

## The Problem with Identity Politics: Dialogical Interrelation in Rachel Kushner's *The Flamethrowers* (2013)

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If forging identities from the long dead of the past can be perilous, it can also enable explorations into the nature of social revolt. Like hagiography, fictions that seek to retell history can reconfigure the past, overcoming its transient, ephemeral nature. But these stories can also draw legitimate attention to the struggles faced by historically oppressed political movements, and redress the anonymity of their principal agents. Rachel Kushner's 2013 novel *The Flamethrowers* approaches the history of 1970s feminist art in precisely this way, unearthing a range of forgotten feminist artists of the period, assuaging and even correcting their historical dispossession.

But the novel does more than this by enmeshing this group of imagined artists, which are associated with feminism's second wave, with the overt masculinities of the Futurists of the 1920s and '30s. It gathers together these young Italian Fascists and New York feminists and ensconces them in an abstract bubble of time. To be sure, Kushner places these two movements in counterposition; but she also shows

us the way in which the ugly violence of war served to silence the primary figureheads of both groups. The novel thus suspends artists of both periods in the same precarious bubble of speed and time that F. T. Marinetti described in “The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism.”<sup>1</sup> It attempts to catapult these varied figures into our present day, utilising a prose that moves at warp-drive speed and expresses all of the immediacy and urgency of both movements.

Darting back and forth between the fascistic tendencies of the Futurists and the radicality of the feminists, Kushner’s novel traps both movements somewhere between their fictive world and ours, merging these two histories—the one fictional, the other “real”—to produce a conduit to the past. The time-preserving aims of the novel are not simply communicated to us by the story’s characters, however, but *understood* by them, perhaps most perceptively by the macho minimalist artist Sandro, who considers young women to be nothing more than treacherous “conduits” through which older men can revisit their youthfulness.<sup>2</sup> Using a double-edged fictocritical method, Kushner’s novel deploys imagined characters as political emblems, creating a novel that functions something like an echo chamber of political revolt. That is, the novel makes sounds in places that were previously silent, and gives form to what Roland Barthes once called the “dead spots of affective space,” using fiction to reengineer the “bad concert hall” of history, where the sonic pattern of feminism normally “fails to circulate.”<sup>3</sup>

But *The Flamethrowers* also extends on the galvanising political and theoretical revisionism of Kushner’s non-fiction work, disinterring the still largely voiceless history of second-wave feminism and its actors, highlighting the precarity of their lives and influence. The novel produces creative women from readymade moulds, formulating characters that, once silent in the worlds of film and art history, now stand out from their time and enter into our own. Among the many ways in which the novel realises these feats is the remarkable manner in which it distinguishes its characters’ voices, giving them unmatched salience. In view of the centrality of these hitherto unheard voices in *The Flamethrowers*, this paper will use Clare Hemmings’s innovative

theory of “political grammar” to examine the range and quality of the voices that Kushner’s novel articulates.<sup>4</sup>

*The Flamethrowers* uses women with stifled voices to parallel many feminist works of the 1970s, including the critically dismissed films of Barbara Loden, the secretive performances of Lee Lozano, the censored pornography of Marilyn Chambers, and an anonymously performed Italian documentary film titled *Anna*. In comparing characters with varied texts, the novel exposes feminism’s distinctive markings of precarity. Bereft of champions or cheerleaders, 1970s feminism appears to be full of frustration and failure. And while Kushner’s novel is supplemented by a range of the author’s non-fiction articles and interviews (published variously in *Artforum*, the *New Yorker*, *BOMB*, and the *New York Times*, among others), *The Flamethrowers* also references film—with its veiling, layering and fragmentation—producing a compendium of texts traversing the 1970s to 2013. With this array of cinematic intertexts, the novel establishes a continuum of feminist film, becoming a kind of collaborative work borne of variant subjectivities. The novel also allows the reader to interact with the voiceless women of the period, offering the histories of these particular feminist artists.

*The Flamethrowers* features not only these narratives about women but Kushner’s criticism of her own work, which transforms her fiction into fictocriticism and turns the world of the novel into a twofold reality. In her criticism, Kushner examines the oppressive forces emanating from the institutional structures of the 1970s art world, particularly what the critic Linda Nochlin called, in a groundbreaking article, written in 1971, “the view of reality which they impose on the human beings who are part of them.”<sup>5</sup> Institutional criticism is of particular significance to contemporary feminism, despite second-wave feminists’ criticism of its shortcomings and exclusions. What Kushner’s novel does is investigate how artists, those perhaps aptly described as quiet revolutionaries, not recognised as particularly valuable or legitimate during their lifetimes, have been crucial to feminism’s history.

Though sympathetic to the precarious and intersectional struggle of rebellion, Kushner models her novel’s eponymous flamethrowers

on the lives of mainly white, straight, middle-class female artists. When it was published in 2013, during what might be called late post-modernism, and amid what has been provisionally called feminism's fourth wave, Kushner's characterisation of these women seemed to assume that intersectional discrimination had ended, or that it would resolve itself, seemingly imposing a limit on the development of feminism's political identity. In this way the novel could be understood as a work of anti-feminism; its rearticulation of a range of once-marginalised voices less acknowledges their importance than reinscribes their exclusion. The novel affords only narrow scope to marginalised characters in its passages, amplifying the silence of those who have been subject to gender, class, and racial discrimination, and relegating them to insignificant, anonymous roles. One such figure is an anonymous Amazonian rubber worker who receives fewer than seven pages' attention.

In the discursive contexts of early women's collectives of the 1970s, American feminists adopted a range of activist practices that collapsed the critical distances, and transgressed the disciplinary boundaries, that had previously limited the potential for feminist critique.<sup>6</sup> The women's movement became more stable as higher numbers of "safe" environments, such as women's collectives, emerged.<sup>7</sup> These environments permitted feminist coteries to spring up throughout the United States, as well as in Australia, where many second wavers gained footing and security. Established in 1974, the Sydney Women's Art Movement (WAM) was one such collective which allowed for a more vibrant and secure exploration of political issues.<sup>8</sup> Women's Liberation (WL) in Australia had started some years before WAM, and had already inaugurated the fight for recognition of women's rights through newsletters and women's movement networks.<sup>9</sup> In some ways, the histories of Australia's and America's second-wave feminist movements are interchangeable: both are Anglocentric (or at least ethnocentric), focus on heteronormative radical activism, and arose through congregations of women's collectives in metropolitan centres.<sup>10</sup> And while feminist cultural criticism illuminated the historical neglect of women's contributions to society, women's art of the 1970s

functioned as art activism by virtue of its origins in feminist criticism. As the Australian feminist artist Jude Adams writes of her own work, “my various practices were underpinned by feminism and its critique of patriarchy and hence qualified as art activism.”<sup>11</sup>

Yet, despite the successes of WAM in the 1970s, Australia’s contemporary art community has little to show for the efforts of Adams and her colleagues. For example, Elvis Richardson’s *CoUNTess Report*—a study devoted to reporting on gender representation in Australian contemporary visual arts—recently noted that men continue to outnumber female artists in Australia’s art galleries. Men, the report also found, received higher proportions of art prize money than women in 2016, despite the fact that higher numbers of women artists practice in Australia in 2016, and even higher numbers of Australian art prize winners have been women.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, *CoUNTess*’s report indicates the glacial pace at which changes in gender representation in the Australian arts community have transpired, highlighting the structural mechanisms that make gender bias so tenacious and enduring in this context.

*The Flamethrowers* rarely considers women’s identity as it exists, or might exist, outside the tripartite model of gender/class/race, approaching the feminine subject in a way that seems largely outmoded, constrains the novel’s ability to transform political norms, and ultimately reproduces what Hemmings describes as “‘earlier feminist’ racist and heterosexist exclusions.”<sup>13</sup> Intersectionality is paramount, Hemmings argues, to the stability of all social movements. To familiarise oneself with an inclusive and associative feminism, however, requires that we learn to use a new “political grammar,” one that is capable of transforming the way in which feminists use narratives as a means of empowerment. “If Western feminists can be attentive to the political grammar of our storytelling,” she writes, “if we can highlight reasons why that attention might be important, then we can also intervene to change the way we tell stories.”<sup>14</sup>

In seeking to recognise the marginalisation of various feminist subjects, contemporary stories such as *The Flamethrowers* face a difficult challenge. They must encounter “forgotten feminists” but

not simply superimpose on their stories a “fantasy feminism” that is actually collusive with the heterosexist norms of the West. As I will go on to suggest, Kushner’s novel arguably fails on this count, rendering its feminist characters as “blank women”—inert tabula rasa whose actions the novel does not criticise. But before making this argument, it is worth noting the way in which bell hooks has recently dismissed one such example of “fantasy feminism” in the case of the singer Beyoncé and her 2016 album *Lemonade*.<sup>15</sup> For hooks, *Lemonade* is “affirming” insofar as it asserts the importance of such notions as “honoring the self” and “loving our bodies.” However, the album also fails, she writes, to reconstitute the category positions that undergird existing systems of patriarchal oppression.<sup>16</sup> Beyoncé thus presents, writes hooks, a “simplified worldview” that extends on the “world of fantasy feminism,” wherein “there are no class, sex, and race hierarchies that breakdown [sic] simplified categories of women and men, no call to challenge and change systems of domination, no emphasis on intersectionality.”<sup>17</sup> In *Why Stories Matter*, Hemmings advocates precisely for the self-reflexive criticism that hooks offers in her critique of *Lemonade*’s putative feminist failures. It is also the type of criticism that Hemmings herself directs to contemporary storytelling. As she writes in her monograph, Hemmings seeks to give “invested attention to silences in the history of feminist theory,” and, in her words, to “suggest several ways of making the stories we tell both more ethically accountable and potentially more politically transformative.”<sup>18</sup> Her work indicates that both hooks and Kushner, two very different critics of Western culture, might have a common moral obligation, a “reflexive Western accountability”: to tell stories in subversive, politically resistant ways.<sup>19</sup>

Of course, hooks herself indicates the importance of a feminist political grammar when she scrutinises an *ELLE* magazine interview with Beyoncé in which the singer identifies herself as a “feminist.” For hooks, the epithet “feminist” functions differently in Beyoncé’s idiom. As a kind of honorarium, the pop artist uses the term not to denote an ideal or idea about women’s rights, but to promote *Lemonade* itself.<sup>20</sup> And while, for different women both hooks and Beyoncé may be femi-

nists, they might also subscribe to different, even antithetical, political grammars. Like hooks, the singer Annie Lennox criticised Beyoncé's invocation of feminism as a "tokenistic" gesture—the expression of a "feminism-lite."<sup>21</sup> However, theorists of celebrity culture such as Nathalie Weidhouse have argued differently, suggesting that these dismissals of Beyoncé's feminism both constitute and reaffirm existing systems of bodily and monetary control, exhibiting the same "lack of intersectional thinking" that hooks attributes to Beyoncé herself.<sup>22</sup>

Another way of conceptualising Beyoncé's feminism may be to understand it as a materialisation of the fourth wave's alleged obsession with the media and the internet. After all, Beyoncé is an artist whose work, productions, and publicity are distributed and circulated online. As Jennifer Baumgardner suggests, tensions between some feminists have arisen because of fundamental differences in communication methods. For those born near the end of the twentieth century, the "online universe was just a part of life," she writes, whereas for older feminists, the internet "landed in [the] world like an alien spaceship," probably "when they were twenty or fifty."<sup>23</sup> In general terms, internet-adapted feminists (or, those whose activism has primarily been facilitated by the internet since 2008) may be identified as fourth-wave feminists. Those whose feminist activities preceded the internet, by contrast, such as those feminists of generation X, have been generally identified as part of the third wave. One of the ironies of this conceptualisation that Baumgardner highlights, however, is the fact that many third-wave feminists reject the notion of waves altogether, thereby disavowing—or even disallowing—the possibility of differences between themselves and other feminists, so consigning feminism to a set of frozen principles, a kind of hypostasis.<sup>24</sup>

Considering how the legitimacy of different feminisms has been opened up to evaluation today, it is interesting to note that one critic, Alyssa Rosenburg, called *The Flamethrowers* the "most feminist novel you'll read all year" when it was published in 2013.<sup>25</sup> Rosenburg's adulation for Kushner's novel's superlative feminism is striking, particularly considering how unlikely it is to qualify as an "ethically accountable" or "politically transformative" story with reference to

Hemmings's formulation.<sup>26</sup> Whereas Hemmings imagines a new "Western feminist accountability that shuttles back and forth between past and present in order to imagine a future that is not already known," Kushner's novel seems instead to nostalgically linger on the immaturities, frailties, and failures of feminism's second wave, and to romanticise rather than problematise its characters' naïve attempts to enhance their whiteness, such as when narrator and protagonist Reno dusts herself in "rice powder" to give her skin "a kind of moon glow" (82). These kinds of episodes tend to delimit what ability *The Flamethrowers* may have, or might have had, to strike at the persistent systems of oppression that buttress patriarchal dominance and prop up white supremacy in the twenty-first-century West.

In her short personal history of 1970s art activism, Adams shows how collaborative art can be understood as intrinsically antithetical to patriarchal modes of production. Collaboration, she writes, constitutes "a feminine way of working as opposed to [one that promotes] male individualism."<sup>27</sup> However, Adams criticises collaboration too, which, inasmuch as it has made positive effects on women's artmaking, can also "be laborious, time-consuming and conflictual." Within many feminist art collectives of the 1970s, Adams observes, collaborative practices became difficult to sustain, turning many locuses of creativity into precarious sites of social and political insecurity.<sup>28</sup>

Over time, these kinds of contexts can give women a sense of what is distinctly feminine about their artmaking practices. Faced with the threat of obscurity, even in their own time, women work to counteract feelings of precarity, as Diana Meyers writes, by "cordoning off a social sphere of mutually attuned, mutually concerned women," acutely aware that "separatism in all its forms turns down the racket of patriarchy."<sup>29</sup> Feminine collaborations amid hostile, insecure, male-dominated social contexts thus create spaces in which women's voices can be heard both clearly and safely, without the intrusion of patriarchal "noises" or influences. And while, as I have already observed, many women may have different notions of feminism, it is their "Otherness," Meyers notes—which is to say their distinctiveness from men—that connects them. In this way, "feminist collective projects that place

value on conversation, connectivity, and women-to-women relationships,” she writes, can “provide a foundation for the relational self and ‘relieve women of the burden of [their] Otherness.’”<sup>30</sup>

### Kushner’s *The Flamethrowers*

Most of *The Flamethrowers*’s characters are straight, white, middle-class women who orbit the patriarchal art world, where evaluations of artworks and of culture rest on traditional notions of privilege and the norm of the male gaze. The narrator, Reno, makes numerous references to the vocal artist and woman of colour Nina Simone, whose voice was “so low that it sounded like a female voice artificially slowed” (46). In a seemingly fictional incident, Simone is said to have once shot a university friend of Reno’s after he had appeared at Simone’s holiday home door in the South of France (27). Reno also makes oblique references to Clarice Lispector, a queer feminist author from Brazil whom Kushner has praised in her essays.<sup>31</sup> Yet these references to non-white, non-straight women are few and far between, divulged only in fragmented, immaterial, and inconsequential asides. Reno’s story is thus a problematic one for accounts of feminism that embrace the lessons of the twenty-first century, such as intersectional inclusion

However, the novel’s apparent erasure of racial and sexual difference might also be regarded as partly defrayed or mitigated by its diegetic setting—the 1970s—when the lessons of intersectionalism were yet to be realised, much less imparted and adopted. Conscious of the permutations in feminist history and ideology, Hemmings accepts that the feminism of the twenty-first century would appear different today were it not for the “intersectional decades” of the “1990s and onwards,” which moved us partly “beyond the ‘white, western, heterosexual middle-class’ past.”<sup>32</sup> However, as Hemmings also makes clear, this shift, of course, has not mean that all—or even many—storytellers have treated these matters with the same sense of accountability.<sup>33</sup>

In *The Flamethrowers*, Reno’s narrative voice functions as a kind of double index: it ostensibly signifies the voice of the fictional personage,

Reno, but it also partly embodies Kushner's voice. Kushner writes both fiction and criticism (she has penned articles in *Artforum*, *Bookforum*, the *New Yorker*, and the *New York Times*), and perhaps it is this that makes her authorial voice so self-reflexive. Kushner often explicitly probes the meaning and content of her novels in her essays, but she also seems to adopt an analytical register in her fiction, conveying the impression that her novels are also critical works. Kushner's fiction in general, and *The Flamethrowers* in particular, seem to be located at the interstice of fiction and present-day reality. This admixture of the real and imaginary might arise, as she suggested herself in a 2013 article in the *Guardian*, because, when writing *The Flamethrowers*, Kushner imagined herself as her protagonist Reno. As she explains: "through the eyes of a very young woman encountering the world of downtown New York in 1975, I looked, and then looked again, to see with freshness, what my narrator might have seen."<sup>34</sup>

*The Flamethrowers* is a historical novel predominantly set in the mid-1970s New York art scene. However, the setting oscillates between the 1920s, with the emergence of Futurism, and a brief period in Rome during the city's 1970 revolutions. Nicknamed after her hometown of Reno, the novel's narrator and protagonist is peripherally interested in art, although her chief concerns are speed and motorcycles, which tethers her to the Futurists, for whom speed *was* art.<sup>35</sup> The narrative follows Reno's navigation of the New York art world, but it also fluctuates between disparate monologues and vignettes, anecdotes that detail Reno's history with machines, men (including her significant relationship with the son of the founder of Futurism), and the rise and fall of 1920s Fascism in Italy. Upon returning from Italy, Reno remains in New York, pondering whether her experiences have changed her.

*The Flamethrowers's* form relies on a relatively orthodox plot construct: Reno tells her story in generally linear sequences, although they are interspersed with myriad temporal jumps—psychological flashbacks in which Reno reflects on her relationships with those she meets in New York and Rome. And while most of Reno's associates are fictional, many of these characters are based on real-life feminist

figures, and many of her stories drawn from the biographies of identifiable influential artists active in mid-1970s New York. This is unsurprising given that, in her 2013 *Guardian* article, Kushner compared her “favourite books”—a collection of artist biographies—to “a miniature city” that was piled across her desk. For Kushner, it seems, the city of New York and the lives of these artists—these women—are fused, interrelated. Many artists, including Lee Lozano, inspired Kushner’s novel. Lozano, she recalled in the *Guardian* article, had “stopped speaking to women as a minor art project that ended up lasting the rest of her life.” For Kushner, this—Lozano’s brutal attitude—typified the period, and Kushner had hoped that *The Flamethrowers* could document this mode of brutal experimentalism, imbuing it with a new and authoritative “freshness.”<sup>36</sup>

It is Kushner’s uniquely narrow focus on the feminism of the 1970s that makes all of her work—and not just her novels—so valuable to contemporary feminist theory. Of particular interest is an essay titled “Curated by Rachel Kushner,” which she wrote for the *Paris Review* in 2012.<sup>37</sup> Throughout her essay, Kushner touches on many relatively unknown artists who, as she writes, formed the personae of *The Flamethrowers*, as well as images and anecdotes of their work.<sup>38</sup> To explore the lives of these artists in an in-depth way, one has only to access any of the many other writings Kushner devotes to them, including her writings on Anna and Clarice Lispector in *Bookforum* and *Artforum* respectively.<sup>39</sup> Read as a whole, Kushner’s fictional and critical work, along with the works and lives of the artists she documents, constitutes a project to unsilence and undo the exclusion and misrepresentation faced by early feminist artists in their variously subordinated and precarious groups.<sup>40</sup> Indeed, Kushner’s honed lens—her specialist knowledge—allows her to identify the artists’ experiences more authentically, legitimising these women’s experiences, albeit within the rubric of a largely straight, white, middle-class narrative.

In her 1968 article about the women’s liberation movement for the *New York Times Sunday Magazine*, Martha Lear coined the phrase “second feminist wave” for those 1960s and ’70s women who did not identify with the 1848 Seneca-Falls-Convention suffragettes.<sup>41</sup> It is

this political landscape—tense, binary, oppositional—in which Reno finds herself embroiled. Reflecting on the way in which the various “waves” of feminism have been classified, Baumgardner argues that “If you think too hard about the criteria for each label, the integrity of the waves disintegrates rapidly and they eddy into one another.” In some ways, *The Flamethrowers*, far from thinking “too hard” about the criteria for the second wave, thinks almost *not at all* about what constitutes the aims of these different period of feminism, instead embracing the second-wave ethos as a timeless truth, an unalloyed good. What is of interest about the novel, however, is the way in which it brings the avant-garde artists of the second wave into our current milieu, engendering both a collision and a continuum across feminist history.

Futurism, for all its flaws, was in some ways analogous to the first stirrings of 1930s feminism: both were reactionary, organised movements, railing against the values of the past. Moreover, the futurists, like many feminists, were fascinated with the problems of representing the oppression of modern experience, and both were engaged in varied modes of artistic production. However, in almost every other way, the futurists were antithetical to the contemporaneous feminist movement. Glorifying victory and technology, the futurists immediately joined the war effort when the Great War broke out in Europe.<sup>42</sup> And, of course, Italian Futurism also maintained ties to fascism—and, ultimately, it was this, and the movement’s tendency to extreme violence, that contributed to its short life, with most of its founders killed during the War.<sup>43</sup> Despite its fatalistic politics, Futurism’s aesthetic style clearly paved the way for modern art—not only for Dadaism and Duchamp, but also for the work of such vorticists as Christopher R. W. Nevinson in England, and the Russian futurists. Moreover, the movement’s grotesque use of shock tactics for publicity could be seen as presaging the very first mode of political performance art—even as an augury of the kinds of performance art described in *The Flamethrowers*.<sup>44</sup>

The feminist art scene chronicled by *The Flamethrowers* is incredibly fragmented—and incredibly unfriendly. For Reno, there is no

collective, no solidarity: most of the art featured in the novel amounts to haphazard performance works produced by busy, desperate artists in their daily lives. When Giddle, one of Reno's closest friends, enacts what she insists is a "performance," it completely undermines those around her, destabilising the already tenuous support base among and between the artistic women (89). Other more established female performance artists known to Reno, such as the charismatic and influential Gloria, hold short exhibitions in which people are encouraged to reach behind a curtain and feel the artist's "naked pelvis" (299). Kushner herself understands the period as crass and tongue-in-cheek, but equally intellectual: it was full of "freewheeling ideas," she writes, "but also conceptual rigour." Its artists were not limited to their canvasses, but made "art outside the studio, in the form of a dance, a dare, a gesture, a practical joke."<sup>45</sup>

Collecting together a pastiche of these artistic forms—advertisements, performance art, paracinema, and other ephemeral images—Kushner's novel offers a sort of snapshot of the time, one that folds itself comfortably around the many hyperreal artist-characters Reno meets. This panoply of art enhances the metonymic nature of the novel's language: that is, the words and descriptions seem to fabricate the works in a new textual space, representing them in ultra-realist manner, and distorting the original stories from which they were produced. The images become disconnected from their creators, and, as the narrative moves rapidly across temporal space, bombarding the plot with so many varied artworks, it forms a highly textured counterreality, one that combines the aesthetic speed of Futurism with the political urgency of feminism.

In a *New Yorker* review of the novel titled "Youth in Revolt," James Woods suggested the importance of Kushner integration of artistic hyperrealism into *The Flamethrowers's* fictional world. He praised aspects the novel's characters and their characterisation, noting that even those who seem insignificant to the central plot are "both solid and curiously spectral."<sup>46</sup> The plot features various thematic interruptions, he observed, each of which redirects the flow of the narrative to new ends, sometimes seemingly desultorily. Crafted from an array of

feminist narratives, the plot ripples “with stories, anecdotes, set-piece monologues, crafty egotistical tall tales, and hapless adventures.”<sup>47</sup> Multimodal, then, *The Flamethrowers* is an example of postmodern heteroglossia; it produces an array of dense political and human portraits, all of them so complexly interwoven with reality that, through their chaos, they become, as Woods suggests, all the more authentic as “real-life fictional characters.”<sup>48</sup> The novel, of course, features many true-life characters, many of them feminist artists of the period: the anonymous star of Italian revolutionary film *Anna*, appears often-times throughout the text, while the performance artist Lee Lozano could easily be identified as the inspiration for the character Giddle. By incorporating these identities into the novel’s diegetic world, Kushner’s text weaves a “third present,” one in which both fictional and real characters begin to coexist. Temporally uncertain, the fictional landscape thus also becomes a site in which shifting perceptions about intersectionality can be exhibited; and in this way Kushner’s approach to feminist storytelling attains a chaotic lucidity that borders on the realer than real, or the larger than life: a feminist “hyperrealism.”

### Giddle as Lee Lozano: Reading *The Flamethrowers* as Woman a Clef

Reno’s confidante, Giddle, actively avoids success in the art world, shunning all recognition and placing herself outside of art history. In this respect, she imitates Lee Lozano, who similarly rejected the art world, “dropping out” of and disavowing its disciplinary strictures. In the real world of the ’60s and ’70s, artists such as Lozano were crucial for fomenting the claims asserted by many public feminists, and especially for advancing the specific objects of the second wave. But their influence is not just a matter of the historical record; it is also underlined by Kushner’s inclusion of a work by Lee Lozano in the selection of images she curated for the *Paris Review* in 2012—a telling indication of Kushner’s admiration for the artist. In *The Flamethrowers*, the text and conceptual language of Lozano’s work is transcoded through the work of the character Giddle. Indeed, Giddle’s work

concentrates on language, and specifically the question of its veracity, just as Lozano's many performances explore language's truth. But Lozano's work is also unique in the history of art: she interwove her lived experience—her participation in the social world—with her “performances” in so close a way as to make it almost impossible to disentangle or untether those categories. In the late 1960s, Lozano began rendering a succession of life-related actions (she rarely defined her work as “performance”) that were in most ways indistinguishable from the habits and choices of her daily life. Part of a series of “strike works” that began with her “General Strike Piece” of 1969, and continued with her “Dropout Piece” of 1971, these real-life performances sought to experiment with stamina, and to interrogate the ways in which women commune and speak.<sup>49</sup> Difficult to exhibit, her performances were recorded as scribbles in journals; however, what soon became well known was Lozano's refusal to work with, or even to communicate with, other women.<sup>50</sup> Her 1971 work “boycott of women” involved the artist's unflinching avoidance of all contact with female friends and associates. Originally planned to continue for only six months, Lozano later admitted that the performance affected her relations with women for the rest of her life: even after the scheduled six months had passed, Lozano would go on to acknowledge the presence of women only when utterly compelled to do so, ignoring most women, including many waitresses, for some 28 years after her “boycott” began.<sup>51</sup>

Unsurprisingly, Lozano's performance prompted her, as an artist and feminist, to question the social construction of gender, allowing her to develop an acute, rare insight into the structure of gender exclusion. One-time friend of the artist Roberta Smith recalled how “Lozano was more attuned to the problematics, limitations, and systematized nature of gender and patriarchy than most people on most days.”<sup>52</sup> Speaking about “boycott” in an interview, Kushner remarked that Lozano's “gesture [was] so specific” that she “didn't want to import it into the book” exactly as it occurred. Disavowing any real connections between Lozano and Giddle, Kushner insists “there are no *romans a clef*” in the novel, but “only characters that inhabit the

fictional space.”<sup>53</sup> And yet the novel’s inclusion of so many curious allusions to real life, and of so many apparently real characters, suggests that, if the novel is not strictly *roman a clef*, then it is perhaps something like a composite picture of many half-facts and half-truths about the position of women in the 1970s: less *roman a clef* than *woman a clef*.

Lozano withdrew from the New York art world, rejecting both this community and the broader “community of women,” and abandoning whatever celebrity she had attained in those spheres.<sup>54</sup> Disposing of much of her work before her death, Lozano seemed to allow voicelessness and absence to define her art-historical legacy. However, by highlighting Lozano’s career through the refracted, fictional character of Giddle, Kushner’s novel seems to aim to “repair” Lozano’s silence, at the same time as it transforms Lozano’s life choices into different ones. Of course, interest in Lozano’s work had been “experiencing something of a small renaissance” since the early 2000s, although not because critics wished to celebrate her “rigorous abandonment” of women and the art world, but because, as Helen Molesworth writes, she sought to “valorize her paintings, and to commend the prescience of her conceptual pieces.”<sup>55</sup> Yet the most intriguing link between *The Flamethrowers* and Lozano’s life follows from Catherine Wagly’s description of Lozano’s passivity:

she’s highly aware of the injustice of the situation and she is, at least in retrospect, angry. In a move that emphasises that, in art, Lozano never let herself be passive. She simply erased the boundaries between artist and observer.<sup>56</sup>

By showcasing Lozano’s work in the *Paris Review*, and immortalising her mannerisms in the character Giddle, Kushner’s novel asks one to be retrospectively aware of the injustices Lozano faced in the male-dominated art world. Reno narrates a complicated relationship of intimacy and betrayal between two female friends who refuse to compromise their frustrations or temper their defiance. By basing Giddle on a real-life person, Kushner’s novel becomes a work of fic-

to criticism, one that evaluates the work of an exemplar of the many disregarded female artists of the 1970s—albeit that Lozano, like Giddle, was a middle-class, heterosexual, white woman.

### *Anna*

Anna is the name given to the fragile teen girl who exists only in a 1975 documentary directed by Alberto Grifi and Massimo Sarchielli. After Lozano, she is another true-to-life character whose existence might have been completely forgotten had not Kushner included her in *The Flamethrowers*. Anna's femininity, her mental illness, and her transience all seem to signify the transnational nature of the revolutionary movements of 1970s Rome and New York—although she herself is rather inert, rather powerless, in the context of these groundswells, less a proactive participant than a coincidental bystander. *Anna's* male film crew record the eponymous figure's muted movements, which are discussed by a range of people, including an aging, middle-class lawyer, a young, fiery feminist, and other members of the crew. These conversations occur mostly in Anna's absence, and this crew, mostly consisting of men "author" her in a language that seems to proffer the final, authoritative word on her situation.<sup>57</sup>

Kushner acknowledged what she characterised as these men's exploitation of Anna in *Artforum* in 2015, writing that "To observe is to contaminate, and in this case, Grifi and Sarchielli were not merely observers. They presented themselves as their subject's saviors."<sup>58</sup> In her essay on intersectionality, Sirma Bilge homes in on a similar distinction in her discussion of contemporary women's self-determination, arguing that, despite their "best intentions," many who tell stories about women have neglected "intersectional reflexivity and accountability, and [have thus] prompted their own kinds of silencing, exclusion or misrepresentation of subordinated groups."<sup>59</sup> In view of their stories about women, Grifi, Sarchielli, and even Kushner, make apt subjects of Bilge's critique.

In *The Flamethrowers*, however, "Anna" is not a film, but a real-life person who lives in the apartment below Reno during the the

Red Brigade Revolution. Anna, “the biondina,” emerges in the novel during a dreamlike, almost Flaubertian series of moments; she is “the pregnant girl” who weaves through the crowd wearing a “guileless smile, which said ‘I have nothing to protest. I’m here to be here (277).’” By transmuting Anna into a person, the novel gives Anna the voice she can never have in the film that bears her name, as if *The Flamethrowers* might have been an ode to her and women like her. In the documentary film, every interview seems to add another layer of frustration and anxiety to the mix; and although many of those who appear in the film offer their thoughts about Anna’s situation, Anna never comments on it herself. The many admonishing voices that surround Anna—one of which calls her an “untamable bitch” who needs her “head smashed in”—seem to channel, as Kushner suggested in her essay on the film, the unforgiving, exclusionary spirit of the times: “Through these voices,” Kushner writes, “Italy’s ferment is heard.”<sup>60</sup>

Kushner transmutes her cultural criticism of the documentary into a range of episodes in *The Flamethrowers*, where Anna is similarly voiceless. The documentary that bears Anna’s name is incredibly difficult to source, its existence fragmented and tenuous; but Kushner’s text might be understood to recover the documentary, granting fresh access to Anna’s story. Though Kushner argues that a revolutionary spirit can be heard in the various monologues in the film, including from the “layabouts, loudmouths, capelloni (longhairs), and all manner of Roman lumpen,” it is Anna who lacks such a voice of revolution. Without an identity, she becomes “only a first name,” and even a walking question mark.<sup>61</sup> In fact, one might suggest that even Kushner’s novel struggles to lend Anna the voice and identity she deserves, so laboured are the novel’s attempts to interpret her mute expressions:

She smiled at me, but in a way that let me know yes, she was pregnant, and that she didn’t much appreciate being stared at. (273)

And elsewhere:

She wove through the crowd in her poncho, her same guileless smile, which said, "I have nothing to protest. I'm here to be here."  
(277)

Reno describes the women who star in the films that she watches in the same terms in which she describes Giddle and herself: "I wanted to be looked at. I hadn't realized until now. I wanted to be looked at. By men. By strangers. Giddle must have known" (83). The narration seems to nod at the work of Laura Mulvey (among others), who writes of women who desire the male gaze; and yet Kushner's visions of women's subordination go further than much of the scholarship on the subject.<sup>62</sup> In her *Paris Review* article, Kushner described the vision that inspired Reno: "The first image I pinned up to spark inspiration for what would eventually be my novel *The Flamethrowers* was of a woman with tape over her mouth."<sup>63</sup>

Reno's desire to be looked at is her own attempt to respond to historical characterisations of women as merely the *bearers* of meaning, rather than as the *makers* of meaning. The tape over Reno's mouth is a symbol not simply of her enforced silence, but of her refusal to bear meanings in a language system always already "pregnant" with heterosexist encodings. And yet, as mute signifier like all of *The Flamethrowers's* women, Reno is also conduit through which the patriarchy can impose its linguistic order, thwarting autonomous communication among women. In any case, the symbolism of the tape was not of great critical or theoretical interest to Kushner: "I didn't think much about the tape over her mouth," she wrote, "which is actually Band-Aids over the photograph, and not over her lips themselves."<sup>64</sup> Nevertheless, by grouping these women together—all silent, all defiant—Kushner's text engenders the heteroglossia—or, as Mikhail Bakhtin's described—a "double-voiced discourse."<sup>65</sup> Her novel is an attempt to use "another's speech in another's language" and to conduct a conversation between a collective of female artists, fictional characters, and real women in "our world."<sup>66</sup> The two voices—that of the author and that of the character—become dialogically interrelated, their conversation an attempt to collectivise.

Kushner acknowledges that while those who appear in *Anna* speak “A confusing and borderline incoherent language,” it is, “within its specific and dire context, logical.”<sup>67</sup> These people “talk about revolution, violence, [and] despair,” she observes, highlighting the antagonistic language that surrounds the silent female protagonist. However, even in *The Flamethrowers*, Anna never divulges her own thoughts on her situation, and soon disappears, not long after the birth of her baby. As I have suggested, one could argue that Kushner fails to endow Anna with a voice of her own, even while evincing an intention to redress her silence. In this way, the novel may ultimately be destined to reinscribe the authorship and authority that Grifi and Sarchielli exercise over Anna. However, it is also Anna’s vacant space—her blankness—that links the women of *The Flamethrowers* together: they are the chimeras of celluloid, there and then gone.

### China Girls

One of the most important roles Reno plays is that of a China girl. As Kushner explains in her *Paris Review* piece, “China girls” were those women whose faces were used to adjust colour densities in film processing.” In the early 1970s, she writes, these girls “were mostly secretaries who worked in the film labs—regular women who appeared on leader that was distributed all over the world.”<sup>68</sup> A China girl’s official duty was to pose on “colour-timing control strips”; however, their identities were almost never known. In an interview with the *New Yorker*, Kushner directly addressed how a fair complexion determined one’s eligibility to be on film. Filmmakers, Kushner explains, wanted a particular colour of skin: “white skin, that is—flesh calibrations in the movie industry have always been aimed at Caucasian skin.”<sup>69</sup> During her time working as a China girl at a film lab in New York, Reno lives an unsubstantial and ephemeral existence. Relegated to the border of the cinematic frame, she is quite literally marginalised. Yet, as the central Caucasian figure in the novel, her story perpetuates rather than challenges racial stereotypes. Her relationship with those who view the films in which she appears is fleeting and meaningless:

“If they did see me, my face strobed past too quickly, leaving only an afterimage. . . Me then gone, me then gone” (86). However, it is notable that she, a Caucasian woman who seemingly imitates the diction of a Chinese English-speaker (“me then gone”), is in the privileged position of having been selected to do this work.

China girls defy the commercialisation of women’s identities on film, as the subjects play no character and perform no diegetic role. The China girl “performs” as herself—or, as her skin colour—but she is deprived of identity, and wedged between reality and fantasy. While working as a China girl, Reno notices, of the other China girl she sees, that “their ordinariness was part of their appeal: real but unreachable women who left no sense of who they were. No clue but a Kodak color bar, which was no clue at all” (87). A 2005 short film titled *Girls on Film*, directed and written by Julie Buck and Karin Segal, two visual artists then working at the Harvard Museum, explores the objectification of China girls, producing many restored images of these girls from the archives.<sup>70</sup> “They’ve been trapped all these years,” Buck remarked in an interview at the times of the film’s release. “[But] now the show has freed them.”<sup>71</sup>

### *Behind the Green Door*

1972 spawned the Mitchell brothers’ feature-length erotic film *Behind the Green Door*, a classic of the genre and an icon of the “Golden Age of Porn.”<sup>72</sup> It is a film that Reno watches in a red-light cinema before a major blackout interrupts the session (5-6). The film’s narrative features a wealthy San Franciscan woman, Gloria Saunders, who is kidnapped and taken to an elite sex club, where she engages in sex with multiple men and women.<sup>73</sup> Played by Marilyn Chambers, Saunders remains in complete silence throughout the film. In an interview with *BOMB Magazine*, Kushner described the way in which *The Flamethrowers* attempted to channel Chambers’s elusive objectification:

She’s an object, to be sure—but she cannot be fixed as such, she’s ungraspable on account of a seditious streak. . . It’s a form

of interior contemplation that I am trying to honestly render in fiction.<sup>74</sup>

In many ways, Chambers's character represents another of Kushner's "blank," inert women. One might imagine Chambers to have been cast as a sophisticated yet forgettable China girl if it were not for her sudden career change from laundry products model to porn actress. Claspng a baby on the front of an Ivory Snow soap flakes box, Chambers is open faced and wholesome—but, most of all, she is memorable. Perhaps it is this that prevented her becoming a China girl. Engaged in orgies and multiple hard-core sex scenes—the first of their kind in wide release cinema—Chambers, as Gloria Saunders, remains just as silent as she had been in her print commercials. Several cunnilingus scenes take place in the film, along with a psychedelic seven-minute-long ejaculation scene in which semen flies through the air and covers men and women alike. But through it all, Saunders's character is silent.<sup>75</sup>

While watching *Behind the Green Door*, for instance, Reno begins to think critically about her New York friends:

This woman, I thought, was what Giddle impersonated. It somehow did not occur to me that the waitress in the film was even more of an actress than Giddle was. She was acting in a movie.  
(345)

*Behind The Green Door* prompts Reno's curiosity and leads to self-discovery. It provides her with inspiration for her own artistic productions and allows her to formulate her female identity. She searches for her own "green door"—her own entry point into the New York art scene—but can find only these scattered and heterogeneous ideas about sex and femininity. While she watches the film, New York plunges into the second blackout of the novel, prematurely ending the showing. It is a "power failure" in at least two senses: if energy is temporarily unavailable to the city, it is also drained from Reno. However, Reno's inner turmoil and frustration also reflect her

emerging sexual curiosity, and, as the city's populace create anarchy, Reno, while maneuvering her Valera motorcycle through the chaos, witnesses "A black woman whose body melted into the darkness, her short shorts hip-height and bodyless, the leg openings stretched wide like rigatoni" (348). Reno's desirous gaze, and her striking description of the black woman's dark skin, her legs enveloped in shorts that resemble pasta-shaped tubes, indicates her own way of looking, one that has developed as she has travelled across the Atlantic Ocean and entered the New York art world. It is also one of the few points in the novel when Reno identifies a person of colour (another is the brief vignette on Nina Simone discussed earlier). Here the black woman appears as a synecdoche for the blackout, her skin consubstantial with the enshrouded cityscape. But the black woman also seems to haunt the white, middle-class protagonist, appearing—and then disappearing—like a ghostly spectre: "I felt but didn't see her, a body moving past, and when I looked again I saw only white short shorts" (347). If Reno objectifies the black body, then, it is both as sexual and gothic object, a body at once seductive and uncanny.

### Barbara Loden's *Wanda*

Written and directed by Barbara Loden, the almost-silent film *Wanda* (1971) follows the life of a woman who, having granted her husband a divorce and relinquished to him the right to her children, commits a violent bank robbery with a man she meets while travelling. A stirring film about a quiet female revolution, *Wanda*, as Kushner describes it, is the story of "a young woman who isn't afraid to throw her life away" (399). Loden, who also stars in the film as the wild, eponymous protagonist, acknowledges her relationship to the character, as well as to the feminist movement of the time: "I tried to be independent and to create my own way, otherwise, I would have become like Wanda, all my life just floating around."<sup>76</sup> Loden's work never received much attention, possibly because the popularity of Hollywood B-grade films had already begun to wane by the 1970s, as had the popularity of pulp cinema and other genres resonant with *Wanda's* style, characterised

as it was by cinema-*vérité* sequences captured on grainy 16mm film. Other obstacles to *Wanda's* success might have included the film's reluctance to glamourise the life of its outsider protagonist—it instead roughens the violence and poverty she faces—and its failure to offer a neat resolution. Indeed, *Wanda's* intense realism can be confronting: the film features almost no professional actors, and many sequences contain no dialogue at all. Like the many women Kushner's *The Flamethrowers* assembles together, Wanda is a blank, almost peripheral figure, emotionally present for some of the film, but affectively “gone” for the most part.

*Wanda's* realism and sparse, *vérité*-inspired dialogue, most of it improvised, was the result of what Loden drew from those around her, from the same world through which many of Kushner's characters move. Loden told the *Los Angeles Times* in 1971 that she had become a blank woman, a *tabula rasa*: “I had no identity of my own. I just became whatever I thought people wanted me to become.”<sup>77</sup> There is an urgency in Loden's character, a desperation both for direction and a sense of selfhood. Like the other women in Kushner's novel, Wanda *wants* an identity, but cannot avoid becoming another “creature of language, silenced” (385). Nevertheless, Loden's art is self-reflexive; it is the language of art that she deploys to reclaim agency, a strategy enacted by many women artists of the time. Adams summarises the phenomenon succinctly: “Given that women had traditionally been the object rather than the subject of visual representation, it was not surprising that emerging women artists and historians demonstrated an interest in self representation and female identity.”<sup>78</sup>

Wanda leaves “respectable” society to follow a criminal; but instead of becoming an empowered rebel in control of her decisions, she falls mute, erasing herself and her agency. At one point, Michael Higgins, her villainous boyfriend, screams for her to fall into line with convention: “Follow the script!,” he yells, before dragging Wanda through the ill-fated bank heist he had planned. Wanda, as we come to know her, remains voiceless throughout the film. In a 2002 essay book chapter, Bérénice Reynaud explained the director's intentions: “Loden wanted to suggest, from the vantage point of her own experi-

ence, what it meant to be a damaged, alienated woman—not to fashion a ‘new woman’ or positive heroine.”<sup>79</sup> Far from an inspiration to empowered feminists, Wanda’s story is that of the twentieth-century feminist precariat.

This being so, Loden’s voice remains always already doomed to historical erasure. Having been seldom cited in feminist criticism, and reissued only once in Europe, *Wanda*, as Reynaud suggests, may simply have been “too authentic” for audiences to embrace.<sup>80</sup> In fact, according to Reynaud, Loden had herself been silenced and exploited in her life, used like a conduit by her husband, the famous director Elia Kazan:

[Kazan], a successful man of 44, happily married, suffers a mid-life crisis and draws inspiration from a younger woman... Again, one has the eerie feeling of a life being slowly erased under the ornate carving of official history.<sup>81</sup>

While Loden may not have sought to produce a “positive heroine,” Wanda’s silence—like that of *The Flamethrowers*’s female characters—may be regarded as a cognitive ability rather than as a weakness. In an interview before her death, Loden compared her own experiences to those of Wanda, describing her protagonist’s “apathy” as a mechanism she uses to conceal her inner agitation.<sup>82</sup> In a world where, in Lacan’s words, “women is symptom to man,” Wanda’s ability to transform her pain and anger into indifference may be seen a form of resilience. It exemplifies a woman’s way of working through and addressing her precarious circumstances in the face of a diagnostic, patriarchal gaze—and perhaps, as Reynaud implies, in the face of the hostility encountered both by Wanda and Loden from their husbands.<sup>83</sup>

By acknowledging the unpredictable and perilous lives of a range of radical second-wave women, Kushner’s novel pays fitting attention to a group of women often omitted from history—including from many feminist histories. However, the novel’s political grammar is also dubious, posing a particularly difficult problem for intersectional

feminists intent on charting a coherent teleological history of women's emancipation. In many ways, Kushner's stories do not subvert the dominant masculinist narratives of the 1970s but inexorably reinscribe them, albeit through the eyes of Reno, a woman protagonist.

Nevertheless, the women whom Reno meets in *The Flamethrowers*—analogous but subtly distinct—seem to recognise the urgency of the evolving women's identity crisis. As Reno says of one romantic rival, Talia Valera, who punches herself having been asked to do so by a man, "she was not afraid, she was undamaged, still beautiful. But she *was* damaged; they all were" (324). The paradoxical description—she is "undamaged" and yet "damaged"—reflects the same paradox of self-representation expressed by the works of many such female artists and activists. Of course, Kushner's fictionalisation of a 1970s feminist art world does not (and cannot) eclipse the advances of feminist scholarship in art history and theory from the 1980s to the present. Instead, the novel explores what might be salvaged from the feminist art of the second wave, a movement sometimes dismissed for its Anglocentric, heteronormative prepossessions. In many ways, then, the novel thus reflects the open-minded attitude that Hemmings adopts when she acknowledges the problems of "relativism and political incapacity" concomitant with "postmodern feminism." "Perhaps earlier feminist theories," she writes, "might still have something to teach us about what we have in common as women, despite the valuable critiques of essentialism that have come since."<sup>84</sup>

#### Notes

1. F. T. Marinetti, "The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism," trans. R. W. Flint, in *Documents of the Twentieth-Century Art*, ed. Umbro Apollonio (New York: Viking, 1973), 19–24.

2. Rachel Kushner, *The Flamethrowers* (New York: Scribner, 2013), 69. All subsequent page citations refer to this edition and are given parenthetically in the text.

3. Roland Barthes, *A Lover's Discourse: Fragments*, trans. Richard Howard (London: Penguin, 1990), 167.

4. See Claire Hemmings, *Why Stories Matter: The Political Grammar of Feminist Theory* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011).

5. See Linda Nochlin, "Why Have There Been no Great Women Artists?" *ART-*

news (January, 1971): 22–39.

6. See Melissa Estes Blair, *Revolutionizing Expectations: Women's Organizations, Feminism, and American Politics 1965–1980* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2014), esp. 1–10.

7. See, for instance, Daphen Spain, “Women’s Rights and Gendered Spaces in 1970s Boston,” *Frontiers: A Journal of Women’s Studies* 32, no. 1 (2011): 161, 170.

8. See Jude Adams, “Looking from with/in: feminist art projects of the 70s,” *Outskirts Journal* 29 (2013), <http://www.outskirts.arts.uwa.edu.au/volumes/volume-29/adams-jude-looking-with-in>; also see Richard Haese, *Permanent Revolution: Mike Brown and the Australian Avant-Garde 1953–1997* (Carlton: The Miegunyah Press, 2011), 180.

9. Adams, “Looking from with/in.”

10. By contrast, a helpful overview of where the Anglo-American second/third-wave distinction *does not* apply (it does not apply, for instance, in Poland) appears in Jonathan Dean, “Who’s Afraid of Third Wave Feminism?,” *International Journal of Feminist Politics* (2009): 345.

11. Adams, “Looking from with/in.”

12. See Elvis Richardson, *CoUNTess* (June 17, 2009), <http://countesses.blogspot.com.au/>; and Elvis Richardson, “The Countess Report (February, 2016),” <http://www.thecountessreport.com.au/The%20Countess%20Report.FINAL.pdf>.

13. Hemmings, *Why Stories Matter*, 89.

14. *Ibid.*, 6.

15. bell hooks, “Moving Beyond Pain,” *bell hooks Institute* (blog), May 9, 2016, <http://www.bellhooksinstitute.com/blog/2016/5/9/moving-beyond-pain>.

16. *Ibid.*

17. *Ibid.*

18. Hemmings, *Why Stories Matter*, 2.

19. bell hooks, “Moving Beyond Pain.”

20. Tamar Gottesman, “Beyoncé Wants to Change the Conversation,” *ELLE Magazine*, April 4, 2016, <http://www.elle.com/fashion/a35286/beyonce-elle-cover-photos/>.

21. See Chris Azzopardi, “Q&A: Annie Lennox on her legacy, why Beyoncé is ‘feminist lite,’” *Pride Source*, September 25, 2014, <http://www.pridesource.com/article.html?article=68228>.

22. See Nathalie Weidhase, “‘Beyoncé Feminism’ and the Contestation of the Black Feminist Body,” *Celebrity Studies* 6, no. 1 (2015): 129.

23. Jennifer Baumgardner, *F ’em!: Goo Goo, Gaga and Some Thoughts on Balls* (Berkeley: Seal Press, 2011), 250.

24. *Ibid.*, 244.

25. Alyssa Rosenberg, “*The Flamethrowers* Is The Most Feminist Novel You’ll Read All Year, And One Of The Best 2013,” *ThinkProgress*, <https://thinkprogress.org/the-flamethrowers-is-the-most-feminist-novel-you-ll-read-all-year-and-one-of-the-best-2013-88fd679a6597#.qzvpezpx8>.

26. Hemmings, *Why Stories Matter*, 2.

27. Adams, “Looking from with/in.”

28. *Ibid.*

29. Cynthia Willett, Ellie Anderson and Diana Meyers “Feminist Perspectives on

the Self," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy Online* (Stanford: University of Stanford Press, 2015), <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2010/entries/feminism-self/>, qtd. in Adams, "Looking from with/in."

30. Ibid.

31. See, for instance, Rachel Kushner, "Lipstick Traces: Novelist Claire Lispector's Radian Nothingness," *Bookforum* (January 2013), [http://www.bookforum.com/inprint/019\\_04/10575](http://www.bookforum.com/inprint/019_04/10575).

32. Hemmings, *Why Stories Matter*, 144.

33. Ibid. On some of the failures of intersectionality, see Silma Bilge, "Intersectionality Undone: Saving Intersectionality from Feminist Intersectionality Studies," *Du Bois Review* 10 (2013): 405-424.

34. Rachel Kushner, "Rachel Kushner's Top 10 Books about 1970s Art," *Guardian*, July 25 2013, <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2013/jul/24/rachel-kushner-top-10-books-1970s-art>.

35. For a fascinating summary of Futurism's relationship with women, speed, and war, see Lucia Re, "Maria Ginanni vs. F. T. Marinetti: Women, Speed, and War in Futurist Italy," *Annali d'Italianistica* 27 (2009): 103-124.

36. Kushner, "Rachel Kushner's Top 10 Books about 1970s Art."

37. Rachel Kushner, "Curated by Rachel Kushner," *Paris Review* 203 (2012), <http://www.theparisreview.org/art-photography/6197/curated-by-rachel-kushner-the-flamethrowers>

38. Ibid.

39. Rachel Kushner, "Woman in Revolt: Alberto Grifi and Massimo Sarchielli's *Anna*," *Artforum* (November 12, 2012), <https://artforum.com/inprint/issue=201209&id=36151>.

40. Bilge, "Intersectionality Undone," 407.

41. Baumgardner, *F'em!*, 243-44.

42. As Lucia Re notes, for "most Futurists... the war represented... a historic opportunity for revolutionary action in and for Italy." See Re, "Maria Ginanni vs. F. T. Marinetti," 109.

43. See Anne Bowler, "Italian Futurism and Fascism," *Theory and Society* 20 (1991): 763-794.

44. Ibid.

45. See Kushner, "Rachel Kushner's Top 10 Books about 1970s Art."

46. James Woods, "Youth in Revolt: Rachel Kushner's *The Flamethrowers*," *New Yorker*, April 8, 2013, <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2013/04/08/youth-in-revolt>.

47. Ibid.

48. Ibid.

49. Roberta Smith, "Lee Lozano, 68, Conceptual Artist Who Boycotted Women for Years," *New York Times*, October 18, 1999.

50. Ibid.

51. See Jo Applin, "Hard Work: Lee Lozano's Dropouts," *October* 156 (2016): 75.

52. Ibid.

53. Jessica Cotton, "Voiceless Voices: An Interview with Rachel Kushner," *The Quietus*, February 3, 2014, <http://thequietus.com/articles/14407-rachel-kush>

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54. Helen Molesworth, "Tune In, Turn On, Drop Out: The Rejection of Lee Lozano," *Art Journal* 61, no. 4 (2002): 65–71.
55. *Ibid.*, 65.
56. Sarah Lehrer-Graiwer, *Dropout Piece* (London: Afterall Books, 2014), 22.
57. *Anna*, directed and written by Alberto Grifi and Massimo Sarchielli (Cineteca Nazionale and Cineteca di Bologna with Associazione Alberto Grifi, 1975).
58. Kushner, "Woman in Revolt."
59. Bilge, "Intersectionality Undone," 406.
60. Kushner, "Woman in Revolt."
61. *Ibid.*
62. See Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," *Screen* 16 (1975): 6–18.
63. Kushner, "Curated by Rachel Kushner."
64. *Ibid.*
65. M. M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M. M. Bakhtin*, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 324.
66. *Ibid.*
67. Kushner, "Woman in Revolt."
68. Kushner, "Curated by Rachel Kushner."
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70. *Girls on Film*, directed and written by Julie Buck and Karin Segal (Harvard Film Archive, 2005).
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72. J. W. Pennington, *The History of Sex in American Film* (Santa Barbara: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2007), 56.
73. Woods, "Youth in Revolt."
74. Hari Kunzru, "Artists in Conversation: Rachel Kushner," *BOMB* (Spring, 2013), <http://bombmagazine.org/article/7101/rachel-kushner>.
75. *Behind the Green Door*, directed and written by Jim Mitchell and Artie Mitchell (Mitchell Brothers Film Group, 1972).
76. Bérénice Reynauld, "For Wanda," *Senses of Cinema* 22 (2002), <http://sensesofcinema.com/2002/feature-articles/wanda/>.
77. Kate Taylor, "Driven by Fierce Visions of Independence," *New York Times*, August 27, 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/08/29/movies/29wanda.html>.
78. Adams, "Looking from with/in."
79. Reynauld, "For Wanda."
80. *Ibid.*
81. *Ibid.*
82. *Ibid.*
83. Reynauld uses this quotation as an epigraph to head one section of her essay on Loden's *Wanda*. The original quotation appears in Jacques Lacan, "Seminar of 21 January 1975," in *Feminine Sexuality. Jacques Lacan and the École Fruedienne*, ed. Juliet Mitchell and Jacqueline Rose (London: W.W. Norton & Company), 168.
84. Hemmings, *Why Stories Matter*, 4.

