Reviews

Katrien Jacobs, *The Afterglow of Women's Pornography in Post-Digital China* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 204 pp. ISBN 978-1-349-50361-2 (paperback, $95), ISBN 978-1-137-48517-5 (hardback, $95).
Reviewed by **Ling Tang,** Hong Kong Baptist University

Pornography, especially pornography in China as it is vaguely defined, surveilled, and suppressed by the government, is not just about eroticism in a diverse form, but also about politics, democracy, feminism, and the awakening of the people. In the book *The Afterglow of Women's Pornography in Post-Digital China*, Katrien Jacobs "updates and shifts the analysis of booming sex cultures discussed in *People's Pornography*" (her previous book) (177). The word "afterglow," referring to the transitional period of enjoyable sensations and contemplation after sex, is used to describe "a state of crisis and decay within digital culture" (11). Echoing the term "post-digital," which rejects the uncritical celebration of digital information technology, the term "afterglow" accurately describes the ambivalence and comprehensiveness of erotica in the paradoxical digital media in China.

The five chapters respectively explain (1) how the diverse porn taste of women in China and Hong Kong (alongside the US and Japan) embodies the greater sociopolitical context; (2) how the Hong Kong ghost-scholar romance movies represent a melancholic phantom feminism, in which the empowerment of women can only be achieved in a post-human realm; (3) how the naked body, the most fragile platform for the strongest opinion and the optimal combination of indelicacy and sanctity, becomes an infectious way for scholars, artists, and regular netizens to shout their political and feminist claims under rigid censorship; (4) how the consuming and producing of sexually explicit homoerotic Boy's Love cultural products indicates a request for queer, feminist, and non-normative eroticism of Hong Kong and Chinese women; and (5) how the women in Hong Kong and China resist the state-formulated regulatory term "leftover women" by favoring non-procreative eroticism, migration, and, in the case of Hong Kong, pro-democracy activism.

The book includes intriguing arguments about the most understudied—yet important—topics in the realm of sexuality in China. For example, in Chapter 2

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Jacobs revisits the ghost-scholar romance movies of the 1980s and 1990s in Hong Kong, and argues that the feminist fulfillment of women's sexual sensations, as well as women's artistic and academic aspirations, can only be achieved in the form of a ghost. Jacobs uses the term "phantom feminism" to describe the phenomenon, but from a materialist approach this may not be "feminist" at all, since it clearly shows that women are entirely submissive and powerless in the "normal" realm. Similarly, in Chapter 4 Jacobs describes the very common plot in Boy's Love cultural products as the "art of failure" because of the way in which erotic power relations are the reverse of social status power relations. In other words, it refers to a socioeconomically powerful protagonist being emotionally and erotically submissive to a financially inferior lover. However, if viewed from another perspective, it could be understood as the cliché Cinderella story wrapped in queerness. Since most women readers still identify with *uke* (the passive character), the Boy's Love cultural products risk perpetuating patriarchy.

The author positions herself as a "wandering scholar," which refers to a person doing research on dispersed, drifting, and fragmented subjects from a non-centralized perspective, writing purposively without imposing clear boundaries, so as to contest diverse boundaries such as nationality, sexuality, and, undoubtedly, the definition of pornography. The book is in dialogue with not only the classic pro-sex feminist literature, but with the most up-to-date feminist literature as well, which is exemplified by such a work as *Leftover Women* by Leta Hong Fincher (2014).

However, Jacobs's writing style can, to some extent, be ambiguous and confusing for the reader. Some boundaries can only be erased after they are clearly defined. The most distinctive boundary that requires clear definition is the one between Hong Kong and China. If only more sociohistorical background information on the mainland–Hong Kong conflict could be provided, the testimonies of the Hong Kong women and the importance of the city's localness in terms of eroticism would be easier to comprehend, especially for readers that are not familiar with the politico-cultural context. Can mainland immigrant students represent the voice of Hong Kong? Similarly, the difference between gender-fluid and transgender needs to be discussed prior to referring to some of the cases like that of Xiao Meini—mentioned in Chapter 3—as transgender.

Overall, the book provides the most up-to-date and critical information about the politics of erotica in contemporary China and thus can be useful for anyone who wishes to learn about pornography, sexuality, and gender in China. The information it includes is highly heterogeneous, enchanting, and, most importantly, relatively unfamiliar to the academic, as well as to the general reader. Additionally, Jacobs has made some of the content—including a lot of visuals—available online[1] in order to make it more accessible to the netizens to whom it may be of interest.

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Note

[1] http://womenspornographyin-chinaandhongkong.rhcloud.com/.

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Fincher, Leta Hong. 2014. *Leftover Women: The Resurgence of Gender*. London: Zed.

Gilad Padva, *Queer Nostalgia in Cinema and Pop Culture* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014) viii + 254 pp. ISBN 978-1-349-44317-8 (paperback, $90), ISBN 978-1-137-26633-0 (hardback, $95).
Reviewed by **Jun Zubillaga-Pow,** Glasgow School of Art

My first question upon receiving this new monograph by the Israeli scholar Gilad Padva was this: how could bodies on screen or on stage trigger a bout of nostalgia? That is, for someone without the lived experience of the filmic characters, how does cinematic nostalgia translate or resonate? In his book, Padva contends that nostalgia can be evoked in the story lines of selected contemporary queer films and other visual materials, such as picture books, comic strips, and music videos. In the nine chapters that cover documentaries, musical films, and independent films, Padva charts specific moments of queer nostalgia related by the interviewees or characters therein. Their vivid retelling of past sexual awakenings evinces feelings of poignancy, as do particular objects such as Ken dolls and phallic toys. Other fond memories are rekindled by chance encounters, say, with an ethnic or generational other, or shared reminiscences among political and/or (trans)gender comrades.

Nostalgia, therefore, does not exist in the singular. Padva resolves this discursive multiplicity through his invention of several neologisms, which he arrives at by adding prefixes to the word "nostalgia": "femininostalgia," "negrostalgia," and "motionostalgia." By differentiating one form of affect from the other, Padva inevitably emphasizes the social demarcations of both bodies and experiences. He suggests that the narratives of recollection and fantasy afford the protagonists and corresponding viewers a glimpse into a nostalgic past. However, the argument that only effeminate people, black people, and victims of homophobia can represent the respective nostalgias defeats the *raison d'être* of queer solidarity. Surely, none of the filmmakers had intended their work to be watched around the world only by *those* specific demographic groups. The capacity for this visual material to transcend corporeal and cultural borders is precisely the

reason why nostalgia itself (or affect in general) does not discriminate. In this sense, it becomes essentialist to found yet another phenomenological taxonomy for nostalgia.

Nonetheless, students of bodies on screen would benefit tremendously from Padva's systematic interpretations and citations. In his exegesis of the dozen-odd filmic objects, we learn precisely what queer bodies are and what they do, how they are shaped and dressed, and how they behave and react. Padva's choice of discursive material, including his own woodcut collages, is also evenly spread out across the two decades between 1989 and 2011, although almost everything is made in the United States. Instead of analyzing the source material through what could potentially be "chronostalgia," Padva devotes most of the first five chapters to white male bodies on screens. The caricatures of nostalgia are represented by muscular, promiscuous, and/or effeminate men and boys. The biographical tropes of being black, lesbian, spiritual, and seropositive are discussed in the latter half of the book with two chapters focusing on the mythological nature of queer nostalgia.

Given the possibility to read each chapter as a stand-alone piece, an alternative approach of intersecting Padva's analyses obliquely across the chapters could germinate quite interesting questions. This includes how the films by Todd Haynes and Todd Stephens could be framed as "autoqueerography," or how the documentaries *Beefcake* and *Gay Sex in the 70s* espoused a "blancostalgia" or white nostalgia for gays of color fetishizing white bodies. There are nonetheless a couple of hermeneutic quibbles that I have with the book, the first being that Arte's *Summer of the Sixties* was produced for French and German audiences, so the author's claim that the creators omitted the significance of British decriminalization and the Stonewall riots in the video animation appears to be unfounded (29).

The second quibble is with Padva's attempts to queer Lady Gaga's visual extravaganzas. The men are homoeroticized as "handsome" in "Bad Romance" (179) and "gorgeous" but "effeminate" in "Alejandro" (189), whereas the women dancing in white tights in the former video are analogized with homophobic monstrosity (183–184). These allusions I find rather jarring. While his readings of the superstar performing the roles of a monster and a martyr are persuasive, I remain unconvinced that the meanings of the songs or artistic directions fit into any nostalgic queer framework. Instead, the aesthetics of strobe lighting and PVC fashion made the artwork look more futuristic than anything else.

One final but important quibble is the fact that Padva does not mention the distribution of these queer objects, which must not have been circulated that widely due to their niche viewership and controversial subject matter. Precisely because nostalgia is such an interpersonal and exclusive sentiment, the value of these emotive stimulants, akin to that of postcards and their limited rate of exchange, has declined over time. The recent impetus in gay acceptance and

gender diversity means that these cinematic and musical responses to erstwhile social maladjustments will one day become history. For now, however, Padva's original insights into the world of gay and lesbian bodies on screen ought to be read by all scholars of film studies, memory studies, and queer studies.

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Mary R. Desjardins, *Recycled Stars: Female Film Stardom in the Age of Television and Video.* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015), 320 pp. ISBN 978-0-82-235802-2 (paperback, $27), 978-0-8223-5789-6 (hardback, $95).
Reviewed by **Hans Rollman**, York University

> Where do screen stars go when they die?
> For that matter, where do they go when they get old?

The response to both these questions is more complicated—and conceptually richer—than one might imagine, and is the subject of a thoughtful study by American film and television studies professor Mary R. Desjardins. Her work explores the "recycling" of female film stars: a broad sweep encompassing the revitalization of aging stars' careers following their initial wave of stardom; their rebirth into other genres or forms of media; and their reconceptualization by other artists years later. Desjardins grounds her analysis in the twentieth century (and particularly the period between 1940 and 1990). The choice of time period is not incidental: the recycling of film stars is a social process that is not only grounded in culture but inflected by material and technological change. The evolving presentational styles of screen and image—from silent films to network television, from video recordings to computerized DVDs—present both possibilities for and constraints on the ways in which a society understands and engages with its screen-based cultural icons, and in which those icons are recycled to respond to the shifting needs of the present. It is this intersection of technology and the social which produces and reproduces the variable images of cultural icons as potent representations with gendered, class-based, racialized, and other sometimes hotly contested forms of meaning.

Recycled Stars consists of several intersecting case studies of female film stars, and it explores the multiple—sometimes contradictory—social meanings that are embedded in the ways in which their personas and identities

were initially presented and then recycled. Agents involved in this process do not merely include the media production companies that "found" the stars and brought them to the screen; fans, journalists, cultural commentators, and family members also played a profound role in the shifting images and presentations of these stars. This is rendered potently apparent in the study of Gloria Swanson, which opens the book. Her transition—shifting from an early film career to hosting her own television program and then going back and forth between film and television—demonstrates the differences between these emerging forms of media and the ways in which these differences were powerfully gendered and motivated by other social markers and normative identity standards. The way in which women dressed and comported themselves; the way in which they engaged with and responded to guests on screen; and the information they divulged about their lives and daily activities all marked new terrain for a society that had never experienced such a close and personal relationship with its icons. As much as this new relationship created pressures for the stars, however, it also opened possibilities for them: Swanson's deliberate manipulation of her star biography (highlighting her accomplishments as a businesswoman and even inventor) and the way in which she deliberately engaged with cultural tropes about aging stars in her role in the film *Sunset Boulevard* demonstrate both the malleability of evolving cultural standards for aging stars and the agency that those stars could themselves bring to bear on social norms.

Subsequent chapters explore other dimensions of star generation and regeneration—of how the cultural presence and significance of stars was made and then remade in the wake of their aging and death—and the varying levels of agency which stars had in this process. Desjardins explores the role of gossip magazines and moral biographies—especially as vehicles for imposing normative gender codes on women—in a study of Maureen O'Hara; she also explores the complexity of media marketing and promotion and its intersection with normative mid-twentieth-century family values in a fascinating chapter on the star couple of Lucille Ball and Desi Arnaz. Other stars and their contributions to the multiple meanings and iterations of star recycling are also explored throughout the book.

The broad sweep of the study emerges most fully and creatively in its final chapter, however, when Desjardins examines a series of experimental films. This chapter underscores Desjardins's interest in the creative potential of star recycling. The experimental films (and their producers) are largely unknown: *Meeting Two Queens* (a found footage film putting Marlene Dietrich and Greta Garbo in silent conversation with each other); *Rock Hudson's Home Movies* (another found footage film focusing on that actor and his body's/identity's complicated role in a shifting cultural imaginary), *Superstar* (a film using Barbie dolls to portray the life and tragic death of Karen Carpenter), and others all demonstrate the experimental and theoretical potential of using differing and

innovative forms of media to offer new and potent interventions which provoke a rethinking of the cultural valence of a star's life (and death). Juxtaposing the made-for-TV movie *The Karen Carpenter Story*—with its deliberate downplaying of the singer's anorexia—with *Superstar,* in which Barbie dolls and intertitles provoke a more conscious awareness of the body, demonstrates the possibilities that new and emerging forms of technology offer. It's useful that Desjardins gives space to now obsolete technological moments. Extensive consideration of interactive DVDs, Internet websites, video recordings, and other technologies now long surpassed might at first appear redundant, yet they offer a useful lesson in the innovative and creative ways in which technological forms are used to give meaning and presence to star icons and the shifting cultural values represented by stars' constant recycling through new, experimental, and ultimately ephemeral means.

What does the future hold? Desjardins's work is a theoretically dense, conceptually rewarding exploratory survey of the different forms and meanings that star recyclings have involved throughout the twentieth century. But it does not reveal any overarching trajectory or theoretical paradigm. Perhaps, indeed, the sheer instability and unpredictability of the fusion of technological innovation, marketing strategy, and sociocultural norms which cycle and recycle star identity renders broader systemic understandings moot. But Desjardins's epilogue provokes exciting if unanswered questions about what the current proliferation of media means for star recycling. Twentieth-century star recycling, she notes, depended in many ways on a shared social imaginary and a universally recognized cast of cultural icons: today's media terrain is so much denser, with icons and trends that transform themselves so much more quickly, that star recycling will undoubtedly adopt new and unpredictable forms. Yet there is much to learn from these early days of television and video, and Desjardins offers an exhaustive and rewarding demonstration of just how valuable this sort of rigorous historical analysis of the engagement between screens and bodies can be.

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Shaka McGlotten, *Virtual Intimacies: Media, Affect, and Queer Sociality* (New York: SUNY Press, 2014), viii + 170 pp. ISBN 978-1-4384-4878-7 (paperback, $26), 978-1-4384-4877-0 (hardback, $75).
Reviewed by **Amber Jamilla Musser,** Washington University in St. Louis

Virtual Intimacies: Media, Affect, and Queer Sociality shakes up the conversation around virtuality by veering away from staking a claim about its utopian or dystopian possibilities to argue that intimacy itself is virtual. In making this argument, McGlotten brings affect theory to bear on the proliferation of screens in modern life to show that what we imagine is new and different is really much of the same. Intimacy, as McGlotten theorizes it, is about feeling "a *feeling* of connection or a *sense* of belonging" (1). This affective space is tethered to reality, but also exceeds it in intangible ways. Intimacy is, therefore, a capacity, which is to say it produces the conditions of possibility for people to experience a range of emotions from anxiety, paranoia, and loss to optimism and belonging. There are no good or bad technological objects, only multiple affective sites ripe for an analysis of how people—mainly, but not exclusively gay men—understand their relationships to others, the world at large, and technology.

McGlotten offers several levels of analysis in his theorization of intimacy as affect. At the macro-level, he explores the wide-scale panics that arise around the specter of the Child and the fear of predation or exploitation via webcams or chat rooms. In these discussions, McGlotten argues that the outcries that accompany public sex stings or the exposure of child pornography rings understand these events as aberrations, albeit frequent, of the norms of intimacy, and, as spectacular "aberrations," they confirm the rationale for panic and the importance of reinforcing particular moralized norms of monogamy and privacy. The reverence of the neoliberal logic that privileges monogamy, privacy, and the Child, what is now deeply familiar through the works of Lauren Berlant and Lee Edelman. At the micro-level, *Virtual Intimacies* explores the individual tactics of technological manipulation—DIY pornography and the guilds of *World of Warcraft*—for reading against the grain that enable people to create unexpected communities and modes of belonging. These tactics are deeply resonant with the strategies of disidentification discussed by Jose Muñoz and Jack Halberstam's work on queer subcultures. Virtuality, then, produces the occasion for elaborating critique and possibility in ways that are familiar given the work of the aforementioned queer theorists; yet McGlotten's insistence on using the frame of the virtual allows us to dwell on the fact that, while the screen does not necessarily introduce a new bogeyman or radicality onto the scene, virtuality enables us to focus on the emotional stakes of these discourses on intimacy.

The book's first chapter, "The Virtual Life of Sex in Public," lays the groundwork for the inseparability of virtuality from actuality by showing the ways that a rhetoric around virtuality has become collapsed into a fear of and

pathologization of public sex. Rather than stick with the familiar "To Catch a Predator" narrative, which does make a brief appearance, McGlotten brings together ethnographic narratives from gay men, many of whom dwell on public sex as an aberrant form of intimacy, equating it with loss because of its historical relationship to the loss of community members through HIV/AIDS, and his readings of the public appetite for congressional gay sex scandals as part of a larger narrative of hypocrisy. In addition to exploring the way intimacy can work as a discourse of normalization and spectacularization, this chapter lays the groundwork for establishing intimacy's place in the affective. The rest of the chapters offer case studies in theorizing intimacy and affect. The second chapter, "Intimacies in the Multi(player)verse," explores the potentials of intimacy through an exploration of *World of Warcraft*. McGlotten describes the different types of communities that have sprung up around the game—both those that meet in person and those that meet up in the multiverse—while also exploring the relationship between narratives of gaming, isolation, and addiction. The third chapter, "Feeling Black and Blue," offers an unflinching look at how black gay men navigate online dating through an analysis of profile-crafting strategies. Much of this chapter focuses on the much-mentioned racism of online dating and feelings of paranoia and sadness that accompany these undesirable interactions for the black men involved. Yet, McGlotten also shows the optimism that attends this platform as new profiles are always waiting to be created and racially charged interactions can always go in a different direction. The fourth chapter, "Justin Fucks the Future," expands on the power of the discourse of the Child by doing a close reading of the scandals that surrounded Justin Berry, a teenager who ran an online camera circuit featuring teenagers engaged in various sexual acts and who was outed and then attempted redemption as an expert in keeping children safe. McGlotten unpacks the various layers of the story, which involve scandals for the journalist, Berry's father, and Berry himself, in order to show the different ways that the fear of contaminating the Child spread and the inability of avoiding that taint. The last chapter, "The Élan Vital of DIY Porn," explores the other side of webcam possibilities and the sexual by showing the robust community that has sprung up around DIY pornography and the ways that this community subverts many of the norms of the pornography of bodily perfection and on-camera orgasm while dwelling on the variety of people participating in these communities and the wide spectrum of acts—some mundane and not conventionally sexual—that they perform. The coda, "On Not Hooking Up," revels in this pattern of reading against the grain by highlighting the skewering of racist Grindr profiles as another mode of community formation.

Though McGlotten is clear that he has limited the scope of his ethnographic research to gay men (and this is reflected in some of the particularities that he describes), his analysis of intimacy as capacity illustrates that intimacy is not a

thing that one strives for or recoils from, but rather it is something that we can only understand as a complex set of affective relationships. What we learn from *Virtual Intimacies* is that we are always in the space of negotiating the weight of the norm and the possibilities of the individual at once—the technologies of the virtual simply magnify these complex choreographies of belonging, prohibition, and desire.

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Marc Raymond Strauss. *Hitchcock's Objects as Subjects: The Significance of Things on Screen*. (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2016), 204 pp. ISBN 978-0-7864-4308-6 (paperback, $35).
Reviewed by **Shannon Scott,** University of St. Thomas

Hats. Keys. Champagne glasses. Scissors. Telephones. Shower curtains. Mirrors. Stuffed birds and live ones. Marc Raymond Strauss's *Hitchcock's Objects as Subjects* examines the significance of objects in each of Hitchcock's fifty-two extant films. These objects, imbued with meaning, are "treated as subjects, equal protagonists to the human actors" (1). Strauss convincingly illustrates how Hitchcock's objects, which are placed with intentionality in each frame, result in calculated emotional reactions from viewers. Strauss, the author of *Alfred Hitchcock's Silent Films* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2004) and *Hitchcock Nonetheless: The Master's Touch in his Least Celebrated Films* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2007), knows his material well enough to write with a playful touch, judiciously adding opinion and humor much like the "Master of Suspense" himself, who was also fond of inside jokes, MacGuffins, and *double entendre*.

Although Strauss's text moves chronologically through Hitchcock's oeuvre, from *The Pleasure Garden* (1925) to *Family Plot* (1976), it could also be organized around objects that occur repeatedly in Hitchcock films—the significance shifting depending on theme and tone. The objectification of human bodies is accomplished by "zeroing in, usually via close ups and, more often, with extreme close ups on body parts, not the whole body" (10). Strauss highlights this most persuasively in *Strangers on a Train* (1951), where legs and shoes are featured in the opening sequence. François Truffaut (1983: 195) notes that the "accidental collision of the two men's feet is the point of departure for the whole relationship, and the concept is sustained by deliberately refraining from showing their faces up to that point." Similarly, the hands of Bruno Anthony (Robert Walker)—receiving a manicure from his mother, hitting a high striker at a carnival, flexing with ominous strength—come to represent the whole of

his murderous personality, eventually leading to the strangulation of Miriam Haines (Kasey Rogers).

The tendency to objectify women is a theme explored by the director in his early films, and it continues throughout his career. In *The Pleasure Garden*, a patron lusts after the "kiss curl" of a chorus girl, and is subsequently deflated when she detaches it from her head and hands it to him—the falseness of the object mirroring the shallowness of the patron's affection. In addition, heroines who are treated as objects often make the journey to subjectivity in Hitchcock's films. For example, in *Notorious* (1946), Alicia Huberman (Ingrid Bergman) is purposefully posed by a statue of Queen Nefertiti, as she is bejeweled for her first dinner with Alexander Sebastian (Claude Rains). For Alicia, the goal is to make Devlin (Cary Grant) acknowledge her personhood, a process that nearly results in her demise via poisoning. In *Marnie* (1964), Marnie's (Tippi Hedren) ultimate purpose is to discover her own subjectivity, from the first mirror shot to her final confrontation with her mother. Finally, in *Lifeboat* (1944), Connie (Tallulah Bankhead) must lose all her earthly objects to the sea in order to achieve subjectivity.

Hitchcock also uses humans as objects when he films crowds—the camera shooting masses of bodies in a way that makes the viewer feel "trapped in the mob" (18). In *The Lodger* (1927), there is a distinct sense of disorientation as bodies crush together, displaying a lack of individuality. Strauss investigates the mindlessness and danger of mobs most poignantly in his study of *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (1934), where he meticulously breaks down a crowd sequence shot by shot. Human subjects can also be dehumanized by landscape, which occurs dramatically in *North by Northwest* (1959) not simply with the exterior backdrop of Mount Rushmore, but in the filming of the Mount Rushmore cafeteria, where "even an object as simple as a table seems to upstage people in the film," making them appear small and their problems insignificant (163).

Correspondingly, homes set the emotional tone in a Hitchcock film. Both the interior and exterior of Manderley in *Rebecca* (1940) reveal the subjective nature of the mansion. In interviews with both Truffaut and Peter Bogdanovitch, Hitchcock claimed that "the house is one of the three key characters in *Rebecca*" (88). Furthermore, the significance of small and large objects—from towering arches to delicate flower vases, from grand staircases to antique chairs—all menace the new Mrs. De Winter (Joan Fontaine) by either crowding or diminishing her. Hitchcock frequently uses domestic objects as a means to illuminate and conceal. Portraits, often linked with the presence of the deceased, are a prominent feature in Hitchcock's films. The ghost of the first Mrs. De Winter haunts the screen in her imperious portrait, as does that of Carlotta Valdes in *Vertigo* (1958). Portraits can also express objectification, as in *Easy Virtue* (1927) where Larita Filton (Isabel Jeans) becomes a piece of art, posing for a

portrait, her passage from *objet d'art* to personhood prefiguring or echoing that of other Hitchcock heroines.

According to Strauss, "money as an object is *never* the key to subjective happiness in any Hitchcock film" (49). Jewelry is frequently representative of money, or a visual stand-in for the emptiness of materialistic desire such as the coiled snake bracelet in *The Ring* (1927) or the diamonds around Francie's (Grace Kelly) slender neck in *To Catch a Thief* (1955). The trope of gluttony or conspicuous consumption is manifested through objects as well, specifically food. In *The Farmer's Wife* (1928), a table is overcrowded with a feast, including a "riotous shaking of the Jell-O," adding more complications to an already doomed marriage proposal (37). Food shows the indulgent and pampered life (along with sexual appetites) of Iris (Margaret Lockwood) in *The Lady Vanishes* (1938). Hamburger grease besmears important documents in *Topaz* (1969), and potatoes interconnect repulsively with corpses in *Frenzy* (1972). In *Hitchcock à la Carte*, Jan Olsson (2015) further explores Hitchcock's use of food and bodies in his television series, again demonstrating the latter's "gastronomical proclivities."

Strauss's *Hitchcock's Objects as Subjects* will prove a valuable resource for those researching Hitchcock's canon, with particular emphasis on *mise-en-scène* details. By drawing on the work of other scholars, such as Murray Pomerance (2004) and Robert J. Yanal (2005), Strauss adds his voice to current scholarship on material culture, or "thing theory," frequently focusing on humans as objects. In the introduction, Strauss poses the question, "Are they [human beings on screen] not, after all, merely two-dimensional images of people, and not the people themselves?" (6). While actors become objects made up of smaller objects, like hands and feet and eyes and ears, adorned by more objects, such as eyeglasses symbolic of intelligence, vulnerability, and a desire to discover the truth, Strauss's keen eye for concrete detail keeps the meta on a relatively earthly/earthy, if cerebral, level, creating an intelligent and eye-opening meditation on Hitchcock's objects.

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Amalia Ziv, *Explicit Utopias: Rewriting The Sexual in Women's Pornography*. (Albany: SUNY Press, 2015). 312 pp. ISBN 978-1-4384-5708-6 (paperback, $25), 978-1-4384-5709-3 (hardback, $85).
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Since the 1970s, the fight to claim female sexual subjectivity has been intimately tied to debates about pornography. Anti-porn feminists have suggested that the misogyny inherent in mainstream pornography promotes rape and sexism and that it should be stopped at all costs—and through government intervention when necessary. Pro-sex feminists have suggested that such a view amounts to sexual puritanism and promotes censorship, and that consensual sexual expression in all forms should be a protected right. This schism within the feminist movement sparked by the "feminist sex wars" generated ongoing questions regarding the impact of sexually explicit media, one of which was: does the female sexuality represented in pornography promote subjugation and objectification regardless of authorial intent, or can pornography challenge and subvert patriarchal narratives? Amalia Ziv's book *Explicit Utopias: Rewriting The Sexual in Women's Pornography* charts this discourse to date and breaks new theoretical ground in the project to affirm female sexual subjectivity.

Ziv begins by problematizing the idea of "pornography" as a monolithic genre, citing the differences between mainstream and alternative pornography and proposing that pornography has been defined historically by attempts at

regulation instead of by its own attributes. Ziv then recaps the feminist sex wars of the 1970s and 1980s, laying out Catharine MacKinnon and Andrea Dworkin's foundational arguments against pornography as well as anti–anti-porn arguments from Gayle Rubin and Pat Califia. The author's position falls firmly in the latter camp, and Ziv emphasizes the medium's unique ability to re-envision and reconstitute desire and sexual representation for women and queer people. Mirroring her search for female subjectivity by way of alternative pornography, Ziv chooses an alternative method of inquiry too, weighting literary pornography over visual pornography in her analysis. In her discussion of pornographic films, Ziv delves into the hermeneutics of the dildo in lesbian pornography as well as the orgasmic representation in Annie Sprinkle's work as sites where autonomous, transgressive desire can play itself out. She relies more on close readings of lesbian and queer erotic fiction to negotiate identity politics through the erotic, however, and suggests that literary fiction is easier to create and is arguably free from (most) questions regarding the ethics of production, so it can traverse the realms of fantasy and reality more freely.

Ziv examines works by Anne Rice (under the pen name A. N. Roquelaure), Pat Califia, Catherine Tavel, Giselle Renarde, and others to find out how the authors express female sexual subjectivity through tactics such as s/m sex and cross-identification with gay male subjectivity via performed and embodied masculinity. In s/m, roles of dominant and submissive or penetrator and receptor are not grounded in gender, making it an ideal space for women to phantasmatically take up the subject position, regardless of the position they take in play. And in s/m sex, the meanings of the words "dominant" and "submissive" do not correlate to power differentials outside of play. Power does not reside solely in the person dominating or penetrating—in fact, the submissive, receptive party often holds the most power, which is exemplified by the "power bottom" in gay male sexual culture. Ziv explains that when women identify with gay male sexuality, it "gives scope to aggressive, penetrative, or sadistic desires in women, desires that lesbian feminism denounced as masculine and patriarchal" (93). She highlights the importance of performance and parody, which helps break down categories of male/female, masculine/feminine, gay/straight, and penetrative/receptive in the above-mentioned play. This process of categorical slippage is arguably more possible when imagined by the reader of a pornographic text than when viewed by the watcher of a pornographic film. But at the same time, there is more at stake when transgressive sex is played out on screen by willing bodies for a complicit voyeur.

Although Ziv does offer viable alternatives for situating female sexual subjectivity, she is equally concerned with the limitations of pinning down the slippery subject position. By providing a multiplicity of theoretical access points via Sigmund Freud, Jacques Lacan, Leo Bersani, and Judith Butler, she both confirms and counters the strategies she outlines, offering nearly as many counterpoints

as she does points. It is this reflexive ability that is most impressive about Ziv's arguments. There is a masterful quality to any text that can serve both as an introductory and advanced take on a subject, which *Explicit Utopias* does. Ziv's Works Cited reads as a master list of publications that make up the core of sex-positive feminist and porn-studies discourses, but instead of merely covering the content that has come before she does so while updating it with her own unique take on sex, subjectivity, s/m, porn, and play. As such, the text joins similar publications such as *The Feminist Porn Book: The Politics of Producing Pleasure* as suited equally for both gender studies surveys and film studies courses of any level.

By the end of *Explicit Utopias*, we are slightly closer to the author's initial goal of situating female sexual subjectivity, but female sexual subjectivity as tied to cisgender female bodies and heterosexual femininity remains more obscured. What becomes clear is that the historical fusing of the gay and lesbian communities under the contemporary queer identity umbrella is the greatest boon to female sexual subjectivity to date, allowing for the destabilization of sexual and gendered boundaries as evidenced by the queer porn of today. Ziv admits that it is unlikely that the questions first raised by the feminist sex wars will ever be settled, but the "proliferation of phantasmatic reinscriptions" (232) that the author adroitly puts forth in *Explicit Utopias* might one day render those unanswered questions merely antiquated attempts at understanding the complexity of the female sexual experience under patriarchy.

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