and family.² This statement is problematic for many reasons. First, the Vice President's allusion to homosexual marriages as being unsafe “harbors” to raise children cites the historical association between queerness and criminality. As Gayle Rubin explains in her work “Thinking Sex,” “the term *sex offender* sometimes applied to rapists, sometimes to “child molesters,” and eventually functioned as a code for homosexuals.”³ In this way, Pence's implication that heterosexual marriages are “safe” for children alludes to these historic associations that members of the LGBT

¹Information about Pence's support of “Focus on the Family”:
<https://www.denverpost.com/2017/06/23/mike-pence-focus-family-colorado-springs/>
 For information about central pro-life and anti-LGBT values: <https://www.focusonthefamily.com/about/foundational-values/>
 For information about counseling:
<https://www.focusonthefamily.com/family-qa/parent-suspects-that-child-might-be-gay/>
<http://media.focusonthefamily.com/fotf/pdf/channels/social-issues/thriving-values-when-a-loved-one-says-im-gay.pdf>
² *Congressional Record*. 2006. 109th Cong., vol. 152, pt. 1, p. H5301.
³Rubin, S Gayle. “Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality.” *Deviations: A Gayle Rubin Reader*, Durham, Duke University Press, 2011, p. 138.

community—especially gay men—are sexual predators and therefore are a threat not just to children but to society as a whole. Furthermore, by using the figure of the Child in the argument that homosexual marriages are “unsafe harbors” to raise children, Pence implies that queer people are a threat not only to society itself but also to our society’s future. Lee Edelman, who utilizes the notion of “the Child” in conjunction with queer theory explains that “...the child has come to embody for us the telos of the social order and come to be seen as the one for whom that order is held in perpetual trust.”⁴ In other words, not only does the Child represent the “ideal society,” but also the futurity and longevity of that ideal society. Consequently, Vice President Pence’s description of homosexual marriage as unsafe for the Child implies that queer people are ultimately a threat to the viability of society. That idea is reified when, at the end of the quote, he equates changes to heteronormative marriage structure with the collapse of society itself. Additionally, by arguing that heterosexual marriage is “ordained by god,” Pence essentially argues that heterosexuality is natural, inevitable, and sacred. This statement indicates that homosexuality is unnatural and preventable, which implicitly cites queerness’ long history of being seen as a “physiological abnormality.” In her work *Queering the Color Line*, Siobhan Somerville investigates how homosexuality has been similarly pathologized. She notes that numerous sexologists such as Richard von Krafft-Ebing, Havelock Ellis and Karl Heinrich

Ulrichs worked to classify homosexuality as a “physiological abnormality” and in the process became the scientific authorities of what sexual practices were pathologized and which ones were not.⁵ Moreover, pathologized behavior was largely seen as such due to its perceived divergence from “normal” expressions of masculinity and femininity and had explicit racial undertones.⁶ Pence’s claim that heterosexuality is “ordained by god,” and therefore natural, positions heterosexuality as the norm while simultaneously alluding to historical anxieties connecting homosexuality and race with disease. Together, the discursive tools used by Pence reveal the perception that queer populations will infect and ultimately destroy normative society. However, this narrative is not limited to politicians, but is also spouted through mainstream media outlets such as the film industry. In this thesis I analyze two films, *Arrival* and *Embrace of the Serpent*, and identify how they both articulate a similar message about queer populations. *Arrival* tells the story of what happens when twelve alien ships land in various locations across the world. Louise Banks, a professor and highly accredited linguist is recruited by the U.S. Government to work with the aliens, called the Heptapods, to figure out what their purpose on Earth is. As the film progresses and Louise begins to understand their written language, called logograms, she begins to experience time out of linear order. Eventually, she learns that thousands of years in the future the Heptapods will need the help of humans, so

by teaching Louise their language they ensure that the humans can communicate with them when that time comes. *Embrace of the Serpent* takes place in the Amazon rainforest and tells the story of Karamakate, an Indigenous man who is the last of the Cohiuano people. The film recounts his travels with two Western anthropologists, Theo and Evan, who come to the Amazon forty years apart, both in search of a sacred plant called “yakruna.” Theo looks for the yakruna to cure his unnamed illness, while Evan seeks it for its ability to “raise the purity of rubber,” despite telling Karamakate that he just wishes to study it. The travels of these two men run parallel to one another with each man visiting many of the same places, meeting some of the same people, and often having some of the same conversations with Karamakate. However, their endings differ greatly which, I will argue, is the result of their commitment to learning from Karamakate so that Karamakate may pass on his Indigenous knowledge and allow for the survival of his people. In this thesis, I will argue that both films, while seemingly different on the surface, demonstrate how queered populations are seen as an infection or an illness by hegemonic culture and have the power to infect those from hegemonic culture that come into contact with them. However, an important difference between the two films,

and one that allows for some resistance against the pathologization of the queered groups, is that *Embrace of the Serpent* is presented from the Indigenous peoples’ perspective whereas *Arrival* is from hegemonic culture’s perspective. As a result, *Embrace of the Serpent* gives the Indigenous people more agency and allows them to push back some against their pathologization. In this thesis, when I refer to queer populations or queered populations, I do not exclusively mean those who do not identify as heterosexual. Rather, my use of queer is in line with David Halperin’s definition in which “queer is by definition whatever is at odds with the normal, the legitimate, the dominant.”⁷ Consequently, my analysis will focus on groups that are portrayed as “backwards” or “abnormal” in relation to hegemonic culture, the norm. In *Arrival* the queer group is the Heptapods, the aliens who land on Earth and impart their language to Louise. In *Embrace of the Serpent* the queer group is Karamakate and the other Indigenous people living in the Amazon.⁸ In both films these queered groups are seen as an infection to society, and certain preventative actions are put in place to stop their infection from spreading to members of hegemonic culture. Despite these preventative actions, members of hegemonic culture still become “infected”; however, those who survive do so by developing hybridity, thus

⁷ Halperin, David M. *Saint Foucault: Towards a Gay Hagiography*. New York, Oxford University Press, 1995, pp. 62.

⁸ In regard to my analysis of *Embrace of the Serpent* I use the terms “Indigenous” and “Native” respectively when speaking about peoples with a political, spiritual, and social relationship to the land and who are the first inhabitants of that land. In my analysis I utilize the term “Indigenous people” when speaking about Karamakate and the other first inhabitants of the Amazon since “Indigenous” is typically situated within an international context outside of the U.S or Canada. The location of Karamakate and the other Indigenous people in the Amazon therefore qualifies them as “Indigenous” although it should still be noted that these identity categories are socially constructed and often times ambiguous. I use the term “Native”—a term typically used in the context of the U.S.—when referencing research about the first inhabitants of what is now called the United States and comparing it to the situation of the Indigenous peoples in *Embrace of the Serpent*. For sources explaining this distinction in terminology see: “Terminology.” *Indigenousfoundations*, University of British Columbia, indigenousfoundations.arts.ubc.ca/terminology/. “Lexicon and Terminology.” *Reporting in Indigenous Communities*, Reporting in Indigenous Communities, riic.ca/the-guide/on-the-air/lexicon-and-terminology/.

⁴ Edelman, Lee. “The Future is Kid Stuff.” *No Future: Queer Theory and Death Drive*. London, Duke University Press, 2004, pp. 11.

⁵ Somerville, Siobhan. “Scientific Racism and the Invention of the Homosexual Body.” *Queering the Color Line: Race and the Invention of Homosexuality in American Culture*. London, Duke University Press, 2000, p. 19.

⁶ Ibid.

being part of hegemonic culture as well as part of the queered group. In both films their hybridity not only allows for their own survival, but it also allows for the survival of the queered group itself. These two films therefore bring up questions of queer futurity, or the ability of queer people to survive. Some queer theory scholars, like Lee Edelman, have theorized that there is “no future” for queers and that fighting for future inclusion in society reproduces heterosexual ideology.⁹ Others, like Jose Esteban Muñoz, disagree with Edelman and argue instead that queer futurity is never in the “here and now” but rather exists in the “then and there.” It is something “on the horizon” that we will always strive to reach.¹⁰ Both films end with the disappearance of the queered group which ultimately begs the question of which view on queer futurity they present. My findings suggest that although this may seem problematic on the surface, the disappearance of these queer groups reflects the “fleeting” quality of queer futurity as identified by Muñoz.

The thesis is separated into three chapters: a literature review, an analysis of *Arrival*, and an analysis of *Embrace of the Serpent*. The first chapter of this thesis, titled “Creating the Other,” will begin by giving some context to the notion of Otherness—an essential aspect to the queering of the Heptapods in *Arrival* and the Indigenous people in *Embrace of the Serpent*. After explaining how Othering has occurred throughout history, mainly by European powers to non-European powers, I will move on to explain “The queer Other” and how their subjugation is carried out as well as

how it is linked to pathologization. Lastly, I will investigate how racial Othering, like queer Othering, is also linked to pathologization. I note that although queer and racial Othering have been historically linked, for the flow and organization of this thesis I separate the two.

The second chapter titled “Alien Ailments” begins my analysis of *Arrival* with the section titled “Queering the Heptapods.” It looks at what characteristics cause the Heptapods to be seen as the queer and racial Other. I begin by looking at the visual aspects of the Heptapods including their skin color, the “misorientation” of the camera in relation to them, as well as the fog inside their ship that prevents their full visibility. Next, I move on to the auditory aspects of their queerness, namely the “queer sounds”—sounds that not only refuse legibility due to their mechanical and manufactured nature, but that also create a feeling of disharmony thus disrupting hegemonic “norms” of happiness.

The second section builds on the previous section’s explanation of the Heptapods’ queer characteristics and describes how their queerness is presented as an infection or threat to hegemonic culture. I begin by discussing the numerous preventative actions used by hegemonic culture, which in turn pathologizes the Heptapods, including the inoculations that Louise is given prior to contact with the Heptapods as well as the insistence by officials that she wear a hazmat suit. I then turn to how the Heptapods infect others, namely Louise. Louise’s increased fluency in the Heptapods’ written language, logograms, leads

others from hegemonic culture to view her as mentally ill although it is this same fluency that allows her to survive her interactions with the Heptapods unlike previous experts. I end the section with a discussion of queer futurity and what Louise’s newfound hybridity as a result of her logogram fluency says about a queer future.

The second chapter titled “Indigenous Infection” marks the beginning of my analysis of *Embrace of the Serpent*. In the first section of this chapter titled “Queering Karamakate” I identify what queers the Indigenous people of the Amazon, Karamakate included. I begin the chapter by noting how the environment of the Amazon is a key component that queers the Indigenous people and how the Amazon comes to represent the “wild,” “mess” that refuses colonial legibility. I then turn to dreams—a way for the Cohiuano people to connect to the gods through the use of yakruna or other hallucinogenic plants. I argue that dreams are essential to Indigenous ways of living, and since Indigenous ways of living are tied to the environment, which is queered due to its mess, dreams which provide the outlet for understanding how to be Indigenous are also queered.

The next section, “Preventative Actions,” moves on to what causes the Indigenous people to be seen as an infection by hegemonic culture. Here I make a distinction between young Indigenous children and Indigenous adults, arguing that age impacts the preventative measures used by hegemonic culture to “cure” the world of their infection. With the Indigenous children I argue that correctional action is more prevalent since the children are still seen as being malleable enough to erase Indigenous practices from their life. Indigenous adults on

the other hand are more frequently killed since they are no longer redeemable and therefore the only way to eradicate their disease is through extermination.

The final chapter of this thesis addresses how the Indigenous people in *Embrace of the Serpent* come to infect those from hegemonic culture. Here I contrast the sickness of Theo to the health of Evan to discuss the differences not only in their interactions with Karamakate but also their journeys as a whole and how this is a reflection of their respective ability to accept Indigenous cultural practices and become a western-Indigenous hybrid. Ultimately, I conclude that Evan’s decision to learn from Karamakate, as well as Karamakate’s decision to teach Evan is what differentiates him from Theo, who refused to learn from Karamakate and ultimately dies because of it. Finally, I will argue that the health of Evan and sickness of Theo suggest that queer futurity is only possible with the help of queer people as teachers. It should be noted that this conclusion supports an ableist logic that positions health as good and sickness/disability as bad. Although overall *Embrace of the Serpent* is slightly more progressive, the contrast of Theo’s sickness with Evan’s health does become problematic.

My purpose in this thesis is to compare these two films and identify firstly how the queered groups are seen as a sickness to hegemonic culture. Then, I identify the ways in which they are portrayed as infecting others in order to conclude what their disease suggests about queer futurity—or the ability of these queered groups to exist alongside the dominant culture of Western powers. Although in both films the queer Other disappears at the end of the film, leaving the hybrid in their wake, I argue that rather than seeing it through

⁹Edelman, Lee. “The Future is Kid Stuff.” *No Future: Queer Theory and Death Drive*. London, Duke University Press, 2004, pp. 1-31.

¹⁰Muñoz, José Esteban. “Queerness as Horizon,” *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*. New York, New York University Press, 2009, pp. 19-32.

Edelman's eyes as an example of "no future," it is instead an example of Muñoz's notion of queer futurity as being "always on the horizon."¹¹

[...]

¹¹ Muñoz, José Esteban. "Introduction: Feeling Utopia," *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*. York, New York University Press, 2009, p. 11.

Performative Identity in Yekl and Salome of the Tenements

Caleb Wexler

Identity, as it functions in Abraham Cahan's *Yekl* and Anzia Yeziarska's *Salome of the Tenements*, is complex and fluid. Characters in both novels—most notably, but not exclusively, the protagonists—change their appearance, their behavior, and even their names in order to change not only the perception of them, but who they are as individuals. In these novels identity is performative, rather than innate, which allows the protagonists to overcome their social positions as Russian-Jewish immigrants. However, their attempts invariably fail, not because of an inherent Jewishness, but because their attempts to subvert the Jew-Anglo dichotomy still operate within, and thus reinforce, this very system. Consequently, attempts to performatively escape the role of the ghetto Jew serve only to thrust them into an equally artificial, equally restrictive role. Yekl (who also goes by the name Jake) is the protagonist, and central tragic figure, of Cahan's novel by the same name. Of all the characters in these two works, he most fully works to transform himself. Yekl becomes Jake predominantly by changing his appearance and (obviously, though significantly) his name. These changes are performative in the dual meaning that they are affected and performed like a role and also in the linguistic sense of having a definite effect. By presenting himself as Jake, Yekl does, in fact, become Jake.

By changing his appearance Yekl

changes the outward signifiers of his identity and in doing so changes his identity itself. He dresses in the fashions of America, rather than those of his religion and his homeland. By shaving his beard and dressing as an American, Yekl visually assimilates himself into the norms of mainstream American culture. This sets him apart from the "greenhorns" (newly arrived immigrants) and distinguishes him as being something other than them. One of the most notable remarks on his appearance is the following from when Yekl is reunited with his wife Gitl, "She was at the same time mentally scanning the Yekl of three years before. The latter alone was hers, and she felt like crying to the image to come back to her and let her be his wife" (61). What is so striking about this scene is that while his wife recognizes him, she simultaneously cannot find the image of the person she knew, and the absence of the image shows him to be someone different from her husband. In visually performing an American identity, he has become manifestly other from who he was.

In changing his name, Yekl effects an even more profound change of his identity. The name is the most intimate signifier of the self. Even with a common name like Jake, one would not identify themselves with "I am a Jake," which would position the name as a quality which the subject shares with a collective. Rather, one would say "I am Jake." This identifies the speaker not with

a collectivity but with a unique subjectivity. Therefore, by changing his name, Yekl signifies, and in doing so effects, a change from his past immigrant identity to his present yankee identity. Indeed, the construction of this American identity is the goal of all his performative changes. This is made clear by his leitmotif, "Dot'sh a' kin' a man I am!" (10). This phrase is itself performative, continually redefining his identity, culminating in its final iteration, "I am an American feller, a Yankee—that's what I am" (117), in which Yekl both signals and effects the apotheosis of his self-transformation.

Despite the realization of his goal to become American, Jake ends the story still unhappy, and even trapped. When this text is considered on its own, it is unclear why the story ends with Yekl unhappy despite accomplishing his goal of becoming an assimilated American; however, when this text is considered alongside Yeziarska's *Salome of the Tenements* it becomes clear why performative identity in Yekl is self-defeating. In *Salome*, the performative nature of identity is shown through the story's heroine, Sonya, as well as her love interest, John Manning. For Sonya, like Yekl, this performance is largely visual. For Manning, the performance of his identity is not in any one act; rather, it is in the repetition of established patterns and traditions. Considered together, and alongside Yekl, these characters show how identity is performed and the effects of this performance within social structures.

Initially, Sonya, a poor woman from the Jewish ghetto, wants to be beautiful to express herself as she believes she truly is. To borrow the language of semiotics, she wants the external signifier of her body to reflect the internal signified of her subjectivity. This is

made clear when she says that she is looking for something "that will express me-myself" (23). This phrase, "me-myself" refers to her internal being, her essential self. She does not believe she can achieve this unity of externality and internality in the ghetto, so she makes it her goal to become the wife of the millionaire John Manning.

In order to pursue Manning, Sonya must embody Manning's ideal of the Jewess. This ideal is of a people made beautiful by their suffering and elevated by their poverty. His ideal of the poor Jew has no room for suffering which is not beautiful, or poverty which is not simple. Consequently, Sonya must make herself appear beautiful, but also must make this appear simple and effortless, contrary to reality. This is made entirely evident in Manning's visit to her apartment, during which he remarks favorably on the simplicity of her clothes and furniture, entirely unaware of the fact that it has all been carefully and expensively curated for him. As a result, Sonya begins performing not the identity which is true to her, but that of Manning's ideal Jew. To understand identity in this text, it is necessary to understand Manning's perception of the Jews. Two key points are shown in the line, "Even as a boy the tragic history of the Russian Jews had stirred John Manning with heroic longings" (32). This makes clear, first, that Manning's perception of the Jews is a priori. Second, that his perception is based on their role as an object for his own heroism. This can best be understood within the discourse of Orientalism, as established by Edward Said in his book *Orientalism*.

The context of the modern Orientalist discourse allows us to better understand the relationship between Sonya and Manning. As is explicitly stated in the text, "Sonya and

Manning...were the oriental and the Anglo-Saxon trying to find a common language" (132). In Said's *Orientalism*, he describes the Orient as the constructed European perception of the East, and the Occident as the perception of Europe constructed as that which is not the Orient. Just as the ideas of the Orient and Occident as places are constructed, the identities of the Oriental and the Occidental (Anglo-Saxon in the language of *Salome*) are performative. Sonya is not initially the Oriental that Manning perceives her to be, but rather adopts (which is to say, performs) the appearance and behavior of the Oriental for Manning, and later as his wife, the Occidentalized Jew. Sonya's observation that, "You [Manning] never budged from the straight footsteps of your ancestors" (152) reveals that Manning too is performing a set of expected behaviors which have been established as tradition by his family and which are reinforced as normative by his society. His continued performance of these behaviors constitutes his Anglo-Saxon identity.

The dichotomy in Yekl is not nominally between the Oriental and Occidental, but rather the yankee and the greenhorn, or the assimilated Jew and the unassimilated Jew. However, assimilation into the American cultural norm is defined by the mainstream, which is to say the Anglo-Saxon culture, and the greenhorn is defined by their retention of old world and specifically Jewish customs and language. Furthermore, by repeatedly defining himself by opposition to the greenhorns, Yekl reenacts the construction of the Occidental as the opposite of the Oriental. The dichotomy in Yekl is therefore de facto between the Anglo and the Jew, and thus between the Occidental and the Oriental, and we can understand the identities of Yekl and Jake as existing on

either side of this divide. Additionally, Said identifies this relationship as one of power and domination, and Yekl recasting himself as the Occidental can thus be understood as an attempt to gain social power.

While Yekl and Sonya apparently subvert the Orientalist paradigm by becoming themselves Occidental, neither of them are able to find happiness in these new roles. For Yekl, repositioning himself as a Yankee renders him unable to relate to his unassimilated wife, engenders an internalized self-hatred, which manifests as an increasingly antagonistic relationship with his wife and culminates in their divorce. When Sonya adopts Manning's version of Oriental beauty and becomes his Occidentalized wife, she is at her most alienated from herself and her desires. The reason that neither of them can become happy is because performing the role of the Occidental is not a subversion of Orientalism but is instead contingent on its perpetuation, and thus reinforces a system which is inherently oppressive. Yekl and Sonya remain unhappy because perpetuating this paradigm only changes the form, not the fact, of their oppression.

The Anglo-Saxons are the beneficiaries of the power dynamic of Orientalism, receiving social privilege as a result of it, but it is nonetheless a restrictive and oppressive system for all involved. For the Jews, it relegates them to a role of poverty in which they are expected not to advance themselves, but to embrace the suffering and simplicity of their poverty. For Manning it restricts his behavior so thoroughly that he is unable to be emotionally intimate even with his wife, even at the crucial moments when it might have saved their marriage. Nobody wins because this system is inherently oppressive, and therefore

happiness is found only when characters refuse to participate in it.

By the end of *Salome*, Sonya lives as herself, not as an Oriental or an Anglo-Saxon, but as an artist. Before Sonya's goal became marrying Manning, it was to become beautiful in a way that reflected who she felt herself to be. This is the other side of performative identity, changing the signifier, not to change the subjective signified, but to represent it truthfully. Becoming an artist allows her to create this beauty herself and in doing so create an identity which is not, so to speak, "readymade."

Yekl and *Salome of the Tenements* both represent identity as performative. For both Sonya and Yekl, the method by which they affect their identities is their appearance. However, both of these identities exist within, and reproduce, an oppressive structure in which neither character can become happy. By refusing to participate in this system, and recognizing its artifice, Sonya is able to live a life which is authentic to herself and achieve the happiness which eluded her as Mrs. Manning and eludes Yekl as Jake.

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The Disproportionate Effect of Restrictions to Abortion Access

Megan Saks

The systematic, institutionalized denial of reproductive freedom has marked Black women's history in America. Considering this history—from slave masters' economic stake in bonded women's fertility to the racist strains of early birth control policy to sterilization abuse of Black women during the 1960s and 1970s to the current campaign to inject Norplant and Depo-Provera in the arms of Black teenagers and welfare mothers—paints a powerful picture of the link between race and reproductive freedom in America.
—Dorothy Roberts, *Killing the Black Body*

Since the passing of *Roe v. Wade* in 1973, new bills surface every legislative session that aim to restrict access to abortion. The legalization of abortion in 1973 did not result in affordable, safe, and timely access to healthcare for all people. Targeted Regulation of Abortion Providers, or TRAP laws, impose strict regulations on abortion providers that often result in the shutting down of clinics. These laws take many forms, such as the requirement of mandatory waiting periods for patients or specific width of hallways. Since 1973, Federal and State governments continue to pass legislation that restricts access to abortion and reproductive health care, such as the Global Gag Rule and the Hyde amendment. While abortion care providers are routinely and systematically targeted and shut down, Crisis Pregnancy Centers (CPCs) are opening at an alarming rate. CPCs often coerce people to carry pregnancy to term through illegitimate medical practice. Throughout this paper I analyze the history of family planning

service centers, Targeted Regulation of Abortion Providers, and Crisis Pregnancy Centers. I aim to show how restrictions to abortion access hurt low-income women and women of color the most through the framework of Reproductive Justice (RJ). The eugenics movements of the twentieth century focused on regulating women's reproductive health care by differentiating care between white people and people of color. White physicians emphasized positive eugenics, emphasizing the reproduction of the 'right' kind of genes, backed by pseudo-scientific understanding that genes could determine race and class. People of color, especially Black women, were subject to negative eugenics with a focus on the prohibition and regulation of reproduction. 'Scientists' of the time routinely tested 'medical' technologies on Black women. These tests often resulted in temporary or permanent forced sterilization.

For example, one powerful figure of the early twentieth century

that supported negative eugenics was Margaret Sanger. Making great strides in favor of reproductive freedoms, such as her work in overturning the Comstock Laws, Sanger then turned her attention to the "Negro Project" working with African American leaders of the time, including W.E.B. Du Bois in promoting the eugenic cause. The merging of Sanger's American Birth Control League with the Clinical Research Bureau to form the Birth Control Federation of America (BCFA) marked an important moment in the targeting of low-income black women in regards to reproductive health. The first "family planning centers" were set up in black areas with little wealth (Washington 196-197). These early centers contradictorily promoted the eugenic movement *and* provided access to healthcare for poor and/or rural Black women. These clinics gave women access to cheap and free family planning services such as birth control pills and other types of contraceptives. Later in the twentieth century, Black organizations declared their suspicions that the federally funded family planning centers, which looked like they existed to help Black women, were actually aiming to eliminate a black presence in the U.S. under the guise of 'family planning' (Washington 198).

Following World War II, the United Nations passed a resolution to prevent and punish genocide in reaction to Hitler's Nazi regime and eugenic platform. This resolution resonated with members in the Black Power movement that distrusted white establishments that were targeting Black reproduction. A key split in this

ideology was that it was predominantly male voices making a comparison to genocide while Black women, especially those who were poor and with less access to education, embraced birth control and accepted abortion. Despite distrust of the targeting of African American populations for family planning clinics, Black women were often forced to get services from these clinics despite the clinics' true intentions. This is because "these clinics were numerous and well funded at a time when health advocates failed to address more pressing African American health issues, such as abysmal nutrition, poor control of infectious disease, high infant mortality, low life expectancy, poor quality health care, scarce mental health care, and even a lack of access to hospitals and physicians" (Washington 200). In line with the sponsoring of eugenic-backed clinics targeting Black women, the government supported programs of the 1970s coercing Black women into sterilization. Biological understandings of where, when, and how children can and should be born and raised, led to supposed biological solutions that were anti-Black in intention and impact.

Targeted Regulation of Abortion Providers (TRAP) laws are one contemporary way in which the government continuously targets low income and women of color. Gaining traction in the 1990s, TRAP laws are pieces of legislation that deliberately close down reproductive health clinics and/or decrease access to abortions and reproductive healthcare. For example, due to TRAP laws many states require

abortion clinics to follow the guidelines of ambulatory surgical centers, which conflates abortion with much riskier and invasive procedures. TRAP laws both shut down abortion centers and increase the stigma surrounding a procedure that is statistically proven to be less dangerous than the routine procedure of a colonoscopy. One TRAP law, enacted in Utah, requires reproductive health care providers to acquire admitting privileges to a nearby hospital. As many hospitals in Utah are religiously funded institutions which do not allow admitting privileges in cases of abortion, the law targets abortion providers and has resulted in the systematic closure of abortion clinics in throughout the state. In 2016, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) reported in an article named "Women Who Have Been Denied Medically Necessary Health Care at Catholic Hospitals Speak Out" that one in every six hospital beds in the United States is in a Catholic hospital (American Civil Liberties Union). As of April 1st 2019, twenty-four states have passed laws or policies that regulate abortion providers and go beyond what is necessary to ensure a patient's safety. Seventeen states have licensing standards comparable or equivalent to the state's licensing standards for ambulatory surgical centers which perform much more invasive procedures than abortion, which, for abortions occurring earlier in pregnancy, is often as simple as taking two pills at home (Guttmacher Institute). Eighteen states have specific requirements for procedure rooms and corridors and require clinics to be near

and have relationships with local hospitals (Guttmacher Institute). Each law making access to abortions less safe, less affordable, and less timely is compounded for poor women and women of color who often already experience disproportionate restrictions to their access to health and resources.

Another tool for shutting down abortion centers and restricting access to reproductive care for women is Crisis Pregnancy Centers which use manipulative advertising and deceptive recruitment tactics with the intention of making women who are pregnant carry unwanted pregnancies to term. At first glance, these resources may look like they aim to support low-income women, but they are actually aiming to convince women against abortions. Crisis Pregnancy Centers offer free, often state subsidized, access to family planning services. CPCs often promote 'comprehensive' options, yet do not offer abortion services and are actively anti-abortion. Professional at CPCs are trained to persuade women out of abortions through providing misinformation and other tactics of persuasion. For example, when people enter the clinic they may experience a person in a white coat, though not a licensed medical professional, telling them that an abortion will increase likelihood of a risk of breast cancer and future infertility. The unethical practices of CPCs target and attract low income women by offering affordable or free pregnancy-related services. Crisis Pregnancy Centers offer services like pregnancy counseling from an anti-abortion standpoint, but are

not required by state or federal law to disclose their intentions or the fact that they are *not* licensed medical clinics. CPCs also attract people with promises of support and guidance by offering and administering free ultrasounds (which do not need licensing to utilize) with the intention of shaming pregnant people into carrying unwanted pregnancies to term. Most CPCs are affiliated with and supported by Christian and anti-abortion organizations, like Heartbeat International, yet fail to advertise their religiously based and anti-abortion ideologies. Further, CPCs locate themselves in close proximity to real reproductive healthcare clinics. They also flood online search databases to optimize visibility—all the while operating under the guise of being unbiased and comprehensive. This ‘scientific’ medical language and information is *false* and has been discredited by research, yet CPCs’ ability to spread this false information is protected under free speech rights granted by the First Amendment (Borrero et al.). While state and federal public funds are often appropriated to finance CPCs, the Hyde Amendment prevents the use of *any* federal funds to pay for abortion except for in cases of endangerment of the woman’s life or in cases of pregnancy resulting from rape or incest. Government funding of Crisis Pregnancy Centers in many ways parallels the government subsidization of eugenics-based clinics of the early twentieth century. Both, unfortunately, still target low income women and women of color. Government agencies and institutions clearly have a stake in preventing bodily autonomy

and should be held accountable for their contemporary and historical actions. We know now that health disparities cannot be attributed to pseudo-scientific examinations of race as biological, although they do fall along racial lines due to other economic, social, and political structures. The disproportionate health disparities between communities of color and white communities is due to a long history of inequitable accessibility to healthy environments, food, healthcare, and much more. To attribute disparities in health outcomes and healthcare to the targeting of reproductive options and clinics on women of color, especially Black women, is to ignore the systemic roots of inequity. Statistical and qualitative data proves this point: “According to the Centers for Disease Control, African American men die on average 5.1 years sooner than white men (69.6 vs. 75.7 years) while African American women die 4.3 year sooner than white women (76.5 vs. 80.8 years) and they face higher rates of illness and mortality” (Smedley et al. 2). Disparities in health are not biological in origin, but they are biological in effect. To recognize and shift the paradigm in which people are receiving and experiencing health requires engaging with frameworks that purposefully acknowledge the history of anti-Black racism and the legacy of the eugenics movements in the United States.

One important framework that does acknowledge the historical and contemporary complexities of reproductive health is Reproductive Justice (RJ). Black women and activists, including Loretta Ross, coined the term

Reproductive Justice in 1994 as a way to move the focus of reproductive activism towards an intersectional approach considering race, sex, gender, sexuality, class, age, and nationality. Reproductive Rights and Reproductive Health movements often focus on “The application of neoliberal concepts to the reproductive lives of women...” which enable “the reproductive capacity and motherhood of free, white, wealthier women” while “degrading the reproductive capacity and motherhood of all others. The one outcome structures and depends on the other” (Ross and Solinger, 106). In contrast, Reproductive Justice operates from three intersectional pillars: the right *to* parent, the right to *not* parent, and the right to parent in a *safe and healthy environment*. Loretta Ross co-founded the Reproductive Justice organization SisterSong in order to illuminate the structural and socially created inequalities that disproportionately affect women of color. The praxis of RJ calls upon frameworks such as Environmental Justice and Economic Justice to illustrate the focus of reproductive freedoms on individuals with a consideration of social conditions that shape decisions regarding family planning. The framework of Reproductive Justice allows us to see, and therefore work to dismantle, the systems which continually attack the access to reproductive health care for poor women and women of color. Although frameworks like Reproductive Justice are advancing the discussion on action for more equity, restrictions to reproductive health care are still extremely prevalent and continue to be

fueled by vocal opposition, often hidden behind facades of ‘regulation.’

A historical account of the development of restrictions to abortion access illuminate the ways restricting reproductive freedoms have always affected low-income and women of color the most. Although reproductive rights and health organizations are organizing to support abortion freedoms, there is need for a more intersectional approach. Reproductive Justice is an important movement in the fight for bodily autonomy that addresses the many ways that freedom over one’s own body can be attacked, restricted, and controlled. The capitalist system of the United States was built upon controlling Black and Brown bodies and continues to do so today through vast restrictions to abortion access and reproductive freedom.

The bodies of women of color are under constant scrutiny from governments, religions, organizations, and individuals to the point where larger experiences of systemic racism and inequality are eclipsed by a focus on the neoliberal privatization of reproductive ‘choices’ and health. The focus of Reproductive Rights on laws and litigation, though an important endeavor, does not do the work of acknowledging how institutions and systems of power routinely and disproportionately affect poor women and women of color. A woman of color experiencing the environmental injustice of living near toxic waste might also know the injustice of economic disparities and an ever increasing wealth gap, she might already have children she is

trying to raise in a state where the police are being exponentially militarized and explicitly target communities of color to fill prisons which fund state and federal governments. These same governments in turn might use their funds to support Crisis Pregnancy Centers and create new bills (like Fetal Personhood bills) and TRAP laws with the overt intention of shutting down *real* abortion clinics.

The layers of complexity and obstacles that people must overcome to access abortions are unjust. All of the restrictions to abortion access that I detailed in this paper are only heightened for people who hold intersectional identities. Reproductive Justice organizations such as SisterSong and the Colorado Organization for Latina Opportunity and Reproductive Rights are doing work not only to address the restrictions of access to health care and abortion, but also to address the existing disparities in wealth, health, opportunity, and state sanctioned violence affecting women of color. Other organizations working for reproductive rights should be following their lead and doing the same.

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