(2009) that "poses the most important questions we must now face" (211) come to hold an importance similar to that of Yasujiro Ozu's compassionate films about Japan's post-World War II proletarianization. In Andersen's estimation, Ozu's greatness lies partly in how he altogether avoids subjective or psychological renderings of people; instead, "what counts is the objective situation of his characters, the material conditions in which they make their lives" (251).

The author's leftist political leanings quickly become clear, as do his sympathies for working-class people and art that represents their struggles. Yet Andersen's graceful prose, while remaining didactic, never loses itself in ideological jargon. He is a clear-eyed polemicist who makes his points bluntly, as when commenting in 1986 about actor-President Ronald Reagan: "People like him because he makes them feel good about their anger" (94).

In transitions providing historical analysis, as when describing a turn toward comedy in the plots of 1960s American sex films, he lodges perceptive points: "And so as it has happened so often before in the history of commercial movies, a restriction imposed by the requirements of censorship had a profound impact on the content of the medium" (30). At other times, his synthesizing statements arrive by epiphanic grace, as the act of regarding a film leads to an encounter with the ineffable. This happens when Andersen confesses to not understanding why he values a film as he does, or why he is so captivated by human figures within it. A discussion of Warhol's *Camp* (1965), for instance, details the misfit performers' strenuous efforts to appear like stars before the camera, then concludes, "The indivisible other side of objectivity is faith" (46). He possesses the poet's gift for merging description with synthesis.

Implicit in many of his statements is the figure of the writer as viewer. "The peculiar position of the spectator at the movies is a matter any film theorist must grapple with" (132), claims Andersen in 2005 when reviewing a book by David Thomson. Those who have watched Andersen's Deleuze-inflected personal film history *The Thoughts That Once We Had* (2015) will know that he positions himself within his work, without hypocrisy, as a spectator detailing reactions to what he has seen and learned. *Slow Writing* serves as the autobiography of a person who has continually regarded his self-appointed role of cultural historian with great seriousness.

This restless figure, possessed of a "militant nostalgia" (234), seeks to show how "Something better is possible" (24) in cinema, that the medium can reclaim its previous potential. Why Andersen's preferred art is cinema, rather than architecture, music, and visual art (additional subjects of his interest), has to do with how the medium contains them all—plus a mirror for any socially conscious being's self-study.

Even if he is a slow writer, Andersen is also a spry thinker who works to formulate new thoughts from piece to piece. This reviewer caught him repeating himself only a few times, with one instance being a reference to the characters of Floyd Mutrux's docu-fictional study of young drug users in Los Angeles, *Dusty and Sweets McGee* (1971), immediately memorable people who are "stuck in the daily ruts we all face, only more so" (172, 207).

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## ALMUDENA ESCOBAR LÓPEZ

### ***Immediations: The Humanitarian Impulse in Documentary*** **by Pooja Rangan**

Pooja Rangan begins her provocative new book with an open question: "What does endangered life do for documentary?" (1). Do the voiceless need the documentary to have a voice? Or does the documentary need the voiceless to exist? Rangan's critique shifts the fundamental emphasis from the object to the subject. How, she asks, is subjectivity involved in the production of knowledge? What are the interrelations between viewers, makers, and their subjects? Rangan challenges the sense of urgency implicit in humanitarian documentary by turning to questions of representation. She thus resituates documentary subjects at the center of her analysis, demonstrating how the practice of othering has been displaced from indigenous cultures to the nonhuman and those who are in a social position of vulnerability (6).

Analyzing by turns the particular case of children, the televisual first-person live reporting of victims, the voiceover narration to articulate nonverbal autism, and the personification of animals that supposedly represent themselves through self-portraiture, *Immediations* offers a model for understanding the forms developed in humanitarian documentary. What Rangan means by her chosen term, employed in the title and throughout the book, are the aesthetic choices of humanitarian documentary practices that visually define the disenfranchised as "other." By unveiling the internal mechanisms of these "immediations," Rangan successfully dismantles an otherwise anachronistic system of codification, opening up a new critical space

in which humanitarian subjects can resist the selfhood molds imposed by participatory documentary modes.

Through her close analysis of four particular examples, Rangan traces the effects of the "humanitarian impulse" as a means of revealing political and aesthetic consequences. Her first chapter focuses on *Born into Brothels* (Zana Briski and Ross Kauffman, 2004), a film that documents the aid project Kids with Cameras, which was developed by codirector Zana Briski, a British photojournalist, to teach photography to the children of an Indian brothel as a tool to improve their precarious lives. Rangan rejects the idea of "feral innocence" (39), which understands children as subjects in limbo, outside mediation and political economy. Instead, she demonstrates how photographic practice in this case is a refined capitalized mode of child labor developed under neoliberal models. Her critique aligns itself with the criticism leveled against the film by local organizations—that is, accusations of child exploitation and a condemnation of its ignoring local efforts to develop educational programs for sex workers and their children.

Next Rangan explores "bare liveness" as a form of immediation (82–93), tracing how home reporters play a decisive part in proving information more authentic by making public the vulnerability of their body and putting their lives on the line. Rangan analyzes *Trouble in the Water* (Tia Lessin and Carl Deal, 2008), focusing on the work of Kimberly Rivers Roberts in filming herself and her neighbors during Hurricane Katrina in Louisiana. Rangan unpacks how the staged liveness of the news anchor mediates the speech of the dispossessed, treating their reporting as "immaterial communicative labor" (97). The commodification of their individual subjectivity flattens the complexity of cultural performance, reducing it to a matter of truthfulness and authenticity. By situating subjectivity at the center of her analysis, Rangan further utilizes the concept of "bare liveness" to rethink the role of individual self-reporting as a neoliberal tool used to project authenticity and the illusion of transparency. In other words, this chapter demonstrates how "immaterial communicative labor" serves the single totalizing point of view given by mainstream media.

Rangan then shifts her attention to representations of disability as a means of understanding how the dominant practice of voiceover forecloses the possibility of communication that doesn't include normative language. Rangan criticizes the primacy of human discourse, contemplating the possibility of new modes of being in the world. She compares the logocentric treatment of autism in *Autism Is a World* (Sue Rubin, 2004) and the counter-discourse developed in *In My Language* (Amanda Baggs, 2007), which describes the experience of living as a person with autism. Bagg's film "shows how the modes of relationality implied by grammatical personhood and articulate speech forcibly mediate hir [*sic*] access to political recognition" (121). Baggs prioritizes sensorial information instead of separating the body from the environment through the abstracting process of language. In this sense, Rangan compares Baggs's approach to Trinh T. Minh-ha's strategy of "speaking nearby" to challenge the totalizing visions of ethnographic documentary (123) and to envision a communion between the materiality of the voice and the body.

Rangan devotes the final chapter of *Immediations* to animals. Here she takes as her starting point the YouTube video *Original Elephant Painting* (2008), in which an elephant paints what seems to be a self-portrait. For Rangan, animal personification is another example of immaterial humanitarian labor, comparable to children's cultural labor or the immaterial communicative labor in "bare liveness." If the other chapters argue that the gesture of giving the camera to the "other" stakes a claim on its own humanity, this chapter discusses political and formal reflexivity in documentary (155). In this case, the self-reflective act of the portrait not only humanizes the animal but also defines the very concept of human. It is here that Rangan delivers the book's most compelling insight—namely, that humanitarian reflexive ethics can be countered by ethics of opacity and mimetic modes of inhabitation (157). In this sense, the acceptance of difference instead of the desire to master it becomes a core strategy.

Rangan offers a sharp critique of how humanitarian efforts have become responsible for the reproduction of aesthetic codes that privilege intervention as a model of execution. As an alternative, she proposes a noninterventionist model that allows new modes of relationality whereby difference is welcomed and accepted instead of mitigated. For Rangan, participation becomes a rethinking of the relationship of the self to the other, and an acceptance of the possibility of different approaches to the world. Her aim, as she puts it early on in her study, is "to cultivate an attunement to the contradictions that emerge from the liberating encounter with difference before they are smoothed over by the ideological glue of humanism" (9).

By combining feminism, anthropology, and media studies, Rangan's analysis of the humanitarian impulse in documentary continues the multidisciplinary work on the documentary tradition by critics and theorists like Trinh and Fatimah Tobing Rony (5). The "mechanical eye" as described by Trinh creates a determinate way of looking, conditioning the structure of the material, and defining what is being watched within predetermined aesthetic structures. By tracing the origins of the documentary impulse and its relation to immediacy, Rangan persuasively demonstrates that the viewer, although ignored as a producer of visual structures by traditional documentary

studies, is in fact essential to understanding not only humanitarian documentary, but perhaps documentary as a whole.

*Immediations* is successful in its recuperation and expansion of the process of othering, as it generates new questions regarding how the exhibition spaces and networks of circulation of these immediations influence both the reception of the materials themselves and the kind of spectatorship they produce. Further, the concept of immediation could be expansively related to vulnerability within other kinds of documentary, where the power structures between maker and subject are at stake. Taken as a whole, *Immediations* marks an important contribution to documentary and anthropology studies, making exemplary use of multidisciplinary research to explore more deeply the human power structures and their relationship to the politics of representation.

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## MARC FRANCIS

### *Lewd Looks: American Sexploitation Cinema in the 1960s* by Elena Gorfinkel

Elena Gorfinkel's *Lewd Looks*, which historicizes the heyday of sexploitation in the United States between 1959 and 1972, arrived on my doorstep the same week I began watching David Simon's new HBO show *The Deuce*. This fortuitous convergence prompted a reflection on the cultural need to explain how pornography became mainstream and how the current "pornotopia" streaming 24/7 online may be emblematic of its exponential growth. *The Deuce* opens in 1971 Times Square, on the threshold of the hardcore pornography boom, and ends with the New York City theatrical premiere of *Deep Throat* (1972). Likewise, *Lewd Looks* tracks softcore pornography throughout the entire decade leading up to *Deep Throat*. But while *The Deuce* plays to viewers' anticipation of "the good stuff," *Lewd Looks* allows readers to savor a moment when trashy movie theaters were teeming with films full of bizarre plot twists, unthinkable kinks, and unending spectatorial teasing.

Gorfinkel's book takes its place on the shelf alongside Eric Schaefer's *"Bold! Daring! Shocking! True!": A History of Exploitation Films, 1919–1959* (1999) and Linda Williams's *Screening Sex* (2008), both of which deal with the problems that would ensue legally, socially, and politically as softcore pornography became an increasingly public form of visual pleasure. *Lewd Looks* does not so much disrupt this flow of scholarship as it does expand upon it, giving sexploitation its necessary due. It picks up historically where Schaefer leaves off, but by carving out a cross section of the larger exploitation genre, and revisiting some of the terrain covered by Williams, it investigates more specifically what Gorfinkel regards as a "belated form, about to expire and about to begin . . . caught between different regimes of representation and between a wary circumspection about social and sexual change and a capitalization of its profit-making potentials" (26).

All of the era's auteurs are present: Joe Sarno, Russ Meyer, Doris Wishman, and Radley Metzger, among others. Meyer and Metzger especially become representative of the kinds of border wars that ensued between censorship and free speech, obscenity and suggestion, trash tastes and arthouse sensibilities. As these directors' films grew in popularity, their distribution expanded, leading to numerous local legal struggles involving anxious parents and paranoid courts. In dialectical fashion, as comedy and pornography, as artistic and prurient, these films—especially *Lorna* (Russ Meyer, 1964), *The Dirty Girls* (Radley Metzger, 1965), and later *Carmen, Baby* (Radley Metzger, 1967) and *Vixen* (Russ Meyer, 1968)—would eventually push the nation's highly repressed and puritanical culture in the direction of an unwitting embrace of, or at the least a begrudged acquiescence to, hypervisible sex.

Gorfinkel effortlessly navigates a range of disciplines and reading practices. For instance, in the first chapter, the reader is given a detailed legal history of sexploitation films of the 1960s. Rather than just surveying court cases that would at first restrict sex films and then finally liberate them by the early 1970s, Gorfinkel combines this history with a granular textual analysis, revealing the ways in which sexploitation's entire ontology depended on restraint and concealment as much as on salacious content. Gorfinkel astutely observes that softcore producers were "caught in a rhetorical double bind, dependent on censorship for their business yet on the brink of losing it should content restrictions . . . relax enough to eclipse their specific generic trademark of leering sexuality and suggestive omission" (90). This predicament results in a kind of self-conscious flirtation with viewers.

*Lewd Looks* expects its readers to have at least some knowledge of sexploitation's prehistory. While "nudie cuties" get ample attention, stag films, the rise of *Playboy*, underground fetish films, and adult video arcades get only periodic reference. The absence of the peepshow is especially glaring given sexploitation's "elliptical" form, encouraging in its spectator a "look but don't touch" awareness. This omission is not