

A QUESTION OF PRIORITIES:

UNMAPPING THROUGH A DIASPORIC FEMININITY

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“Fold up the maps and put away the globe. If someone else had charted it, let them. Start another drawing with whales at the bottom and cormorants at the top, and in between identify, if you can, the places you have not found yet on those other maps, the connections obvious only to you. Round and flat, only a very little has been discovered.”¹

Notions of silence and invisibility have peppered my thoughts in recent days, months, and years. Even as they exist as traits or unfortunate symptoms of my cultural background, immigrant upbringing, and personality, I believe that they still hold the potential of being utilized and subverted in a productive manner. As Dennis Lee writes, “to reflect is to fall silent, discovering that your authentic space does not have words.”² It is thus through reflection – which encompasses both process and product and is simultaneously means and end – that one can then attempt to figure out and forge an ideal ‘authentic space’ for themselves.

I have fallen silent many times, as a child, an adolescent, and in my young adulthood. I reflect on these instances now as piecing together to form a self that strives hard to no longer feel relegated to being quiet or to disappear. In the fifth grade, which I had entered upon my family’s immigration to Canada, I suddenly realized the significance of possessing an accent, and one that was perhaps, undesirable, at that moment. A vivid memory was my saying ‘*three*’ more like ‘*tree*,’ the way people did in Singapore. I realize now how much of a trivial issue that really

was. However, at that age, it was just one of many constant reminders to be more conscious and conscientious about speaking out loud, and that I was not nearly yet a Canadian, despite my moving to this country to become one.

This experience came to make up a small part of my struggle for assimilation beginning at the ripe age of nine. Many young people struggle with this, particularly immigrants, something I have observed in my teaching job. It is always imperative to remember that being silent or invisible does not necessarily mean that there is nothing ‘not-there.’ *A void may be empty but [it] is not a vacuum.*³ And so, in times of my quietude and reflection, I try undertaking the task of carving out that authentic space for myself, to turn silence and invisibility—which Mitsuye Yamada says, is an *unnatural disaster* for Asian women—on its head.

I return to Jeanette Winterson’s assertion, which my paper began with, because of its focus on the concept of cartography and how it relates to female identity, as it has been governed and fixed by traditional hegemonic discourses. It has been said, that if women are to change established notions of female identity, they must take up the roles of explorers and cartographers, in order to fix new positions through the uses of new instruments. Mapping is a traditionally patriarchal and imperial practice, thus there exist blind spots on the map; they differ from individual to individual, and can only be seen through moments of fluid, alternative

pathways. Consequently, it is through a *remapping* that new coordinates are plotted, so as to articulate those knowledges and experiences that have been disavowed. This idea of mapping through and with a female sensibility is not at all a novel thought. Particularly in literature, women authors have often engaged in the relationship between the colonial endeavor to map and name territory, and the mechanisms that govern the production of gendered bodies. The need to have one's position marked on the terrain so as to have knowledge of their place—their here—is “not a luxury but a necessity,” according to Margaret Atwood.⁵

Drawing on that notion, I liken the act of *mapping* the self to that of the *writing* of the self. Both are implicated in the issue of language and dominance. Who has the power to name? Marlene Goldman asked.⁶ The act of place-naming is a primary colonizing process because it “appropriates, defines, and captures,”⁷ as was the case with freshly conquered or settled places such as British Columbia and New England. Thus, in my writing, I aim to employ this notion of *mapping* in order to express what is particular to me, starting with the question, *what and how do I name myself?* The terms we use in naming carry with them such precise and deliberate undertones. With this in mind, I think: Am I ‘Chinese-Canadian’? ‘Canadian-Chinese’? Or perhaps simply just ‘Canadian’? But what if that term excludes my Chinese heritage? (Or does Canada, known for its mosaic of cultures, automatically encompass it?) And in a hyphenated identity, which do I privilege by naming first? Where do my loyalties lie?

In considering the construction of identity and language practices, it is necessary to—on one’s own terms—*name* and *re-name* so as to *un-name*⁸. Writing is located at the intersection between subject and history. It is only through self-inscription, that the complex relations of a subject – caught between contradictory dilemmas of gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, and class, for instance – could be woven into language. “Writing and voice braids;” remarked Hélène Cixous, “it’s good to write to allow the tongue to experiment with itself.”⁹ Subsequently, this paper is a kind of examination of myself here as *written* woman and *writing* woman; a task that involves trying to inscribe my self, my body, my identity, and all of its complexities, pluralities, and uncertainties into this text. I aim to rely on what I know and have experienced firsthand, because as it has been noted, “the imagination must come home.”¹⁰ Trinh T. Minh-ha and Adrienne Rich share the idea that a woman cannot write or speak without first engaging her body. Hence, I draw on, “not a continent or a country or a house, but with the geography closest in,” the body, as a mobile site of knowledge-power.¹¹

Using the act of self-writing—autobiography—the objective of this paper is to *map* and *name* my self, through an unmapping of firstly—place via the visibility of the *flâneuse*, secondly—the corporeal and its ties to one’s various positionings, and lastly—the material—more specifically, the implications behind the notion of a ‘feminine art.’ These three elements are strongly attached to the concepts of *container* and *content*, which symbolize that the world is a container of our bodies, selves, ideas, and things, and that the body simultaneously holds and is held by

larger environments. My approach to this paper simply, is to draw on my multiple embodied subjectivities and memories, to turn myself into what Susan Sontag states, is a text, “to be deciphered,” and a project, “something to be built.”¹²

I believe that there is a need, first of all, to delineate certain terms before proceeding. “Identity” and “unmapping” are both core concepts to my writing here, thus it is imperative, for author and reader, to break this language down to a knowable position.

To begin with, the word “identity” holds a double meaning of both difference and sameness. It suggests some form of commonality (as in the word ‘identical’), yet it also signifies the grasping of a sense of difference from others.¹³ This dialogic of sameness and difference has structured my formulation of a cultural identity that is caught between – or rather, *straddles* – the peripheries of concurrent ‘inside/outside’ existence that comprises a transnational, immigrant identity. As part of the Chinese *diaspora* (in Canada, in North America)—having migrated from an established or ancestral homeland¹⁴—I occupy, not a singular cultural space, but rather, a doubled relationship or dual loyalty to the idea of *places*. It is what Smadar Lavie and Ted Swedenburg define as the connections migrants, exiles, and refugees have to “the space they currently occupy and their continuing involvement with ‘back home.’”¹⁵

The term *hybridity* is also highly relevant to the construction a *post-colonial* identity. Susan Stanford Friedman writes that identity, as migration through space, becomes a “product of cultural grafting.”¹⁶ Through hybridity then, one undergoes the continuous process of *transculturation*, the mutual borrowing, lending, and adaptation between cultures. *Post-colonialism* — the continuous process of resistance, reconstruction, and negotiation with racial formation in dominant white society¹⁷ — is directly related to these earlier concepts as well. Furthermore, my thinking of a name or label such as ‘Chinese-Canadian’ is very much impacted by the notion of the *hyphen*. It refers to a “third time-space” or *imaginary homeland* that is “enlarged and exploded” by borders and diasporas.¹⁸ These terminologies, for me, speak to the ties between *host country* versus *homeland* and the ‘degrees of authenticity’ that come to shape one’s self: how might an individual be ‘too Chinese,’ ‘too Westernized’ or ‘not enough?’

For many people, identity—as an infinite movement and in all of its infinite layers—consequently brings up the question of priorities as a crucial issue. Coupled with my being a woman, I, as a ‘raced’ and ‘gendered’ individual, then experience a *triple bind* or “endless lament!”¹⁹ of being torn between allegiances. As if it isn’t hard enough to have to choose between putting ‘Chinese’ or ‘Canadian’ first, I also face the daunting task of wondering: of the categories of ‘woman’ and ‘race,’ which position should I privilege? Which side do I speak for first? But why not both and at the same time? Why do they have to be continually dichotomized? I find the charge of having to ‘pick’ one side of either of the two difficult and problematic. Defining

one's self is never as easy or clear-cut as picking a name and sticking to it, without taking into account one's continuously mobile and shifting living conditions.

I subscribe to the idea that identity is both relational and situational and always hybrid. This means that firstly, one axis of identity (like gender) must be understood as in relation to other axes (like race). Secondly, identity shifts fluidly from setting to setting, so that not all axes are equally foregrounded in every situation; some might happen to be more salient than others depending on the circumstances. It is then through these multiple and transversal axes of identities, that there will then lie the possibility of new spaces for new consciousnesses.

The second term, *unmapping*, which I will undertake in this paper, was conceived of by Richard Phillips as an act of denaturalizing geography “by asking how spaces come to be and to undermine the world views that rest upon [them].”²⁰ Central to this concept is the important relationship between identity and space. It echoes Maurice Merleau-Ponty's stance that *being is synonymous with being situated*.²¹ Thus, from one's positionality, *unmapping* entails an unsettling of familiar, everyday notions through an examination of space as a social product that produces bodies and vice versa. *How are hierarchies of power and violence embedded in white representations of territory? How much does an identity of dominance rely upon keeping racial Others firmly in place?* These are some questions asked by Sherene Razack who expanded on Phillips's idea.²²

In my act of *unmapping* place, the corporeal, and the material here, I will be looking at the close relationship between identity and space, and how this relationship and my embodied subjectivities have given shape to my beliefs and the approach I take to my work. The concept of *unmapping* is one that is tied to spatialization and territorialization – geography, in essence – however, I will be applying the idea to the body and a ‘feminine art’ as well; to look at the way place and stance inform them... seeing as the ideas of *container* and *content* are intricately linked. After all, we live in a *universe of experience*, seeing as we are always “in direct commerce” with beings, things, and [our] own body.²³

UNMAPPING PLACE, SPACE

*"There will be moments when I shall want to be invisible, moments when I will be invisible whether I want it or not, and moments when I might want to be, never conspicuous, but at least present."*²⁴

It has been said by Northrop Frye, that the primary and lasting concern of the Canadian sensibility is being and feeling lost, as well as the consequent struggle to orient oneself. It exists as "our famous problem of identity," one that is less perplexed by the question of '*Who am I?*' than by the riddle of '*Where is here?*'²⁵ So, where is here exactly? David Staines speculates that the answer may well lie in the origin of the country's name, a Portuguese word meaning '*Nobody here.*'²⁶

With a history of being mythologized as the 'True North Strong and Free' – a phrase from the national anthem that evokes the notion of *terra nullis* (vast, empty, uninhabited land), Canada's colonial legacy has parallels to women's experiences of being treated like territory, "anatomized and appropriated"²⁷ in the same way that early explorers mapped and claimed actual geographical terrain. Just as the nation was defined and controlled through traditional, imperial practices, women's experiences of the politics of gender have been defined and controlled by patriarchal culture. So I ask again, especially in a place where, so often, the construction of the Man/Woman dichotomy corresponds to the colonial tactic of manufacturing the Other, *where and what is here, exactly?*

When I reflect on *home* and *belonging*, I certainly feel at some kind of loss attempting to articulate what exactly these terms mean, especially when they have multiple definitions and states that are particular only to me. Perhaps it is part and parcel of the Canadian condition to question where ‘home’ is or how to belong, or maybe that it is simply a fixation at the forefront of my mind. I was almost ten when my family moved from Singapore, the island-city in South East Asia, and I am Chinese though not from China, even though that is where my grandparents all migrated from... While I have never visited the ‘motherland,’ it is inscribed on my skin that I must certainly be from there, or at least have ties to it.

On exchange in Cuba recently, strangers in the street would often utter, “China?” and when I shook my head, they would continue: “Japan? Vietnam? Korea?” I would smile back and say, “No, Canada!” *Ohhhh*, I remember an elderly school teacher nodding in response, “...but... China?” She hadn’t understood. I smiled again and said, “Yes.” Later on during the trip, I’d caught myself instinctively stating that I was from China when asked. Perhaps it was just less of a hassle to answer in that manner – to tell others what they were expecting to hear – and in any case, one could argue that in fact, I *am* from China, just not directly so.

I call to mind the statement that *place becomes race*. Just as space is socially constructed, the social is spatially formulated as well. For Henri Lefebvre, space has always had a political subtext, and is a product filled with ideologies, “shaped and molded from historical and natural elements.”²⁸ Walking in the street in

Havana was a peculiar and unparalleled experience, to say the least. I felt an extreme bout of visibility that arose from my clearly being a tourist, a young female, and a non-white [and accordingly, non-Western] woman. Being on the receiving end of looks from male strangers signaling us in the street was at first, fine – it rolled off us – but by the end of our two weeks overseas, we had grown tired and infuriated. Not so much by the gesturing at us for attention, but more in the manners in which they were done. *Psssst*, their lips would utter... or they would start speaking in Spanish, knowing that we probably could not understand... *Chino chino chino* (*China China China* or *Chinese Chinese Chinese*), I'd heard many times over... and these were just the tamer bits.

On the one hand, was the experience of being sexualized as a woman and exoticized as an “Oriental;” on the other, was the agonizing familiarity of being the recipient of racial slurs. It brought me back to previous times in my history when I felt othered, silenced, and extremely visible in the public sphere. I am reminded by Gayatri Spivak who said that, “if in the context of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow...”²⁹ How then, would someone such as myself, have been able to respond to such things, on foreign soil where I did not know the language? I was relegated to silence.

I turn my attention to the ties between women and public spaces, and the “problematic relationship” Linda Nochlin has said they have had since the start of

modern times. The *flâneur*, the dandy, and *l'étranger* (stranger)—considered the “heroes of modernity”—were all male and possessed the freedom to move about the city, which was thoroughly encoded and policed by masculine desire and pleasure.³⁰ Consider the close relation between space and the production of power and knowledge, a key idea in Michel Foucault’s work. ‘Place’ in post-colonial societies is a complex interaction of language, history, and environment. *Who is able to move where and in what ways are people kept subordinated through silence and invisibility?* There lies a constant struggle for those who are othered to find a place, one that is not marked “by the longitude or latitude” of power or knowledge.³¹ There are multiple sites on which female subjectivities are negotiated and renegotiated, as well as particular ways in which the feminine body is able to behave and move. The struggle, it has to be reiterated, is always with finding that ‘authentic space.’

For one, in the literature of modernity, women were visible only in relationship to men: in the roles of whore, widow, or murder victim.³² According to Janet Wolff in her landmark essay from 1985, *flânerie*, as performed by women, was simply rendered impossible by the sexual divisions of the nineteenth century. Women were marginalized in public and thus, the *flâneuse* did not and could not exist. She was invisible. In these modalities of feminine spatiality where women are not afforded the same occupiable positions as men, it has to be noted that just as women are located differently than men, there exists diversity amongst women themselves. *Sisterhood is not global*. Not all women share the same experience of ‘being a woman,’ because sharing a gender is simply not enough to guarantee that all women hold similar social

positioning. Thus, differences between women—produced by the intersections of class, ethnicity, and nationality, for one—undermine the homogeneity and continuity of their very category.

I recall Radhika Monhanram's assertions that "whiteness has the ability to move," and that this mobility results in an unmarked body.³³ Accordingly, my experience of mobility as a raced, gendered woman differs from any one else's experiences. I have been in situations where my body has been marked by the words and gestures of others, consequently creating difference... thus, being in Havana reminded me of those accounts. "We are interrogating our experiences precisely in order to know how it opens to us what is not ourselves," Merleau-Ponty remarked.³⁴ In this sense, being silent – despite being very visible – such as in Cuba, resulted in naturally returning to the same questions and issues that continuously plague me: how exactly can I negotiate the steps of *mapping*, *unmapping*, and *remapping* who I am in response to various situations and various positions? How am I to make myself heard and visible in spaces where I am not automatically allowed to be?

I return to the idea of the *flâneuse* and her apparent invisibility, and invoke Rosi Braidotti's political myth of the embodied *nomad*. This concept refers to the occurrence of multiple axes of identification at once, and is sustained by the metaphor *travel is transformation*.³⁵ Since my late teens, I have been interested in the photography of 'human actors' in the street. My interest in public human interaction

with one another as well as with elements of the physical or social landscape, stems from a desire in capturing the everyday in a way that somehow makes it comforting; all the while, remaining strange and unfamiliar. Although the resulting body of street photography is important to me as evidence of transitory moments of my presence in a time and space, it is the process of active walking and active looking in a city – particularly in one that is new to me – that gives me great pleasure in affording the *flâneuse* her visibility. Through this very act of wielding a camera (a rather phallic instrument, one might add) and turning its gaze outward, I am able to negotiate the environment on my own terms; to perform a kind of mastery over unknown spaces “as I gather them within the fold of the known.”³⁶ Despite being strange and unsettled, the city, because of its richness and generosity of material to me, feels all at once, open and comforting.

The structure of voyeuristic pleasure is based upon the invisibility of the *subject* and visibility of the *object*, but I transpose this order so that instead of being looked at as if I were in front of the camera, I am an *object* that now looks – I render myself a *subject*. The camera is an instrument of self-projection, and within the scheme of traditional social values that patriarchal looking maintains, I carve out a personal space in the public, and *unmap* – by writing myself through images. Though my body is not physically present in the street scenes I capture, it is through an active gaze, selection, and processing of the resulting images, that I leave my mark, my here, my evidence of me. Being heard and present does not always necessarily mean being loud or taking up visible territory. It is through this creation of a bodily

and complex relationship with my surroundings, that I am allowed to embody a fuller citizenship; whereby the city “acknowledges” me just as I acknowledge it.³⁷

UNMAPPING THE CORPOREAL

“Babies drop out of us from our most secret places, through channels the fathers have charted and laid claim to.”³⁸

The notion that women have long been defined by biology is echoed in the parallels between the colonizing of geographical terrain and the patriarchal domination over female bodies. Bodies map the relations between power and identity; they are the gauge from which all is measured. With the propensity that women are represented as the space of the bodily, it is important for women to then, *write* themselves to make themselves heard, so as to return to and reclaim their confiscated bodies. Minh-ha reiterated this belief: the body must be *re-thought* in order to *re-appropriate* femininity.³⁹ Engagement is necessary for writing and speaking. Hence, I endeavor to do as much: to *re-think* and *reflect* on the body—as threshold between *container* and *content*—focusing on how it relates to autobiography, to words, and to memory. I want to *unmap* the corporeal in order to consider my body and its attachments to particular locations and situations. It must be said, that the “to-and-fro movement”⁴⁰ between *written* woman and *writing* woman in creating history is utterly endless.

Reflecting on the body right away invokes more thoughts of home and belonging. I have previously discussed the struggle of women and ‘othered others’ in attempting to fashion an individualized sense of space and self — a position from which they can speak from and negotiate the world that is particular to only them. Place and displacement are crucial features of post-colonial discourse.⁴¹ The sense of *Unheimlichkeit* or ‘not-at-homeness’ is evoked, according to Sigmund Freud, in response to something paradoxically both familiar and foreign.

This sensation has occurred in me many times, and I am reminded of an incident a few months ago with a shop owner after a friend had made a large purchase. “Sorry, I don’t shake hands with women,” he remarked, as I drew back my hand in embarrassment. My politeness had made me feel insignificant and I immediately felt out of place and outside of my body. I do not know exactly why he apologized, because I am sure he is not sorry for having made such a deliberate, calculated choice in his life. Perhaps he even derives pleasure from saying those words... I do not know.

This awareness and sense of dislocation is something vaguely similar to what I have experienced other times, namely while photographing in public. Having and using bodies makes us threatening and at times, feel threatened ourselves. The city sphere can be inviting and rich in material, just as it can incite feelings of unease and apprehension. On a couple of occasions while walking the city, at times with my camera or while setting up equipment to shoot, I have found myself paralyzed with

anxiety because the environment or something directed towards me made me feel unwelcome and out-of-place. The body, which serves “as testimony for lived experience,”⁴² encounters both an interior and exterior sense of dislocation. Felt from both ‘sides’ of the skin, this interruption is read from below – that is to say, within the body’s world (the *container*); and above, on the surface, as a heightened level of bodily self-consciousness. ‘Difference,’ for the post-colonial subject is, after all, most directly and immediately felt in the “superficial differences of the body and voice;” such as in skin colour, eye shape, hair texture, or accent. As the body is the inescapable, visible sign of “oppression and denigration,” Ashcroft, Griffith, and Tiffin understood these bodily elements to be read as permanent symbols of the “‘natural’ inferiority” of their possessors.⁴³

This leads to my being reminded of yet another instance from over two years ago. I was interning for an artist who had an idea for an image he wanted to make. The photograph would depict a woman’s mouth alongside a heavily chipped wine glass, and there would be a bit of blood on her lips. In his studio that day, he mentioned how he had wanted to make some test shots before finding the ‘right’ model. Very casually, he volunteered the comment that my lips were “too ethnic.” *Oh, okay...*, I remember nervously offering a small, confused laugh at the unsolicited remark, *that’s fine*.

I recall not thinking too much of it at that moment, and though it had irked me, I chose to tuck it away. It was only until over a year later, in passing conversation

with someone, that I was led to re-reflection on the situation. What did “too ethnic” even mean? What did being “ethnic” mean to him? And how was I being excessive in my ethnicity? A statement from Everett and Helen Hughes immediately comes to mind. “We are all ethnic,”⁴⁴ they declared. However, it has become such widespread practice to define *ethnicity* as *otherness*, as non-Whiteness, and even, non-Westerness.

In looking and thinking about the body and embodiment, it is important to look at experience and personal histories and how the corporeal becomes socially constructed and how our ideas about the body and difference impact the societal. I want to return to the idea of naming and the power of language to dominate. Spivak suggests that the strategy of ‘Othering’ is a practice based on assumption of authority; of voice and of control of the word.⁴⁵ We live in human bodies that embody difference because they refuse homogenization; because these bodies are not allowed to assimilate.

The artist’s remark sought to keep me in my place; to remind me that my ‘yellow,’ feminine body was inferior to that of a ‘white’ body – to the body much like the one he was in possession of (European and male). To name is to control, to colonize. Such differences are often culturally learned, and then naturalized as essence. “Essence is a social construction... a social construction that can become essence – become essentialized.”⁴⁶ Thus, I perceive that the artist’s view of

‘whiteness’ is essentialized; it is his essence. To him, I believe that the performance of ‘whiteness’ is thoroughly embodied, encoded, and reinforced as normative.⁴⁷

Recalling and retelling this memory seems to operate “like a murmur in the flesh one suddenly hears years later.”⁴⁸ Writing it out, as opposed to the times I have evoked it in my mind, has been a part of my process of wanting to *unmap* the corporeal; to remember and confront the racial hierarchies that structure our lives. Razack, who further developed Phillips’s notion of *unmapping*, notes that it is important “to interrogate” and “to engage” in a mapping of spaces and bodies in



Figure 1 Clare Yow, *I Am on Musqueam Land*, 2009

relation; through systems of domination⁴⁹. With that, I turn to another means of *unmapping* the corporeal, that also draws on memory – that which is concerned with “the feel,” because the ‘feel’ of words has something to do with “the feel of the body.”⁵⁰

The concept behind a small series of photographs (*I Am On Musqueam Land*) made in 2009, was derived from varying ideas surrounding the notion of a ‘ghost.’ In the images, a figure, veiled head-to-toe by a large, white sheet, stands in various outdoor landscapes. These self-portraits (Fig. 1) were made in Vancouver on the University of British Columbia campus, which sits on traditional Indigenous land.

The sheet over top of me evokes a common childhood notion of a ghost figure. While it makes me invisible to some extent (*if you cannot see others, others surely cannot see you, right?*), the sheet simultaneously gives me a heightened amount of visibility within the scene. I hold the status as a *double minority*, being female and Chinese, and in these photographs—where there is no evidence of this because of the obscuring cloth—I have become both a kind of *invisible* visible minority and visible *invisible minority*, all at once.

The manner in which the figure is depicted, draws from the word ‘ghost’ in Cantonese, which is used in the phrase “*gwai lo*” – literally to mean ‘ghost man,’ as in any one who is non-Chinese, non-Asian, purportedly a ‘foreign devil.’ In Maxine Hong Kingston’s novel, The Woman Warrior, which I have referenced in a past work, the term ‘ghost’ is used often in alluding to Westerners. Her semi-autobiographical story deals with issues of silence and invisibility as it relates to femininity, Chinese culture, and the assimilation of immigrants in the West. Where I link my photographs to the concept of *unmapping* lies again in that important relationship between physical identity and space. Place is race, after all. Intended to undermine the idea of “white settler innocence”—that European settlers were solely responsible for discovering and developing the land—*unmapping* uncovers the hierarchies of power and violence that are rooted in white representations of territory.

What this means is that in *unmapping*, it is necessary to contest traditional, European claims to the land and to the nation, for one. It is necessary to make visible

Aboriginal nations whose lands were violently taken from them. Furthermore, it is necessary to include in the national story, “those bodies of colour whose labour also developed this land, but who are not the first occupants.”⁵¹ This includes Chinese labourers who were contracted to build the Western portion of the Canadian Pacific Railway. It is necessary to say, *Hey!, I am here too. We are here. Others are here.* Thus, in these images, I give visibility to my body and to the traditional land through representation of both.

I do realize that my body is not physically observable although it is physically present. As in my street photographs, I leave my mark, my here, my evidence of me. I give you my word that I am under that sheet. As an obstacle in the field of total visibility, power, and authority, I make myself unavailable to objectification and retain control of my body and representation of it. Under the cloth, I am hidden, but not absent or invisible, and enable myself to constitute a space whereby my own subjectivity is engendered. This is my one way of *unmapping* the corporeal through a *re-thinking* of the body, and *re-appropriation* of femininity, which is so often created and enacted on somebody else’s terms.

UNMAPPING THE MATERIAL

“Things do not exist without being full of people.”⁵²

The *container/content* relationship of place to the body and to things is an intricate, interconnected web. Place and space are closely tied to the corporeal and positionality, and the body, contained by the larger world at the same time as it is a container in itself, is “a thing among things.”⁵³ Bruno Latour’s statement, which begins this section, asserts that consideration of humans, necessarily involves the simultaneous consideration of things. Things are filled with memories and stories, after all. They possess interiority and consequently, ‘speak’ to each one of us through the associations we make and have with them. Thus, it is my intention here, to unmap the notion of a ‘feminine art,’ through the axes of gender and race. Placing it under the umbrella of ‘the material,’ I will focus on the processes behind this particular ‘brand’ of art as a kind of thing turned object-cum-commodity.

Firstly, I draw on Bill Brown and his notion of “thing theory,” for my conception of the differences between ‘thing’ and ‘object.’ He said that by looking at things, we render them objects. Hence, it is not through mere glimpses that things become objects, but rather, that it requires a *changed relation* to the individual subject in order for this second layer of complexity to take place.⁵⁴ Just as we are able to convert a ‘thing’ into an ‘object,’ it is the ‘object’ which in turn makes us a ‘subject,’ makes us “real,” according to John Frow. “[T]he auractic thing returns my gaze: it is

myself that I see, looking back in astonishment at its mirror image, myself...”⁵⁵ With that in mind, my thoughts here will be concentrated on *unmapping* the notions behind a —supposedly— ‘feminine art’ and its relation to the concept of ‘white solipsism.’ My approach to this idea of ‘feminine art’ is to look at it not so much as a *thing*, but rather, as a material object or commodity. Reflection and consideration of a ‘feminine art’ turns us into subjects; subjects who may or may not consume it as a kind of commodity.

As in Pasi Falk’s theorization of the “consuming body,” consumption is the “exchange system” ⁵⁶ that facilitates the construction and negotiation of identity and the self. Our consuming bodies serve as the links between our physical body, our self, and culture or society. We are always consuming, (r)ecting, spewing. We are all in control of what ideas and experiences to intake, and what to disregard. Thus, our experience of the encounter (with ‘feminine art’ in this instance), depends on whether we choose to encode it with significance by projecting certain ideas onto it. It has to be noted that things/objects/commodities (‘the material’) and people are mutually constitutive: just as us human actors give significance to the material, “things-in-motion”⁵⁷ are what invigorate human and social context. Our bodies consume things, just as things come to consume us. (I will continue to use the word ‘things’ to generally refer to objects that are not yet encoded with human significance.)

Unmapping a 'feminine art' begins by reflecting on the gender associations of particular formal artistic strategies. More specifically, I wish to focus on the uses of grids (as an aesthetic, structural presentation device), repetition (use of cyclical, accumulative elements), and mimicry (the mirroring or appropriation of a 'readymade,' which I refer to as any existing thing, gesture, or idea). Employed by women artists such as Eva Hesse and Agnes Martin, the structure of the grid and repetition have ties to notions of a 'female imagery' created by a 'female sensibility.' I never considered my work as stemming from any kind of deep womanly standpoint or philosophy, until a studio visit in 2009 with a [female] artist who observed her tendency to encounter solely women artists utilizing the grid format. I began to wonder if I was indeed, subconsciously working from a sort of 'feminine place,' thereby creating 'feminine' things.⁵⁸

The grid has never struck me as a feminine or feminist tool, but I am very interested in it perhaps embedding certain perceived gender connotations. As a form and mode of presentation, it has always provided a kind of structural comfort for me in helping to illustrate repetition and uniformity. I have long been drawn to the notion of a typology for its banality and matter-of-fact-ness, much like in the photographs of Bernd and Hilla Becher. The same goes with employing repetition, mimesis (or appropriation, which could be considered a special instance of repetition) in my practice.

In repeating a phrase (Fig. 2), gesture (generating a year's worth of sheets of make-up residue), or adopting aspects of the banal and ordinary as my subject matter (stamped library checkout slips or spam email subject

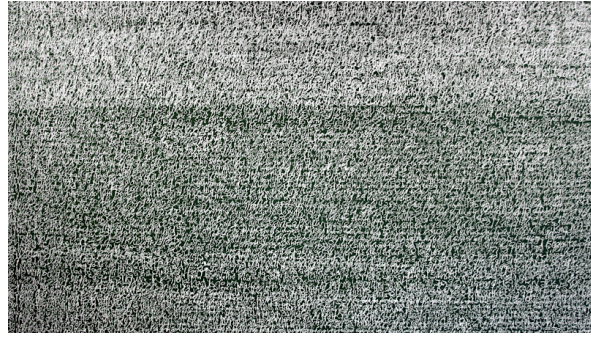


Figure 2 Clare Yow, *Maxine and I*, 2009

lines), I have wanted to evoke experience and memory; to call up reflection, time, labour, and loss, and to suggest the impossibility of their full retrieval. I am drawn to using these devices largely in part due to the lengthy and labourious efforts behind them, which may—in some way—be attributed to my immigrant upbringing where I was taught the necessity of working doubly hard to reach a rewarding end. With all the time and sweat involved, there is satisfaction in repetition.

In speaking about grids, Lucy Lippard considered their use to be “learned,” rather than a natural tendency in women’s art.⁵⁹ If that is so, how then does one ‘learn’ their use, and where from? I do not know where exactly I ‘picked up’ the idea to work in this manner, but rise of ‘the feminine’ and ‘femininity’ in my thinking about and making art was, in fact, something that only came to light recently. Thus, in examination of ‘feminine art’ here, I possess the need to uncover more of what’s merely there when we contemplate this label. *Unmapping* asks that we consider the identity to space relationship, and I want to put forth the idea that the notion of a ‘feminine art’ has been created around patriarchal, Eurocentric worldviews, and that they are based on perceived, innate differences between men and women and

amongst women themselves. It seems to me that ‘women’s art’ has been rooted in ‘[‘white’] women’s work’ (a particular brand of domesticity).

For example, Hesse’s work has been said to have utilized a relatively rigid framework as a means for controlling “inclinations towards chaos,” and that the grid proved to be a discipline by which her obsessions could be expressed.⁶⁰ I argue that traditional stereotypes within the man/woman dichotomy have played significant roles in genderizing art and continuing to maintain that divide. The historical relationship between identity and space has conventionally seen women relegated to the realm of ‘home’ – whereby Man is to work, science/technology, and organization, and Woman is to domesticity, nature, chaos, and is in need of being tamed. Hence, in the eyes of some, Hesse might have been seen as a kind of ‘mad woman’ and assuming the ‘masculinized,’ rigid grid structure somehow controlled or tamed her unruliness – a fittingly patriarchal explanation. Could this be then, why so many women artists take up the typology?

The ties between ‘women’s art’ and the domestic seem unable to be severed. During the end of the 1960s, Post-Minimalism coalesced with the Women’s Rights Movement. It was a rich period defined by women artists, alongside utilization of the tactics of repetition, the grid, and geometric structure.⁶¹ This was happening at the same time as women’s work in the home was typecast and “substantially recognized as duplication, doomed repetition, stifling, tiresome and empty activity.”⁶² Even though women began to reflect on and reject imprisonment in the household, I

think somehow, society's constant need to pigeonhole—women in this case—led to the conflation of domestic activities with a 'feminized' artistic practice. In the 'feminine art' debate decades prior to this, I could imagine how Martin's process of creating rational rows of penciled lines or bands of colour might have been apparently perceived as no different than the repetitive acts of vacuuming or quilting.

Unmapping a 'feminine' art, for me, has meant not just looking at how patriarchal society might have engendered these notions and implications of feminized, artistic strategies. I think it is also integral to investigate, within art practice, the idea of sisterhood *not* being global (to echo a phrase used earlier); that, just as there are differences between men and women, not all women stand on equal ground. Whether they are consciously articulated or not, white assumptions determine our epistemologies, methodologies, and politics. According to Cathy Thomas and Anna Yeatman, 'white,' Western, middle-class women are "custodians of the established order;" they are bearers of whiteness, which, because it is so often taken for granted, is "a privilege enjoyed but not acknowledged, a reality lived in but unknown."⁶³

Just as the hierarchical forces of patriarchy dominate women in the art field – as The Guerilla Girls astutely showed – Eurocentrism is just as alive in making the art realm inaccessible to artists 'of colour,' and 'women of colour,' even more so. Around the time of the major WACK!: Art and the Feminist Revolution exhibition at the Vancouver Art Gallery in 2008, I distinctly recall a woman pointing out it was a

shame the gallery could not “let” (her words) women have this show to themselves, and that the VAG “had to” (also her words) schedule an exhibition of Chinese artist Zhang Huan’s work around the same time. I interpret her comments as saying that the institution’s programming was blatantly sexist and illustrative of the “white supremacist capitalist patriarchy”⁶⁴ — something that bell hooks has spoken much of — and that as a man, Huan was essentially stealing the thunder of the women artists also exhibiting there.

It might be important to add here that in my eyes, the woman appeared to be of European descent. I note this due to the fact that I think that the visitor’s remarks inherently demonstrate the notion of ‘white solipsism’ – as coined by Adrienne Rich – so that in her eyes, the dichotomy was simply that of men versus women. It did not matter that Huan was an ‘artist of colour,’ or that the gallery might have been breaking new ground in its decision to hold two concurrent exhibitions featuring ‘minority’ groups. Huan’s gender simply held precedence over his race. It was as if the female visitor applied the ‘*you all look alike*’ phrase that is commonly directed towards Asians or ‘Orientals,’ in not recognizing that there are differences even within the category of ‘men.’ I am reminded of Valerie Smith here. She said that “when historical specificity is denied or remains implicit, all the women are presumed white, all the males black.”⁶⁵ It seems that we, as a society, have internalized the logic of binaries, where everything must fit comfortably under the headings of male/female, black/white, personal/political.

This is why the concept of ‘white solipsism’ is of significant value in unsettling familiar notions. It is not the viewpoint that one race is superior to all others, but is rather, a “tunnel vision which simply does not see non-white experience or existence as precious or significant.”⁶⁶ It is the tendency to think, imagine, speak, and behave as though whiteness described the world. If patriarchy dictates that the category of women is always in subordination to men, then Eurocentrism dictates that ‘whiteness’ and the West will always remain on the controlling side of the binary opposition to non-White, non-Western, othered individuals.

Thus, what of an individual who is a woman *and* non-White? She cannot help but undergo a *double colonization* and is forever caught in a *double bind* between the allegiances of ‘woman’ and ‘race.’ As stated earlier on, where then might her loyalties lie? If she happens to make art, and her work is self-identified or labeled by others as ‘feminine,’ might this mean that she prioritizes, or appears to prioritize, her gendered identity over her ethnic identity?

I wanted to conduct an *unmapping* of this notion of ‘feminine art’ as a commodity to be consumed, much like how ‘white solipsism’ and ‘Eurocentrism’ are kinds of commodities too. I believe that ‘feminine art’ is principally rooted/routed (to borrow a term from James Clifford) in patriarchal and Eurocentric ideas. Being an individual who is non-White and a woman, feminine or feminist art has so often been packaged to me as work by Western, European, ‘white’ artists. It is a place where I

struggle to see myself because I have not been allowed to, for historical reasons or otherwise. Hence, *unmapping* ‘feminine art’ here, has been a process by which I am starting to see where I stand in relation to it. There is a need to think beyond old ideas that state that those Minimalist strategies are simply tied to, or a mere step up from traditional women’s work.⁶⁷ Minh-ha’s thoughts on repetition are of great importance here:

*“When repetition reflects on itself as repetition, it constitutes this doubling back movement through which language (verbal, visual, musical) looks at itself exerting power and, therefore, creates for itself possibilities to repeatedly thwart its own power, inflating it only to deflate it better. Repetition outplays itself as repetition, and each repetition is never the same as the former. In it, there is circulation, there is intensity, and there is innovation.”*⁶⁸

Active, performative gestures that comprise their processes are what draw me towards utilizing grids, repetition, and mimicry in my work. They may convey a kind of stillness or quietude in their final form, and may invoke ‘femininity’ or ‘womanliness,’ but I sense that that can be a positive thing, one that could even engender a kind of pleasure or pride. Within a ‘feminine art,’ I might not feel like I fully belong, but categories always leak, despite our desperate attempts to “separate, contain, and mend” them.⁶⁹ Within those categories, however, there lies many possibilities of new spaces for new consciousnesses. As I *unmap* and carve out a space for myself, all the while continuing to draw on these certain kinds of artistic gestures and approaches, a fight between loyalties and between social identities is precisely where a new identity might emerge.

“Every story is a travel story,” Michel de Certeau wrote, “a spatial practice.”⁷⁰ I think of travel as a process that is enduring and permanent in any one’s life, though for some, the word itself might solely signify a transitory, leisurely expedition, perhaps into foreign surroundings. However, it goes well beyond that, certainly through both familiar and unfamiliar symbolic territory. For any individual, ‘travel,’ I feel, is concerned with knowing one’s location and one’s positionality in relation to other people, other things, and other places. Awareness of and trying to gain understanding to one’s ‘here’ is key in the construction of any person’s selfhood and personal narrative. We are always creating stories for ourselves and about ourselves, whether we fully grasp them or not.

Return to the beginning of this paper, where I spoke about the sensation of feeling lost as being a symptom of the Canadian cultural condition. My experiences as an assimilated immigrant, and a gendered and racial minority, have certainly contributed to the building and writing of my story. Here, in this text, drawing on my embodied subjectivities and lived knowledge, I have undertaken an *unmapping* of place and space, the corporeal, and the material; to examine how my various travels (or perhaps I should say instead, *movements*, *routes*, or *actions*) have come to shape my approach to these elements in my research and practice. Adopting the geographical, spatially-conscious notion of *unmapping*, I strived to examine firstly—the visibility of the *flâneuse* through my walking and photography in public,

secondly— how the body belongs, refuses to or is not allowed to belong, and finally— the notion of a ‘feminine art’ through the use of possibly gendered visual devices. I wanted to look at them in relation to my ‘here’ and my self, and how together, they have allowed the surfacing of new means in which to re-think and re-appropriate femininity.

As a site, the self is one of continuous splittings, doubling, grafting, markings, of histories, vulnerabilities, fractures, and dislocations. I share my body with the flesh of the world and we go back and forth in our attempts to make sense of one another. Thus, these acts of writing and *unmapping* through a diasporic femininity have been a crucial and an invaluable part of the process of my being *writing* woman just as much as I am *written* woman. In trying to understand what it means to be in this specific skin, I have been building my “I” as a site, as well as my “I” as a text, which is all together, a site in itself. Much like the notion that place is a palimpsest—a kind of parchment where generations have inscribed and reinscribed the development of history—so is this text. These words make up a site, wrapped in a skin that I keep writing and erasing over top of. It is an external, protective layer, that moreover possesses interiority and one would hope, heart.

Silence and invisibility are unnatural disasters for Asian women, Yamada wrote, and I believe this to be true, however unfortunate. I believe that destabilizing silence and invisibility does not necessarily mean turning in the exact opposite direction and becoming loud, striking, and baring all. For me, it means making the

attempts to negotiate, map, name, and travel on one's own terms – to conscientiously tread the line between total assimilation with fixed racial and gender categories, and adapting to the fluidity of the definitions that varying occasions may provide. Ultimately, I believe that the quest for an ideal 'authentic space' that an individual can call one's own, is a question of priorities, of loyalties, and of privileging certain elements over others. My early teenage self found that the overwhelming desire to integrate into Canadian life led to the humiliation and rejection of my Chinese roots; actions I now sorely lament. The formulation of an 'authentic space' is not an uncomplicated task... it is wholeheartedly demanding. However, it has to be noted that *travel is transformation*, and in the vein of Braidotti's thinking, nomadism means unsettling existing conditions, refusing stagnancy. Assimilation does not mean that the *consuming body* has to solely conform to one standard and reject all others. I realize that now. Travel is transformation and travel, to me, is leaving yourself constantly open to change and to new ideas of thinking about change.

Recall Merleau-Ponty's declaration that *being is synonymous with being situated*. Our body, of the same flesh as the world, comes to reflect our present stance and all of its surroundings. It has to be said then, that even if one might be in a place of uncertainty, dislocation, or *triple bind*-ness—while not ideal—it is still an 'authentic space' nonetheless. It is still a position from which narratives of identity and the identity of narrative can be built. One can certainly take up a position in limbo... but even 'nowhere' is simultaneously 'now here,' and 'here,' with all of its accompanying names and silences and stories, are simply whatever we make of it.

Notes

1. Jeanette Winterson, Sexing the Cherry, (London: Vintage, 1990), 81.
2. Dennis Lee, "Writing in Colonial Space," in The Post-Colonial Studies Reader, eds. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, Helen Tiffin (London; New York: Routledge, 2006), 400.
3. Toni Morrison, "Unspeakable Things Unspoken: The Afro-American Presence in American Literature," Michigan Quarterly Review, Winter 1988-89), 11.
4. Audrey Thomas, Intertidal Life, (Toronto: Stoddart, 1984), 170-1.
5. Margaret Atwood, Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature, (Toronto: Anansi, 1972), 19.
6. Marlene Goldman, Paths of Desire: Images of Exploration and Mapping in Canadian Women's Writing, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 14.
7. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, Helen Tiffin, The Post-Colonial Studies Reader, eds, Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, (London; New York: Routledge, 2006), 391.
8. Trinh T. Minh-ha, When the Moon Waxes Red: Representation, Gender, and Cultural Politics, (New York: Routledge, 1992), 14.
9. Hélène Cixous, "Sorties" in The Newly Born Woman, Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clément, trans. Betsy Wing (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 171-73.
10. Lee, 398.
11. Minh-ha, When the Moon, 131; Adrienne Rich, "Notes Toward a Politics of Location" in Feminist Theory Reader: Local and Global Perspectives, eds, Carole Ruth McCann and Seung-Kyung Kim, (New York: Routledge, 2003), 448.
12. Susan Sontag, Under the Sign of Saturn, (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1980), 390.
13. Susan Stanford Friedman, Mappings: Feminism and the Cultural Geographies of Encounter, (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1998), 19, 153.
14. "Diaspora," Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, 2010.

15. Smadar Lavie and Ted Swedenburg, Displacement, Diaspora, and Geographies of Identity, eds. Lavie and Swedenburg, (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1996), 14.
16. Friedman, Mappings, 24.
17. Ashcroft, et al., 2-3.
18. Lavie and Swedenburg, 16; "imaginary homeland" was a term conceived of by Salman Rushdie.
19. Alicia Dujovne Ortiz, "Buenos Aires (An Excerpt)," in Discourse, 8 (Fall-Winter 1987), 80.
20. Richard Phillips, Mapping Men and Empire: A Geography of Adventure, (New York: Routledge, 1997), 6.
21. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Phenomenology of Perception, trans. Colin Smith, (London, Routledge, 1962), 252.
22. Sherene Razack, "Introduction – When Place Becomes Race," in Race, Space, and Time: Unmapping a White Settler Society, ed. Sherene Razack, (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2002), 5, 7.
23. Merleau-Ponty, The Structure of Behaviour, trans. A. L. Fisher, (London: Methuen, 1965), 189.
24. Helen Scalway, "The Contemporary Flâneuse," in The Invisible Flâneuse?: Gender, Public Space, and Visual Culture in Nineteenth-Century Paris, eds. Aruna D'Souza and Tom McDonough, (Manchester; New York: Manchester University Press; Palgrave, 2006), 164.
25. Northrop Frye, The Bush Garden: Essays on the Canadian Imagination, (Toronto: Anansi, 1971), 220.
26. David Staines, Beyond the Provinces: Literary Canada at Century's End, (Toronto; Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1995), 7.
27. Goldman, 37.
28. Henri Lefebvre, "Reflections on the Politics of Space," Antipode 8 (1976), 31.

29. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in The Post-Colonial Studies Reader, Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin (Eds.), (London; New York: Routledge, 2006), 28.
30. Janet Wolff, "The Invisible Flâneuse: Women and the Literature of Modernity," Theory, Culture, and Society 2 (1985); Aruna D'Souza and Tom McDonough, The Invisible Flâneuse?: Gender, Public Space, and Visual Culture in Nineteenth-Century Paris, eds. D'Souza and McDonough, (Manchester; New York: Manchester University Press; Palgrave, 2006), 2.
31. Steve Pile as quoted in Scalway, 164.
32. Wolff, 44.
33. Radhika Monhanram, Black Body: Women, Colonialism, and Space, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 4.
34. Merleau-Ponty, Visible, 159.
35. Rosi Braidotti, Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory, (Cambridge: Columbia University Press, 1994), 4.
36. Minh-ha, When the Moon, 12.
37. Scalway, 164, 168.
38. Thomas, 205.
39. Trinh T. Minh-ha, Woman Native, Other: Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989,) 36.
40. Ibid, 30.
41. Ashcroft, et al., 391.
42. Sara Suleri, "Woman Skin Deep: Feminism and the Postcolonial Condition," in The Post-Colonial Studies Reader, eds. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, (London; New York: Routledge, 2006), 277.
43. Ashcroft, et al., 321.
44. Everett C. Hughes and Helen McGill Hughes, Where Peoples Meet: Racial and Ethnic Frontiers, (Glencoe, Illinois: Free Press, 1952), 7.

45. Goldman, 209.
46. Lavie and Swedenburg, 11-12.
47. Weirdly enough, I only recently discovered that this artist I interned for had been commissioned some time ago, to create a sculpture commemorating the efforts of Chinese labourers on the Canadian Pacific Railway. I thought it a strange coincidence.
48. Goldman, 121.
49. Razack, 15.
50. Goldman, 121.
51. Razack, 5.
52. Bruno Latour, "The Berlin Key or How to Do Words with Things," trans. Lydia Davis, in Matter, Materiality, and Modern Culture, ed. P.M. Graves-Brown, (London; New York: Routledge, 2000), 10, 20.
53. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "Eye and Mind," trans. Carleton Dallery, The Primacy of Perception and Other Essays on Phenomenological Psychology, the Philosophy of Art, History, and Politics, trans. James M. Edie et al., ed. Edie, (Evanston, Ill: 1964), 163.
54. Bill Brown, Things, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 4.
55. John Frow, "A Pebble, a Camera, a Man," in Things, ed. Bill Brown, (Chicago: University of Chicago press, 2004), 349.
56. Pasi Falk, The Consuming Body, (London; Thousand Oaks, California: Sage, 1994), 7, 90.
57. Arjun Appadurai, The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective, (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 5.
58. But would that really be such a bad thing? I don't think it is, however, the 'feminine' is almost always conflated with 'feminist,' another dirty, little, F word.
59. Lucy Lippard, From the Center: Feminist Essays on Women's Art, (New York: Dutton, 1976), 65.
60. Ibid.

61. Lynn Zelevansky, Sense and Sensibility: Women Artists and Minimalism in the Nineties, (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2004), 7.
62. Kristin G. Congdon, "Feminist Approaches to Art Criticism," in Pluralistic Approaches to Art Criticism, eds. Douglas Emerson Blandy and Kristin G. Congdon. (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1991), 15-24, 18.
63. Cathy Thomas in Ien Ang, "I'm a feminist but... 'other' women and postnational feminism," Feminist Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader, eds. Reina Lewis and Sara Mills (New York: Routledge, 2003), 194; Anna Yeatman in Ibid, 203.
64. bell hooks, Art on My Mind: Visual Politics, (New York: New Press, 1995), 104.
65. Valerie Smith in Norma Alarcón, "Anzaldúa's Frontera: Inscribing Gynetics," Displacement, Diaspora, and Geographies of Identity, eds. Smadar Lavie Ted and Swedenburg, (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1996), 42.
66. Adrienne Rich, "Disloyal to Civilization: Feminism, Racism, Gynephobia," On Lies, Secrets, and Silence, (New York: Norton, 1979), 299.
67. For me, thinking about 'traditional/domestic women's work,' unfortunately still conjures up that prehistoric yet still very-much-present-today image of a white, suburban homemaker in Middle America, from which I still feel excluded. When I think of another kind of 'women's work' – as in hard, physical labour – in relation to someone who looks like me, I am inclined to think of the instances in which I and others I know have been around a non-Asian child and have been mistaken as the nanny. It seems that a situation like that makes others leap to the notion of 'us' as a kind of inexpensive, 'Third World' labour – as just another othered individual in a host country rather than a homeland.
68. Minh-ha, When the Moon, 190.
69. Minh-ha, Woman, 94.
70. Michel de Certeau in Friedman, Mappings, 132.

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