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Dolls, Dreams, and Drives: Sexual Subjectivity in the Films of Kim Kyung-Mook

Any description of the films of Kim Kyung-Mook must be immediately qualified. His films emanate from an unapologetically “gay” perspective. Yet they have nothing to do with identity politics. One of recurrent motifs in his films involves the attempt of a young gay man to find sexual and emotional fulfillment from an older married man unwilling to provide them. Yet the films are neither a lament nor a victimology. Instead these situations contribute to a more extensive understanding of a sexual scenario as a structural disequilibrium. Furthermore, desire is not an urge to be quelled by physiological satisfaction of the closure of a psychological narrative but rather an open question—destabilizing in its constitutive effects and affects. This paper will examine Kim’s films to draw out the inscription of sexual subjectivity and the self-constitution of the subject as object of the other’s desire. It will also contrast the fundamentally gay phenomenology at work in these films with other Korean films whose use of “gay” sexuality as plot elements simply serves heterosexualist ideologies.