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Women’s Creative Labor in Film



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Introduction: Recognizing Women's Contributions to Film



Cynthia Baron

The recent 2015 report of the Female Filmmakers Initiative, established by the Sundance Institute and Women In Film, Los Angeles, once again made women's labor in film and television – and the substantial challenges to women's success and recognition – a topic of discussion in the press and within the industry (see references). It also provided the basis for an investigation initiated by the American Civil Liberties Union (see references). The three-year study, which confirms trends identified in previous reports, illustrates and analyzes the limited opportunities for women's sustained employment in high-profile positions, such as director or cinematographer, and for women's commercial and critical success in an industry where decisions about budgets, distribution, employment, and even awards are predominantly made by men; the report on "Gender Inequality in Film" published by *Indiewire* reveals that men make up almost 80% of the members who nominate and vote on Academy Awards (see references).

While the industry's socio-economic realities will remain an integral piece of discussions about women's creative labor in film, a look at women's actual contributions makes it possible to gain a more complete and more nuanced understanding of both film history and film practice. To facilitate the process of identifying ways that women's creative labor has shaped individual films and informed developments in cinema, the articles in this issue of *The Projector* examine a range of films, from exploitation cinema to American independent cinema, British costume dramas, and films by diasporic filmmakers working in Canada.

The first article, "Bikers, Babes, and Women's Lib: Female Directors and 1970s Independent Film Production," by Maya Montañez Smukler provides an excellent historical context for the issue's subsequent essays. After offering a concise account of women's roles as directors in American cinema, Smukler turns to the careers of Stephanie Rothman, Barbara Peeters, and Beverly Sebastian, who all directed films for the low-budget independent market starting in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Smukler explains that films by Rothman and Peeters especially reflect the "progressive views that defined the era – gender and racial equality, sexual liberation, drug use, political protest" and other priorities of the "youth-focused counterculture."

The second article, “Labor Pains: Exploring Gendered Dimensions of Production, Creativity, and Career with a Look at Independent Director Kelly Reichardt,” by Dawn Hall analyzes points raised by Smukler, namely, that women directors face serious challenges to sustained careers, and are typically denied the opportunity to have their experience in independent cinema function as a stepping stone to directing mainstream features. Hall combines her look at various reports on women’s labor in film with an assessment of career strategies that independent filmmaker Kelly Reichardt has used “to sustain her career as a director in a restrictive film industry.” Hall examines details of Reichardt’s career between *River Grass* (1994) and *Meek’s Cutoff* (2010), identifying the director’s decision to combine feature filmmaking – *Ode* (1999), *Old Joy* (2006), *Wendy and Lucy* (2008) – with university teaching and directing short films. One could surmise that Reichardt has made prudent choices; following the period Hall discusses, Reichardt has gone on to direct *Night Moves* (2013) with Jesse Eisenberg, Dakota Fanning, and Peter Sarsgaard, and a feature with Michelle Williams and other indie wood actors to be released by Sony in 2016.

In closing her discussion, Hall suggests that attention to women’s creative labor can change prevailing perceptions about women’s place in cinema *and* about film practice itself. This observation is especially pertinent to the third essay, “Reel Stitches: Female ‘Below-the-Line’ Workers in British Heritage Cinema,” for here Rosa Fernandez-Day shares some initial findings from her ethnographic study of women employed by the London costume house Cosprop, which continues to provide costumes for film and theatre productions after “playing an important role” in the cycle of British heritage films that featured Merchant-Ivory productions such as *A Room with a View* (Ivory, 1985) and *Howards End* (Ivory, 1992). Building on research by Miranda Banks published in *Production Studies: Cultural Studies of Media Industries*, Fernandez-Ray shows that textual analyses can and should “be balanced with behind-the-scenes studies.” Her discussion of costumiers (who help create the look of a production by augmenting a designer’s research), makers (who create women’s costumes), and tailors (who produce men’s costumes) illustrates the substantial gap between the creativity and agency of the workers she interviewed at Cosprops, and the perception that the labor of a costume department contributes little to audience impressions of filmic characters or their interpretations of film narratives.

The fourth article, “A Shot in the Dark: The Resilience of Anti-Colonial Film Production in Amita Zamaan’s *Disconsolatus* and Helen Lee’s *Prey*,” by Tara Atluri continues the process of re-visioning conceptions of women’s creative labor by offering a comprehensive look at two films by women diasporic directors. Amita Zamaan’s film *Disconsolatus* (2015) centers on Dana, a Palestinian woman living in Toronto, who encounters the “outbreak of a disease called ‘Disconsolatus,’” which mirrors her “depressive state as a woman who is haunted by apartheid and loss.” Atluri compares Zamaan’s film to work by Armenian director Atom Egoyan, whose expatriate films also explore the “after effects” of genocide; as Atluri points out, Zamaan “does not represent the violence of ongoing war and genocide in Palestine, but rather ruminates [on] the traumas of war indirectly, through the psychic life of the exiled Palestinian woman.” Helen Lee’s film *Prey* (1995) also explores “migrant alienation and longing,” in this instance by tracing a romance between “Ill bae, the daughter of Korean immigrants who own a convenience store in downtown Toronto and Noel, an Aboriginal man who shoplifts from the store.” Atluri sees Lee expanding the critique generated by work such as *M. Butterfly*, the play by David Henry Hwang and the 1993 film adaptation by David Cronenberg, by challenging “mainstream Orientalist representations of femininity,” then further troubling “‘model minority’ rhetoric by offering a

narrative that casts the Korean woman as one whose life is tied to an Aboriginal man through desire and through the realities of racism in urban Canada.” Recognizing the creative labor of both Zamaan and Lee, Atluri notes that while “the cultural truths of Palestinian alienation and exile, as well as those of Korean immigrants, are perhaps never fully translatable,” their films demonstrate “the agency of feminist artists,” and in closing, she shares Zamaan’s exhortation to other outsider filmmakers to: “Put it on paper and then film it. Even if it’s with your iPhone.”

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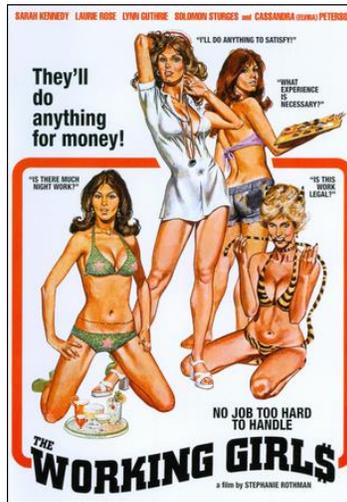
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Bikers, Babes, and Women's Lib: Female Directors and 1970s Independent Film Production



Maya Montañez Smukler

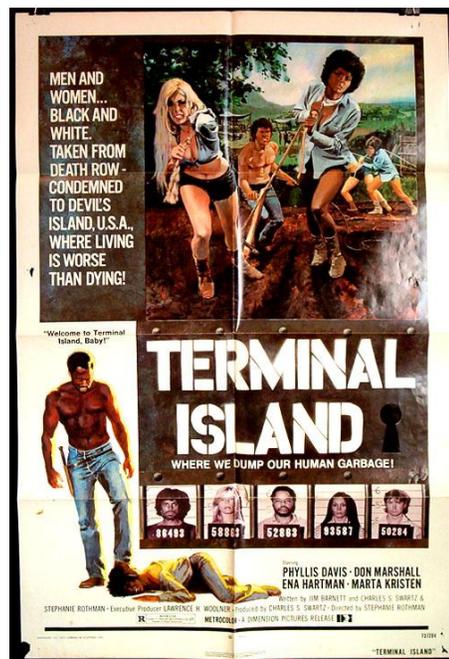
The 1970s was a crucial decade for women directors working in Hollywood. Due to the activism of the national feminist movement during that decade and its influence on the film and television industries, in particular the feminist reform efforts taking place within Hollywood's professional guilds—the Directors Guild of America (DGA), the Screen Actors Guild (SAG), and the Writers Guild of America (WGA)—the number of women directors making commercial feature films began to increase compared to previous decades. As an example of this historical change in the creative output of women directors, this essay focuses on filmmakers Barbara Peeters, Stephanie Rothman, and Beverly Sebastian who, during the 1970s, each created a substantial body of work directing pictures for the exploitation film market.¹

During the silent era, an estimated fifty-seven women were directing films.² From the mid-1930s till the mid-1960s, only two women filmmakers had careers as directors in Hollywood: Dorothy Arzner and Ida Lupino. Between 1961 and 1966, two New York-based women, Shirley Clarke and Juleen Compton, were directing independent feature films outside of Hollywood. Between 1967 and 1980 there were an estimated sixteen women who had made narrative feature films within the commercial United States-based film industry, either within the Hollywood studio system or as independent filmmakers.³ These directors were Karen Arthur, Anne Bancroft, Joan Darling, Lee Grant, Joanna Lee, Barbara Loden, Elaine May, Barbara Peeters, Joan Rivers, Stephanie Rothman, Beverly Sebastian, Joan Micklin Silver, Joan Tewkesbury, Jane Wagner, Nancy Walker, and Claudia Weill.

The film industry during the 1960s and the 1970s thrived in its diversity as the marketplace for non-studio-made pictures expanded, both inspiring a young generation of filmmakers and cultivating the tastes and purchasing power of a large youth audience. An influx of foreign films, with subject matter frequently contested by American film

censors as being too explicit, screened in art house theaters; independent films, those made with neither studio nor big business financing, experimented with form and narrative conventions, while utilizing grassroots modes of production, distribution, and exhibition; and a variety of low-budget independent B-films—also known as exploitation films—dominated drive-ins and grindhouse theaters.⁴

Exploitation films were produced in large quantities for small budgets of \$500,000 or less, and targeted a youth audience. These movies were identified by their excessive portrayal of sex, female nudity, violence, and action sequences. They were also recognizable by the frequent use of genre conventions including, but not limited to, horror, science fiction, biker, nurse, and teacher films. B-films tended to exploit topical subjects. In the 1960s and 1970s that meant depictions of an antiestablishment, youth-focused counterculture typified by drug use, rock-n-roll, and casual sex, as well as storylines about values inherent in the era's social movements such as racial inequality, antiwar protest, sexuality, and feminism. Because these films were made on the cheap and often contained explicit or salacious material they tended to feature lesser-known performers; and because they were low-budget, non-union productions they tended to rely on and exploit lesser-known directors or at least those not well-known outside of the exploitation network (Schaefer).



dir. Stephanie Rothman, Dimension Pictures, 1973

Stephanie Rothman

Stephanie Rothman graduated from the University of Southern California's Department of Cinema with a Master's degree in 1964. An award winning student filmmaker, she was hired as an assistant by Roger Corman—the successful exploitation producer—who was

known for mining Los Angeles film schools for new recruits. As was the norm when working for Corman, ambitious new hires moved up the ranks quickly. Rothman directed second unit on the beach film *Beach Ball* in 1965; in 1966 she received co-directing credit on the vampire picture *Blood Bath*; and in 1967 she directed the beach comedy *It's a Bikini World*. In 1970, Corman started his own production/distribution company, New World Pictures, and hired Rothman and her husband Charles Swartz to make the company's first film, *The Student Nurses*—she as director, Swartz as producer, and together they would come up with the story. Made for no more than \$500,000, the film earned \$1 million at the box office and became the first of New World's lucrative “nurse” franchise (Corman 181). In 1971, Rothman directed the horror film *The Velvet Vampire* for New World Pictures before leaving to head development and production—in partnership with Swartz—at a new exploitation company, Dimension Pictures, where the wife and husband, directing and producing team made the films *Group Marriage* (1972), *Working Girls* (1973), and *Terminal Island* (1973).

Beginning with *The Student Nurses*, and apparent in the rest of her films, Rothman invokes feminist themes and characterizations, such as female friendship and the value of women working, employing her characters in a variety of careers including, but not limited to, those traditionally associated with men (e.g., lawyers, car mechanics, chemists, entrepreneurs). While women are the protagonists of her movies, male characters are given the same opportunity for growth and potential. Her fair treatment of both genders was described by one interviewer in 1970 as rooted in the fact that as “[a] dedicated feminist, Miss Rothman feels women's lib ought to be followed by a men's liberation movement. ‘Men have to realize it's all right to be what they want, even if the role is traditionally female’” (Snedaker 32).



dir. Barbara Peeters, New World Pictures, 1971

Barbara Peeters

Like Stephanie Rothman, Barbara Peeters also incorporated the feminist politics of the decade within the storylines and characterizations of her films. The tendency to narrativize the progressive views that defined the era—gender and racial equality, sexual liberation, drug use, political protest—was common in exploitation films, particularly those made for Roger Corman. Corman, who identified himself as having liberal leanings, did not mandate his filmmakers to include similar views. However, he was not opposed as long as the message was packaged in typical exploitation excess. Thirty years later Rothman laughed when retelling her boss's instructions: "Make it exciting, and I want some action in it, I want some excitement. I want lots of nudity, and come up with an interesting story" (Rothman 86). Peeters, who would also work for Corman during the 1970s, echoed Rothman's description of the producer's instructions, specifically the "three girls in a dilemma formula," a structure that defined New World's nurse and teacher franchises: "Every fifteen minutes there had to be tits and ass, an action sequence, or a car chase. [Roger] didn't care what you did as long as you got those basic elements that he felt sold these B-movies. The rest of it, great, as long as it moved *quickly*" (Peeters).

Barbara Peeters began her artistic career at the Pasadena Playhouse when she graduated from its training program in 1964. Soon after she transitioned from theater to independent filmmaking, working on a variety of low-budget sexploitation and exploitation genre films. In 1969, she was a costume designer on Walnut International's *The Fabulous Bastard From Chicago* (dir. Greg Corarito), a period piece about a 1920s bootlegger-gangster; a script supervisor on the 1970 biker revenge film *Angels Die Hard* (dir. Richard Compton), distributed by New World Pictures; and also that year, she wrote and co-starred in Hollywood Cinema Associates' sexploitation women-in-prison film *Caged Desires* (dir. Donald A. Davis). As if this wasn't already enough work, that year she wrote and directed her first feature film, *Dark Side of Tomorrow* (also released as *Just the Two of Us*), the story of two housewives who have an affair. In 1971, Peeters wrote and directed her second feature, *Bury Me an Angel*, another biker revenge film unique for its female protagonist, which was distributed by New World Pictures. Following *Bury Me an Angel*, Peeters began steady employment for Roger Corman working in different capacities—including location and production manager, and second unit director—on a variety of New World movies, such as *Night Call Nurses* (dir. Jonathan Kaplan, 1972), *Eat My Dust* (dir. Charles B. Griffith, 1976), and *I Never Promised You a Rose Garden* (dir., Anthony Page, 1977).

In 1975, Peeters wrote and directed *Summer School Teachers*, another installment of New World's latest franchise: student teacher pictures. The film is a comedic romp that adheres to the requisite female nudity and action scenes while also introducing a feminist storyline. For example, one of the teachers (Candice Rialson) takes on the sexist school administration and starts an all-woman football team that demands equal rights. In 1978, Peeters directed *Starhops* for First American Films. The story of three women who take over a burger stand, the actresses spend the majority of the film on roller skates wearing

red, white, and blue string bikinis, but the picture's pro-small business, anti-corporation theme cuts through the portrayal of the female characters as being just "burger bunnies." At the end of the decade, Peeters returned to New World Pictures for her final collaboration with Corman, directing the science-fiction horror film *Humanoids from the Deep*, released in 1980.⁶



dir. Beverly and Ferd Sebastian, Sebastian International Pictures, 1974

Beverly and Ferd Sebastian

Unlike Peeters and Rothman, the wife and husband team of Beverly and Ferd Sebastian did not draw heavily on topical social and political issues for their films' themes. In a 1975 interview for the *Los Angeles Times*, Ferd described the couple's target audience in geographical terms. "You've gotta remember there's L.A. and the movies that do well in L.A. and then there's the rest of the world. We make our movies for the Sears-Roebuck audiences. Our audience is a blue-collar audience from 12 to 50 years old" (Kilday R37).

The Sebastians were unique from other wife-director and husband-producer couples that worked together and clearly demarcated their creative roles in the credits of their films. Instead the Sebastians shared credits as co-writer, co-director, and co-producer on the majority of their movies. From early on the couple were collaborators. When Ferd quit his job as a pipe fitter to begin work as a photographer, Beverly ran the darkroom while her husband took pictures. The couple lived in Houston, where they transitioned from still photography into making television commercials and educational films. A feature film was the logical next step (Kaminsky W-1). *I Need* (1967) was produced for \$7,500 and self-distributed by the Sebastians, out of necessity because no distributor would pick up the title. The couples' early films appear to have centered on strong sexual themes and explicit depictions. According to the American Film Institute Catalog's description, *I Need* was about a woman who was raped at ten years old and as an adult becomes a sex

addict who eventually goes insane because of her past trauma's impact on her life (Krafsur 517).

In 1972 the couple moved out of the sexploitation format and into narrative exploitation films. Tapping into cultural trends, *The Hitchhikers*, produced by their production company, Sebastian Films, Ltd. and distributed by Entertainment Ventures, was about a group of co-ed hippies—reminiscent of the Manson family without the brutal violence—who pose as hitchhikers to rob unsuspecting male motorists. Their next film, *Bloody Friday* (1973, also known as *Single Girls*), capitalized on the era's singles culture and the popularity of the slasher genre, creating a storyline about an island retreat called "Liberated Living" whose sexual encounter group is threatened by a serial killer. The film was produced by the Sebastians and distributed by Dimension Pictures.

Beverly and Ferd excelled in movies that hinged on elaborate action sequences, particularly those with chase scenes, explosions, shootouts, and female sexuality and nudity, the defining characteristics of the 1970s B-film. In *Gator Bait* (1974), a fierce, scantily clad Cajun woman (Claudia Jennings), must defend herself and her family in the swamplands, a feat that often requires her to flee lecherous men in her speedboat. *Flash and the Firecat* (1975) reprised a Bonnie and Clyde narrative in a contemporary setting that had the outlaws (Roger Davis, Tricia Sembera) racing the law in dune buggies. Their 1977 release, *Delta Fox*, followed a hit man (Richard Lynch), who finds himself a target and must track his enemies using fast automobiles and gun battles. The film's opening sequence was an expertly executed car chase worthy of a big-budget Hollywood picture.

Both Stephanie Rothman and Barbara Peeters wanted, ultimately, to crossover to Hollywood and direct feature films; they saw their careers in exploitation as a stepping stone to the dominant industry. However, both filmmakers found this transition impossible to make. In spite of having directed six feature films, and supervised the productions of several others, Rothman could not gain entrance into the mainstream film or television industries. Her last movie would be *Working Girls*, in 1973. Cashing in on what she would describe as gender "tokenism," Peeters was able to move into episodic television during the 1980s and became a prolific director of one-hour dramas, such as *Cagney and Lacy*, *Falcon Crest*, and *Remington Steel* (Peeters). She has yet to direct another feature film since *Humanoids from the Deep*. The Sebastians seemed content working exclusively in the low-budget marketplace, which they did until their retirement from feature production in 1993. In addition to what seemed to be the couple's preference for exploitation filmmaking, they produced and eventually self-distributed many of their movies through their companies, Sebastian Films, Ltd. and Sebastian International Pictures Distribution Co., a successful business venture that allowed them creative autonomy and access to profits, benefits that were not readily available to most exploitation filmmakers.

The mythology of 1970s Hollywood is that it was an era of extraordinary potential for young filmmakers. As described by film historian David A. Cook, the decade was "a time in the history of...the [US film] industry [when] almost anyone with talent and the will to do so could become a film director" (98). While these years were exceptional in the way

cultural conditions and shifts within Hollywood's infrastructure provided opportunities for a new generation of filmmakers, it is important to make clear that these "opportunities" were available almost exclusively to white male directors. During the 1970s, building a body of work—four, five, six, seven films—in a couple of years, could only be accomplished working in exploitation filmmaking because of its cheap and quick production-distribution-exhibition cycle. Here is where these women—representative of a small, yet growing number of female directors—contributed to a unique era of American film history.

Notes

¹ This paper was delivered as part of the "Women's Creative Labor in Screen Industries" panel at the 2015 Society for Cinema and Media Studies Conference, Montreal, Quebec. It was taken in large part from my dissertation, *Working Girls: The History of Women Directors in 1970s Hollywood* (Cinema and Media Studies Department, UCLA, 2014).

² The number of women directors working during the silent era is calculated from the *Women Film Pioneers Project* (Jane Gaines, Radha Vatsal, and Monica Dall'Asta, eds., Center for Digital Research and Scholarship, New York: Columbia University Libraries, 2013). Due to the fact that the early film industry was configured differently than the classical Hollywood studio system and the studio system and independent commercial film communities of 1970s this number may be interpreted in different ways considering each filmmakers' body of work. For my purposes, it demonstrates the high presences of women filmmakers in the United States during the silent era compared to later decades.

³ The subject of this presentation—and my larger project on women directors during the 1970s—is the focus on the creative output of women in the United States who directed narrative feature films intended for a commercial, revenue-generating marketplace. Although some of these directors also worked in other formats (i.e., documentary, television), this distinction is to differentiate between these feature films and the many women working during this era in exclusively documentary, experimental, or avant-garde filmmaking.

⁴ For a discussion of the cultural trends and economic changes that shaped Hollywood's modes of production, distribution, and exhibition during the late 1960s and 1970s see: Douglas Gomery, "The American Film Industry of the 1970s," *Wide Angle* 5.4 (1983): 53-59; Thomas Schatz, "The New Hollywood," *Film Theory Goes to the Movies*, eds. Jim Collins, Hilary Radner and Ava Preacher Collins (New York: Routledge, 1993) 8-36. For production histories of the 1970s that also include an examination of the era in terms of genre, individual filmmakers, and independent commercial film communities that existed outside of Hollywood, see: David A. Cook, *Lost Illusion: American Cinema in the Shadow of Watergate and Vietnam 1970-1979* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000); J. Hoberman and Jonathan Rosenbaum, *Midnight Movies* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1983).

⁶ As was the norm in exploitation filmmaking, crews were non-union. During the making of *Humanoids*, Peeters, a member of the Directors Guild, was fined for working on a non-union production. Corman had promised Peeters that he would pay the substantial fine (\$15,000, more than her salary on the film), but never did. Adding to the friction between producer and director, Corman approved, without Peeters' knowledge, additional footage be shot for the film—scenes of gratuitous female nudity and rape—that if asked, Peeters would not have consented to. The pair never worked with each other again. Andrew Epstein, "'Humanoids' Haywire, Women Say," *Los Angeles Times* 8 May 1980: 5.

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**Labor Pains:
Exploring Gendered Dimensions of Production, Creativity, and Career with a Look at
Independent Director Kelly Reichardt**



Dawn Hall

No matter what cinema they operate within, women filmmakers represent a segment of directors that have been historically underrepresented. While women filmmakers find a stronger voice through opportunities the independent film industry offers compared to Hollywood, there is a significant lack of support in both industries. By analyzing and exploring the careers of contemporary American independent women filmmakers, scholars can identify their opportunities and challenges to raise awareness about the need for a more diverse and equitable film industry. This discussion synthesizes a number of recent studies on women in the film industry and, through an in-depth look at the filmmaking of independent director Kelly Reichardt, analyzes the creative methodology, production, and content of contemporary women filmmakers.

In January 2013, the Sundance Institute and Women In Film Los Angeles released a study conducted by the University of Southern California (USC) Annenberg School of Communication and Journalism titled “Exploring the Barriers and Opportunities for Independent Women Filmmakers.” This study analyzes the challenges women filmmakers face when financing, marketing, and directing films, both documentary and narrative. While not particularly groundbreaking, it offers more information to support Martha Lauzen’s *Celluloid Ceiling* reports from the Center for the Study of Women in Television and Film. Many of Lauzen’s reports track women’s current and historical participation within the film industry looking at employment in the top 250 films. In 2014, “Women accounted for 7% of directors . . . the same percentage as in 2009 [and 2010]. This figure represents a decline of two percentage points from 1998” (Lauzen n.p.). Women directors do not seem to be gaining ground, as Melissa Silverstein reports in *Indiewire*, stating that there has been “NO sustained growth in women directors over the last decade in both narrative and documentaries . . . So the next time someone says things are great for women directors tell them that things are not better, they have STAYED THE SAME and that we still have so much more work to do” (n.p.). Silverstein sums up what Lauzen’s reports

surmise: because of industry challenges, women directors are not moving forward, but they are not taking large strides backwards either.

When the Sundance Institute study looked at the barriers for female narrative filmmakers, they found five areas that significantly stunted women's ability to succeed. Out of the 51 interviewees, 43.1 percent answered that there were several types of "gendered financial barriers" for women who try to make narrative films including a "funding structure that is primarily operated by males," the fact that "[f]emale-helmed projects are perceived to lack commercial viability," and the tendency for women to be viewed "as less confident when they ask for film financing" (Smith 11). The other four "spontaneously mentioned" gender barriers by the interviewees included "male-dominated networks" by 39.2 percent of participants, "stereotyping on set" by 15.7 percent, "work and family balance" by 19.6 percent, and "exclusionary hiring decisions" by 13.7 percent (Smith 11).

While the barriers to finding funding have been widely acknowledged in many studies, it is the perception issues—such as the one in which women filmmakers are seen as "less confident" when requesting funds—that is revealing. Yet the study goes on to point out the perception that the number of women filmmakers working and succeeding in the industry was growing progressively each year, and that is not the case according to Lauzen's findings (Smith 11). In fact, "29.4% of respondents questioned the veracity of data on the low number of women in independent film . . . [and] disclosed that the state of gender equality for females in independent film was not different than other industries" (Smith 11). The disavowal and resistance on the part of those working in the film industry underscores the difficulties for women directors or any women employed in the industry. Addressing whether or not American independent women director percentages are the same or in line with international women directors is very difficult because many international film industries receive state funding, and that is not the case in American independent film. Instead, American independent filmmakers must raise private capital or apply for grants. In her article "Women Directors. Globally," Marian Evans attempts to create a (2010 through 2012) global snapshot of the percentage of women directors producing narrative film. Evans uses Martha Lauzen's 2012 "Independent Women: Behind-the-Scenes" report to compare American independent women director participation to women directorship globally. Evans finds that while the 18 percent statistic used to account for American independent women directors does seem average when compared globally, Hollywood's 7 percent is still very low in comparison (Evans n.p.; Lauzen, "Behind-the-Scenes," 1). This finding is significant especially when such a high number of seasoned and executive level interviewees shared the perception that women's participation in the film industry is improving.

In her article "Just Another Girl Outside the Neo-Indie," Christina Lane notes that many independent female filmmakers are treated by the industry as one hit wonders. Lane highlights directors who have their first feature film financed, but then find it very difficult to get other movies either financed or to be successful. Filmmakers like Julie Dash (*Daughters of the Dust*, 1991), Leslie Harris (*Just Another Girl on the I.R.T.*, 1992), Nancy Savoca (*True Love*, 1989), and Allison Anders (*Gas Food Lodging*, 1992) all had trouble securing financing or lacked appropriate marketing for their subsequent feature films even when their first films made money or were critically successful (197-9). Lane suggests that this phenomenon was partly the result of studio executives' concern over content and commercial viability. So in an effort to deal with

the restrictive environment, many women directors turned to television, the “girl ghetto” (Lane 199).

How can women filmmakers avoid the “one hit wonder” trajectory? One possibility is to look at other women filmmakers that avoided the trap, such as Kelly Reichardt, and explore their production methods to create more career sustainability industry wide.

Kelly Reichardt’s life experiences have contributed to the methods she employs to sustain her career as a director in a restrictive film industry. Having learned from the obstacles she encountered during her first feature in 1995, *River of Grass*, Reichardt is a filmmaker who creates on her terms, and her model of filmmaking can serve as a template to others. In an interview with *Bomb* she discusses making her first feature film:

I had written this script, lived with it and raised the money, yet I still had to go to the set each day and defend my post as director. It was the first time in my life that I was like, Oh, I get it, this is happening because I’m a five-foot-tall female—I wasn’t given the benefit of the doubt. . . . I fought for every shot in my film, which is such a drain and something I wasn’t prepared for. (qtd. in Haynes n.p.)

Like many of her characters and fellow women filmmakers, Reichardt has to struggle to assert herself and push past obstacles. Reichardt’s hard work paid off when *River of Grass* was one of the sixteen out of six hundred entries accepted to the 1994 Sundance Film Festival (Ficks n.p.). The film was nominated for the Grand Jury Prize in the dramatic category at Sundance, and two years later Reichardt and her lead actor, Lisa Bowman, were nominated for several more, at least five nominations total, but none were awarded (“Awards”). Reichardt’s frustration can be heard in a 2011 interview when she says “the door wasn’t open” for her as it was for other first time directors and their films such as Kevin Smith’s *Clerks* (1994) and David O. Russell’s *Spanking the Monkey* (1994) (Longworth). Admittedly, these films stand apart in content and focus considering that Reichardt has a female protagonist and highlights female oriented concerns and issues.

While *River of Grass* was appreciated in reviews by the *Village Voice*, which (as quoted on the case of the DVD release of the film) described it as “one of the year’s smartest indies,” those reviews did not help her find funding for her next project, *The Royal Court*. Reichardt explained that in addition to being pegged as a “woman director” who created “women’s films,” the death nail was having an African American female protagonist, which acted “like double dynamite” (qtd. in Hornaday n.p.). This attitude about women directors and female protagonists is not new. In her 2008 study, “Women @ the Box Office: A Study of the Top 100 Worldwide Grossing Films,” Lauzen begins her report by stating that a leading Hollywood studio executive allegedly declared there was no room for female protagonists in movies as they were bad for the box office; she goes on to quote *New York Times* critic Manohla Dargis as responding: “it is hard to believe that anyone in a position of Hollywood power would be so stupid as to actually say what many in that town think: Women can’t direct. Women can’t open movies. Women are a niche.” Reichardt’s associate producer on *River of Grass*, Susan Stover, explained that Reichardt “was annoyed with herself that she went down that path, where ‘I’ll call you in a couple of days’ becomes weeks becomes months becomes it never happens” (qtd. in Hornaday n.p.). After *The Royal Court* was dropped, Reichardt abandoned her feature filmmaking to work independently

of the studio system, which helped create her minimalistic aesthetic, a characteristic seen in all of her films. In 1999 Reichardt released *Ode*, her 48 minute Super-8 short based on Bobbie Gentry's song "Ode to Billie Joe," with a crew of four in one week: "There I was . . . standing outside in North Carolina with my good friend, [Susan Stover] holding the camera . . . with two actors, just making something. It was just this huge epiphany: I'll just find another way to make films'" (qtd. in Hornaday n.p.). Following that philosophy, Reichardt went on to make *Then, A Year* (2002) and *Travis* (2004), two short films with little to no crew.

Another element of Reichardt's filmmaking model was her decision to begin a teaching career. Teaching first at the School of Visual Arts in New York and then Columbia and SUNY Buffalo led to personal financial independence. These positions also helped Reichardt continue her independent filmmaking projects and culminated in her position as an Artist in Residence in Film and Electronic Arts at Bard College. Teaching is one way she is able to sustain her creativity without soliciting Hollywood financing. Reichardt explained: "That's why I started teaching, I just said to myself, how can I sustain something like this, where I have some money to make some films . . . the key is that I . . . don't have a personality . . . to make that system that does exist [Hollywood] work for me" (qtd. in Stewart n.p.). Although Reichardt explains teaching at Bard College stimulates creativity, her assertion also indicates a financial necessity, especially when relying on private capital to help finance films.

Micro-budgets and independent filmmaking are intertwined more often than not, and all of Reichardt's films strike a balance between budgetary necessities and artistic aesthetics. In an article for *Stop Smiling*, Michael Rowin explains that Reichardt's second feature film *Old Joy* (2006) represents the essence of true independent films: "It's not only one of the best films of the year, but perhaps the only American film of the year to superbly demonstrate the true aesthetic heritage of the term *independent*" (n.p.). *Old Joy* was filmed in a very minimalistic style on location in natural light, with a forty-nine page script, a six person crew, and a two week shooting schedule. *Wendy and Lucy*, released in 2008, was, at the time, the largest for budget for Reichardt at \$300,000 dollars (Box Office Mojo). Cutting costs by casting non-actors and production members and utilizing ten to thirteen crew members, Reichardt demonstrated the ingenuity necessary for micro-budget indie filmmaking.

Meek's Cutoff (2010) with a two million dollar budget was a film unlike any she had attempted due to its sheer size and scope: "The cost of feeding the oxen and horses on *Meek's Cutoff* was equal to the entire budget of Reichardt's second film [*Old Joy*]" (Gilbey n.p.). The film was her most expensive project and even with careful budgeting, it lost money. *Meek's Cutoff* seemingly breaks Reichardt's unwritten minimalist filmmaking production rules because it is a period piece in the Oregon desert with thirty to fifty crew members, animals, and a child actor. However, it is directly in line with her artistic vision and independent philosophy. When Reichardt talked artistic control with *The Guardian*, she repeated her independent ethos, "The more money you take, the more hands there are in the pie. . . . Right now, there's no one telling me what to do. I can edit on my own schedule. No one gives me notes outside the same friends who I've been showing my films to since I started" (Gilbey n.p.). Kelly Reichardt's model of filmmaking offers encouragement to other up-and-coming women filmmakers who are determined not to compromise artistic vision or be co-opted by commercial demands. Nevertheless, discriminatory factors that cause women filmmakers funding issues, even when working with micro-budgets, need to be addressed.

As the 2013 Sundance Institute report suggests, many initiatives are needed to stem gender inequality in the film industry, and researchers compiled a list of organizations that were already working toward solutions (Smith 4). The report's conclusion looked toward future actions with clearly stated goals:

The career sustainability of female filmmakers—both narrative and documentary storytellers—must be enhanced by examining hiring and financing practices. Issues of work and family balance, which serve as one method of minimizing the impact of imbalanced production environments and biases in financial investing, need to be addressed. **Finally, valuing the artistic merit of female-created stories and recognizing their commercial appeal is crucial for future change.** (Smith 33, emphasis in original)

It is no secret that studios view female-centered narratives as too risky and at times require adjustments to a seemingly more commercially appealing content. As the 2013 Sundance Report points out, many within the industry do little to “challenge systemic issues of inequality that may still exist,” therefore “[a]ssisting women as they navigate these obstacles and sensitizing decision-makers to the very real injustices females face should be a priority for concerned groups in the future” (Smith 33).

Lack of funding opportunities is highlighted at an overwhelming rate and while there are several new funding options, raising awareness about these funds seems to be a challenge. In a 2014 Sundance Film Festival Women in Film panel session, Anne Hubbell, co-founder of Tangerine Entertainment, introduced The Juice Fund, a tax deductible, donation driven fund to support female directors. The fund grants ten one-thousand-dollar awards a year to first or second time female narrative film directors in an effort to support their participation in film festivals; on top of funding, the award includes five hours of mentoring and inclusion in community networking events at film festivals (Macaulay n.p.). At another Sundance event, Jacki Zehner, president of Women Moving Millions highlighted the newly organized GameChanger Films, a for-profit film fund for female narrative filmmakers. While it is encouraging that several more organizations are addressing the lack of funding for female narrative filmmaking, marketing these opportunities is still spotty and this impedes progress.

Industry reporting by the Sundance Institute, Women In Film, the University of Southern California, The Center for the Study of Women in Television and Film, and media reporters have provided statistics and research, but setting an agenda from those findings and creating change is challenging. Correcting the unbalanced perception issues and addressing the lack of support for female directors requires a comprehensive plan, one which the academic arena can contribute to with wider acknowledgement and appreciation for women's films. To promote and create change outside the industry, scholars and academics can make an effort to embrace the current pedagogical resources available and support new research related to women in the film industry. Introducing students to the study of women's films can be a step in changing perception and opportunity for future and contemporary female filmmakers.

Perception and funding issues for women in the industry are institutional and cultural hurdles making for slow progress toward change, but with every female filmmaker who creates a

sustainable career path and each new organization that supports female directors, especially in underrepresented areas such as narrative film, the industry becomes more diverse and its content more inclusive. A film industry that values a diversity of voices and stories is a richer resource for all involved, women in the industry, film students, and studios, but most especially for audiences.

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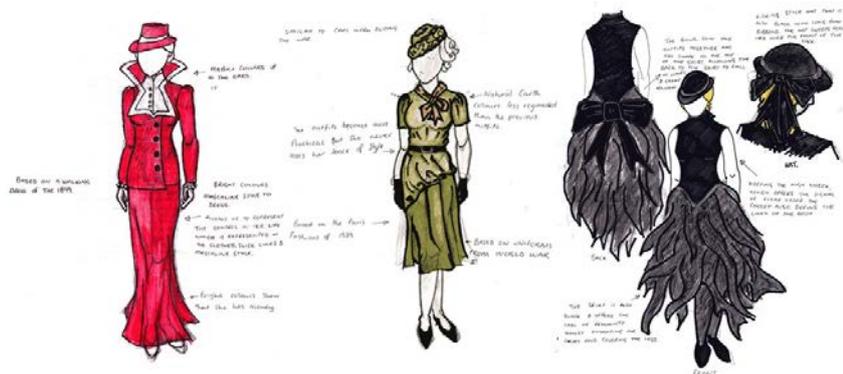
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Reel stitches: Female “Below-the-Line” Workers in British Heritage Cinema



Rosa Fernandez-Day

It is only when we pull apart the seams of costume design that we, as scholars and viewers of media, can begin to see the intricacy of the artistry, and the hidden - and gendered- labor involved in its production. (Banks 95)

This quote, extracted from Miranda Banks’ 2009 chapter “Gender Below-the-Line, Defining Feminist Production Studies,” from the book *Production Studies, Cultural Studies of Media Industries*, validates fieldwork as the only possible way to obtain understanding, amongst the general audience and within academia, for those who have created the costumes for a film. The study of the profession, carried out by Banks through interviews of Hollywood costume designers, unveils one of the reasons why this work is unrecognised, also by the industry, as costume design, by majority, is a female-based profession, being therefore devalued in comparison with other male-centered departments. On top of this, a good wardrobe should go unnoticed to serve its purpose, which is to appear natural to the character, so by extension the success of the work implies a secondary position.

This chapter inspired, but mostly encouraged me, to carry on pulling the thread further down the line, to reach the lower and most anonymous level of costume, in order to complement the knowledge of the “intricacy of the artistry,” as suggested by Banks. Focusing on the case of seven female workers, I have explored the significant yet invisible labor carried out by women in the London costume house Cosprop, where I also work as a milliner, repairing, trimming and adapting hats for stage and screen.

The aim of this research is to raise awareness of the intricate process that precedes the filming of a costume drama and the relationship between the designer and the workers in costume houses that emerges from this practice. I believe it is in workrooms specialized in the materialization of period costumes where the complexity of the craft can be observed at its best. I also chose a British-based analysis in order to divert from the common Hollywood mainstream themes and for geographical convenience, as I was able to develop my investigation within my own work space.

I do not wish to undermine the work of the designers, but to create a more equitable perception of both the credited costume department and the vast number of uncredited people who work alongside the designers during the pre-production process. Opening the back door into workrooms brings new insights on creativity and intentionality, challenging, in a most positive way, the idea of designer as sole person responsible for those costumes we see on

screen. Traditional screen-based interpretations of the production of meaning can be balanced with behind-the-scenes studies, necessary to understand the finished text, as so many decisions are spontaneous or made by subjects who do not even exist for academia.

The framework of my study is highly contested, nation-specific, costume sub-genre British Heritage cinema. The firm Cosprop played an important role in the development of this cinematic style during the mid-1980s, as John Bright, founder of the company, designed the costumes, along with Jenny Beavan, for most of the Merchant-Ivory productions that are considered the kick-starters of this trend (*A Room with a View*, 1985, *Maurice*, 1987 and *Howards End*, 1991). The majority of these films were shot on small budgets and paid special attention to a detailed depiction of the past through historically accurate costumes and rich interiors. Set in late Victorian or Edwardian England, they showed upper-class characters interacting in locations like Gothic colleges or country houses. The use of literary sources conferred a degree of *quality* and *prestige*, supported also by the perfection of style, and a cast of the best new and consecrated actors. These screen representations of the past were limited to an England that was experienced by a few rich people, who travelled thanks to inheritance money, and who wore lace and cream linen that never got dirty. As Cairns Craig defined them in his 1991 article “Rooms without a View,”

These are films in which the past is treated as though it existed in isolation from all that went before and after it, just as all those objects and possessions exist in isolation from any sense of grubby thing-making (Who made them? Where? With how much sweat?). It is a cinema focused on a class that could pretend to be insulated from the world outside. In this it is very much in tune with our contemporary consumerist view of the world as a place in which objects exist only in acquisition, not in the labour of their creation. (12)

Craig’s idea that this cinema does not acknowledge other social groups beyond the English upper-classes, and that it displays a collection of artefacts in all their glory but never their origin, connects with what the film industry and academia do with the workers: concentrate on the big names and on the allure of the finished object, but ignore the work of the makers. The concept of invisibility present in the “anti-heritage” criticism, and the analogy between the unknown on-screen workers and the present day costume-makers, shows very clearly the omission of craft in benefit of the top layer of the profession.

The approach to film costume is determined by two schools of thought: the prominent one that looks at costume as narrative, analyzing its meaning on screen and the impact on audiences, and the one that focuses on the career of a particular costume designer, most often in a Hollywood based context. Designer/scholar Deborah Landis has proved to be groundbreaking in terms of explaining the difference between fashion and costume and unveiling the sometimes difficult relationship between departments, writing extensively about the tensions and conversations between the director of the film and the designer in mainstream movies, but this has again left unanswered the questions: Who made those costumes? Where? With how much sweat?

The significant growth of new interdisciplinary studies of media that analyze the work of the many people involved in producing a film has allowed researchers like me to look at costume from a different angle and will hopefully finish with the erasure of the workers in costume literature. Namely, media industry studies and production studies provide theoretical support for questions of authorship, hierarchies, collaborative efforts, recognition, and invisibility.

They also confirm that an insider/scholar who has access to first-hand information is not only valid, but highly necessary, as implied by Banks, to understand procedures and behavioral patterns within the film industry.

The terminology above and below-the-line used in production studies has been borrowed from the division of workers in the top page of a budget for a film. Director, producer, writer and cast appear first and separated by a dark line from the rest of the crew. Below the line we will find positions like the Art Director, Costume Designer and Director of Photography amongst others. "Above-the-line" workers are considered creative; they establish the concepts that define the project, their presence in the film is irreplaceable, and therefore they will set their own personal fee. "Below-the-line" workers are regarded as craftsmen because they carry out what is considered manual work and they are paid according to the production company standards and budget.

Despite the familiarity that is shared at times due to the nature of the job, there is still a great space between the above and below spheres of costume design, as in many primetime dramas that want to make us believe that the upstairs and the downstairs are closer than they really are (as in Craig's description of heritage cinema where the working classes never appeared).

As a practitioner, I can illustrate these claims thanks to personal involvement and the opportunity for access to makers *in situ*. Furthermore, Cosprop is a suitable case to exemplify female costume-labor and the related idiosyncrasies, as it is formed of a total staff of 40 members where 90% of the workers are women, with men mostly in charge of office jobs. This company provides stock for hire and bespoke makes for worldwide period productions, holding in their warehouse costumes and accessories from the 15th century to the 1960s. It operates under the management of designer-maker John Bright, who oversees all the work that is being undertaken, adding an interesting note to the analysis of gendered labor.

To support my claims, I spoke with women who could be archetypal of the whole, and, although I could not say their opinions are conclusive, there seemed to be a consistency in their responses in relation to the themes of creativity, costume as female labor, invisibility and recognition. I carried out semi-structured interviews, using a questionnaire, but leaving space for spontaneous comments and improvisation, as it proved easier for most of the interviewees to connect with me as a colleague, not as an academic. The ages of these seven women go from the mid-20s to the mid-60s, being the age range of the workers in the company. I wanted to speak with a selection of workers to cover most of the positions developed by women, the number of years in the firm, and the different backgrounds and personalities. Unexpectedly, many other women volunteered, acknowledging with their support the purpose of my research.

I interviewed a ladies' costumier, three ladies' makers, one tailor, and two higher-ranking men's and ladies' makers. The job descriptions of each of these roles is almost unknown within the industry, academia, and the press, despite working side-by-side with the designer and assistants for an average of one to five months in the case of films and over several years for TV costume dramas. A costumier is the bridge between the company and the costume department, who facilitates access to the stock and deals with the makers, dyers, and milliners. Their collaboration is crucial in helping create the look of a production, as they are very good at following the designer's notes and preparing or "pulling" full outfits for both principles and crowd. They can complement the designer's research of the period, and sometimes make up for the lack of it. A maker is traditionally understood as a dress or ladies'

maker and a tailor is in charge of the men's wardrobe. Makers and tailors at Cosprop have the privilege of working from scratch on a garment. They meet the designers and learn about the project, make their own patterns, cut the fabric, sew the pieces together, fit the actors, and, finally, add the embellishments.

This very personal approach allows them to “get under the skin” of a project, and thanks to historical and technical knowledge, skill, and a good eye, they often decide and create without any other guidelines than a color indication, a blurred photo, or a fabric swatch. The word used in-house to define this way of working is “organic.” When the materials begin to gain a three-dimensional form, designers and fabricators will have another conversation. The interviewees defined it as a non-rigid process where the costumes change and grow, until they become natural to the persona who will be wearing them. These women understand that the costumes they make have to look like clothes for real people, not like items that have been pulled from a rail at a dingy costume house. They are used to having in mind that not only an outstanding work has to be produced, but that the designer, director, and actor have to be pleased. In this, they demonstrate that there is not only a compromise with the above level of costume, but with the “above-the-line” workers that seem so far apart. Many award-winning films like *Out of Africa* (Sydney Pollack, 1985), *Elizabeth* (Shekhar Kapur, 1998), *The Duchess* (Saul Dibb, 2008), and *Jane Eyre* (Cary Fukunaga, 2011) had their costumes and hats made by these women because of their competence and their ability to work independently. In terms of expressing their creativity, all the women responded the same. The work as described above satisfies their creative urge, and none of them would like to become a designer, because they admitted to loving their jobs and working for this company.

When asked about why they thought workrooms were mainly formed of women, they all responded soundly that the lack of men was not a subject of consideration. Referring back to their college days, they told me in agreement that in classrooms of 25 students there would be an average of one or two boys. They concluded that men are generally more interested in the money than women are, and therefore go for higher positions or work in fashion, where egos and financial expectations can be fulfilled easier. Women seem to be happier in lower positions and are “foot soldiers” of the costume-making. It was also revealed that there is an archaic and sexist conception of women being seamstresses, a term that implies traditionally “domestic labor,” diminishing its value. On the contrary, the word tailor connects with a higher and exquisite rank, automatically granted to men, although in period costume-making there seems to be plenty of women in this position who are largely treated with equality.

I asked these women how they perceived themselves in relation to the whole of a production, and, again, opinions coincide and bring us back to the concept of above and below the line within costume. By choosing these careers, they assumed that they were going to be invisible and that this “is the way it is.” This does not mean that they would not like to see their names on the screen, but all of them stressed that the compensation to being invisible is provided precisely by working in a costume house like Cosprop, where they are as close to the industry as one can be in the privileged position of a “normal job,” being able to plan a family life, having a 9 to 5 schedule, a maternity leave, and sick pay. My interviewees compared themselves with people who work on set and said that having different personalities and priorities had made them prefer this job within a tiered infrastructure to that of designers or free-lance costume workers.

The most relevant conclusion of this auto-ethnographic study is that it is not personal credit that the hidden female workers would like to achieve, but “respect” for their contribution to

the whole of a production. As Craig flagged in his article, considering the implication of all or most of the subjects involved in a creative process is necessary and beneficial to avoid a narrow-minded view of the world of labor. It would also complement theories of autism and decision-making procedures, demonstrating that film costume studies needs to draw on production studies research and vice-versa, supporting the collaborative efforts of the workers and elevating the value of craftsmanship. I hope my work, and future research on costume, is successful in obtaining recognition for many anonymous participants, not only pulling apart the seams, but looking also at the stitches that hold them together.

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**A Shot in the Dark: The resilience of Anti-Colonial Film Production In
Amita Zamaan's *Disconsolatus* and Helen Lee's *Prey***



Tara Atluri

Introductions: Amita Zamaan's *Disconsolatus* and Helen Lee's *Prey*.

To labor involves not only productions of the gendered and sexual body, but also the labor of birthing nations. Conversely, the labor of creative inspiration functions in what Halberstam terms “queer time” and space, that which is born out of a restless and transient desire.¹ In this article, I discuss the do it yourself approach of racialized, queer/feminist filmmakers. The article focuses on the films *Disconsolatus*, made by South Asian Canadian filmmaker Amita Zamaan released in 2015, and the short film *Prey*, made by Korean-Canadian filmmaker Helen Lee and released in 1995. These two films are discussed as they are representative of racialized women's labor in film production. This labor I argue is tied to the efforts of racialized, diasporic, queer/feminist bodies to find a “home” within poetics due to the alienation of their bodies and desires on a white settler landscape.

I begin by offering a synopsis of the films and locating them in relation to Canadian and North American film history and production. *Disconsolatus* follows the story of Dana, a female Palestinian exile who is displaced in the city of Toronto. Dana's geographical, cultural, and political exile is tied to her psychic alienation. Dana comes to learn of an outbreak of a disease called ‘Disconsolatus’ in the city which requires mandatory evacuations, medication, and quarantine for those who are infected with the mysterious illness. The disease produces symptoms which mirror Dana's depressive state as a woman who is haunted by apartheid and loss. The film blurs the lines between fiction and reality through the point of view of this character whose mind is never at rest. Dana's dream world and daily reality in a city riddled with disease are blurred. The film represents an erasure of boundaries between succinct borders of reality and fiction, sickness and health, and sanity and insanity. The waking dream state of the main character creates a film that is rich in poetics and one in which the lament of political exile

cannot be divorced from mental and psychic trauma. The film stars Nilofar Dadikhuda as Dana, Tabitha Tao as Jenny, Glenn Reid as George, Matt Yantha as Siguror, Marcus Haccius as Le-ill D, Stacey Iseman as Paculla, Aeiron Munro as Antin, Aulfiqar Lena-Stewart as the young boy, Schlomo Benzion as Dr. Cerletti, Kyle Haccius as the White Coat, April Lee as the infected woman, and Damien Williams as the infected man.

Disconsolatus can be considered as part of Canadian film history in relation to other diasporic filmmakers whose narratives and cinematic influences cross borders. For example, themes with Zamaan's work resonate with the films of Atom Egoyan, as Egoyan's films also address issues of exile and trauma, depicting psychic alienation and familial violence as a microcosm for larger forms of political crises that migrants carry with them to Canada. In *Image and Territory: Essays on Atom Egoyan*, authors discuss Egoyan's use of the poetics of film to address the silences of histories of the Armenian genocide and other traumas which characters live with in many of Egoyan's films. Burwell and Tschofen write,

Atom Egoyan's *Ararat* (2002) is the first widely released cinematic representation of the Armenian genocide. However, the film seeks not simply to document the genocide, but to reveal how a ninety-year-old event continues to have disruptive and even traumatic effects on a scattered Armenian population, now known as the Armenian diaspora . . . (1)

The authors further discuss Egoyan's *Ararat* and other films such as *Family Viewing*, which also focuses on the after effects of the Armenian genocide through different generations of a family in relation to what they term "the psychology and politics of denial." The denial of the genocide by Armenian migrants involves a will to forget what has happened across borders in an effort to carve out a life within the temporalities of North America. As migrants, the characters in Egoyan's films must speak in the English language and the language of Western secular capitalism, with the painful histories of war and persecution much like their mother tongues being unintelligible to the majority of North Americans they encounter. Trauma and life histories, like ongoing political conflicts, do not disappear and remain buried in the psyches of exiles, erupting in physical and mental sicknesses and through familial tensions. Rather than depicting a genocide that no longer exists in the material reality of Western secular time, the after effects of genocide as personal and familial trauma are depicted within Egoyan's films. As Burwell and Tschofen write,

Through a careful consideration of the historical and political allusions in a number of his short and feature length films....Egoyan, always conscious of his directorial role, seeks not to transmit a trauma to the viewer, but rather to represent `catastrophe's aftermath. (3)

Similar, within *Disconsolatus*, Zamaan does not represent the violence of ongoing war and genocide in Palestine, but rather ruminates of the traumas of war indirectly, through the psychic life of the exiled Palestinian woman. The deep disturbances of the political become bodily and mental disturbances that plague the Western city, at a distance from the actual site of conflict. The authors state that within Egoyan's filmic depictions of the Armenian genocide and the effects it has on diasporic populations, "Genocide is an absence implied rather than revealed."⁶

Zamaan's film should be considered in relation to Canadian films made by diasporic directors and filmic considerations of how genocides that seem foreign and distant haunt the bodies of displaced migrants within the West.

What also unites Zamaan's *Disconsolatus* with Egoyan's films are the uses of the female body as that which is marked by gendered violence, one in which the body of the exiled and traumatized woman comes to act as a symbol for raped, pillaged, and destroyed land. Egoyan's films *Open House*, *Diaspora*, and *Portrait of Arshile* all utilize artistic techniques to reflect on the buried traumas of exiles. Egoyan explores "the groundlessness of the exilic and diasporic experience by exploring the longings that haunt the disjuncture between image spaces and geographical spaces in Egoyan's short film, *Open House*, *Diaspora*, and *Portrait of Arshile*" (Burwell and Tschofen 3). Just as Zamaan's film uses a non linear structure which offers the audience the perspective of the disjointed mental life of the Palestinian female exile, Egoyan also uses avant garde film techniques to offer insight into the skewed temporalities and emotional lives of exiles.

Within Egoyan's films a "displacement effect is sometimes manifested formally in, for example, the non linear structure of Egoyan's experimental short film *Diaspora*, which 'exiles' the viewer from any stable referent" (Burwell and Tschofen 9). Without a stable referent and a linear narrative the viewer is made to "experience time, space, and movement in a manner similar to the emotional cognitive experience of spatial and historical disorientation felt by diasporic and exilic subjects" (Burwell and Tschofen 9). Similarly, Zamaan's film can be thought of in relation to histories of Canadian films made by various diasporic directors such as Egoyan, whose films offer one insight into the incomprehensible lives and losses of survivors of genocide who are exiled within North America.

Helen Lee's *Prey* is also a narrative that uses filmic and poetic techniques to reflect on migrant alienation and longing. The film revolves around the romance of two characters, Ill Bae, the daughter of Korean immigrants who own a convenience store in downtown Toronto, and Noel, an Aboriginal man who shoplifts from the store. The film is structured within the space of one day in which "Ill Bae's family routine collides with her New World romance, catching her between loyalty to her father and her passion for a new lover with a checkered past" (<http://www.helenleefilm.com/Prey/Prey.htm>). A short film, *Prey* begins on the morning after a break in at the family convenience store. Ill Bae, a Korean Canadian woman in her twenties, works at her family's convenience store and catches Noel shoplifting only to realize that they went to high school together. She finds herself attracted to Noel, whom she does not chastise for stealing, drawn towards his lawlessness as an escape from the conservative hard working moralism of her immigrant family. The cast includes: Sandra Oh as Ill Bae, Adam Beach as Noel, Aymara DeLlano as Daniela, Alan Gilimor as the TV Narrator, In Sook Kim as Halmoni, Fred S. Muir as the pawnbroker, Ik Kejun Shin as the father, and Mung-Ling as the "dragon lady."

In "Out of the Shadows: Three Asian Canadian Playwrights Confront Film Noir," Gygli discusses the use of film noir techniques by Asian Canadian artists. Film noir allows the Asian feminine body, often made invisible with dominant white settler narratives of Canada and represented as sexually docile within orientalist discourse to embody the role of femme fatale.

Gygli discusses the role that 'race' and gender play in film noir, and how these conventions are subverted by Asian Canadian writers and cultural producers. Gygli draws on the writing of Kaplan who states,

the visual style of film noir refers to Western culture's unconscious linking of the darkness of the psyche (especially the female psyche) not only with the literal darkness of racial others, but also with unconscious fear/attraction for the racial others that the 'Imaginary' of dominant white culture represses both literally and symbolically (qtd. in Gygli n.p.)

Lee employs film noir techniques through allusions to both sexuality and criminal deviance that gesture to the relationship between "race" and innocence. Within Lee's *Prey*, the Aboriginal male character is constructed as a "dark" outlaw figure while the Korean female lead, Il Bae, exists in the shadows of fairy tale images of white femininity. As an urban Aboriginal man with a penchant for shoplifting and as a thankless service Asian worker, both Noel and Il Bae are dark stains on the white picket fences of racist and classist white settler mythologies of "romance." Unlike mainstream film noir production in which "dark" femme fatales and deviant outlaws are often vilified, within Lee's *Prey* both Noel and Il Bae are not converted to the quaint provincial missionary moralism of colonial Canada. Rather, they are seen to enjoy the pleasures of living on the edges of dominant fantasies of arduous work and sexless scripts in which "deviant" racialized bodies are constructed as pathological and fearful. Gygli discusses the usual narrative within film noir as one in which the femme fatale character's sexual freedom often does not last. The author states, "the femme fatale is punished at the end and sexuality is returned to the realm of marriage and the home" (Gygli n.p.). Within Lee's *Prey*, the dominant racist and sexist ideologies of film noir are troubled as Il Bae's sexual power is not harnessed to meet the biopolitical interests of the family or the nation state. Rather, her lawless sexuality and estrangement from idealized white bourgeois colonial ideals of femininity and orientalist ideals of feminine submission remain intact. Il Bae is neither the provincial colonial maternal figure of dominant white Canadian history nor is she the dutiful sexless immigrant daughter and thankless laborer. Helen Lee's *Prey* utilizes the techniques of film noir to reveal idealized romantic scripts of "happy families" and "peace keeping" settlers on stolen land to be grandiose white lies born out of dark histories of racism now hidden behind customer service pleasantries.

One can consider Lee's film in relation to the historical representation of Asian femininity through orientalist forms of cultural production, reproduced and parodied within contemporary Canadian cinema. One of the most reproduced narratives involving East Asian women, whether intentionally or not, is the story of Madam Butterfly. de Lauretis charts the history of this figure, citing the narrative as an outgrowth of nineteenth century travel literature. She states that Madam Butterfly emerged in 1887 in a book titled *Madame Chrysantheme* by Julien Viaud a French naval officer. The book detailed Viaud's travels in Japan and his temporary marriage to a young Nagasaki woman named O-kiku-san (*Chrysanthemum*) (de Lauretis 310). Viaud published the book under the pseudonym Pierre Loti. de Lauretis states that the book's popularity throughout Europe can be attributed to "the vogue for the exotic, the Oriental, and in particular the fascination that the West-Europe and the United States had for Japanese culture, art, and design in the second half of the nineteenth century, no doubt encouraged by Japan's opening of its ports to Western trade and travel around 1860" (310).² In *Romance and the "Yellow Peril": Race, Sex,*

and *Discursive Strategies in Hollywood Fiction*, Gina Marchetti states that the most common depictions of East Asian women in Hollywood cinema exist in “Madame Butterfly” type narratives. According to Marchetti “Butterfly tales ennoble female sacrifices of all sorts. They argue, in support of dominant male notions of the social order, that women can be morally ‘superior’ to men by sacrificing themselves completely for the patriarchy” (79). Marchetti further states that

The Butterfly character may be a fool, but she represents a spiritually transcendent folly that transforms her into a saint...The Butterfly becomes a scapegoat for the excesses of men and for the abuses of the West. Thus, she both conjures up uneasy feelings of guilt and purges them through her self-sacrifice, presented as tragic but necessary. (79)

A rewrite of *Madam Butterfly* was created by Asian American playwright and activist David Hwang in 1988 called *M. Butterfly*, and was later turned into a film by Canadian filmmaker David Cronenberg, who, like Helen Lee, challenges mainstream orientalist representations of Asian femininity. *M. Butterfly* is a postcolonial queer parody of Puccini's classic narrative. As de Lauretis states, the script for Cronenberg's film version attempts to “trouble, ironize, deconstruct, and ultimately reappropriate the dominant narrative” (312). In Hwang's story, the Butterfly is a male body and a spy for the People's Republic of China who is aware of the classic Madam Butterfly tale and seeks to “self exoticize” in order to aid his career as a spy. In Hwang's rewrite, Song Liling, the modern Butterfly, “is not guileless and not passive, not an object but indeed the subject—the conscious and willful subject—of a fantasy that sustains the agency of his own desire” (de Lauretis 313). de Lauretis argues that what occurs in Hwang's rewrite is a postcolonial inversion in which “the discontents of Western civilization have come full circle and the aggression that it had displaced onto its colonized others now turns upon itself, upon the colonizer” (324). In discussing the narrative, director David Cronenberg states that “the figure of the Butterfly, the cliché of the submissive oriental woman, is a ‘cultural truism.’” (qtd. in de Lauretis 316). Whether they have seen *Madam Butterfly* or not, the images and implications of the narrative have been so widely reproduced in various cultural texts that as Cronenberg states “technically you could take any man off the street in Western culture and he would believe all of these things. He doesn't have to ever have seen *Madame Butterfly*” (qtd. in de Lauretis 316). As de Lauretis states, the Butterfly is a cliché, “a stereotype set in a threadbare orientalist narrative, which...like many other public fantasies, still has the power of ‘something deeply felt and experienced’” (316). The *Madam Butterfly* narrative is driven by a political history that makes it a powerful story, a story that is always to some extent present in the representation of Asians in Western culture. It is a trope that has helped to both shape the Orient as feminized and helped to carve out dominant stereotypes of Asian women as passive and weak. Helen Lee's *Prey*, much like Cronenberg's filmic adaptation of Hwang's play, can be seen as a contemporary challenge to Orientalist histories of artistic representations of Asian women as submissive.

One can consider specific mainstream film and television representations of Korean women in relation to histories of war. Authors discuss representations of Korean “war brides” within television shows such as *M.A.S.H.* and *After M.A.S.H.* Hamamoto states that while American popular culture is used to emphasizing Asians as perpetual foreigners, it also circulates constant “success stories” that minimize the racism Asian Americans face and also justify American

imperialism. In the short-lived series *After M.A.S.H.*, a spinoff of *M.A.S.H.* the trope of the “Asian War Bride” is exploited. Soon-Lee is a Korean woman who married the American corporal Maxwell Klinger and has now relocated to America. Hamamoto states that “*After M.A.S.H.*, like its parent program *M.A.S.H.*, exploits the historical experience of Asians . . . caught in the vice of American militarism by implying that their lives actually have been bettered by the invasion, occupation, and destruction of their native countries” (27). The trope of the “Asian war bride” reinforces American imperialism through racist-sexist depictions of Asian culture as barbaric and Asian women as passive and helpless, needing to be saved by white American men to whom they remain forever indebted. The trope not only reinforces ideas about Asian inferiority, but enforces racist-sexist ideas of Asian women as being naturally submissive (Hamamoto 24-26). As Hamamoto states “The Asian War Bride is the ideal companion or wife to white American males who prefer ‘traditional’ women untainted by such quaint notions as gender equality” (25). Hamamoto further argues that in recent years “perhaps in response to conservative male backlash against the advances of the women’s movement over the past twenty years, there have been any number of ‘dating’ and marriage services that promise to deliver compliant overseas Asian women to men in search of alternatives to native-born Americans who might have been exposed to the virus of feminism”(26). Lee’s depiction of Ill Bae, who is seen to have sexual agency in her relationship with an Aboriginal man, and who is not controlled by the patriarchal rule of either her father or a husband, is a challenge to the depiction of the Asian “war bride,” who is desirable based on her assumed lack of feminist politics and alignment with antiquated ideas of “tradition” as sexism.

In depicting the lives of racialized female migrants in Canada as those of psychic and physical distress, systemic racism, arduous work, and sexual desires that move outside of Orientalist narratives, both Zamaan and Lee also challenge the myth of the “model minority.” The myth of the “model minority” is one in which Asians are imagined to be “hard workers” in comparison to other racialized people such as African Canadians and Aboriginal persons. This myth masks the exploitation of Asian workers while also creating a divisive rhetoric that positions racialized people against one another. In *The Karma of Brown Folk*, Vijay Prashad writes,

We are not simply a solution for black America but, most pointedly, a weapon deployed against it. The struggles of blacks are met with the derisive remark that Asians don’t complain; they work hard—as if to say that blacks don’t work hard. The implication is that blacks complain and ask for handouts . . . the myth of the model minority emerged in the wake of the Civil Rights movement to show up rebellious blacks for their attempts to redress power relations. The state provided the sop of welfare instead of genuine redistribution of power and resources, and even that was only given as reluctant charity. (qtd. in Haley n.p.)

While Prashad, writing in the American context makes specific reference to the use of Asians and South Asians to manage anti racist dissent among African Americans, one can also consider how “model minorities” are utilized to mask the ongoing colonial genocide of Aboriginal peoples in white settler colonies such as Canada. *Prey* troubles “model minority” rhetoric by offering a narrative that casts the Korean woman as one whose life is tied to an Aboriginal man through desire and through the realities of racism in urban Canada, those of urban Aboriginal homelessness and the exploitation of Asian workers.

I discuss Zamaan and Lee's film production in relation to fantasies of the "happy" reproductive labor of women by racialized feminist/queer filmmakers who shoot from the hip. What unites production values of contemporary queer, racialized, feminist films made on the streets of Toronto is a re-mapping of the nation through a tilted lens. If colonialism was and continues to be a capitalist venture, in which "happy homes" are reproduced by idealized white, bourgeois, heteronormative female subjects, the productive labor of feminist filmmaking challenges dominant familial scriptings of women's value. By using her own artistic labor, and an innovative form of racialized queer diasporic film production ethics that involves support from communities of friends, lovers, allies, and artists, Zamaan's film production disidentifies with dominant tropes of capitalist labor and heteronormative, white reproduction.³ Just as Zamaan disidentifies with provincial tales of happy apolitical homes, Lee's film translates unspoken truths of haunting wars that displace migrants in urban centers and those of Canadian colonial genocide that displace urban Aboriginals. In discussing feminist/queer film production strategies, I use queer, anti-racist, film, and feminist theory to move away from narratives of pity, arduous struggle, and violence that often depict racialized, queer, and feminist lives and deaths on the margins of glorified nationalist narratives. Without discounting the difficulties facing queer, feminist, and racialized filmmakers, I suggest their resilient will to create art offers a new economics of artistic production that can be understood as anti-colonial activism.

Dominant myths of family names and family money, passed down through lineages of white settler entitlements, are troubled by racialized female bodies that appear on screen to reproduce different mythologies of love and belonging. In both Zamaan's and Lee's films, the centrality of the female characters trouble the labor value of the immigrant woman's body as servile worker or invisible shadow on the pavement. Drawing on narratives of labor that went into the making of *Disconsolatus*, and their relationship to the Toronto International Film Festival controversy surrounding Israeli apartheid, I discuss the relationship between land, settlement, and the ruptures presented by alternative communities of film production. I also discuss the production ethics of Helen Lee's *Prey* in her efforts to translate the schisms of language and loss that define migrant lives and the lives of urban Aboriginals. The body of the racialized, diasporic woman acts as a feminist translator in a similar way as feminist film translates dominant myths of colonial patriarchy into those of feminist/queer cinematic pleasure. I further discuss Lee's labor in relation to her choice of genre and the struggles of women who continue to make films despite systemic barriers of sexism and racism. If the "family" is a labor of patriarchal, colonial romantic scripts, the desire to tell stories that unsettle mythologies of white male authority is represented in the labor power of young, racialized, feminist/queer filmmakers. A challenge to white male authority is also presented by both Zamaan and Lee through the bodies they stage on screen, as figures of unapologetic sexual treason.

In an interview regarding *Prey*, Helen Lee discusses efforts to make an unsettling film regarding the truths of cultural alienation of second-generation migrants and their ambiguous relationship to Aboriginality. By staging a "love story" that begins in a convenience store, a common class based reality that structures Korean immigrant lives, Lee's film labors to move away from simplistic narratives of white Canadian romances of "innocence" drowning in colonial denial. *Prey* also challenges narratives of "happy immigrant families" shrouded behind slave wage labor. The finality of "settlement" through migrant assimilation to dominant white colonial

scripts is troubled by Lee, whose production ethics and writing style are demonstrative of the uneasy truths told by feminist film. As Lee says of the relationship between Sandra Oh and the character played by the male lead in *Prey*, Adam Beach, “I think of their relationship as a completely temporary one, a phenomenon of the late twentieth century that allows such encounters between Asian immigrants and Indigenous people to be possible” (qtd. in Hoolboom, 21). As I discuss, both Zamaan and Lee labor to tell unsettling narratives of characters not at rest within dominant ideologies of nationalism.

Slave Wage Labor and “Happy Housewives”

The “labor power” of the idealized Canadian female subject to reproduce the white settler state is challenged in Zamaan’s portrayal of the female exile that lives in isolation. Zamaan’s narrator is not a super-model minority who is “happy” to be home.⁴ Similarly, Lee also tells the story of “Ill Bae,” known as Eileen in her Canadian public school, a bad English translation that frames the film as a story of the mistranslated lives of migrants and urban Aboriginals. As we learn in the film, “Ill Bae” is a boy’s name in Korean, gesturing to the queering of heteronormativity through the racialized female body. The “mistranslation” of “Ill Bae” into the English “Eileen” turns this figure into a heteronormative cis-gendered woman through the act of naming. The colonial Queen’s English is used to settle the gender and sexuality identity of this figure, while her relationship to Korean diasporas and languages calls normative gendered names into question. In this way, the construction of non Western spaces and dialects as sexist, heteronormative and homophobic as compared the assumed liberatory spaces and languages of Canada are called into question. The queer body does not need to escape to “Turtle Island” to be “properly” named, but perhaps needs to escape bad colonial English translations.

The film begins with a scene shot in blue light. Oh’s character appears as a femme fatale, shown lying in bed and awakened by the sound of the phone ringing. An exhausted Ill Bae answers the phone alone, seeming sexy and disinterested. “What again?” she says, slamming the phone down in frustration, being left to answer to the ringing call of a security alarm that disturbs her immigrant father. The camera captures a lasting image of Oh’s frustrated face as Ill Bae proclaims with sardonic irony, “I could tell this was going to be my lucky day.” The narrative of the “lucky” peace-loving immigrant from a destitute and oppressive place is troubled by Ill Bae’s refusal to feign joy in the face of banal, provincial, white settler Canada. The film moves to Adam Beach’s character, Noel, the mysterious and handsome Aboriginal man who remains haunted throughout Lee’s film by his own familial ghosts and the larger ghosts of white settler colonialism.

The audience hears Noel’s internal dialogue, “Last night, I dreamt I came home and then I was there.” The dialogue is however not heard at “home” but on a moving bus. Beach’s character is the working class urban Aboriginal man turned petty thief who must traverse the “fair is fair” secular capitalist ideologies of colonial meritocracy with a wink and nudge to a truth based in entitlements to Aboriginal land born out of colonial theft. Ill Bae and Noel’s romance begins when he shoplifts food from her family’s convenience store, and he remembers her from their Toronto high school. The narrative centers on their “outlaw” affair that turns around a narrative of theft, the death of Noel’s younger sister, and the wage-based capital of immigrant labor. The

story of what Žižek terms “multicultural multinational capital,” in which discourses of “multiculturalism” are facets of multinational capitalist globalization, are troubled through the character of Ill Bae who is positioned between the denial of discourses of “happy immigrants” forced into slave labor and Canadian colonialism (Žižek 28-51). Ill Bae is positioned as a translator of discourses of denial, as one who is able to translate the unspeakable racism that exists in Canada and the silenced entitlements of first generation immigrants, who are constructed only as workers, with no sexual and personal desire.

Similarly, the rhetoric of Canadian multicultural “diversity” in which “race blindness” functions as a denial of white privilege is challenged in Zamaan’s *Disconsolatus*. Zamaan’s narrator is not “happy” to be home in *The Little Mosque on the Prairie*.⁵ One can compare Zamaan’s *Disconsolatus* and Lee’s *Prey* to mainstream representations of “happy” immigrant settlers depicted in mainstream CBC programs such as *Little Mosque on the Prairie*. Within such visual economies of racialized representation, racialized immigrant bodies follow within the footsteps of white settlers. Muslim women are depicted as being “free” in Canada and immigrants represent a diasporic middle class that is a far cry from the working class laborers depicted in Lee’s *Prey*, and the exiled figures depicted in Zamaan’s film. Dana, a Palestinian exile is not settled at “home” nor in mental state, rather she is a disturbed character who makes a mess of the clean pageantry of apolitical platitudes of “peace,” conjuring up ghosts from wars of colonial settlement that Canada and its film industry are implicated in. In allowing the audience to enter the mind of Dana, the Palestinian exile and in telling a narrative of sickness and plague that besets the imagined cleanliness and peace of Canada, the wars that Canadian government’s support are rendered in the bodies and minds of white settlers and diasporic subjects. Dana’s grief does not stand apart from the silent grief of war and occupation that funds and governs Canadian life, but is representative of a melancholia that besets all in Turtle Island, a place of polite racist denial.

In her text, *The Promise of Happiness*, Sara Ahmed critiques platitudes of nationalist bliss with histories of feminist complaint. Drawing on histories of feminist struggle that reference Friedan’s *The Feminine Mystique*, Ahmed writes,

The happy housewife is a fantasy figure that erases the signs of labor under the sign of happiness. The claim that women are happy and that this happiness is behind the work they do functions to justify gendered forms of labor, not as a product of nature, law, or duty, but as an expression of a collective wish or desire. How better to justify an unequal distribution of labor than to say that such labor makes people happy? How better to secure consent to unpaid or poorly paid labor than to describe such consent as the origin of good feeling? (1)

The fantasy of the consensual labor of the “happy housewife” is conjoined with the idea of multicultural narratives of happiness, in which racialized diasporic women are often imagined to escape to white settler nations to achieve better lives.

One can also consider Deepa Mehta’s film *Bollywood/Hollywood* (2002), in which racialized migrants in Toronto are also depicted as affluent settlers who achieve heteronormative bliss through narratives and film techniques of light hearted romantic comedy. While Mehta’s *Fire*

(1996) and *Water* (2005), set in India, depict obscene spectacles of gendered violence, South Asians who are represented in Canada are settlers who achieve “happiness” through middle class suburban capital and heteronormative romance. In *Impossible Desires: Queer Diasporas and South Asian Public Cultures*, Gayatri Gopinath suggests that the inability to imagine queer female desire within *Bollywood/Hollywood* may be connected to the violent Hindu Nationalist opposition to queer sexuality that erupted after the release of Mehta’s *Fire*, which depicts the lives of queer women in India. Gopinath writes,

In early December 1998, movie theatres in Bombay, New Delhi, and other major Indian cities were stormed by dozens of activists from the Shiv Sena, the Hindu right-wing organization that formed the militant wing of the BJP-led Hindu nationalist government then in power. The activists were protesting the screening of *Fire*, the 1996 film by the Indian Canadian director Deepa Mehta which depicts a lesbian relationship between two sisters-in-law in a middle class, joint-family household in contemporary New Delhi. Screenings were forcibly stopped, film posters burnt, and property vandalized. The Shiv Sena justified its actions by claiming that the film’s depiction of lesbian was an affront to Hinduism and ‘alien to Indian culture.’ (131)

However, the racist ways in which caste, color, and colonial settler ideologies are reproduced through heteronormative tales of diasporic marriage economies are left unexplored in films such as *Bollywood/Hollywood*. While the oppressive treatment of women and queers are the focus of Mehta’s films set in India, there is no mention within her depictions of Canadian migrant life of racialized economies of slave wage labor. Furthermore, *Bollywood/Hollywood* offers no feminist critique on the part of racialized migrant women to heteronormative familial relations. The well monied immigrant class that Mehta stages in Toronto reproduces racial and caste based lineages while also remaining at a distance from urban Aboriginal poverty and working class labor. The plot turns around a conflict regarding the marital and familial expectations of families and their immigrant children, which are easily resolved through heteronormative and “race” based marriages with the film’s lead character eventually marrying another affluent South Asian immigrant. The “happy housewife” economies which tie economic capital to familial wealth are secured, while the exiled bodies of migrants from war torn countries, Aboriginals, and the immigrant working class are made invisible.

Conversely, Helen Lee and Amita Zamaan labor to offer complex fictions that challenge the cartoonish song and dance of both Bollywood and Hollywood spectacles of fantasy. While *Bollywood/Hollywood* makes both white settler colonialism and feminism in Canada invisible, Zamaan and Lee offer films that depict the joined production of colonial capitalist ideology and heteronormative biopolitics. Gopinath cites Julia Emberley’s discussion of the relationship between Canadian colonialism, filmic reproduction, and biopolitical mythologies of white settler nations such as Canada/Turtle Island. Emberley discusses “Tarzan and Jane” films in relation to economies of bourgeois heteronormative reproduction and the body of the idealized woman within a white settler colony, such as Canada. Jane is the bourgeois feminine woman who tames the “wild” Aboriginal man, Tarzan. The body of the white, upper class woman is used to tame the Aboriginal man and make him useful to reproduce idealized children for the nation. Within these films, the body of the racialized Aboriginal woman is absent. The colonial history of racist white settler mythologies appears in the absence of the Aboriginal female body, a lingering

political truth in the ongoing genocide of First Nations people in Canada/Turtle Island and the growing number of “missing” Aboriginal women that haunt the landscape, both filmic and real.

In both Zamaan and Lee’s films, the racialized body of the woman appears on the landscape. The darkness of the brown female body and the invisibility of racialized femininity as anything more than a slave wage laborer or a haunting ghost of new imperialist wars take up the space of the screen. While the “Tarzan and Jane” films discussed by Emberley are emblematic of mainstream enactments of racist reproductions of whiteness, the avant garde films of racialized feminist filmmakers translate all the polite denials of Canadian racism into images of dark women thrown against a lily white landscape.

The Labor of Translation: Broken Tongues and Dirty Pictures

The production process of both Zamaan and Lee can be read as works of ongoing translation. Zamaan’s film is inspired by the late Palestinian poet, Mahmoud Darwish. The director discusses the film as a creative translation of Darwish, a famed Palestinian writer whose poetry reflects the psychic, emotive, and physical traumas of colonial exile. Zamaan states,

In my opinion, the late Mahmoud Darwish possessed unparalleled artistry. Many of his poems utilize surrealistic imagery that blends the personal and political with fantasy. So it is no surprise that many artists have interpreted his work into different mediums. I came across “I didn’t apologize to the well” this summer and I read it over and over again. It moved me deeply and evoked some fantastic imagery: oracles, mystical wells, and gazelles. It inspired me creatively and I put on the hat of a surrealist writer and a couple of days later I had a screenplay in my hand. (qtd. in Cader n.p.)

The work of a translation beyond borders of language, nation, and faith shaped the writing and production of *Disconsolatus*, written by Zamaan. Similarly, Lee states that her film was also written as a work of translation in which the hybridity of lives haunted across and because of borders is told in several tongues and expressive of multiple realities. Lee discusses her production of the script for *Prey*, written for Sandra Oh, an English-speaking actress of Korean descent, and Lee’s aunt, who speaks Korean. She states,

The script for *Prey* was originally written for Sandra Oh and my mother’s sister, In Sook Kim . . . I knew this would be an interesting process of not only pairing a highly trained actor like Oh with my Aunt who’d never performed before, but also because Oh, like the character, didn’t speak Korean, and my aunt doesn’t speak much English. (qtd. in Feng 151)

Just as Zamaan translated Palestinian Darwish’s poems of exile into the form of film, Lee also engaged in a labor of translation to make *Prey*. As she discusses,

Since I cannot really speak Korean either, a process of translation was integral to the project. At every stage from rehearsal to shooting to editing, the interpreter,

Jane Huh stuck close and ready. I wasn't prepared for the cultural wrangling over specific attitudes and sayings that I thought were authentic or convincing but Jane insisted were off-mark. (qtd. in Feng 151)

Frantz Fanon once wrote that, "To speak means to be in a position to use certain syntax, to grasp the morphology of this or that language, but it means above all to assume a culture, to support the weight of a civilization" (3). Zamaan's film, in taking on the language of the Palestinian exiled poet, takes on the weight of the unsettling truth of migrant melancholia. *Disconsolatus* is an expression of the incomprehensible losses of Palestinians, which cannot be translated into trite English language Valentine's Day cards. So too, does Lee labor to tell a story of linguistic translation that is tied to the impossibility of cultural translation. In "The Politics of Translation," Gayatri Spivak states "The task of the feminist translator is to see language as a working to the clues of gendered agency" (201). The abilities of both Zamaan and Lee to shift across languages, national histories, and borders through admirable creative labor gestures to the agency of feminist filmmakers.

Filmic feminist agency is not a labor born out of assimilating and perfecting the grammar/diction of Queen's English. Rather, it is through the language of film, never fully translatable in the aesthetic imagery it offers and emotions it produces in viewers that anti colonial feminist/queer filmic agency is found. Zamaan's film exists as an ongoing conversation between her and the late poet Darwish, while Lee's film was an attempt at translation between her and her Aunt, a Korean-speaking migrant who attempts to interfere in the romantic plotline between Ill Bae and Noel. As Lee recalls, "True to form, my aunt herself, a prolific essayist and poet, refused to play the role of the grandmother (who was initially written as very accepting of Noel and Il Bae's liaison) and demanded changes" (Lee 317). Lee further remarks,

My aunt wanted Noel out of Ill Bae's apartment and out of her life. While I never thought I'd take identity for granted, especially in a film about cross-generational differences, here I was making my own cultural assumptions . . . (Lee 317)

If language is deeply interwoven with "culture" as the embodiment of a people, the cultural truths of Palestinian alienation and exile, as well as those of Korean migrants, are perhaps never fully translatable. And yet, if feminist translation is expressive of gendered agency, both Zamaan and Lee's films express the agency of feminist artists in using a language of aesthetics, creative narrative, and courageous stories of love, lust, and loss to translate haunted lives, beyond all literal translation. Just as Zamaan had to work on and with Darwish's words, translating them onto screen, so too did Lee work with her Aunt, an interpreter, and with the untranslatable desire that language and history carry. Lee further states, "Ultimately, developing Halmoni's character was a collaboration between my aunt and myself, a creation of the Korean and the kyopo imagination. I doubt the film would exist without her" (Lee 317). Similarly, while Darwish is perhaps beyond translation, Zamaan's film would not exist as a testament to the survival of racialized feminist/queer films that go against the grain without the haunting overtures of his writing.

Producing Anti-Colonial Film: The Production of Feminist/Queer Film as Anti-Racist Activism

Both Lee and Zamaan's filmmaking speak to avant-garde cultures of film production that defy logics of racism and patriarchy, which posit women's "productive" role as lying in the thankless service or "happy housewife" rhetoric of idealized reproductions of whiteness. While the promise of British bliss exists in the happy, healthy body of the character Jess in Gurinder Chadha's film *Bend it Like Beckham* (2002) in Zamaan's rendering, the female exile embodies the traumatic grievances of Palestinian exiles.⁶ Zamaan's film can further be considered in relation to films such as *Return to Kandhar* (2003), made by Canadian Afghani filmmaker Nelofar Pazira. Diasporic Canadian filmmakers in these films, often funded by national film organizations, are positioned as "native informants" who construct narratives of third world barbarism and Canadian feminist "liberation." As Ansari discusses in "'Should I Go and Pull Her Burqa Off?': Feminist Compulsions, Insider Consent, and a *Return to Kandahar*" in relation to Pazira's film, there is a will to "liberate" women in Afghanistan on the part of the feminist filmmaker that violently forces secular Western ideals of feminism onto the bodies of Muslim women, implicitly supporting Islamophobia and the global "war on terror." The alienation of migrant life that Zamaan represents in *Disconsolatus* offers an internal critique of multicultural utopias in which Canada and other secular Western capitalist nations are constructed as spaces of refuge for racialized diasporic women.

Lee's film also stages a narrative that resonates outside of great North American histories of pioneers and invisible Aboriginals, telling a contemporary narrative of urban working class Canada and all the unlikely, invisible fictions it produces. Lee's film can be juxtaposed to mainstream Hollywood films such as *Crash* (Paul Haggis, 2005). *Crash* offers a Hollywood portrayal of racial antagonisms in which the Aboriginal body is absent, while issues of racism are presented only in relation to Asian, Latino, and African American bodies. Lee's film centers the figure of the Aboriginal within the urban city and also focuses on sexualized desire between racialized migrants and Aboriginal people. The absence of Native American characters in films such as *Crash* and the invisibility of desire on the part of the stereotypical migrant laborers, take centre stage in Lee's *Prey*. As opposed to other mainstream renditions of racialized lives and politics in North America, within Lee's film Korean migrants have sexual desires and Aboriginals are living and breathing city dwellers. Lee states,

Since Koreans emigrated in significant numbers only in the past two decades, it's historically unlikely that Il Bae and Noel's worlds have met until now. Native people, who suffer the same invisibility as Asians and other racial minorities in mainstream media, are practically unknown to the Korean American/Canadian community. (qtd. in Hoolboom 21)

There is an unacknowledged loss in *Prey* between multi-lingual conflicts and invisible histories of Korean War scripted onto migrant bodies and the melancholia of urban Aboriginal alienation. At one point, in a moment of wry irony, Il Bae's Korean grandmother refers to Noel as a "foreigner," gesturing to the making of multicultural immigrant patriots against displaced Indigenous people. As Lee states, "It was important to me to explore how a Native character

could impact on a Korean family who may have never before acknowledged the Native presence in their adopted land” (qtd. in Hoolboom 21).

Unhealthy, Unwealthy, and Sexy/Queer: Dark Images and Ultra Light Tobacco

Helen Lee states that making *Prey* involved laboring to produce a story that is as restless as the arduous spaces of labor that define Korean migrant existence, “A typical convenience store was the perfect stage to enact this drama, a place where so many Korean Americans have spent their lives” (Lee 315). As Michel Foucault once remarked in regards to capitalist temporalities,

the anxiety of our era has to do fundamentally with space, no doubt a great deal more than with time. Time probably appears to us as one of the various distributive operations that are possible for the elements that are spread out in space. (Foucault and Miskowiec 23)

The labor of migrants and survivors of colonial occupations from Turtle Island to Palestine stand outside spaces and temporalities of imagined “happy housewives” and domestic bliss. The twenty four hour temporal and spatial realities of the all night convenience store, run in arduous isolation by Korean migrants in Lee’s *Prey*, is similar to the production process of *Disconsolatus*. As Zamaan states, making the film involved a production process of 48 hours of intensive film production and no sleep in the deserted streets of Toronto used to stage dystopian images. Outlining the artistic strategies that structure the making of feminist/queer, racialized, and political film, Zamaan discusses her do it yourself production process,

We all volunteered our time and devoted funds from our personal savings, primarily toward equipment and location costs. We kept costs low by renting a single camera and some cool lenses, as well as minimal lighting equipment for one week at a four-day rate. We shot 24/7 so that we could complete all the scenes in the seven days. A lot of our scenes were shot between 3AM and 6AM, when we could use the empty streets of Toronto as our film set. (qtd. in Cader n.p.)

As Zamaan also further says of the film’s central character Dana, “With her family far away in occupied Palestine, the artist becomes increasingly isolated in her Toronto home” (qtd. in Cader n.p.). Similarly in *Prey*, the family dramas of second-generation working class Korean fathers and their daughters do not happen around Thanksgiving dinner tables, but over convenience store coffee and cigarettes. We see Ill Bae outside the convenience store, smoking and chugging coffee from a Styrofoam cup. “We have coffee here. Did you forget?” asks Ill Bae’s money and work-obsessed father. “But ours is shit,” she grumbles to herself, telling the truth of migrant families whose livelihoods are tethered to globalised fast food, frivolous expenditure, and convenience. The economy of tobacco is a remnant of colonialism that positions Ill Bae between the wealthy bourgeois body and the urban Aboriginal who has no “peace pipe” left. Rather Noel, the Aboriginal leading male in *Prey* is left to shoplift food from the convenience store.

The bio-politics of “health,” turning around reproduction in which rich women consume excessively and “happy housewives” frequent downtown yoga studios, are nowhere to be found in the convenience store in *Prey*. The audience sees a bourgeois woman buying cigarettes from Ill Bae, who is working behind the counter. Beach’s character, Noel, bumps into the customer who is buying cigarettes. “Walk much,” she says in a haughty tone. “It’s called hand eye coordination. Jesus! And I just got this thing dry-cleaned. Look at those lines,” she says, looking at her own reflection in a cosmetic mirror. “Make those Ultra Lights.” Drawing on a symbolic and poetic use of mirrors, we see Beach’s character reflected in the security mirror, as the bourgeois female customer is a distraction from his petty theft. She continues talking to herself, while Ill Bae rings up her “Ultra Lights” and catches a glimpse of Noel stealing food. “Of course, my weekend didn’t help, total debauchery. We practically closed the club.” The affluent narcissistic excess figured in the woman’s “Ultra Light” tobacco and the reflection of her post party image in her own mirror are juxtaposed with those of Beach’s image in the security camera. Noel’s image is a colonial haunting to dreams of diasporic wealth in which narratives of happy “multicultural” lives are shadowed by colonial genocide. So too, is Zamaan’s film a labor of truth challenging bio political scriptings of “healthy” bodies at home in “healthy” nations.

The legalized truths of addiction, figured in the “Ultra Light” cigarettes of weekend party going affluence, are juxtaposed with the image of the Native male body. Noel is a moving “tobacco Indian” whose outlaw behavior is not reflective of normative consumer excess, in which bourgeois addictions are legislated and taxed while Native men steal food from 7/11. Ill Bae acts as a translator between truths of immigrant wealth, over the counter capital, and the legislated production of those addicted to commodities and legislated out of ownership of Aboriginal land. Similarly, Dana, the main character in *Disconsolatus* is not a “healthy” white settler or super-model minority at home in a body that reproduces idealized citizens. Just as the dis-ease of Aboriginal people and the excess of bourgeois cocktails, cosmetics, and Ultra Light cigarettes fund industries in Canada, Dana’s distress funds pill popping therapeutics. As Zamaan says of Dana’s addiction to pills,

Disconsolatus is a Medieval Latin term for someone incapable of consolation. It is relevant to the predicament of our lead character, but it also sounds like an infectious disease, doesn’t it? I think the fictional disease that we portray in this film is something that all audiences can relate to, either directly or through someone close to them. Similarly, the film touches on the themes of the power of big pharma and the institution of psychiatry. (qtd. in Cader n.p.)

Dana’s addiction to pills expresses a dark side of the nation, productive of medicated lives that are hidden from nationalist fantasies of “healthy” representations of “good Canadian families.”

Zamaan discusses the theme of disease, perhaps reflecting a dis-ease of the main character and the racialized, colonized, and feminine subject who is a sick haunting to a national imagery of great white men and their colonizing, survivalist embodiment. Ahmed discusses the “feminist killjoy,” “melancholic migrant” and “out-raged queer” that are represented as problems and obstacles to the anti intellectual and apolitical fantasies of white, middle class heteronormative bourgeois families. These filmmakers present a bare truth in images of barren shelves looted by Aboriginal pick pocketers and full medicine cabinets of addicted Palestinian exiles. There a great

and lasting beauty to the poverty of “home” only found in the escapism of screen images in which invisible racialized migrant exiles, finally find snippets of their own reflections.

Disidentificatory Desires: Working On and Against Dominant Film Aesthetics/Production

In his text, *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics*, Munoz writes that

The fiction of identity is one that is accessed with relative ease by most majoritarian subjects. Minoritarian subjects need to interface with different subcultural fields to activate their own senses of self. This is not to say that majoritarian subjects have no recourse to disidentification or that their own formation as subjects is not structured through multiple and something’s conflicting sites of identification. (5)

Munoz goes on to document disidentificatory performances that “circulate in sub cultural circuits and strive to envision and activate new social relations. These new social relations would be the blueprints for minoritarian counter public spheres” (5). Zamaan discusses her disidentificatory approach to filmmaking and the possibilities that technology offers to emerging, racialized feminist/queer filmmakers. She states,

Technologically speaking, filmmaking has never been more accessible – it’s quite feasible these days to make high-quality, feature-length films on a micro-budget. This opens up the industry to stories and filmmakers like never before. A young director whose story doesn’t fit the status quo and whose uncle isn’t so-and-so in the biz might get a chance to sit in the director’s chair. Said director might be a woman (four per cent of feature-film directors are women in Canada), or even a woman of color. (qtd. in Cader n.p.)

The worlds of racialized, feminist/queer filmmakers and their production ethics are not divorced from capital and from aspirations of artistic success. However, the production ethics of filmmakers such as Zamaan in making films such as *Disconsolatus* and Lee in making *Prey*, act as minoritarian counter public spheres that work on and against mainstream film. In their production process, these artists create new social relations outside of family money and nationally funded film. Zamaan discusses her production process, involving a labor intensive method and support from feminist/queer, anti-racist, activist, and artistic sub cultures in Toronto. Fathima Cader asks Zamaan, “Rumor has it that you made the film in under a week with less than \$10,000. How did you pull that off?” Zamaan responds,

It’s true. People see the four-minute teaser we put online and don’t believe that we shot this thing for next to nothing. It definitely wasn’t easy. Once I had a screenplay, I was faced with the challenge of funding a Darwish-inspired poetic sci-fi with a Palestinian lead in Canada. After sharing a few laughs with myself, I decided to enlist some of the smartest people I knew, who were foolish enough to take on the task. (qtd. in Cader n.p.)

There is creativity to the production ethics of *Zamaan*, reflective of the story she narrates. *Disconsolatus* refuses to succumb to well-funded, trite mainstream narratives. She states,

Working with a microscopic film budget requires a whole other level of creativity. Our actors rehearsed for a month before shoot week. We planned and planned meticulously so that we could pull off this truly insane challenge. We were all zombies by the end of it. (qtd. in Cader n.p.)

The exile of Dana, the film's lead character, is mirrored in the "zombie" making production processes of feminist/queer racialized filmmakers who labor to tell political stories in an industry of Israeli apartheid film. Similarly, Helen Lee also discusses the labor, production, and distribution process involved in making short films such as *Prey*, which is 26 minutes in total. An interviewer of Lee comments about the lack of support for short film in Canada Lee states,

If shorts mattered in this country (or any other country, for that matter), they might have become Canada's Do the Rights Thing. Does the marginal status of shorts trouble you, or does it provide more freedom (no one is looking so you can do what you want)? (qtd. in Hoolboom 29)

Lee discusses the difficulty of producing short film in North America, making reference to European short film and the labor of female filmmakers. She states,

As for the short film format, I remember attending the Clermont France short film festival in France with *Prey* and realizing, hey, shorts are not marginal here in Europe at all; they make them in 35 mm and they're shown before features in theatres and bought for television. Canada and the US have caught up somewhat but the status of the short filmmaker is still zip. (qtd. in Hoolboom 29)

Much like *Zamaan*'s choice of Sci Fi as the genre for *Disconsolatus*, the production of shorts disidentify with heteronormative stories of white, bourgeois, romantic feature films. *Zamaan* discusses Science Fiction in relation to the kind of politically charged, unsettling narrative of migrant female exile told beautifully in her film. She states,

The only viable film genre that would satisfy this kind of storytelling was the sci-fi genre. So in *Disconsolatus*, we have a Palestinian artist who actually has Darwish's poetry and imagery pop up in her subconscious world. This is presented through sci-fi staples like telekinesis, telepathy, and interdimensional travel. The poem, as I read it, also deals with a personal awakening, one that I connected with on many levels. (qtd. in Cader n.p.)

Working against cartoonish, heteronormative, and colonial/orientalist Walt Disney imagery of *Aladdin* (Ron Clements and John Musker, 1992), *Mulan* (Tony Bancroft and Barry Croft, 1998), and *Pocahontas* (Mike Gabriel and Eric Goldberg, 1995) both *Zamaan* and Lee use a queer/feminist ethics of production to disidentify with the mainstream.

It Never Gets Better: The Haunting of Exile

Disconsolatus and *Prey* are at the level of script writing, choice of genre, and production process precarious labors of unsettled and restless desire. Lee states,

In Europe you can be a short filmmaker forever, and not necessarily have to “graduate” to making feature films—it’s a viable format....I didn’t start off making films with the ambition of making features. Shorts were very much my world having worked at DEC films in Toronto and Women Make Movies in New York, the arena of non-theatrical film and video for the educational market was/is many short films. To me they weren’t marginal at all and, I made short films with that attitude. Every frame, every scene and every minute had importance. (qtd. in Hoolboom 29)

Zamaan also discusses the labor and precarity that defines the making of non-traditional film, particularly those centering on Palestinian female characters in a time of Israeli funded film. She discusses the film as one that was made in and defined by struggle, a common feature in the narratives of racialized feminist/queer filmmakers. She describes the guerrilla tactics involved in the making of the film,

Perhaps the only people pleased with the ridiculous summer construction that plagues Toronto every year are guerilla filmmakers. We might not have big studios, but we can be assured that a few major streets will be closed off to traffic year after year, waiting to be filmed. *Disconsolatus*’s plotline involves an empty city under quarantine so we really needed the streets to be completely abandoned. We also shot in some unusual places in the early morning hours. (qtd. in Cader n.p.)

There is an outlaw desire to both *Disconsolatus* and *Prey*, with Zamaan’s narrator embodying all of the passionate and queer outrage of Darwish in her chronic unrequited craving for a mental reckoning to colonial genocide. Dana is an artist whose desire to express herself appears in her creative productivity rather than her capacity to reproduce idealized settler citizens. Just as Ill Bae and Noel embody a lustful anti colonial politic that is temporary, dirty, and fleeting, Dana embodies a distress outside of fictions of settlement.

Zamaan’s filmic portrayal of migrant melancholia, specifically through the figure of a Palestinian female exile, resonates with Jasbir’s Puar’s arguments in *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* regarding homonationalism, queerness, and “terror.” While “happy” idealized gay, white, and male figures function as a form of homonationalist capital through a “pink dollar” marketing of gay family life that reproduces white settler mythology, Dana remains haunted. The “it gets better” rhetoric of homonationalist capitalist dreams is challenged in Zamaan’s film. It does not “get better” for Palestine, and therefore the “health” of the white settler state that funds genocide is cancerous for the exiled female Palestinian. Rather than identifying with mythologies of settler states as “home” and with trite provincial tropes, *Disconsolatus* and *Prey* disidentify with mainstream nationalist discourse.

Shooting Blanks: Competing Racialized (Im) Masculinities

In *Prey*, we also see that the fiction of the universal patriarchal European family is troubled by the racialized immigrant. Ill-Bae's father, the owner of the convenience store where she also works, plays an interesting role in the film. His dialogue is mainly spoken in Korean with English subtitles and smatterings of English language phrases. Throughout the film, we never see him leave the convenience store. Instead, it is Ill-Bae who leaves the space of the store to do business for the family. The Korean immigrant father is continually emasculated by the labor force and his inability to communicate in a public sphere governed by the English language, which his Canadian born daughter speaks fluently. The fiction of the heteronormative patriarch governing both the public sphere and the family is troubled by the Asian immigrant male's lack of capital in a white Western settler society. Similarly, in *Disconsolatus*, there are no husbands or fathers. There is only the lone female Palestinian artist in exile, who creatively labors against the alienation and loss produced by colonial occupation. The "comforting" heteronormative bourgeois family romance is an absent truth in the life of the Palestinian female exile, just as Il Bae is no Korean "comfort woman" but a person with her own desires, fulfilled in a lustful night with Noel. What both Zamaan and Lee labor to tell are edgy stories of desire. Against the banal denial of racism and reality of wars that leaves immigrants displaced in North American cities, Lee and Zamaan offer complex and difficult films to reflect great losses of love and nation. As Lee says,

I do think the immigration story is suffused by loss, and not only the gain of a next life in a new country. Somehow there's a conflation of mother and culture in my films; this yearning for cultural connection is symbolized by the lost mother. (qtd. in Hoolboom 29)

Just as Dana is left alone, with her family being across borders in occupied Palestine, so too does *Prey* tell a story of familial grievance. Both Ill Bae and Noel are at a loss, with her mother having passed away and his sister having passed away. Lee states,

The relationship between Noel's loss of his sister and Il Bae's loss of her mother, tenuously linked in the story is also a lynch pin for their connection—not that they should be defined by negatives, however. They both know sadness in their lives, that much is shared. And how does one calculate loss, particularly a concrete one such as a family member? (qtd. in Hoolboom 29)

The incalculable loss of homeland and family also produces a mental and emotional distress in Dana, Zamaan's main character that is never fully settled. Similarly, loss also define Ill Bae's widowed father, a haunted convenience store operator whose life revolves around wage labor. Lee's *Prey* also symbolizes grief and grievance in a doll that belonged to Noels' deceased sister, which he pawns. Ill Bae attempts to recover the lost doll, a metaphor for her will to make peace with the dead feminine, her own mother, and the lack of family and birth between her and Noel. And yet, within a life world of wage and cash based truths, she can only steal money from her grandmother's purse to buy the pawned doll. Within secular capitalism incalculable loss is melancholically replaced a deficit of life with money. Ill Bae's buying of the pawned doll

reflects the tenuous position of the racialized diasporic daughter in relation to both her emasculated and widowed father and Noel. She buys the doll, while he looks down in the shame of a colonized, impoverished man. She also labors to translate English and tries to soothe her father's deep distress. Feminist film is an effort to translate spaces of loss, excess, overconsumption, and colonial denial into uncomfortable creative truths. Zamaan discusses shooting *Disconsolatus* in downtown Toronto. She connects urban spaces of contemporary Toronto which appear on the surface to be clean and peaceful, as ones that are tied to the bloodiness of war and all the fraught female exiles from Palestine they produce. Zamaan states,

Trinity Square, outside Eaton's Center, has this beautiful historic well that is unbelievably cinematic, which we used as the mystical water-well from Darwish's poem. The graffiti alleys on Queen Street West are like a labyrinth straight out of a graphic novel. For the scenes involving infected patients in the psychiatric complex, we used Toronto's infamous "hedonist" club, Wicked, which just happened to host a number of caged beds. I guess you could say that was memorable. (qtd. in Cader n.p.)

There is a re-staging of sexless missionary moralities that remap the landscape of the "great white North" in both Zamaan and Lee's films.

A Shot in the Dark: The Resilient Risk of Queer/Feminist Racialized Films

Prey offers insight into how Indigenous people and people of color hold a tenuous position in relation to an idealized notion of the bourgeois family. While the film ends by suggesting the possibility of further romance between Noel and Ill Bae, the last scene is a precarious shoot-out that offers an ironic feminist staging of cowboy and Indian films, parodying colonial stories of Tonto's and damsels in distress.⁷ Ill Bae reluctantly lends Noel the family car, which he crashes causing property damage but emerging unscathed. He enters the family convenience store and tells Ill Bae's confused father who barely speaks English that he has crashed their car. Having bought a gun for self-protection, the hysterical Asian male shopkeeper turns the gun on Noel. Ill Bae, much like Lee and Zamaan, embodies a feminist reversal of the heteronormative biopolitical gaze as a woman that can win in a shootout of competing racialized (im)masculinities of Aboriginal and migrant men. While Zamaan and Lee labor to shoot their films in a male dominated industry, Ill Bae shoots the gun, a phallic symbol of power. She wrestles the gun from her father and it goes off in a final, dramatic blow. Has she shot her father? Noel? Herself? The film ends when all three stand unscathed and Ill Bae, as sardonically and anti-climatically as in the film's premier sequence mutters, "Dad, this is Noel. Noel, this is Dad." Ill Bae wins in a colonial contest of nationalist patriarchs cowering behind looted counters with guns, selling candy and cigarettes to adolescents with fake I.D, in broken English. Lee discusses the focus and inspiration required to survive as a racialized feminist filmmaker, against all odds. She states,

I'm acutely aware of my filmmaking peers who are women, who after some promising short films had children or got married or moved on to other work. It's the men who remain, actually. Most, of not all of my filmmaking colleagues now

are men. But the pressure is all mine, the pressure to produce, to make films that are good and that matter. (qtd. in Hoolboom 29)

Just as Ill Bae is driven by a passion beyond the rational in her final shooting of the gun, feminist filmmakers survive outside of drives born only in economic reward or valorization by a patriarchal film industry in which women in film exist to be strangled and shot, and rarely to do the shooting. Zamaan also discusses the real struggle that went into making *Disconsolatus*. Zamaan states,

We want to continue the volunteer-based community feel by raising the money from the public to finally get *Disconsolatus* out to festivals and audiences around the globe. I encourage people who are interested in the film and this kind of filmmaking to contribute what they can to our Indiegogo campaign, even if it's just coffee change. (qtd. in Cader n.p.)

Just as Lee continues to labor to receive funding and an audience within a filmic economy dominated by men, whiteness, and wealth so too is *Disconsolatus* a film in which labor production ethics are born out of the realities of racial, gendered, and class politics. Ill Bae and Helen Lee take a risky shot in the dark, just as Zamaan's films are precarious ventures. Zamaan further states,

I'm not going to shock anyone when I say that the film industry in North America isn't exactly gushing over a film inspired by Darwish with a Palestinian main character, so we are really relying on the support of individuals to help us bring *Disconsolatus* to the finish line. We can't accomplish this without you. Fans and contributors can get regular updates off Facebook and Twitter pages. (qtd. in Cader n.p.)

Un-Happily Ever After: Coffee, Canned Beans and Creative Struggle

Throughout Lee's *Prey* we see that food, coffee, and cigarettes are recurring motifs in the realities of migrant life. While Ill Bae chugs coffee and smokes outside the convenience store, her grandmother brings mandarin oranges, gesturing to familial biopolitical ideologies that are tied to health. She hands Noel a mandarin orange and he takes a bite, burying the rest of it in the earth as they engage in a temporary relationship based in mutual lust. Noel's body as a precarious urban Aboriginal man is left to steal food from a convenience store, while Aboriginal traditions and ancestors remain buried in the stolen land of Turtle Island. When Il Bae's grandmother Halmoni arrives at her apartment to find Noel there and her conservative elderly moralities are rattled, she speaks of a long lost love in Korea who used to bring her bananas. She brings fruit, which the granddaughter and grandmother peel together, watching "wildlife" images light up the TV screen. Halmoni sits between Il Bae and Noel, an old migrant woman's loss positioned between a post coital and non committal "outlaw" pair of unlikely lovers. There is no bearing of fruit on stolen land—only coffee, cigarettes, and sex.

The truths of wage labor and productions of desire with no finality of familial reproduction also define the endless struggle of the racialized feminist/queer filmmaker to give birth to film. When

asked what advice she would offer to emerging filmmakers, Zamaan is frank. Zamaan offers the hard earned wisdom of the last woman left standing, one who wins in a shootout born out of bursting fires of film, her camera used with as much passion as Ill Bae's smoking gun. Zamaan's advice to emerging filmmakers represents the determination of politicized women, transgender, and queer people of color making films, those who take a shot in the dark:

Put it on paper and then film it. Even if it's with your iPhone. Even if your iPhone is 3G. Then make another one. And get used to eating canned beans, because some of your grocery money is undoubtedly going to pay for your film. (qtd. in Cader n.p.)

Notes

¹ See Halberstam, J. *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies and Subcultural Lives*. New York: NYU Press, 2005.

² See also Kondo, 231-232.

³ See Munoz, Jose. *Disidentification: Queers of Colour and the Politics of Resistance*. Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1999. Halberstam discusses 'queerness' in regards to temporalities that is of relevance to the production strategies of racialized feminist/queer filmmakers such as Zamaan and Lee. Halberstam writes,

If we try to think about queerness as an outcome of strange temporalities, imaginative life schedules, and eccentric economic practices, we detach queerness from sexual identity and come closer to understanding Foucault's comment in "Friendship As a Way of Life" that "homosexuality threatens people as a way of life, rather than a way of having sex." (310) In Foucault's radical formulation, queer friendships, queer networks, and the existence of these relations in space and in relation to the use of time mark our the particularity and indeed the perceived menace of homosexual life. (1-2)

If one considers the avant-garde film production techniques that define the making of *Disconsolatus* and *Prey*, with reference to the reliance of subcultures of friends, activists, artists who worked on Zamaan's film there is a "queer" use of time that perhaps expresses what the filmmaker terms "guerilla" filmmaking techniques. Similarly, Lee's resilience as a feminist filmmaker who struggles to make short films that are politically charged and cast with multiracial characters despite pressures to assimilate to the mainstream is also a queering of her labor practices that in some ways involve an eccentric approach to economics that centers on creative and political integrity, rather than an accumulation of the most wealth possible.

⁴ See Puar, Jasbir K., and Amit Rai. "The Remaking of a Model Minority: Perverse Projectiles Under the Specter of (Counter) Terrorism." *Social Text* 22.3 (2004): 75-104. Puar and Rai discuss *Bend it Like Beckham* in relation to the production of images of model minority "domestic patriots" within a time of a global "war on terror." The body of the peace loving model minority represented in Gurinder Chadha's film is juxtaposed with the figure of the

“terrorist.” Zamaan’s film disidentifies with the image of the ‘model minority’ by centering the narrative of a displaced Palestinian female exile.

⁵ See Al-wazedi, Umme. "Representing Diasporic Masculinities in Post-9/11 Era: The Tragedy Versus the Comedy." *South Asian History and Culture* 5.4 (2014): 534-550. While this essay discusses the emotive tragedies of “terror” scripted onto Muslim male bodies imagined to be “security threats” in a time of a global “war on terror,” so too does the female exile in *Disconsolatus* represent a haunted figure of loss.

⁶ See McWhorter, Ladelle. "Sex, Race, and Biopower: A Foucauldian Genealogy." *Hypatia* 19.3 (2004): 38-62.

⁷ See Kemper, Kevin R. “‘Geronimo!’ The Ideologies of Colonial and Indigenous Masculinities in Historical and Contemporary Representations about Apache Men.” *Wicazo Sa Review* 29.2 (2014): 39-62. The author discusses representations of racialised Aboriginal masculinity, as well as femininity in films such as *The Lone Ranger* in which the Aboriginal man is depicted as a “Tonto” sidekick while the authoritative white man acts as the heroic cowboy.

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