

# Tiny Asian Female Seeking Analysis: Representation, Aesthetics, and Performativity in Ali Wong's *Baby Cobra*

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I have noticed lately the emergence of an idiom as oft-used as it is insidious. It began when I arrived at my workplace and was met with a latte from a managing partner at the company. What I saw as a gracious gesture prompted a different response from my supervisor, a slight unbeknown to its offender, an offhand remark at once jarring and familiar: *he likes pretty Asian girls*. For me—and, surely, many others—this designation and its variants have become routine. We are categorized using a convenient formula, appearance + race + gender, which functions to condense and dismiss us as *pretty Asian girls*, *cute Asian women*, and *tiny Asian females*. In every case, our image precedes our merit.

Asian women's place in the North American lexicon indicates their peripheral existence in male-dominated Westernized societies as "figures whose role it is to represent the larger whole from which they emanate"; "bodies [without] a signifiable existence prior to the mark of their gender" and race; and "images of indifference, insignificance, and ineffectuality all [pointing] to a deficit of power" (Said 63; Butler 13; Ngai 18). Since the Western imperialist lens through which the East is imagined positions the West as "self" and the East as "Other," it follows that the former is the standard by which the latter is measured. Representations of the East are thus restrictive, passive, and non-normative as they exist solely to affirm the superiority of the West. Indeed, always regarded as small—that is to say, inconsequential—Asian women can be seen as the epitome of the cute aesthetic. In *Our Aesthetic Categories: Zany, Cute, Interesting*, cultural critic Sianne Ngai contends that "objects already regarded as familiar and unthreat-

ening" bring forth, not only "an aestheticization [of cuteness,] but an eroticization of powerlessness, evoking tenderness for 'small things' but also, sometimes a desire to belittle or diminish them further" (3). The ambivalence with which one objectifies the pretty Asian girl is evident precisely in the word "girl"—frequently used to describe Asian women well into adulthood—which indicates her infantilization and the subsequent need to be controlled. The colloquial preference for "girl" speaks to an Orientalist tradition of fetishization, particularly as it signals a paternalistic relationship between the childlike, Asian object and the powerful, Western subject. Paradoxically, to call someone "cute" is often to offer a compliment with the inference of attractiveness. However, regarding Asian women, what may be attractive to the person deploying the compliment is not the women themselves but the appeal of asserting one's power over them.

1. Cultural critic Edward Said theorizes Orientalism as, "in short, . . . a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient," that is, the Eastern world and its constituents (3). Examining the history of Western scholarship, he argues that the Orient is "Europe's . . . cultural contestant, and one of its deepest and most recurring images of the Other. In addition, the Orient has helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience" (1). The nature of Orientalism ensures that "European [or Westernized] culture [gains] in strength and identity by setting itself off against the Orient as a sort of surrogate and even underground self" (3).

In contemporary North American media, caricatures of Asian women are less frequent than the past, yet the ideologies behind new images remain largely unchanged. Although Hollywood has attempted to include more Asian women on screen, most of their roles remain limited to one of two trajectories: stereotypically Asian, always marked by otherness, and thus seen as a separate entity from North America; or assimilated, adopting Western imperialist ideals, and rejecting cultural ties to the East. Curiously, the latter approach to writing Asian characters is often seen as progressive because of its departure from recognizable archetypes. Rather than incorporate the cultural backgrounds of Asian characters into their narratives, much popular media insists on muting any discussion of ethnic differences.<sup>2</sup> These representations, which profess inclusivity, actually “function to domesticate and fold in colour, thereby recentring the desirability of cultural whiteness as mainstream” (Kim). In her comedy special *Baby Cobra* (2016), Ali Wong rejects being synonymous with lesser in favour of a platform from which she can control public perception. As the second Asian-American woman to achieve mainstream recognition in stand-up comedy,<sup>3</sup> she demands visibility with her presence alone. Moreover, Wong’s performance at once exaggerates and subverts conventions of Asian femininity to deconstruct regressive social categories and, ultimately, call for new ways of imagining.

Far from conforming to the unthreatening image of the pretty Asian girl, Ali Wong’s *Baby Cobra*

2. In *Slaying the Dragon: Reloaded*, Elaine Kim includes a clip of the film *Charlie’s Angels* (2000), in which actress Lucy Liu portrays Alex Munday, a visibly Asian character belonging to a family network comprised of her white surrogate father (Charlie) and white sisters (the Angels). Munday identifies solely with Western culture, and the film makes no reference to her ethnicity. Comparable roles include Brenda Song’s London Tipton in the television series *The Suite Life of Zack & Cody* (2005-2008) and Jamie Chung’s Valerie Vale in the television series *Gotham* (2014-present).

3. Margaret Cho came to prominence on the comedy circuit in the 1990s, and she is well-known for her criticism of “mainstream prettiness not only for its implicit racism but for its relation to other hegemonic ideals about the body in culture—its sexuality, nationality, physical ability, age” (Mizejewski 126). Like Cho, Ali Wong deliberately uses Asian stereotypes to challenge traditional notions of race, giving particular attention to the Asian female body.

destabilizes viewers by working against established representations of Asian women and urging them to question gendered and racialized social roles. The comic attacks double standards for women as wives and mothers, for instance, by demarcating pressures to act in accordance with a socially constructed definition of womanhood, that is, a “regulatory regime of gender differences in which genders are divided and hierarchized under constraint” (Butler 25). Conventionally situated at the bottom of the hierarchy, women are seen as inherently powerless and capable of achieving a semblance of power only if linked to a man. Wong plays with this stereotype in detailing her journey to marriage as a “manipulation cycle” during which she “[threatens] to leave without ever actually leaving, because [she knows] that [she’s] too old and it’s too late to go back out there and find a new man and start the whole manipulation cycle all over again” (*Baby Cobra*). Giving voice to a discrepancy in the socialization of women and men, Wong acknowledges the sexist framework which at once teaches women to desire romance and marriage and teaches men to resist it: she delineates existing pressures for women to marry while simultaneously emphasizing the labour of marriage in her performance of the manipulative and shrewd future wife. Peculiarly, Wong uses elements of the dragon lady stereotype—overbearing, cruel, tyrannical, and sexually manipulative Asian women—to turn the notion that submissive “Oriental women make the best wives” on its head (Hwang 98). By exaggerating one stereotype and destabilizing another, Wong suggests the precariousness of Western assumptions about Asian women. In effect, she performs these caricatures to elicit laughter, not at their repetition but rather the farcicality of Western culture’s subscription to them.

Wong continues to exploit stereotypes about women, and particularly Asian women, as a means of deconstructing the power structures that figure them as substandard. For instance, in describing her inclination to be “very soft...very nurturing, and very domestic” around her husband, she explicitly asks audience members to trace her adherence to familiar ideas about Asian femininity which amplify the patriarchal nature of women’s roles in heteronormative marriages. She adds that “for five years,” she has “packed his lunch every single day,” demonstrating her seemingly traditional deportment before subverting it with the punchline: “I did that so that he’d become dependent on me.” The takeaway of the joke thus becomes a critique of the cultural assumptions she draws upon in its set-up, effectively necessitating viewers’ recogni-

tion of the tenuous grounds for those generalizations. As with the manipulation cycle joke, Wong reminds viewers of a societal tendency to overlook women’s wit as well as the inherent labour that comes with living as a married woman. As sociologist Arlie Hochschild observes in her book *The Second Shift*, domestic responsibilities are primarily allocated and fulfilled by women when it comes to heterosexual marriages, even in the wake of rising populations of women in the workforce. Wong points to disparate standards for women as she elaborates, “I don’t feed him out of the goodness of my heart. I do it as an investment in my financial future, ‘cause I don’t wanna work anymore.”

In addition to critiquing the image of the doting wife, Wong segues into her examination of contemporary expectations of women in relation to labour. Referring to Facebook’s Chief Operating Officer Sheryl Sandberg, Wong asserts:

She wrote that book that got women all riled up about our careers. Talking about how we as women should challenge ourselves to sit at the table and rise to the top. And her book is called *Lean In*. Well, I don’t wanna lean in, okay? I wanna lie down. I want to lie the fuck down. I think that feminism is the worst thing that ever happened to women. (*Baby Cobra*)

Wong’s take on feminism—or, rather, Sandberg’s brand of feminism—alludes to shortcomings in modern interpretations of the word. Specifically, Wong’s distaste for Sandberg’s advice suggests that the *Lean In* author’s method of female empowerment is actually disempowering, since it burdens women with increased expectations of labour. Indeed, the self-election which Sandberg heralds as the answer to workplace gender inequality posits that there is “a universal basis for feminism...found in an identity assumed to exist cross-culturally” and accompanied by “the notion that the oppression of women has some singular form discernible in the universal or hegemonic structure of patriarchy or masculine domination” (Butler 6). What Sandberg fails to acknowledge is that marginalization exists beyond gender.

For Asian women, whose race is predominantly associated with weakness and often in direct correlation to lower socioeconomic status, self-election may not be a viable option. It is unreasonable, then, to assume that a woman marginalized by race can demand the same degree of authority as someone like Sandberg, who possesses the privileges of whiteness. Moreover,

for women of lower socioeconomic status—many of them women of colour—work is not a privilege in the sense purported by Sandberg; it is a necessary means of survival. In essence, the critique that Wong makes is not against feminism but rather white feminism, a “[domain] of exclusion” which remains “coercive and regulatory” in its “premature insistence on a stable subject of feminism, understood as a seamless category of women” despite having constructed that category for “emancipatory purposes” (Butler 7). For Wong, white feminism is damaging in that it presents increased labour for women under the guise of increased opportunity; “now [women] are *expected* to work [my emphasis]” on top of the unchanging expectation that they maintain domestic order. In fact, she stresses that this added pressure creates deeper divisions between women as she recounts how her “friends . . . get very judgmental about housewives . . . not doing anything.” In response, Wong offers an alternative view: “She’s not a housewife. She’s retired.” As she references her earlier joke (about not wanting to work anymore) and alludes to the labour implicit for married women, Wong challenges both her friends’ inference that household duties do not comprise work and the idea that women should want to work more, as these ideas disproportionately discriminate against Asian women and others whose employment opportunities are limited by biases ulterior to gender. Fundamentally, Wong refuses the notion that female empowerment comes as a direct result of work because it is ineffective: oversimplified and unable to acknowledge forms of marginalization beyond gender, views like Sandberg’s ultimately blame women for not taking initiative instead of questioning the larger structures of power that limit them.

In critiquing the glorified, white-feminist vision of self-election in the workplace, Wong concurrently critiques the aestheticization of the “zany,” which Ngai describes as a “mix of desperation and playfulness” that is “aesthetically appealing” because its “hypercharismatic” presentation “is really an aesthetic about work” and “precariousness” (188). Simply put, the zany refers to a strenuous—certainly, laborious—relation to playing. For Sandberg and like-minded feminists, more work for women equates to empowerment, which is to imply that such work is enjoyable to the extent that it increases one’s esteem. According to Ngai,

“Zaniness, if not a feminist or even feminine aesthetic per se, [is] a particularly meaningful aesthetic *for* feminist practice in our present, captur-

ing both what Donna Haraway describes as the 'paradoxical intensification and erosion of gender' under conditions of post-Fordism and the compulsion to be fun that has long haunted feminist discourse in the characterological form of the feminist 'killjoy' or 'heavy.'" (222)

When applied to the notion that women should seek out and embrace increased workplace labour, the zany aesthetic reveals an underlying reassertion of a tired, sexist perspective: women must always be pleased, pleasant, and pleasing. More specifically, in the face of societal structures always working to marginalize them, women should be pleased to toil, pleasant in how they do it, and pleasing after the fact. On "female zaniness," Ngai notes that an "awareness that the deterritorialization of affective/immaterial labor across the reproductive/productive divide has not made affective/immaterial work in the household any less strenuous for women" (216). The stereotype of the doting Asian wife intertwines the zany with the cute in her keen servility. Wong's refusal to lean into that objectified role thus destabilizes the aesthetic experience written onto the tiny, Asian, and female body.

By simply stepping on stage, Wong asserts her position as a pregnant Asian-American woman comedian, a stance that has never before existed in the North American mainstream and is subversive in its own right. Accordingly, in *Pretty/Funny: Women Comedians and Body Politics*, feminist critic Linda Mizejewski pronounces that "the posture of standing up assumes status and power as well as qualities of aggression and authority, also considered innately masculine" (15). On a stage primarily reserved for white American men, Wong thus demands to be seen as their equal. She begins her segment with an allusion to "one of feminism's most basic cultural critiques," that is, "women are rewarded for what they look like and not for what they say . . . Because of this bias, 'pretty' versus 'funny' is a rough but fairly accurate way to sum up the history of women in comedy" (Mizejewski 14). Cognizant of that binary, Wong immediately points out her new status as a thirty-three-year-old woman and the fact that few—"Thank you, five people," she quips upon hearing her audience's underwhelming applause—find women's aging to be a cause for celebration. Moreover, she equates being thirty-three with being past a woman's physical prime and, in essence, unpretty, as she jokes about being "jealous" of eighteen-year-old girls who "could just eat like shit... take a shit and have a six-pack," girls who have "that beauti-

ful inner thigh clearance... with the light of potential just radiating through." By juxtaposing women's discernible youth with their potential, Wong emphasizes the societal standard that determines women's value not through merit (how funny they are) but, rather, physical beauty (how pretty they are). As her platform and audience make evident, Wong's potential has not plummeted because she has surpassed the age of eighteen. Her attention to Western culture's obsession with women's youth, coupled with her success, therefore invites viewers to re-evaluate social terms of desirability.

Wong denies the position of sexually desired object typically assigned to Asian women and instead stakes her claim to desire. Physically, she is petite and can easily be placed into the aesthetic category of "cute"; she does not, however, allow her viewers to associate her with "the diminutive, the weak, and the subordinate" (Ngai 53). To challenge the dominant narrative, Wong first elucidates the fetishization of bodies like hers: if she were to go "on Craigslist and [post] 'Tiny Asian female seeking anal,'" she contends, "the Internet would crash." The implications here are predictable: the hyperfemininity of Asian female bodies makes them all the more desirable to onlookers, and the assumed modesty of Asian women does not coincide with an initiated request for sex. To wit, the Asian woman is rarely imagined as desiring, yet is frequently sexually desired. Instead of seeing her as a person, the men in this scenario write a series of Western perceptions onto Wong's body and view her as a fantasy object. Since "violence [is] always implicit in our relation to the cute object," the yearning for "cute" Asian women's bodies already marked by fantasies of conquest becomes all the more unsettling (Ngai 85). The commonplace tendency to view Asian female bodies as assets to be possessed is a contemporary sort of dehumanization. In order to reclaim her humanity, Wong emphasizes her position as a desiring subject: by explicating her personal gratification from anal sex, she challenges the fantasy narrative ascribed to her physically small and conventionally feminine frame. Wong's occupation of the stage issues a brashness that thwarts the notion of the discernibly "cute" as powerless, and it effectively takes on the politics of aesthetics both visually and verbally.

Throughout her segment, Wong gestures to her body in ways reminiscent of the carnivalesque, first theorized by Mikhail Bakhtin as a heterogeneous materiality that contains conventions and styles of high culture from a position of debasement. In *The Female Grotesque*, Mary J. Russo applies the carnivalesque to

feminism, articulating the grotesque female body as a necessary counter to cultural hegemony and a site for imagining new pleasures in female performance and spectatorship. The carnivalesque in Wong's body arises from its incongruity with contemporary stereotypes of Asian women. She reveals, for example, that "a lot of people are shocked" by the fact that her "husband is Asian . . . because, usually, Asian-American women who...wear these kinda glasses"—she gestures to her bright red, oversized, cat-eye frames—"and have a lot of opinions . . . like to date white dudes." Wong articulates that the boldness in her attitude and attire—she wears a heavily patterned, tight-fitting dress with red flats to match her glasses—evokes a connection to whiteness and masculinity. Plainly, Western constructions of race and gender do not make room for Asian women to be loud or even expressive. Those who are free to express themselves are white men; as follows, she who dares to draw attention to herself must have the security of relation to the white masculine embodiment of power. By juxtaposing her boldness with the image of her Asian husband, Wong urges her audience to reconsider the unnecessarily rigid dictates that Western culture imposes upon Asians.

Wong takes advantage of her audience's familiarity with categories of privilege to stress their inequity. She illustrates, in particular, her and her husband's class privilege when describing their lifestyle: "[He] and I are both total . . . private school Asians. We both are big hippies, too. . . . We do silent meditation retreats. That's right, we pay eight-hundred dollars to shut up for a weekend." Wong recognizes that her access to private education and expensive vacations enacts a breakdown of the usual divisions: she belongs to a tax bracket predominantly occupied by the white and wealthy. To be sure, she jokes, "Sometimes, all of this hippy-dippy shit we do makes me feel like we are white people doing an impression of Asian people." The dissonance between Wong's racial marginalization and class privilege works in this case to both draw attention to the disparity of wealth among racial groups and disturb limiting assumptions about Asians, as part of an ultimate effort to "resist, exaggerate, and destabilize the distinctions and boundaries that mark and maintain high culture and organized society" (Russo 62). Furthermore, Wong at once illustrates how one's proximity to whiteness creates a semblance of power and enunciates the arbitrariness of racialized power dynamics: "Nothing makes me feel more powerful than when a white dude eats my pussy . . . I just feel like I'm absorbing all of that privilege

and all of that entitlement . . . Also, he's so vulnerable down there. I'm like, 'I could just crush your head at any moment, white man! I could just kill you right now! Crush those brains! Colonize the colonizer!' By reversing the conventional structure of relationships between men and women as well as East and West, Wong places herself in a position of power and destabilizes the idea that Asian women are inherently submissive. Correspondingly, she outlines and disrupts "the flip side of hypersexualized Asian women," that is, "desexed Asian men" (Kim). She challenges Eurocentric notions of masculinity that posit Asian features as effeminate<sup>4</sup> by indicating how these features make Asian men "the sexiest": "They got no body hair from the neck down. It's like making love to a dolphin . . . It's so smooth, just like a slip and slide. . . . Asian men, no body odor. None. They just smell like responsibility." In exemplifying a masculinity that deviates from the Western standard, Wong encourages a broader representational spectrum of Asians collectively.

What makes Wong's comedy special so original is, as *The New Yorker's* Ariel Levy puts it, "her discussion of quotidian domesticity... interwoven with commentary on what may be the last taboo of female sexuality: women are animals." Wong's deliberations on sex are subversive because, by voicing her desire for and fulfillment from sexual pleasure, she works against imperialist fantasies of Asian women as sexual conquests to be had. In *Extraordinary Bodies*, disabilities study scholar Rosemarie Garland-Thomson proposes that "gender, ethnicity, sexuality, and disability are related products of the same social processes and practices that shape bodies according to ideological structures" (136). The suggestion that Garland-Thomson makes is a useful one for thinking about dominant perceptions of all bodies considered abnormal. For example, mainstream portrayals of sex almost always include politics of power, according to which the person who most closely identifies with the cultural standard of normativity (young, white, middle-class male) has the

4. Western culture has a long history of demasculinizing Asian men for their incompatibility with Eurocentric ideals of masculinity. As Said puts it, "the Orient is characterized by the West as feminine because it is "depraved," "lacking control," "degenerate," "weak," "silent," "passive," "submissive," and an object" (6). To the Western male mind, the "non-active" and "non-autonomous" Orientals, like women, never spoke of [themselves], [they] never represented [their] emotions, presence, or history (Said 6). The Asian man is first Oriental [with female attributes] and only second a man (Said 231).

upper hand. Wong decenters the Western male fantasy by describing her own: “to help as many men as possible discover their prostate . . . like a conqueror.” Contrary to the objectified and submissive stereotype of Asian women, Wong expresses her sexual excitement about the fear she is able to instill in men who worry that enjoying her “thumb up there . . . might mean that they’re gay,” at once arguing for Asian women’s right to sexual desire and the fragility of socially-constructed masculinity. In a related anecdote, she details her experience of asking her husband to “abuse” her in bed. Asking him to “choke [her] enough so that [she] can’t talk,” Wong touches on the imperialist idea of her body as land to be conquered before unsettling the simplistic notion: “cause if I can talk, I’m gonna tell you what to do. And I’m tired of being the boss . . . all the time, so in the bedroom, you be the boss. Yes. Because I’m the real boss.” By first performing her “doubly-marginalized position,” as Gilbert would call it, Wong makes a spectacle of Western assumptions about Asian women’s acquiescence in and outside of the bedroom; then, revealing her sexual needs—and demanding gratification—she articulates her position as a desiring subject. The concept of balancing power during sex reveals that how one moves or does not move is both purposeful and powerful, while also showing that what society has come to define as the personification of submissiveness is ultimately arbitrary.

The grotesque body, as occupied by Wong, is perhaps best articulated in her deliberations and enactments of pregnancy. “In the everyday indicative world,” Russo pronounces, “women and their bodies, certain bodies, in certain public framings, in certain public spaces, are always already transgressive—dangerous, and in danger” (60). The danger of the pregnant body is its demonstration of the basic, animal-like reproductive capacity of the woman: it is far removed from the hyperfeminized, subhuman, fantasy figure. Gilbert argues that “material about gynecological examinations is the only chance female comics have to speak about violence and violation of women in this culture,” a fair assessment before the existence of *Baby Cobra* (92). Wong herself points to the “rare and unusual” case of seeing “a female comic perform pregnant because female comics don’t get pregnant . . . Once they do get pregnant, they generally disappear.” Even with the added expectation that women should work, there exists a pressure (and, often, coercion) for women to choose between career and familial pursuits. As she shares her experience trying to get pregnant, Wong does not shy away from uncomfort-

able details or from making her audience understand the circumstances that cause such discomfort. She delineates the process of “[having] to take . . . hormone pills that were suppositories and Push Pop them up [herself] every single night,” only to have them “inevitably dissolve and melt into [her] underwear” while at work. However unfamiliar the chronicles of pregnancy are to her audience, Wong uses her monologue to do “precisely what female comics do when performing gynecological humor—she disarms and relaxes audience members through comic discourse in order to teach them about what it means to be a woman in contemporary culture,” thus “empowering comics and audiences alike” (Gilbert 93). Moreover, Wong challenges the notion of the Asian woman as demure and necessarily ladylike by openly discussing itchy-ness in her genitals as a side effect of progesterone, “finding ways to discreetly scratch [herself] at work,” and her struggle in resisting “the urge to immediately smell [her] fingers.” Her portrayals of the bodily realities of pregnancy work to break the silence on a topic familiar to many women yet largely kept out of public conversation. Simultaneously, “what such imaginings” like Wong’s “may most usefully reveal is the utter falseness of the presumed complementarity of the male and female bodies; the ludicrousness of the male body undergoing the gynecological drill”—or, in Wong’s case, the process of scratching and sniffing—“shows up more than anything the *asymmetry* of gendered bodies in the same position. It shows up those differences which make the female body a crucial (though presumably not eternal) site of contestation” (Russo 123).

By offering her unfiltered experience of the female body, Wong engages new possibilities for discussions about women’s issues. “In a comedy club,” Gilbert explains, “the marginal (grotesque, real, sensual) subverts the hegemonic (classical idealized forms), creating a new order from disorder. It is not surprising that comics often discuss sensual, even scatological experience, allowing the audience to participate vicariously” (59). Certainly, Wong articulates the scatological in her imagining of childbirth when she compares a woman’s leg to a “soft serve lever” and declares that the “real miracle of life” is the fact that, after the woman “[shits] on the floor . . . just when [she thinks] that’s enough to make him finally leave . . . a baby comes out, and he gotta stay.” Her visualization of the delivery process interrogates a commonplace male-centric filtering of the female body: the corporeal truths surrounding childbirth are seen as unfeminine and thus are rarely spoken of beyond medical

settings or closed quarters. Wong’s candidness about all that pregnancy entails suggests that everything can and, indeed, should be up for discussion. In an interview with journalist Hadley Freeman of *The Guardian*, Wong divulges that, “when [she] had a miscarriage... [talking] to other women and [hearing] that they’d been through it too” became a source of relief. She adds, “I think [that] one of the reasons women don’t tell people when they’ve had a miscarriage [is] they think it’s their fault,” alluding to the pressure assigned to women via unrealistic cultural norms. Explicitly, although women’s reproductive capacity is demarcated as an indication of femininity, pregnancy is contradictorily seen as too animalistic to be feminine. Wong’s incorporation of pregnancy, miscarriage, and the scatological into her performance invites audiences to reconsider ordered definitions of who can speak, and about what. As an Asian-American woman telling poop jokes, Wong accosts the cultural script that she has been given, ultimately offering those who look like her an opportunity to do the same.

When initially presented with that idiom *he likes pretty Asian girls*, I was quick to dismiss it for lack of a substantive response. Lately, I have been ruminating on how I might counter the comment the next time it, or one of its formulaic variants, arises: perhaps by returning the sentiment in a reversal of gendered and racialized roles, performing assumptions about my inherent docility, or sharing my lot of opinions to the contrary. Alternatively, I might want to just lie down.

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