

Book Review: Hofmann, Susanne and Adi Moreno, eds. *Intimate Economies: Bodies, Emotions, and Sexualities on the Global Market*. NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016. ISBN: 978-1-137-56035-3 (Hardback). 259 Pages. \$99.00.

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Intimate Economies is an edited book consisting of ten separate chapters, each with its own unique focus, wherein questions are asked dealing with embodiment, notions of selves, commodified bodies and affect, and globalized inequality; *Intimate Economies* makes the overall argument that sex/body/affective workers in a global environment face many oppressive threats while simultaneously maintaining personal agency and non-commodified intimate bonds. The book is broken into three parts: “Commodifying Affects, Emotions and Selves,” “Sexualized Bodies on the Market,” and “Global Reproductive Commerce.”

In the first chapter, “Introduction: Global Intimate Economies: Discontents and Debates,” co-authored by the editors of the book, Susanne Hoffman and Adi Moreno, frame the book as “re-opening the debate” between those who see the commodification of bodies as a selling of “the” self and those who focus on the variety of globalized workers’ experiences. While being critical of those past scholars who viewed commodified emotions and bodies as a monolithic labor encompassing the totality of self, Hoffman and Moreno focus on the

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varieties of experiences and subjective meaning-making in which workers engage.

Later chapters emphasize the multiplicity of selves but the editors, while certainly not arguing that the self is constructed of simple dualities, make use of Arlie Hochschild's duality of commodification of the self. The authors go on to claim no affiliation with any particular school of thought but acknowledge the Marxian base to the overall framework throughout their various sections analyzing different themes within the book as a whole. The authors outline the various debates and research into the commodification of subjective aspects of the self to increase profits through more profound exploitation of the bodies of labor. This is something that affects men and women differently considering the broader Western patriarchal association of women with commodified emotionality and sexuality. While the trend to commodify subjectivities has intensified since the advent of consumer capitalism and thus affects most of labor, the focus of the books is, rightfully, on women and gendered and sexual minorities whose association with heteronormative masculine assumptions about femininity and their relegation to more affective types of labor, places them in position to be targeted for subjective commodification. The trend is even more complicated by globalization and the spread of tourist sites, sites of production, and migrant populations in the service of largely Western corporate interests with corresponding deleterious effects on ecology, economics, and human lives.

The second chapter, "The 'Authentic Cybertariat'? Commodify Feeling, Accents, and Cultural Identities in the Global South," by Sweta Rajan-Rankin, is a Postcolonial analysis of laborers in global call centers in India done by using an ethnographic participant observation approach. The chapter is highly recommended to those scholars who contend that globalization is not an American led project of cultural leveling. Glocalization is also discussed and Rajan-Rankin takes a balanced approach demonstrating instances of Americanization of high-status Indian cybertariats while also discussing the aspects of Neoliberal "Neat Capitalism" that do not translate cross-culturally. She identifies areas where Indian service providers to Western clients has caused a restructuring of Indian social status hierarchies as well as focusing on the individual performativity of service providers and the psychological harm that can result from abusive clients' failure to recognize the basic human dignity of people working in a globalized world where most production sites and many service sites have shifted to the Global South, who are on the "other side" of the phone and world.

Nicolas Wasser, in “Regulating Sexy Subjects: The case of Brazilian Fashion Retail and Its Affective Workforce” makes up the third chapter and applies ethnographic methodology to the growing hyper-individualization promoted by the fashion industry in Brazil especially by the brand *Visibly Hot*. The author makes similar arguments to Durkheim’s works on anomie and industry as well as the cult of the individual. The rhetoric of difference and diversity turns into a façade to merely increase corporate profits and not to increase progressive cultural values. The collective corporate control over workers’ expressions of difference can be summed up by, ‘we are all individuals in the same way everyone else is an individual,’ where the line between individual and collective becomes incoherent and deceptive.

Wasser’s main contribution is applying long standing arguments about consumer capitalism to a new venue. He does not, however, add anything theoretically new and the main arguments can be found in the works of Thorstein Veblen. It is interesting to note that the author does a literary comparison with *Au Bonheur des Dames*, published in 1883 and penned by Émile Zola, as Wasser uses the novel to compare the emerging Gilded Age Parisian bourgeois consumerism and false promises of prosperity to laborers with contemporary consumer capitalism in Brazil. The novel roughly coincides with the early writings of Veblen, particularly his *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899) that has continued to be developed through the Frankfurt School of cultural criticism, to the Birmingham School of cultural studies to one of the most cynical of cultural critics, Jean Baudrillard.

In “Emotional Labor and Ethical Practice: Professionalism Among Sex Workers in Tijuana,” the fourth chapter contributed by one of the co-editors, Susanne Hoffman, Arlie Hochschild’s concept of ‘emotional labor’ is invoked again as one of the central motifs of part one of *Intimate Economies*. While Hochschild’s distinction between authentic emotions and selves versus inauthentic emotions and selves implies the Cartesian self, the intent of Hoffman becomes much clearer. Hochschild’s notion of an ‘authentic self’ is problematic due to the presentation of self as a monolith, but Hoffman is taking a far more nuanced approach in arguing that all selves and emotions are socially constructed and dependent on social context, broader cultural meanings, and historical and geographical social locations; emotions and aspects of selves are also seen as being in a constant state of becoming. She goes on to reject Hochschild’s notion of ‘authenticity’ as it implies emotions could somehow be located in a unified ‘true’ self.

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Hoffman is writing on the cutting edge of Feminist Theory and basing her analyses in classics of Second Wave Liberal and Marxian Feminism but updating them with the philosophical developments of the Third Wave of Poststructural Feminism creating a fascinating theoretical synergy. She contends that women have typically had to do emotional labor both paid and unpaid and disagrees with past scholars who have argued the commodification of emotion in sex work is somehow destructive of some authentic self. She continues with the contention that such arguments not only negate the agency of sex workers but also their professional pride in being able to use their emotional intelligence to perform better in their work. She goes in-depth into how sex workers have to manage their emotions in a variety of ways that speaks to their high degree of professionalism. The portrait of female sex workers as helpless victims of a patriarchal panopticon also misses the social networks and affective connections made between sex workers and how through fantasy and seduction, also further benefits their labors. Thoroughly argued and well documented, this chapter is highly recommended for anyone interested in agency, affect, Feminism, and sex work within late stage information consumer capitalism where the line between the physical and the virtual is becoming progressively finer.

The fifth chapter of the book also marks the beginning of part two. José Miguel Nieto Olivar's "A Feast of Men: Sexuality, Kinship and Predation in the Practices of Female Prostitution in Downtown Porto Alegre" is similar in topic to Hofmann's preceding chapter but markedly from a masculine perspective and is specifically discussing street prostitution as it existed in Porto Alegre in the 1980's and has changed over the decades from the perspectives of four women who formerly worked in this arena of the sex industry. Coming from a Poststructuralist perspective, Olivar focuses on the matrix of multiplicity of women engaged in street prostitution, situated geographically and historically, in terms of dominant discourses, territorialization, hegemonic structures of power, and the variety of relationships both exploitative and empowering.

Olivar situates his discussion around differing cultural constructions of what the act of sex actually means in Brazil to working class prostitutes. Using participant/observation and ethnographic methodologies, he finds that the women he interviews distinguish between sex and a *programa*, family life and work life, and, though often the same person, lover/husband and "pimp." He further argues that perspectives that collapse the distinctions between these dialectic experiences and relationships are coming from a heteronormative stance that negates the

meaning making of familial and work relationships that defy socially normative definitions of family and work. He asserts that to attempt an understanding of these multiply situated women through merely the lens of sexuality misses the fluidity and agency of working class sex laborers' meaning-making specifically in regard to relationships or 'alliances.' One issue that arises theoretically in this chapter is the focus on a Foucauldian analysis of power while simultaneously asserting the power of the husband/pimp to police sex acts (that are also not sex acts) and implement punishment, implying an hierarchy of power instead of the more fluid, and less structured, Foucauldian analysis of power. The author seems to be trying to force a Marxian notion of structured power into a Poststructural framework. While disagreeing with Radical Feminist analyses of prostitution in terms of commodified consumption as denying female agency, he also accepts a model of predation and 'cannibalism' that leads one to wonder where the distinctions lay and if he substantively agrees with Radical Feminist positions while disagreeing on points of semantics.

"Neoliberalism, Oil Wealth and Migrant Sex Work in the Chadian City of N'Djamena" by Ngambouk Vitalis Pemunta and Tabi Chama James Tabenyang constitutes the sixth chapter of the volume and focuses on strategies employed by Cameroonian sex workers in Chad within the broader context of neoliberal globalization. This chapter in the book needs to be read by everyone in the West. The authors adeptly tie together the direction of labor from Cameroon to Chad due to economic restructuring forced on both countries to neoliberalize their economies by the IMF and World Bank to exploit oil reserves discovered in southeastern Chad resulting in ecological destruction, desperate poverty, the violent removal of indigenous peoples from ancestral lands, and the creation of a sexual "playground" to fulfill the fantasies of mostly White businessmen while denying rights to sex workers through criminalization in Chad all to build a pipeline running crude oil from Southeastern Chad to the Cameroonian coastline. This economic imperialism is unfortunately common in many parts of the world to feed the insatiable hunger Americans have for oil without regard for the lives of people from the Global South.

The IMF and World Bank, in a cruel play on words, call such programs "Structural Adjustment Programs" or "SAPs" for short. I defy anyone with the capacity for empathy to read this chapter and not feel a mix of sorrow, outrage, and disgust. The resulting poverty in Cameroon and the demand for sex workers by mostly Western Whites in Chad has led to families once involved in subsistence farming in Cameroon and

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rural Chad to migrate in the hopes of finding better conditions in N'Djamena. For many young women, this means sex work exposing them to legal, sexual, and physical, emotional, and psychological abuse and exploitation. The “structural adjustment” by the IMF and World Bank has led to severe increases in poverty, hunger, and homelessness in both countries. The economic restructuring has also led to demographic and cultural restructuring as well along with the privatization of formerly State-run programs.

Amidst such oppressive conditions, women forced into criminalized sex work still find agency in adapting strategies to survive their new environments by opening businesses in the day while working in sex industries at night and adapting family life to the brutal conditions established by the IMF and World Bank. Not only are these women stigmatized for their labor but religious traditions also make them communal outcasts where sex workers must establish their own social networks. The sexual acts engaged in all depend on the price the “client” is willing to pay up to unprotected sex, which, of course, further exposes women to STIs and HIV that without medical care will turn into AIDS. Women also maintain a degree of agency in which bars and clubs they frequent and in selecting their own repeat clientele. As a social scientist, the reviewer has been trained in value-neutral analyses but finds it difficult, when reading chapters and articles documenting the cost of human life so the most industrialized nations in the world can maintain their lifestyles in ignorant bliss to the suffering of billions around the world, to not experience the evocation of an emotional response. The authors of the chapter, however, have much cooler heads and more effectively document and contextualize the conditions in Cameroon and Chad.

The seventh installment in *Intimate Economies* is titled “The Use of ‘Life-enabling’ Practices Among *Waria*: Vulnerability, Subsistence, and Identity in Contemporary Yogyakarta,” by Néstor Nuño Martínez. The author, from the beginning attempts to put the *waria* into Western definitions of gender and sexuality that assume continuums with two antagonistically positioned polar ends and describes them as “male transvestites.” He then goes on to describe a different type of transgendered identity in focusing on *warias*’ desire for Hormone Replacement Therapy and silicone implants, which would imply, in Western terms, that he is talking about trans women. Trans women activists such as Julia Serano have worked hard to distinguish transsexual communities from transvestites based on completely different relationships to gendered identities and subjectivities. But considering

warias' partial acceptance in parts of the city of Yogyakarta, Indonesia and their existence in Indonesia for centuries, perhaps referring to Indonesia as having a three-gendered model would be more accurate and respectful.

Community building among *warias* had been undertaken by NGOs and GROs under the authoritarian Suharto regime, referred to as the New Order Era (1965-1998), where political organization was prohibited. Following this era came the *Reformasi* period that changed Indonesia to a democratic republic allowing for the formation of political groups based around identity and the demand for equal rights. This also opened the Indonesian economy to foreign investment. Martínez cites the World Bank and IMF as spreading "of individual freedom, free markets, and the creation of political community-based organizations to stimulate civil society [...] with the aim to create self-enterprising subjects to expand the information industry and support markets" (166). In other words, to privatize public sectors of the Indonesian economy and undermine social welfare programs ultimately implying the end of the anti-capitalist authoritarian regime opened the door to neoliberalize Indonesian economics. The author cites this as a major contributor to *waria* political organizations and subsequent demands for equal rights. There are a few issues with this: Firstly, the *Reformasi* was entered before the presence of the IMF or World Bank and instituted by Indonesians; secondly, as the author acknowledges, the IMF and World Bank provided "conditional development loans" (166), which is exactly how these transnational neoliberal organizations economically under-develop newly opened markets; thirdly, he is getting the majority of his information directly from the World Bank's presentation of itself. These factors combined make Martínez's argument seem globally and economically naïve and uncritical.

Despite the aforementioned issues, in 2006 *Perkumpulan Keluarga Berencana Indonesia* (PKBI) formed as a political organization dedicated to *waria* community building and gaining equal rights as Indonesians. Due to continued discrimination against *waria* they have been relegated to "sex work, *ludruk* performances [...], street art, and beauty styling" (167). While *waria* are gaining more social acceptance in Indonesia, they face economic issues similar to transsexual communities in the US. There is now a class divide among *warias* who can afford medical treatments to bring their sex closer in line with their gender and those who cannot. The situation leads many impoverished *warias* to seek out dangerous and potentially life-threatening procedures from non-legitimate sources that PKBI has been working to try to prevent by

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finding legitimated doctors to perform procedures using disposable tools and only charging for the tools used. Martínez refers to these kinds of activities as a switch from death-prevention to life-enabling politics. As a whole, the chapter is very informative about recent Indonesian history and the social locations and movements of *warias* but remains throughout economically uncritical and needed a much broader perspective of the intersections of local economies, stratification among *warias*, and global economics.

The eighth chapter, “Gestational Laborers: Care Politics and Surrogates’ Struggle” by Sophie Lewis opens part three of *Intimate Economies*. The chapter looks at the global, economic, racial, and nationalistic intersections of surrogacy. In the introduction, she discusses uterus as global commodities problematizing human notions of what motherhood means and cites Donna Haraway’s contention that scholars examining such issues should not try to explain it away but to stay with the problematization of motherhood as fruitful lines of analyses. Lewis then goes into detail about the media scandal in Australia and abroad in the case of “Baby Gammy” in 2014. The case was exceptional but it led many countries to establish strict regulations on surrogacy and in some cases to even outlaw the practice. A big part of the debate around surrogacy is that men from mostly industrialized nations are paying surrogacy companies, who in turn go to the least industrialized or industrializing nations to find surrogates among women living in desperate poverty.

The issue of global surrogacy also challenges the notion of family. What makes a family? Is it genetics, social bonds, shared values, or something else? And what does this mean in a global context where you can have a father who is European-Australian, a mother (in this case referring to the woman who intends to perform the social role of mother) who is Chinese-Australian, an anonymous woman who donated an ovum, and a surrogate woman who is Thai? What then does family and motherhood mean when twins are born; one who is accepted by the Australian family and one who is raised by the Thai woman whose uterus the fetus gestated in but is not genetically related? How do we define race and nationality or the bioethics of exploiting female body parts from poorer countries by much richer countries? Whites actually concern themselves about what race the future baby will be if born from a woman defined as a different race. Lewis relies on Haraway’s distinction between reproducing and parenting; where parenting is nurturing and caring for a member of the next generation while reproducing is merely passing on half of your genetic code to make partial copies of yourself.

Surrogacy has not only sparked a global debate among nations and people but an academic debate especially among feminist activists and scholars. Marxian and Radical schools of Feminist thought both rejected surrogacy as dematerializing women and selling their body parts as mere tools for wealthier men abroad to use as commodities. Poststructural Third Wave feminists tend to see surrogacy as queering motherhood and families cutting across lines of identity as well as work versus non-work “being both conscious and unconscious, labor and life, care and growth, nature and creativity, technology and flesh, metabolism and art, and production and reproduction” (195). Then there is another second wave feminist position from Mary O’Brien, arguing that all pregnancies blur heteronormative boundaries of “male-stream thought” (197). Lewis takes a third wave Poststructuralist Feminist and Queer perspective and ultimately rejects what she dubs “Technophobic Anti-Surrogacy ‘Feminisms’” (201). This chapter is strongly written and heavily grounded in a wide range of Feminist and Queer perspectives; for those not familiar with the bio-ethical debates surrounding surrogacy, Lewis also provides a fairly comprehensive summary of the debates and issues especially considering the bounds of fitting so much information into the limits of a single book chapter.

Chapter nine, “Surrogate Mothers and Gay Fathers: Navigating the Commercial Surrogacy Arrangement in India” by Anindita Majmdar follows well after the previous chapter’s broad theoretical discussion in its focused example of queering reproduction through surrogacy. The author, using the work of Saskia Sassen, argues that commodified reproductive organs of women in the Global South, India in Majmdar’s example, make up part of “counter-geographies of globalization” where women’s labor provides foundations for illegitimated economies. While there are multiple issues discussed in the chapter, two in particular are the tensions placed on people between oppressive and exploitative systems. On the one hand, there are gay couples in the most industrialized nations who face oppression in the limiting of their reproductive choices but on the other, there are women in less industrialized nations who face limited economic choices and the reductionistic commodification of their reproductive organs. The chapter provides two intimate case studies of a woman in India, Prema, who decides surrogacy is the best economic option for her and her struggle to decrease the degree of exploitation as well as Xavier, a gay Spaniard, who decided surrogacy was the best reproductive option for him. The narratives powerfully illustrate the strain faced by people caught between

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these dehumanizing global systems and their plight to find personal agency.

The final chapter, “Families on the Market Front” by Adi Moreno, focuses on surrogacy as the idealized method of reproduction for gay men in Israel. This chapter continues themes from the last in terms of Assisted Reproductive Technologies (ART) being a global *cause célèbre* with global gay communities celebrating ART while critics point out its broader connection to the atomized commodification of Black and Brown bodies from the Global South. ART have been controversial in Feminist literature since their inception with notable scholars such as Gena Corea arguing that women have historically been expected to give male heirs to men and the new technologies limit the human interaction side of reproduction casting women into roles as laborers in a kind of unseen site of production (uteruses in particular geo-political regions).

Going back to the metaphysical considerations of morality in German Idealism, Moreno points to Marxian analyses of commodification and other forms of alienated labor as a violation of Kant’s categorical imperative. Global systems’ economic approach to reproduction, an otherwise intimate relationship between people, reduces, in the unequal distribution of international power, women’s bodies in particular to economic sites of production where body parts become exchangeable tools of production to be used by men in relatively powerful political-economic social positions. Theoretically rich, this chapter is well-situated with the broader discussions in Poststructural and Marxist Feminist literature as well as Science and Technology Studies. Moreno deftly weaves political, cultural, and economic considerations with narratives of people operating in the global reproductive-industrial complex and the emotional and physical pain generated through the commodification of women’s bodies in the service of men.

Intimate Economies is a must-read for students and scholars interested in the now global commodification of affect and bodies along intersections of globalization, gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, politics and economics. The work is expansive in the scope of examples from around the world and lends itself easily to research and classroom settings where such topics are being discussed.