

If the salty coolness of Cheung and Chen is the spice added to these respective bland all-white casts, chapter 3 investigates how pungent Chinese female bodies are situated in liberal and colonial atmospheres as unwelcome guests. In *The Crow* (Alex Proyas, 1994), Bai Ling—as Myca, an incestuous femme fatale who is ultimately graphically murdered—embodies the dystopic limits of tolerance of 1990s American multiculturalism. Zuo explores Bai’s off-screen “hot mess” performativity—a term she traces back to its colonialist origins and recasts as the requisite heating that racialized subjects must undergo “to join the melting pot of multiculturalism” (123).

With *Lust, Caution* (Ang Lee, 2007), Zuo delineates the pungent backlash around the sexual performativity of Tang Wei as Wang Jiazhi, one who pursues her feminine jouissance and betrays the nation during the Second Sino-Japanese War. The rejection of its ambivalent moral messages by Chinese and Sinophone audiences once again reveals the limits of tolerance. The flavor of pungency, therefore, cannot erase the boundary between tolerance and intolerance.

In the next chapter, Zuo turns to the contested nature of Chineseness as an open signifier, exploring how Taiwanese stars Shu Qi and Vivian Hsu perform Chineseness in films directed by mainland male directors. Zuo correlates the embodied sweetness and tender beauty of women film stars with China’s “soft power” ambitions in the context of cross-strait conflicts. The stardom of Vivian Hsu—her indigenous identity, her embodied adolescent sexuality in the 1990s, and her performance of over-the-top cuteness—complicates the pervasive One China ideology in *The Knot* (Yin Li, 2006). When it comes to Shu Qi in *If You Are the One* (Feng Xiaogang, 2008) and its sequel, *If You Are the One 2* (Feng Xiaogang, 2010), the extradiegetic Taiwanese-ness of Shu similarly complements the character’s hesitation and recalibration in a romantic relationship with a mainland man.

The final chapter shifts attention away from glamorous movie stars to explore how the racial sourness of Asian-American comedic performers envisions a refusal of the hegemonic capitalist order. By describing Charlyne Yi’s improvisational performance on YouTube videos as “off-beat” and “quirky,” Zuo refers to the notion of anacrusis, connecting Fred Moten’s discussion of anacrusis as an aesthetic form to the Nietzschean embrace of chaos. Meanwhile, in the mockumentary *Paper Heart* (Nicholas Jasenovec, 2009), Yi’s offbeat rhythms provide a sense of genderqueerness that deviates from the norm of heterosexual romance.

Both Ali Wong and Charlyne Yi, according to Zuo, “sour the charm of the ornamental Asian beauty by humorously over- and underperforming their sexuality” (232). Zuo

zooms into the vulgar materialism in Wong’s two star-making stand-up specials, *Baby Cobra* (Netflix, 2016) and *Hard Knock Wife* (Netflix, 2018), where Wong wields her sour cynicism to overturn the dominant moral, social, and political order. The racial sourness of Yi and Wong produces affective responses to the model minority myth in American society.

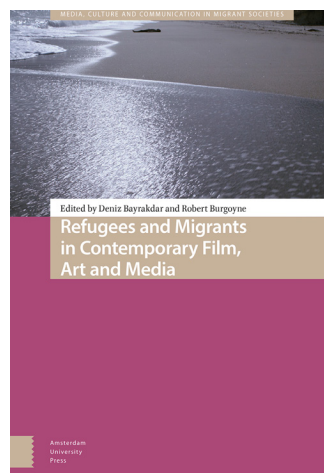
Zuo’s close reading of Chinese female stars is theoretically engaged and convincingly argued. Among the growing literature in Chinese and Sinophone cinemas, what distinguishes *Vulgar Beauty* is the way it constructs a fresh critical framework for understanding feminine beauty. With Zuo’s theoretical perspective and erudite analysis, *Vulgar Beauty* is a necessary addition to aesthetic theory and critical theories of gender, sexuality, race, and ethnicity.

FENGYUN ZHANG is a doctoral candidate in cinema and media studies at UCLA. Her research interests include Chinese cinema, transnational media flow, and media urbanism.

BOOK DATA Mila Zuo, *Vulgar Beauty: Acting Chinese in the Global Sensorium*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2022. \$104.95 cloth, \$27.95 paper. 312 pages.

HANNAH HUSSAMY

Refugees and Migrants in Contemporary Film, Art and Media, edited by Deniz Bayraktar and Robert Burgoyne



How might film, art, and media move beyond merely acknowledging the unprecedented scale and urgency of migration and displacement and begin to generate new language through which to respond to these realities? What insights into the interior lives and experiences of migrants are film, art, and media capable of providing? How do cultural

products address a more extensive range of experiences of migration and displacement, including trauma and loss, without reducing migrants to “media objects” (12)? These are a few of the concerns that circulate through this collection, which developed out of the Twentieth New Directions in Turkish Film Studies Conference: Cinema and Migration, held in Istanbul in 2019.

As part of their introduction to the collection, editors Deniz Bayraktar and Robert Burgoyne emphasize

the environment of sociopolitical tension that migrants are forced to navigate. While the authority of the nation-state purportedly continues its decline, punitive immigration policies relentlessly work to ensure the permanence of the violent logics of exclusion on which the nation-state has been built. Included in the collection, Dora Apel's study of a selection of art exhibitions that react to migration policy underscores that it is the migrants themselves who are forced to navigate this tension.

Apel highlights the proliferation of art exhibitions as part of an effort to expand public discussions of the traumas that exclusionary immigration policies produce in the lives of migrants and refugees. As part of her intervention, Apel analyzes a series of installations that upend the reception of borders as a display of "the strength of nation state sovereignty" by instead highlighting their porosity and precarity (116). Apel emphasizes the capacity of these installations to communicate "the untenable nature of the global immigration system" as well as to promote policy changes that can support displaced peoples (124).

The essays in this collection are invested in asking the question, What types of spectators of migration do film, art, and media produce? Erik Marshall evaluates a number of limitations and possibilities in a growing corpus of virtual reality (VR) interfaces that represent refugees. Ultimately, Marshall underscores the need to harness the possibilities of VR—such as its ability to facilitate "immersive presence" and to give a degree of agency in narrative decision-making over to the participant (144). He wants to move the VR participant away from what Bimbisar Irom calls an "affordable empathy" and toward forms of "riskier empathy" (138).

Similarly invested in demanding more of spectators, Selmin Kara's essay on *El mar la mar* (Joshua Bonnetta and J.P. Sniadecki, 2017) explores an approach to documentary filmmaking on migration that would not start and end with the image. Kara analyzes the filmmakers' decision to mobilize experimental sound technologies that produce a relationship between image and sound that is left intentionally murky. In this way, Kara argues, the audience is challenged to navigate disorientation, and ultimately to consider the sensory possibilities of approaching the film first as a listener.

Kara's, Marshall's, and Nagehan Uskan's essays challenge the one-dimensional, objectifying representations of migrants so often reproduced in news media. Their essays are not alone within the collection in taking on this endeavor. Uskan's essay studies the work of the activist collective Kino Mosaik and specifically the production of their documentary short *Natives of the New World* (2018). Uskan underlines the capacity of activist media to serve

as a source of "counter-information," not only to exploitative news-media coverage, but also to the many artistic representations that produce effects of "aestheticization" and silence migrants (59). Additionally, Uskan studies how waiting for the outcome of asylum procedures, a process "lived as a state of limbo," shapes how time is experienced in a state of displacement (53). Uskan notes, however, that "waiting is not always passivity and brings also the potential for positive change," explaining that this period served as the Kino Mosaik collective's moment of formation (54).

Examinations of the disjointed temporalities frequently produced through experiences of migration and displacement build throughout the collection. Eileen Rositzka examines Christian Petzold's production of a cinematic space of displacement, where relationships between the temporalities of past, present, and future are intentionally disjointed. Rositzka suggests that the elusive film environment of Petzold's *Transit* (2018)—one that contains spaces and people that disconnect from one another just as quickly as they converge—tracks the demand made on refugees to circulate through spaces and to navigate temporalities characterized by bureaucratically regulated deferral. Ultimately, Rositzka argues that the film works to "put the individual spectator in a position of transit—to feel and think through the 'in-between' of times and spaces" (190).

Nevena Daković's essay also assumes the task of analyzing how filmmaking practices might chart and respond to experiences of temporal and spatial discontinuity. Among other issues, Daković examines how Serbian filmmakers work to bring attention to and reckon with experiences of internal displacement. Daković introduces the term "inner exile" to the collection in order to ask how cinema may shed light on experiences of dislocation that are lived and negotiated entirely within one's home country (222).

Bayrakdar and Burgoyne's introduction to the collection addresses the limits of media representations of migrants and refugees, positing that "the larger and more urgent task of framing this new historical narrative, a narrative of vast collective and individual consequence, has not yet been met" (12). While no single work is capable of indexing all the elements that this narrative continues to generate, these contributors perceptively and emphatically respond to the challenges that the editors introduce. They realize that if film, art, and media are to generate language that touches on the multifaceted and constantly shifting manners in which migration and displacement reshape the lived realities of people, then the techniques (and technologies) that these cultural products enlist must continue to evolve, pursuing mobility and experimentation. They demonstrate the need to continue to develop ways of seeing

and hearing migrants and refugees, to complicate distanced and passive spectatorship, and to harness film, art, and visual media's capacities in order to produce active, dynamic observers who not only see and listen, but also are moved to act.

The structure of the collection is intelligently varied; essays that curate a corpus of work for analysis, such as Dudley Andrew's opening essay, mingle with those that opt for close readings of one or two works, such as Kara's study of *El mar la mar*. In this way, the collection proves useful for readers new to the subject matter while exposing experienced readers to emerging scholarship at the intersection of film, media, art, and migration and refugee studies.

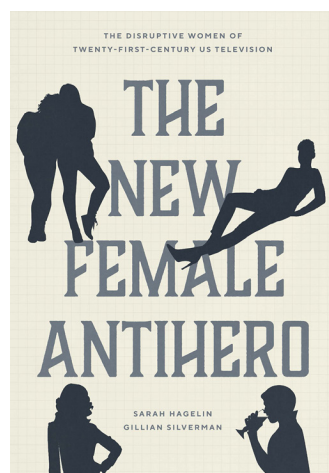
One of the most profound aspects of this collection is the editors' decision to cherish recurrence: a number of the contributors share an interest in approaching temporalities of suspension and a need not only to harness empathy, but also to critique the ways in which the camera mobilizes empathy, the tension between visibility and invisibility, and even the utility of such theoretical tools as Hamid Naficy's "accented cinema." Points of convergence such as these, as well as the decision to incorporate speculative conclusions from each contributor, enable the collection to maintain the iterative, conversational quality of the conference environment from which many of these works initially emerged.

HANNAH HUSSAMY is a PhD candidate in the Department of Romance Languages and Literatures at the University of Michigan.

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JESSICA CASEY

The New Female Antihero: The Disruptive Women of Twenty-First-Century US Television, by Sarah Hagelin and Gillian Silverman



Selfish, misanthropic, lawless, vengeful, apathetic, abject—those are just a few of the words used to describe women in Sarah Hagelin and Gillian Silverman's new text, *The New Female Antihero: The Disruptive Women of Twenty-First-Century US Television*. The catch, though, is that

these are not necessarily negative attributes when used to describe a female antihero. The authors define an antihero as “a character who undercuts the common good either through explicitly criminal acts or through pointedly solipsistic behaviors ... [who] must also position herself against the norms of civilization” (2). Unlike the transgressive women characters of the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s—Mary Tyler Moore, Roseanne Barr, Ellen DeGeneres—the new female antihero is characterized “not by pluck but by punch and pathos” (x). Because the role of women in society has long been associated with reproduction and homemaking, Hagelin and Silverman suggest that the new female antihero's rejection of these norms in their pursuits of power and freedom offers a “more profound threat to the status quo” than the difficult men of quality television because they disrupt the normative narrative of growth and resiliency surrounding women (xiii).

The introduction provides the theoretical and ideological grounding for Hagelin and Silverman's work. They found their argument on the idea “that this emergent protagonist is an ambivalent response to the achievements and failures of liberal feminism” and elaborate on this with a thorough, yet concise, explanation of feminist-versus-post-feminist media debates (xi). After the introduction, the text is divided into two parts analyzing different genres of female antiheroes: the dramatic and the comedic. The authors claim that the difference between the two is that “both the dramatic and the comedic antihero know what they're up against, but the former compensates through massive displays of strength and invulnerability, while the latter often simply sits back and accepts her own powerlessness” (13).

The first half of the book, “Ambition TV,” dives into the dramatic antihero's search for power and how she participates in patriarchal systems to achieve her goals. Using the characters Cersei Lannister (Lena Headey) and Daenerys Targaryen (Emilia Clarke) from *Game of Thrones* (HBO, 2011–19) as their foundational examples, they craft a narrative that Cersei and Daenerys are essentially the same character. Referencing the likes of Hortense Spillers, the authors demonstrate how the undeniable biological link between mother and child allows for someone like Daenerys to capitalize on “discourses of female empowerment and patriarchal domination,” whereas Cersei, who is willing to sacrifice her own children in her quest for power, becomes an example for the viewer of how far is too far (33).