



Review of Peter Lehman (Ed.), *Pornography: Film and Culture* (New Brunswick, NJ and London, Rutgers University Press, 2006), viii + 272 pp.

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Peter Lehman's *Pornography: Film and Culture* is an edited collection of essays both new and old. Given his background in examinations of the representation of the penis in a wide variety of discourses and arts, it is probably particularly apt that he has edited such a book. After his introduction ("'A Dirty Little Secret' – Why Teach and Study Pornography?"), which makes an impassioned defense of the teaching and scholarly understanding of porn, the book is divided into two parts. The first section reprints classic essays by the likes of Lehman, Linda Williams, John Ellis, Paul Willemen, Constance Penley, and Laura Kipnis. The second segment, on the other hand, presents new essays that consider current trends in the field, such as pornography's expansion into new technologies (Chuck Kleinhans), male-male desire in *Penthouse Letters* (Henry Jenkins), sex and the law (Marjorie Heins), comedy and porn (Nina K. Martin), porn and racism (Daniel Bernardi), Asian porn (José B. Capino), and what men see when they watch porn (Marty Klein).

Some of the essays are both entertaining and informative. I particularly enjoyed the discussions of Martin, Bernardi, Capino, and Klein. In her chapter ("Never Laugh at a Man with His Pants Down: The Affective Dynamics of Comedy and Porn"), Martin delves into the relationship between porn and comedy, particularly during its golden age of the 1970s and 1980s. At this point in porn's history, she argues, films like *The Opening of Misty Beethoven* (1972) contained genuinely funny and well-written dialogue. Martin notes, however, that since the advent of home video and the change in where and why people consume porn, the comedic features of the genre have declined and are now reduced to amusing title parodies such as *Lawrence of a Labia*. Marty Klein ("Pornography: What Men See When They Watch") develops some interesting ideas in his chapter about the democratic sexual possibilities of porn. Under the subheading of "Pornography's Truths as Subversive," he argues that porn's "subtexts of abundance and validation" are possible avenues of contemporary cultural resistance (p. 253) which attract political opposition and resistance from the mainstream culture because "the revolutionary implications of empowering people sexually challenge the cultural status quo" (p. 254). Bernardi ("Interracial Joysticks: Pornography's Web of Racist Attractions") and Capino ("Asian College Girls and Oriental Men with Bamboo Poles: Reading Asian Pornography") both examine the racial dynamics of porn but from different perspectives. While Capino focuses on the representation of Asians in porn, Bernardi takes a wider remit and looks at the coding of all (identifiable) races. It is here that I found some unconvincing statements

regarding the representation of African Americans in porn. Bernardi (presumably approvingly) quotes Alice Walker: "In pornography, the black man is portrayed as being capable of fucking anything...even a piece of shit. He is defined solely by the size, readiness and unselectivity of his cock" (p. 328). While I don't dispute this argument, I do query its sole application to blacks; surely, in porn, especially in light of its polymorphous proliferation of subgenres, this applies to all men in heterosexual porn irrespective of their race and ethnicity?

Unfortunately, issues of religion and spirituality in relation to men are not explicitly fore-grounded within this text. Indeed, this is an area which the book, and other scholars, would do well to address. Many of those involved in pornography, on both sides of the camera, belong to faith groups such as Catholicism and Judaism, and the relationship (if any) between religion and porn would be a productive area to explore. The question could be asked of "how does porn consumption and/or production relate to matters of spirituality?" Furthermore, the book is almost completely devoted to audio-visual porn in an American context so the book might be a disappointment to those interested in other forms (print, aural, etc.), in non-straight-porn, and in other countries (particularly Europe).

Nonetheless, these criticisms aside, it was particularly invigorating to read analyses that broke out of the paradigm of discussing the legal implications of pornography, of whether it is right or wrong, or whether it does or does not lead to sexism and/or violence. Noting what I said above, possibly most relevant to readers of this journal will be those discussions of masculinity in reference to both consumption and production of porn, for example, Lehman's brief discussion of the representation of the penis in porn, as well as Jenkins ("He's in the Closet but He's Not Gay': Male-Male Desire in *Penthouse Letters*") and Klein's chapters respectively.

While those scholars familiar with the terrain of porn studies will have most likely read the first half of the book, the second half does contain new material. And this material certainly whetted my appetite in terms of looking forward to the new directions porn research will take in the future. I wait with interest, for example, for further discussion on the non-financial motivations behind why men and women produce porn and do the things they do on screen. Such research could be broken down into tighter groups segmented by class and ethnicity, as well as race and gender. Another interesting area of research might be to probe into the representation of religion in porn, particularly that which appeared after the revelations of the Abu Ghraib abuses or so-called "Christian porn."

Peter Lehman's book joins Williams' existing edited collection *Porn Studies* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2004), and will most clearly serve the undergraduate market, for which it seems designed, particularly those students who won't want to read such a large anthology as Williams'. In this respect, it will serve as a very useful primer.

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