

Issue 37
2012

GENDER FORUM

An Internet Journal for Gender Studies



SexPosed: Gender and Pornography

Edited by
Prof. Dr. Beate Neumeier

ISSN 1613-1878

Universität
zu Köln



Editor

Prof. Dr. Beate Neumeier

University of Cologne
English Department
Albertus-Magnus-Platz
D-50923 Köln/Cologne
Germany

Tel +49-(0)221-470 2284

Fax +49-(0)221-470 6725

email: gender-forum@uni-koeln.de

Editorial Office

Laura-Marie Schnitzler, MA

Sarah Youssef, MA

Christian Zeitz (General Assistant, Reviews)

Tel.: +49-(0)221-470 3030/3035

email: gender-forum@uni-koeln.de

Editorial Board

Prof. Dr. Mita Banerjee,

Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz (Germany)

Prof. Dr. Nilufer E. Bharucha,

University of Mumbai (India)

Associate Prof. Dr. Carmen Birkle,

Philipps-Universität Marburg (Germany)

Prof. Dr. Ingrid Hotz-Davies,

Eberhard Karls University Tübingen (Germany)

Prof. Dr. Ralph Poole,

University of Salzburg (Austria)

Prof. Dr. Kathryn Schaffer,

University of Adelaide (Australia)

Prof. Dr. Chris Weedon,

Cardiff University (UK)

Editorial Deadlines

Spring Issue:

abstracts (October 1),

completed papers (January 1)

Summer Issue:

abstracts (January 1),

completed papers (April 1)

Fall Issue:

abstracts (April 1),

completed papers (July 1)

Early Career Researchers Special Issue:

abstracts (May 1),

completed papers (August 1)

Winter Issue:

abstracts (July 1),

completed papers (October 1)

About

Gender forum is an online, peer reviewed academic journal dedicated to the discussion of gender issues. As an electronic journal, *gender forum* offers a free-of-charge platform for the discussion of gender-related topics in the fields of literary and cultural production, media and the arts as well as politics, the natural sciences, medicine, the law, religion and philosophy. Inaugurated by Prof. Dr. Beate Neumeier in 2002, the quarterly issues of the journal have focused on a multitude of questions from different theoretical perspectives of feminist criticism, queer theory, and masculinity studies. *gender forum* also includes reviews and occasionally interviews, fictional pieces and poetry with a gender studies angle.

Opinions expressed in articles published in *gender forum* are those of individual authors and not necessarily endorsed by the editors of *gender forum*.

Submissions

Target articles should conform to current MLA Style (8th edition) and should be between 5,000 and 8,000 words in length. Please make sure to number your paragraphs and include a bio-blurb and an abstract of roughly 300 words. Files should be sent as email attachments in Word format. Please send your manuscripts to gender-forum@uni-koeln.de.

We always welcome reviews on recent releases in Gender Studies! Submitted reviews should conform to current MLA Style (8th edition), have numbered paragraphs, and should be between 750 and 1,000 words in length. Please note that the reviewed releases ought to be no older than 24 months. In most cases, we are able to secure a review copy for contributors.

Article Publishing

The journal aims to provide rapid publication of research through a continuous publication model. All submissions are subject to peer review. Articles should not be under review by any other journal when submitted to *Gender forum*.

Authors retain copyright of their work and articles are published under a Creative Commons licence.

There are no submission or page charges, and no colour charges.

Detailed Table Of Contents

Stefan Offermann: Dildos and Cyborgs: Feminist Body-Politics in Porn from the 1970s to Posthumanism	2
Johanna Schorn: Subverting <i>Pornormativity</i> : Feminist and Queer Interventions	15
Samuel Horn: Fragments of Fear and Power: On the Pornographic Construction of Masculinity	25
Japhet Johnstone (Review): Kevin Floyd: <i>The Reification of Desire: Toward a Queer Marxism</i>	37
Wanda Coleman: Two Poems from <i>Night Coffee</i>	41
List of Contributors	43

Dildos and Cyborgs: Feminist Body-Politics in Porn from the 1970s to Posthumanism

By Stefan Offermann, University of Cologne, Germany

Abstract:

The article examines different – and in particular conflicting – feminist positions with respect to pornography which have been developed from the 1970s until today, focusing on the issue of the construction of sexual and gender identities. An analysis is carried out on how these identities in regards to the pornographic body are negotiated or even shifted within these different feminist discourses and practices. Starting with a brief examination of the discourse about pornography in the phase when the sexual revolution ended, subsequently the PorNO-campaign of the German feminist journal Emma – launched in 1987 – is discussed more precisely. This campaign represented anti-pornographic feminism which had been criticized by sex-positive feminism developing the so-called post-pornographic approach. The second part of the article looks into the post-porn discourse from the early eighties – Annie Sprinkle – until the queer-feminist-posthumanist intervention in the field of sexuality and pornography by Beatriz Preciado. Finally, the political potential of queer-feminist post-porn in subverting the existing regime of sexuality is considered.

1 Why should we deal with pornography from a feminist perspective?¹ The answer to this question is straightforward. Pornography is the key mass media genre in which sexuality is made visible and performed. Sexuality, on the other hand, is one of the main areas where gender and gender relations are negotiated. In this article, I will examine different – and in particular conflicting – feminist positions with respect to pornography which have been developed from the 1970s until today. The focus will be on the issue of the construction of sexual and gender identities. I will analyze how these identities in regards to the pornographic body are negotiated or even shifted within these different feminist discourses and practices. Dildos and cyborgs will be discussed in the final part of this article, which deals with current queer-feminist debates in the field of so called post-porn.

2 At the beginning of the seventies, in a phase of almost complete legalization of pornography in most of the western countries, the pornographic movie left the underground and was allowed into new public spheres. Pornography as a film genre developed into a mass

¹ This article is based on a talk I gave at the conference Radikal, Sexy, Aktuell: Feminismus in historischer Perspektive on 4. February 2012 (<http://aaa.phil-fak.uni-koeln.de/femsem.html?&L=1>). The conference dealt with the different feminist movements from the 19th century to present day. It was organized by the students and teachers of the advanced seminar Geschichte des Feminismus which took place at the University of Cologne (Institute of Anglo-American History) in the winter semester 2011/12. I wish to thank our teachers Dr. Muriel Gonzales, Dr. Christiane König and Dr. Massimo Perinelli – their commitment made this conference possible. Furthermore, I would like to thank them for their valuable advices and the constructive discussions we had. I also want to say thank you to my fellow students Indira Kaffer, Silke Steiml, Nora Vollmond and Eva Willems who helped me investigating the issue of pornography and feminism. Last but not least, I wish to thank Johannes Duncker, Mirjam Hachem, Marvin Muller and Frank Thonemann for their careful reading of the translation of the article.

product and was increasingly available even in cinemas (Williams, *Lust* 109; Wolf 169-183). It was during that period that the sexual revolution came to an end, or rather began to transform itself into something new. Its leading idea was formulated in the early sixties. The protagonists of the sexual revolution claimed to position the supposedly natural human drives against a likewise supposedly dusty and repressive sexual-political regime. It was argued that the release of desires should serve the liberation of the individual. In the specific context of the transforming sexual revolution, an emancipatory effect was attributed to pornography for a short period of time because it was seen as taboo-breaking. The visualization of naked copulating bodies in the public sphere of cinema was a political act of rebellion (Bovenschen 50-52; Heineman 290-312). The American movie *Deep Throat*, first released in 1972, is often considered the archetype of the emerging pornographic feature film (Williams, *Lust* 109). However, this movie is characterized by ambivalence between being perceived as an expression and representation of sexual liberation on the one hand and the combination of patriarchal submission and commodification of sex on the other hand.² Hence, *Deep Throat's* ambivalent reception rather already testified to a turning point of the dominant discourses surrounding pornography. A part of the new feminist movement, which emerged at the same time as the pornographic feature film from the rebellious period of the sixties, radically criticized the ideas of the sexual revolution. In a certain manner, the prevailing pattern of submission and liberation was borrowed, merely with redefined positions. According to the assumption of this section of the new feminist movement, the sexual revolution first and foremost was catering to the interests and liberation of male sexuality, which now took the position of the force of repression of female sexuality. In this line of thought, the patriarchal, oppressive forces on an objectified and repressed female sexuality even increased. Thus, it was regarded as necessary to liberate female sexuality from the grasp of patriarchy, in order to make the liberation of the woman as an individual possible (Bovenschen 50-53; Schwarzer, *Unterschied* 177-185, 200-205). Consistent with this presumption, many feminists developed a radically rejecting attitude towards pornography. They argued that this apparently male dominated discourse served the submission of women and their sexuality. In 1975, the first feminist anti-pornographic association – named Women against Violence in Pornography and

² It is the gesture of the deep throat-fellatio itself that constitutes the ambivalence. On the one hand, it represents – within the diegesis – a heightened appreciation of the clitoris as essential element of female sexuality, that had been marginalized before. On the other hand, the invisible orgasm of the porn actress performing the deep throat is identified with the visible orgasm of the porn actor. Thereby, the movie constructs a phallogocentric desire economy. In addition to this it is worth mentioning here that the leading actress Linda Lovelace later joined the Anti-Pornography movement and became its chief witness for male violence against women in the porn industry. She claimed to have been forced at gunpoint by her husband Chuck Traynor to “practice” for the eponymous sexual act.

Media (since 1979 simply Women against Pornography) – was founded in the USA. Important protagonists of the anti-pornographic feminism were the lawyer Cathrine MacKinnon and the sociologist Andrea Dworkin, the latter being the author of *Pornography – Men Possessing Women*, published in 1979 (Rückert 15-17).

3 Almost a decade later, Dworkin's book served as the theoretical background for the PorNO-campaign of the German journal EMMA in 1987. Essentially, the PorNO-campaign was a cultural import from the USA. This becomes apparent by the fact that Dworkin's book was translated to German in the same year as the campaign started. It was published by EMMA titled *Pornographie – Männer beherrschen Frauen* and prefaced with a foreword by Alice Schwarzer. The core of the campaign was the definition of pornography as "downplaying or glorifying a clearly humiliating portrayal of women or girls by pictures and/or words" (Anonymous, *my translation*). The force of humiliation was male sexuality which – according to Dworkin – was defined by exactly that: Through the humiliation of the woman it fulfilled itself. Dworkin paints a truly bleak and frightening picture of male sexuality that, in its essence, cannot do anything but subject women. She regards pornography as constantly iterating this kind of sexual power relation between both genders and thereby stabilizing the analogue power relation prevailing in reality. Hence, PorNO established an immediate causal connection between real, everyday violence against women and pornographic representations. The campaign's slogan "Pornography is theory, rape is practice"³ clearly expressed the belief in the immediate impact of pornographic images as an instruction for action (Bovenschen 55-59, 62f.; Koch 118, 126f.; Schwarzer, *Vorwort* 9). This specific assessment was fundamental for the formulation of the draft bill by the EMMA journal. The draft did not aim to immediately prohibit the production and distribution of pornography. Rather, PorNO sought to create an instrument rooted in civil law which would enable lawsuits against pictures and words which humiliated and – according to the authors – harmed the constitutionally protected dignity of women. By law the producers of pornography should be forced to pay compensation. There was the implicit hope that the porn industry would become overthrown by the massive wave of crippling punitive suits, leading to its complete breakdown (Anonymous; Bovenschen 55; Schwarzer, *Begründung*).

4The specific manner in which the law was formulated reveals the powerful identity politics that were strongly inscribed into the new feminist movement: the construction of a homogenous and universal identity category *woman*. Within this category, differences among women were accepted. Yet, in relation to the likewise homogenous category *man*, these

³ This sentence had been formulated originally by Susan Brownmiller in her book *Against our Will: Men, Women and Rape* and was adopted by the PorNO-campaign.

differences were not acknowledged (Scott 45f.). Every woman was to be given the opportunity to file a lawsuit, since the women humiliated in pornography represented all women. Men's violence towards the pornographic actress was thus simultaneously committed to every woman (Schwarzer, *Begründung*). Although since the publication and following translations of Simone de Beauvoir's highly influential book *Le Deuxième Sexe* it became a common belief that gender is a cultural construction – a woman is not born as a woman but becomes a woman – a majority of the new movement resorted to refer to the woman (Beauvoir, *Geschlecht*).⁴ Without oversimplifying, it can be assessed that the hegemonial feminist discourse during the seventies in Europe as well as in the USA was clearly structured by the binary logic of dichotomies. The supposedly solid and natural reference ensuring the binary identity categories *man/woman* was located in the gendered body. This concept was deconstructed for the first time by feminist theorists in the second half of the eighties known as queer intervention. In particular Judith Butler had come to the understanding that a natural, distinctly gendered body does not exist. On the contrary, every body is merely discursively marked as natural – thereby, it becomes naturalized (Butler, *Unbehagen*; Butler, *Körper*).

5 With respect to the approach to pornography, the differential-feminist identity politics had problematic consequences because PorNO assigned certain oppositional features and behaviors to the categories *woman* and *man*. *The* man became the unequivocally ascertainable evildoer and *the* woman a poor victim of his violence and oppression. This is the central characteristic of the PorNO-discourse: Women were completely excluded from the subject position. They were merely conceived as available passive objects of male desire. Thereby, a gender order was sustained and strengthened that PorNO effectively wanted to abolish. Although this order was evaluated differently, its rigorous binary identity attributions remained in force (Degele 215; Rückert 24; Vincken, *Cover up* 12f.).⁵

6 This fundamental contradiction inherent in anti-pornographic feminism became the central point of criticism of a sex-positive feminism that did not abhor and demonize pornography altogether but subverted its phallogentric and patriarchal capitalist structures from within. An important figure in this context was Annie Sprinkle. The US-American has been working as porn actress and sex worker since the eighties and is considered to be the first post-porn activist. Why? In her performances and movies, she developed and practiced a critical and self-reflexive approach to pornographic image-production. Thus, sexual and

⁴ The German translation was used.

⁵ Vincken, *Cover up* 12f. emphasizes that MacKinnon's book *Only Words* and PorNO speak the same discourse. Thus, Vincken's analysis of the book applies also to EMMA's campaign. Furthermore, in Vincken, *weibliches Subjekt* 156 she relates the anti-pornographic discourse, that identifies the woman with the role of the object and victim, with a short genealogy of the subject-concept the bourgeois society developed.

gender identities were no longer perceived as given and natural but their reiterated attributions became exhibited, commented on and even parodied. Hence, it is adequate to speak of a paradigm shift from porn to post-porn (Stüttgen, *Orgasm* 11). This paradigm shift involved a fundamental change of feminist strategies in dealing with pornography.

7 In the first volume of his ground-breaking *History of Sexuality*, a critical revision of the repression- and liberation-discourse of the sexual revolution, Michel Foucault in 1976 emphasized that power and sexuality can never be located in an exterior relationship to each other (Foucault, *Wille*).⁶ Instead, sexuality is produced by historically mutating technologies of power in the first place – and indeed is not grounded in the supposed nature of two sexes. The powerfully dichotomous ordering of sex, gender and sexuality merely has become naturalized and sustained through its reiterated attribution to men and women respectively. It follows that a strategy of resisting a certain regime of sexuality does not work by means of establishing an oppositional, domination-free sphere of natural sexuality, as there is no outside to its culturally produced conception and thus sexuality can never be untainted by the societal regulations of desire. However, precisely the assumption of discovering natural and therefore authentic sexual identities provided the starting point for many utopias of the sexual revolution. Their protagonists believed to be able to position themselves outside of all social distortions and to establish something entirely different and new from there. Although voices critical of porn pointed to the failure of many of these utopias, PorNO appeared as the feminist heir of such utopian ideas because this position likewise took the notion of a good and natural sexuality as its starting point. A woman's sexuality was meant to be protected against an exterior grasp of power which manifested itself this time in form of a male dominated and misogynist market. It was not taken into consideration that any manifestations of sexuality – however they might be valued – are the result of social processes regulating sexual desire men *and* women partake in. PorNO did not assume that it was the inseparable interconnection of male and female sexual desire and the discourses and practices surrounding them that produced the regime of sexuality in the first place. This assumption implies that any concept of sexuality as the basis of resistance cannot be exterior to the regime of sexuality being fought, due to the fact that this basis is always already a vital component of the regime. Taking this kind of analytics as starting point, all strategies of critique, resistance and subversion have to start from within the discourse or the practice meant to be attacked. Regarding the question how these counter-measures can be put into practice, the concept of performativity – in the sense of Judith Butler – becomes essential (Butler, *Körper* 35-41;

⁶ The German translation was used.

Krämer 241-260; Wirth 40-42). This notion draws attention to the artificiality of any identity category and therewith challenges the naturalised, heteronormative ordering of sexuality. Performativity describes how the continued reiteration of certain discourses and practices produces the concept of identity in the first place. From this viewpoint, laying bare the constructedness of identities through the creative power of their reflexive, decontextualizing and sometimes even parodist citation constitutes an effective weapon against the status quo. Thus, the significance of the practice or concept being criticized and fought against is undermined and shifted to new possible meanings. This strategy – instead of the preventive, censoring and excluding power of legal regimentation – was and still is the one post-porn furthers. Nevertheless, even post-porn aimed at a critique of and a fight against the hegemonial type of pornography: the heteronormative mainstream porn. This was intended to become subverted by alternative pornographic images (Stüttgen, *Orgasm* 10).

8 To perform this strategy, the acquisition of agency is necessary. That was accomplished for instance by Annie Sprinkle through a simple but effective action at the beginning of her movie *Deep Inside Annie Sprinkle* (1982). She looks into the camera, thus reflecting the male gaze of the camera and of the spectator, and announces that the following sex acts will solely be performed according to her will (Sprinkle 01:13-05:15). Even though, mainstream porn actresses in general advocate their own lust aggressively, there is still a crucial difference in comparison with Sprinkle's attitude. She puts *her* body and *her* body's sexual desire in the center and makes it not only the origin but also the organizing principle of the depicted sex. Therefore, her agency is not handed over to the men – and women – watching to take possession of her body. Instead, she makes herself the subject of her lust precisely by making her body an object of desire (Williams, *Agent* 122-125). Hence, she breaks the order of power in which men always appear as subjects and women as objects by excessively affirming the order and thereby transforming it into something new and different.

9 As a result of this technique, Annie Sprinkle raises herself from the role of a supposed victim and pure object to a subject position. From there, she can performatively approach the gesture that has developed into an iconic figure of hardcore porn since its appearance on the public stage in the seventies: the cumshot. According to Linda Williams, the inherent desire of porn in staging the truth of carnal lust in order to evoke the somatic affect of sexual arousal in the spectator, found its satisfaction in the image of the external and visible ejaculation of man (Williams, *Hard Core* 135-164). The cumshot thus has become the ultimate proof that real sex has taken place. Likewise, it has constituted the climax of all sex acts in which – according to the critics – also a release of violence can be realized. In place of the male

spectator who identifies himself with the porn actor, the penis representing masculine power and possession shoots at the woman and finishes her. Moreover, the action of the sex acts in mainstream porn is oriented towards the cumshot as the narrative closure in which a discharge of sexual energy is guaranteed. On the other hand, porn has not found an appropriate portrayal of the female orgasm. Effectively, this genre has been marked as being unable to produce a filmic proof of female lust. Through these asymmetries, the phallogentric desire economy becomes evident (Williams, *Hard Core* 8f., 143-146; Vincken, *Cover up* 14).⁷ In the 1980's Annie Sprinkle tried to subvert this order of power through her parody of the cumshot. The following scene can be found not only in *Deep Inside Annie Sprinkle*, but also in other later movies of her. While she is straddling a male co-actor, she begins to ejaculate (Sprinkle 38:37-40:07). Hereby, she at first cites the practice of the cumshot and its established parameters of phallic power. The scene's framing switches then into a parodist mode when her ejaculation exceeds the duration of a male cumshot distinctly and the quantity of the ejaculate becomes absurd.⁸ This parodist act refers to the supposed inability to present a visual proof of female orgasm, which had become a genre convention of mainstream porn. Furthermore, it refers to the male stereotype of unlimited sexual potency, which had become a genre convention as well. This established norm of the pornographic male body is reflected, exposed, de-naturalized and thereby destabilized (Williams, *Agent* 125-127). When the male actor finally also ejaculates, it becomes obvious that Annie's continuous shooting does not constitute a simple inversion of the subject/object-configuration and a combative challenge of the phallus. Instead, it represents an integrative gesture and aims at a penetration of the phallogentric lust economy as an essential component of the regime of sexuality.

10 Sprinkle's post-pornographic attempts however failed to transform mainstream porn. On the contrary, the final cumshot came in fact to be the increasing standard when the fast-forward technology of the video recorder began to prevail in the eighties. While in the pornographic feature film of the seventies, the cumshot was one element among others – in fact the focus was on dialogue, kissing, laughing and petting – in the course of the next media upheaval – the internet – the domination of the cumshot reached a new level. Porn-clips that merely string together contextless scenes of ejaculating penises have made the cumshot the embodiment of mainstream porn. Precisely at the moment of the increasing visual hegemony of the phallus, a new intervention in the field of sexuality and pornography emerged. In the

⁷ For a critical further development of William's analysis of the cumshot see: Aydemir, Murat. "The Cum Shot as Period, Ellipsis and Question Mark." *Post/Porn/Politics*. Ed. Tim Stüttgen. Berlin: b_books, 2009.124-131.

⁸ For the concept of framing see: Goffman, Erving. *Rahmen-Analyse. Ein Versuch über die Organisation von Alltagserfahrungen*. Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1977, especially 52-60.

year 2000, the Spanish philosopher Beatriz Preciado published her contra-sexual manifesto which has a queer-feminist impetus.⁹ Preciado herself is not a porn actress but her theoretical reflections constitute a central point of reference for contemporary post-pornographic debates and practices. This applies for instance to the research and performances of Tim Stüttgen, who organized a symposium named Post-Porn-Politics as part of the world's first pornographic film festival in Berlin in 2006.¹⁰ What does Preciado's intervention consist of? Having become established as *the* ordering principle of sexuality ensuring the binary order of two genders as well as heteronormativity, she challenges the penis as phallus with the dildo. Based on the assumption that all hetero-sex was per se phallic, this prosthesis by then had been rejected by radical lesbian feminism as a replication of patriarchal-phallic sexuality (Preciado 58). In contrary to this position, Preciado regards the dildo as a parodist citation of the phallus and by her becomes simply declared as the original. With ironic reference to the Christian creation mythology, she writes in her manifesto "In the beginning was the dildo" (Preciado 12, *my translation*). Many different copies can now be generated from the dildo, amongst others the penis as a bio-dildo. The dildo and its equivalents are universally employable in a polymorphous-perversely fashion by every body-subject. Hereby, somatic-sexual actions emerge that are detached from gender identity. Complementary, the anus as an erogenous zone undergoes a heightened appreciation. According to Preciado, the anus is radically democratic as every body is equipped with the zone and it is thereby not gender-specific (Preciado 9-19, 23-67; Stüttgen, *Proletarier*). Thus, the bodies produced by queer post-porn clearly differ from those selected and presented by the heteronormative mainstream porn. In that genre, the male body is materialized through the cumshot as a body of lust which is focused on the penis as exclusively erogenous zone. Consequently, this phallic gesture cannot exist in its traditional form in queer post-porn. To summarize, Preciado positions queer sexual practices against the heteronormative order that rejected and excluded them. The symbolic order of the new, contra-sexual society should not be conceptualized on the basis of the penis-phallus as the primary signifier but instead on the genderless dildo.

11 However, the artificial prosthesis of the dildo not only has the potential to blur the boundaries between different sexual and gender identities, but also those between human beings and technologies. Through the concept of Preciado's dildo, post-porn is already located within the scope of a feminist posthumanism. With reference to Foucault, the term

⁹ The German translation was used.

¹⁰ In 2009, Stüttgen published a reader which is based on the symposium and provides a profound overview of current queer-feminist post-porn debates. Stüttgen, Tim, ed. *Post/Porn/Politics Symposium/Reader: Queer_Feminist Perspective on the Politics of Porn Performances and Sex_Works as Culture Production*. Berlin: b_books, 2009.

technology is used to describe not only the inorganic and artificially created object but also its forms of application, i.e. discourses and practices that surround the tool or machine and activate it culturally in the first place (Preciado 115-117). In a feminist-posthumanist perspective, the inorganic and technological on the one hand and the organic and supposedly natural on the other hand are never located in an exterior relation to each other. This inseparable interconnection is analogous to the one between sexuality and power. Every mode of medical-technological interference with the human body – for instance the contraceptive pill – transgresses the boundaries of the organism and thereby renders such borders fragile and permeable (Preciado 109-127). So does a tool called dildo. When someone masturbates with a dildo in queer post-porn and the streams of lust circulate between the dildo and the organism, the attempt to establish the skin as a distinct barrier between the human being and technology becomes impossible and pointless (Joy 21:30-21:55). The diverse and rapidly increasing forms of interconnection between the organic and the technological produce new bodies over and over. As early as 1985, the feminist biologist and science historian Donna Haraway termed these hybrids cyborgs (Haraway 149-181). According to her, every human body is always already a cyborg as every body constantly is technologically connected. Hence, the body cannot be conceptualized without referring to technologies since it is produced by them in the first place.

12 Through the interconnections and hybridizations, body-subjects can emerge which are able to subvert the efforts of normalization of the existing, heteronormative and phallogocentric regime of sexuality. This ability constitutes the political potential for a queer-feminist agenda. These ambivalent bodies and bodily performances elude the supposedly normal identity categories and thereby make them fail. According to queer-feminists, the powerful procedures aiming at a specific normalization of sexuality and gender become queered by queer bodies. As a result, a transformation of the established regime of sexuality is enforced (Stüttgen, *Proletarier*; Stüttgen, *Therapie*). At that point, queer post-pornographic practices can develop an impact on society as a whole. Due to the fact that no body-subject is able to step outside of the regime of sexuality, everybody is affected by a transforming regime of sexuality. Moreover, the flexibilization and destabilization of solid sexual and gender identities allow new feminist coalition formations which were excluded by the rigorous binary identity politics that had been pursued by PorNO (Hark 104f., 108; Degele 52f., 109-117). Under these circumstances, it even becomes possible for a heterosexual man to deal critically and reflexively with heteronormative mainstream porn from a feminist perspective.

Works Cited

Anonymous. "Pornographie: Das Gesetz." EMMA Dec/1987. 19 December 2011

Aydemir, Murat. "The Cum Shot as Period, Ellipsis and Question Mark." *Post/Porn/Politics Symposium/Reader: Queer_Feminist Perspective on the Politics of Porn Performances and Sex_Works as Culture Production*. Ed. Tim Stüttgen. Berlin: b_books, 2009.124-131.

Beauvoir, Simone de. *Le Deuxième Sexe*. Paris: Gallimard, 1949.

_____. *Das andere Geschlecht: Sitte und Sexus der Frau*. Hamburg: Rohwolt, 1951.

Bovenschen, Silvia. "Auf falsche Fragen gibt es keine richtigen Antworten. Anmerkungen zur Pornographie-Kampagne." *Die nackte Wahrheit. Zur Pornographie und zur Rolle des Obszönen in der Gegenwart*. Ed. Barbara Vincken. München: dtv, 1997. 50-65.

Brownmiller, Susan. *Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1975.

Butler, Judith. *Das Unbehagen der Geschlechter*. Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1991.

_____. *Körper von Gewicht: Die diskursiven Grenzen des Geschlechts*. Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1997.

Deep Inside Annie Sprinkle. Dir. Annie Sprinkle. Ewart Enterprises Inc., 1982.

Deep Throat. Dir. Jerry Gerald aka Gerard Damiano. Arrow, 1972.

Degele, Nina. *Gender/Queer Studies*. Paderborn: Fink, 2008.

Dworkin, Andrea. *Pornography: Men Possesing Women*. New York: Perigee Books, 1979.

_____. *Pornographie: Männer beherrschen Frauen*. Mit einem Vorwort von Alice Schwarzer. Köln: Emma Frauenverlags-GmbH, 1987.

Feeling it! not faking it.... Dir. Petra Joy. Strawberry Seductions, 2008.

Foucault, Michel. *Histoire de la sexualité I: La volonté de savoir*. Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1976.

_____. *Der Wille zum Wissen: Sexualität und Wahrheit I*. Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp Verlag,

1983.

Goffman, Erving. *Rahmen-Analyse. Ein Versuch über die Organisation von Alltagserfahrungen*. Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1977.

Haraway, Donna. "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century." *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*. Donna Haraway. New York: Routledge, 1991.149-181.

Hark, Sabine. "Queer Interventionen." *Feministische Studien*. 11.2 (1993): 103-109.

Heineman, Elizabeth. "Jörg Schröder, linkes Verlagswesen und Pornographie." *Das Alternative Milieu: Antibürgerlicher Lebensstil und linke Politik in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und Europa 1968-1983*. Ed. Sven Reichert, Detlef Siegfried. Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2010. 290-312.

Koch, Gertrud. "Netzhautsex – Sehen als Akt." *Die nackte Wahrheit. Zur Pornographie und zur Rolle des Obszönen in der Gegenwart*. Ed. Barbara Vincken. München: dtv, 1997. 114-128.

Krämer, Sybille. *Sprache, Sprechakt, Kommunikation: Sprachtheoretische Positionen des 20. Jahrhunderts*. Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2001.

Preciado, Beatriz. *Manifeste contra-sexuel*. Paris: Balland, 2000.

_____. *Kontrasexuelles Manifest*. Berlin: b_books, 2003.

Rückert, Corinna. *Frauenpornographie: Pornographie von Frauen für Frauen. Eine kulturwissenschaftliche Studie*. Frankfurt a.M. i.a.: Lang, 2000.

Schwarzer, Alice. *Der 'kleine Unterschied' und seine großen Folgen. Frauen über sich: Beginn einer Befreiung*. Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer Verlag, 1975.

_____. "Gesetz gegen Pornographie: Die Begründung" *EMMA* Dec/1987. 19 December 2011

_____. "Vorwort." *Pornographie: Männer beherrschen Frauen. Mit einem Vorwort von Alice Schwarzer*. Andrea Dworkin. Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer Taschenbuch, 1990. 9-12.

Scott, Joan W. "Die Zukunft von Gender: Fantasien der Jahrtausendwende." *Gender – Die*

Tücken einer Kategorie: Joan W. Scott, Geschichte und Politik. Ed. Claudia Honegger, Caroline Arni. Zürich: Chronos, 2001. 39-63.

Stüttgen, Tim. "Before Orgasm: Fifteen Fragments on a Cartography of Post/Pornographic Politics". *Post/Porn/Politics Symposium/Reader: Queer-Feminist Perspective on the Politics of Porn Performances and Sex_Works as Culture Production.* Ed. Tim Stüttgen. Berlin: b_books, 2009. 8-21.

_____. "Kontrase sexuelle Therapie: Die Gender-Theoretikerin beatriz preciado fordert eine internationale kontrase sexuelle Multitude. Zweiter Teil." *Jungle World* 51/2004. 4 January 2012 .

_____ (ed). *Post/Porn/Politics Symposium/Reader: Queer_Feminist Perspective on the Politics of Porn Performances and Sex_Works as Culture Production.* Berlin: b_books, 2009.

_____. "Proletarier des Anus: Die Queer-Aktivistin, Gender-Theoretikerin und Verfasserin des ‚Kontrase xuellen Manifests‘, beatriz preciado, über Widerstand gegen die Normalisierung der Körper und das Durchkreuzen von Identitätspolitik. Teil 1." *Jungle World* 50/2004. 4 January 2012 .

Vincken, Barbara. "Einleitung: Cover up – Die nackte Wahrheit der Pornographie." *Die nackte Wahrheit. Zur Pornographie und zur Rolle des Obszönen in der Gegenwart.* Ed. Barbara Vincken. München: dtv, 1997. 7-22.

_____. "Männer, Frauen, Pornographie. Publikumsbezogene Privatheit und weibliches Subjekt." *Die nackte Wahrheit. Zur Pornographie und zur Rolle des Obszönen in der Gegenwart.* Ed. Barbara Vincken. München: dtv, 1997. 149-159.

Williams, Linda. "A Provoking Agent: The Pornography and Performance Art of Annie Sprinkle". *Social Text.* 37 (1993): 117-133.

_____. "Die visuelle und körperliche Lust der Pornographie in bewegten Bildern: Ein kurzer historischer Überblick." *Die Widerkehr des Anderen.* Ed. Jörg Huber, Alois Martin Müller. Basel, Frankfurt a.M.: Stroemfeld Verlag, 1996. 103-128.

_____. *Hard Core: Macht, Lust und die Traditionen des pornographischen Films.* Basel, Frankfurt a.M.: Stroemfeld, 1995.

Wirth, Uwe. "Der Performanzbegriff im Spannungsfeld von Illokution, Iteration und

Indexikalität.“ *Performanz: Zwischen Sprachphilosophie und Kulturwissenschaften*. Ed. Uwe Wirth. Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2002. 9-60.

Wolf, Enrico. *Bewegte Körper – bewegte Bilder. Der pornographische Film: Genrediskussion, Geschichte, Narrativistik*. München: Diskurs-Film-Verlag Schaudig & Ledig, 2008.

Subverting *Pornormativity*: Feminist and Queer Interventions

By Johanna Schorn, University of Cologne, Germany

Abstract:

Feminist activist Robin Morgan is famously quoted as saying that "pornography is the theory, rape is the practice". This has long been one of the chief arguments of pornography-critics, both liberal and conservative, and this attitude has largely forestalled the possibility of critical feminist engagement with the medium of pornography. There is, however, a small but growing number of sex-positive feminist pornographers who produce images and films that interrogate and disrupt the phallogocentric and heteronormative patterns of mainstream pornography and offer an alternative in the form of pornography that portrays bodies and sexualities in all of their variety. In this article, I provide a brief overview over feminist treatment of pornography, and then contrast it with the recent efforts by sex-positive feminists to reappropriate pornography in holistic and inclusive ways. I will underline my argument by providing examples from feminist producer Tristan Taormino and performer Jiz Lee.

1 In the preface to her 1979 book *Pornography*, feminist activist Andrea Dworkin defines the original literal meaning of the word pornography as "the graphic depiction of whores" (Dworkin 9). While the connotations of the word "whore" can be up for debate, sex-workers throughout history have been, and continue to be today, treated as second-class citizens and denied of certain rights. Thus the very meaning of the word pornography, then and now, seems to point towards the misogynistic and exploitative practices of the industry.

2 Over the years, countless voices on all points of the political spectrum have called to attention the myriad ways in which pornography negatively impacts society. In the 1980s, surrounding the investigations of the Meese Commission, a flurry of research was done to prove or disprove a connection between violent behavior towards women, including rape, and the consumption of pornography.¹ In her 2005 book *Female Chauvinist Pigs*, feminist author Ariel Levy examines the persistent cliché that adult industry actresses are overwhelmingly survivors of childhood abuse, and cites studies that support this (Levy 180). In the same book, Levy sees a connection between pornography and the increasingly invasive ways in which some women alter their looks (e.g. waxing, breast augmentation, labiaplasty) to come closer to contemporary standards of attractiveness (Levy 198), and she is hardly the first to make this connection.²

3 Accordingly, the feminist stance towards pornography has often been as negative as Dworkin's translation suggests. In the 1970s and 1980s, many feminists devoted all of their

¹ cf. Russel, Diana E.H. "Pornography and Rape: A Causal Model". *Political Psychology*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (March 1988). 41-73. or Linz, Daniel. "Exposure to Sexually Explicit Materials and Attitudes Toward Rape: A Comparison of Study Results". *The Journal of Sex Research*, Vol. 26, No. 1 (February 1989). 50-84.

² cf. Walter, Natasha. *Living Dolls: The Return of Sexism*. Frankfurt: Krüger Verlag, 2011.

energies towards fighting against pornography. Especially vocal anti-porn activists were Andrea Dworkin and Catharine MacKinnon.³ The two worked towards having ordinances enacted that would have given anyone harmed by the production or viewing of pornography the means for taking legal actions against the producers of said pornography (Cornell 3). For the two of them and for the purpose of these ordinances, pornography was defined as “graphic sexually explicit material that subordinate women through pictures or words” (Cornell 3).

4 Not all feminists of that time were fundamentally opposed to pornography, however. In fact, the issue became one of the most divisive topics in second wave feminism, causing what is now colloquially known as the “sex wars”. On the one hand were the feminists who were critical not only of pornography, but also of sex work and sometimes even heterosexual intercourse in itself. In a world permeated by patriarchal structures that always cast woman in a passive, objectified role without agency, they argued, woman never had the chance to say yes to sex – her yes was implied, or worse, unnecessary.

5 On the other side of this argument are the so-called sex-positive feminists. For them, it is not the individual expression of a given sexuality that is problematic (be that pornography, sex work, sadomasochistic practices or “plain old” heterosexual intercourse) but the cultural contexts in which they take place. While it is undeniably true that we live in a heteronormative patriarchal society that mandates certain ways of sexual expressions and does not generally place much of a focus on consent or equality, it should also be possible for individuals to experience their sexuality and pleasure in the way that feels most intuitive to them. For sex-positive feminists, the solution is not to restrict or outright ban certain practices, but to work together collectively to ensure that they can be performed within a “safe”, “healthy” and non-exploitative context. One of the ways in which this can happen in the specific example of pornography is through breaking apart the hegemonically phallogocentric, structure of the porn industry and through producing and distributing material that gives a “realistic” and more inclusive view of human sexuality in general and female sexual agency in particular.

6 Since the 1980s, sex-positive feminists have been reappropriating pornography for a female and/or feminist audience against all odds. Female porn producers have been producing and creating products that put female sexuality and agency to the fore, and in fact specifically emphasize equity and consent. These films offer many things that mainstream pornography does not: depiction of women of size and women of color, “realistic” depictions of lesbian sexuality and inclusion of people on the trans* spectrum to name just a few. Additionally,

³ German readers may remember the PorNO campaign, initiated by Alice Schwarzer and waged on the pages of her magazine EMMA. Schwarzer also wrote the Foreword to the first German edition of Dworkin’s book.

many of these women have made it their specific goal to educate women about their sexuality and offer instructional videos and books designed to help women get in touch with their own sexuality.

7 In this article I will sketch the history of anti-porn feminism and its view of pornography, and pose the question whether or not it is possible for feminists to reclaim pornography despite its misogynistic roots. I will demonstrate that, though anti-porn feminists since the 1970s have felt that pornography is inherently degrading to women and detrimental to the feminist cause, more recent sex-positive feminists take a more nuanced approach to pornography. While mainstream pornography remains largely a product that is produced by and for men, at the expense of women, sex-positive feminists feel that pornography itself can also exist in a feminist context. Female producers and performers in the industry confirm this idea by creating porn that is aimed specifically (but not exclusively) at women and brings a more holistic and inclusive approach to the genre.

8 Feminism's involvement in the debates surrounding pornography can be traced back to the feminists of the second wave. While the first wave had been primarily concerned with ensuring political equality, second wave feminists fought for social equality and against the objectification of women. Writers such as Susan Brownmiller (*Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape*, 1975) and Shulamith Firestone (*The Dialectic of Sex*, 1970) began to analyze the structures of society with the conclusion that the main means through which men control women is via sex. Brownmiller, in particular, made the connection to pornography as one of patriarchy's tools, and was one of the first to speak out against it. Together with other feminists, among them Andrea Dworkin, Adrienne Rich and Robin Morgan, she founded the organization Women Against Pornography in 1978.

9 Andrea Dworkin's name is, perhaps, the one that is most closely associated with feminists' response to pornography, and rightly so. She was one of the most outspoken and passionate feminists of her time, and she personified the righteous anger and desire for change that has driven the feminist movement. For her, pornography is the embodiment of woman's status in society, and woman's status is at the very bottom of the food chain: "In the male system, women are sex; sex is the whore. [...] Buying her is buying pornography. Having her is having pornography. Seeing her is seeing pornography" (Dworkin 202), and "the ideology of male sexual domination posits that men are superior to women by virtue of their penis; that physical possession of the female is a natural right of the male; that sex is, in fact, conquest and possession of the female" (Dworkin 203).

10 Her role has been so pivotal that she is hard to overlook, and though her fame waned in the last years before her death in 2005, she used to be both one of the most loved and the most hated people in the US. Even sex-positive feminists like erotica writer Susie Bright acknowledge Dworkin's influence on feminist thought regarding sex and pornography. In a blog post following the news of Dworkin's death, she wrote: "every single woman who *pioneered* the sexual revolution, every erotic-feminist-bad-girl-and-proud-of-it-stiletto-shitkicker, was once a fan of Andrea Dworkin. Until 1984, we all were. She was the one who got us looking at porn with a critical eye [...]" (Bright, 2005). But while Bright and sex-positivists of the era, such as early pornographers Nan Kinney and Deborah Sundahl, used Dworkin's ideas as a starting point for discovering a pleasure-centered sexuality, Dworkin and her "sisters in arms" devoted their time to legislating pornography.

11 This endeavor found its climax with several ordinances that Dworkin drafted together with Catherine MacKinnon which would declare pornography a civil rights violation. The ordinances, MacKinnon writes later, "provide[s] a cause of action to individuals who are coerced into pornography, forced to consume pornography, defamed by being used in pornography without consent, assaulted due to specific pornography" (MacKinnon 132). These ordinances were put to a vote in a handful of jurisdictions and passed by Indianapolis and Minneapolis, though ultimately failed in higher levels of authority in both cities.

12 Dworkin and MacKinnon continued to lobby for their ordinances until the late 1980s, but with no success. By that time, the anti-pornography movement had lost its steam, just as feminism itself had lost much of its support in mainstream culture. The late 1980s and early 1990s saw a waning interest and common agenda in feminism and its causes, and the movement only gained strength again with the onset of the third wave in mid 1990, which brought sex positivism with it as a major feature of feminism.

13 In a recent interview, sex blogger Clarisse Thorn gives this definition of sex-positive feminism:

[it] is about the belief that sex can be beautiful, it can be ugly, it can be difficult to deal with or easy to understand; some kinds of sex are widely misunderstood, and some kinds of sex are widely stereotyped; some people are really into sex, and some people aren't; but most importantly, all kinds of sex are okay as long as they happen among consenting adults. (Thorn 2011)

The aim of sex-positive feminists is to combat the restrictive social mandates that dictate what sexuality should look like. In our society, this means that sexuality is presented largely from a heteronormative point of view, with an emphasis on the pleasure of the male. Thorn sums up the effect this has on female sexuality: "[Women are] encouraged to be into sex in a very

performative way [...]. On the one hand, if we don't seem to enjoy sex in this very performative way, then we're seen as 'prudes'; at the same time, if we seem to enjoy sex too much then we're seen as 'sluts'" (Thorn 2011). Sex-positive feminists try to cut through those stereotypes and encourage everyone to explore the sexuality that feels authentic to them.

14 This concept is embraced and furthered by a host of activists who work in myriad ways to educate others on healthy, holistic sexuality. One of the most important aspects of activist work in this area is education around the issue of consent. Being able to give and obtain full, enthusiastic consent is one of the major tenets of sex-positivism: it is what makes the difference between sex as a performance, as exploitation or as abuse, and sex as a healthy and pleasurable act. One activist who has worked hard to promote enthusiastic consent is Jaclyn Friedman, who writes for the *Yes Means Yes* blog and is one of the editors of the 2008 anthology *Yes Means Yes: Visions of Female Sexual Power & a World Without Rape*. On her blog, she defines enthusiastic consent:

Enthusiastic consent is an ongoing state, not a yes/no lightswitch. It requires sexual partners to be in ongoing communication with each other. It does not mean that you have to get a signed contract to touch my right breast. It does mean that you have to pay attention to whether or not I'm into it as you move your hand toward my right breast, and that if you can't tell, you have to ask. (Friedman 2011)

Of course, giving consent to any given activity involves having a certain amount of knowledge and curiosity about one's own body and one's own likes and dislikes. Neither of those are things that women⁴ are regularly taught about, either via media presentation (which tends very much towards the performance that Thorns talks about) or via sex education that they receive in school.⁵ This is also the reason why education is such an important and explicit part of the work of sex-positive feminists and pornographers. Their aim is to fill in the gaps and correct the misinformation that are the result of abstinence-only sex education and mainstream media.

15 Clear and enthusiastic consent is the overriding principle of sex-positivism, and it allows for the acceptance and inclusion of people of color, people of size, and people with any gender presentation or sexual orientation (including asexuality), as well as the acceptance of non-traditional relationships (such as all forms of non-monogamy) and sexual practices (such as BDSM). In accordance with this, sex-positivism also combats the stigmas associated with female sexuality, specifically the idea that women are naturally demure and passive, and that

⁴ Women are not the only ones who suffer under the perpetuation of these stereotypes. Plenty of men feel overwhelmed by the expectation to always be active and "up for it".

⁵ In the US, the majority of government funding available for sex education curriculums is earmarked for abstinence-only-until-marriage programs. Additionally, many states have laws that mandate that only these programs be taught.

women who enjoy their sexuality or have surpassed whatever the socially sanctioned number of sex partners is that day are deviant or “slutty”.

16 Given this philosophical and political background, it is only natural that some sex-positive feminist activists have been working at bringing all of these influences to the porn industry, and to create films that portray “safe, healthy, realistic and inclusive” sexuality.

17 Feminist pornography is as diverse an industry as mainstream pornography, and there are many different performers and producers who create a variety of films that cater to all sorts of different tastes. What all of the women in this business have in common is their dedication to positive and inclusive portrayals of sexuality, and their identification as feminists as well as their involvement in feminist activism. Tristan Taormino, perhaps one of the most prolific of the feminist pornographers, states this mission at the very top of her webpage, PuckerUp.com: she calls it “Tristan Taormino’s Sex Positive Salon”. Prominently placed on the site is also a link to an article on feminist porn, where she gives a summary of the relationship between feminism and pornography as well as her own genesis as both a feminist and a pornographer. In the article, she writes

Feminist porn is porn that empowers viewers, both women and men: it gives them information and ideas about sex. It inspires fantasy and adventure. It validates viewers when they see themselves or a part of their sexuality represented. It counteracts the other messages we get from society: sex is shameful, naughty, dirty, scary, dangerous, or it’s the domain of men, where only their desires and fantasies get fulfilled. It presents sex as joyful, fun, safe, mutual and satisfying. (Taormino 2011)

Aside from shooting films, Taormino is also the author and editor of several books and erotica anthologies, including how-to guides directed at women on anything from female ejaculation to anal sex. Additionally, she often speaks at conferences and conducts workshops.

18 One of such how-to guides is the movie *Tristan Taormino’s Expert Guide to Oral Sex, Part 2: Fellatio*. Released in 2007 through her own production company, *Smart Ass Productions*, this film is designed to be both pleasurable and informative. From the very beginning, it deviates from the expectations one would generally have of a pornographic movie. It neither starts with a perfunctory attempt at plot, nor *in media res* with a naked couple. Instead, the viewer is greeted by a classroom setting, with Taormino herself as the instructor. She is dressed modestly and conservatively in a tailored pantsuit, and joined by an audience that is also fully clothed. The members of this audience are women of varying ages, races and body types. Taormino, armed with flipcharts and diagrams, proceeds to explain male anatomy. At the end of this theoretical lesson, Taormino introduces to her audience two adult performers, and asks them to talk about their own personal experiences with fellatio, as

well as their own likes and dislikes. Only after this conversation does the movie finally turn to pornographic images proper.

19 The two performers undress, and start to give a practical demonstration of the theory. Audience and instructor remain in the room, however, and Taormino comments on the sex act from the off, giving hints and tips, and explaining the actions and their purpose. The performers stop short of the cum-shot, which has become a staple in mainstream pornographic movies, and Taormino rounds off the session with a few final comments. Thus, we see a woman in control of a pornographic movie in every element of the film: the title proclaims her an expert on the topic, the first scene introduces her as the teacher and thus authority figure, she dominates the sex act through her comments and suggestions, and she ends the scene before we are presented with its anticipated climax in shape of the cum-shot which, in traditional pornography, presents the ultimate proof of male dominance and sexual prowess.

20 The rest of the movie consists of scenes that present variations of the techniques and strategies mentioned by Taormino. Though these scenes are more traditional in some aspects (no audience is present in the room, the performers quickly undress and proceed to sex), they also differ in some major aspects. Firstly, each of the scenes starts off with a conversation between the two performers in which they talk about their experiences with fellatio and discuss their preferences. Secondly, the action is frequently paused and captions containing advice and hints appear on the screen. And thirdly, the couples in the scenes, though all heterosexual, present a variety of races and body types.

21 As this brief discussion shows, Taormino's instructional movies present a break with the traditions of mainstream pornography. Rather than portraying scripted and staged sex acts and adhering to a very narrow and normative view of sexuality, Taormino presents her performers as individuals with unique preferences and quirks, and gives them the room to explore and present their own sexuality.

22 In the depth and variety of her work, Taormino is no exception in the world of feminist pornography. Many of the women working in this field are engaged in many different projects and are not only producing films but also working as activists to push back against negative stereotyping and heteronormativity, in mainstream porn as well as mainstream media. The directors and producers also cover every point on the sexuality spectrum, from vanilla to kinky and from straight to queer. While Taormino focuses on heterosexual interactions, many others place an emphasis on queer sexuality.

23 One such representation of queer porn is given by Jiz Lee. Lee, who identifies as genderqueer, debuted in 2005 in the now classic film *The Crash Pad*. Unique to this film (and

the on-going series based on the film) is the fact that it features a very high ratio of people of color, as well as people who identify as genderqueer, including Jiz Lee and their then-partner Syd Blakovich, another prominent porn performer. This, in itself, is another aspect that is unique in the feminist porn scene in general and the *Crash Pad*-series in particular: rather than random pairings, it often shows scenes between friends and even lovers. This makes them appear much more organic and realistic, and also adds to the comfort levels of the performers.

24 Jiz themselves, like other expressly sex-positive performers, has been vocal about their sex-positive activist agenda. In an interview with the *San Francisco Bay Guardian*, they say

I could write books and books on my thoughts on sex as a medium for social change and where this now fits within what could be defined as a renaissance of queer porn.[...] I think explicit queer sexuality on film will permeate the adult industry by opening dialogues about gender, sexuality, and sexual acts — queer porn can bring the seldom seen female-bodied authentic sexual response and pleasure to the screen [...]. (Lee 2009).

25 The movie *The Crash Pad* serves as another excellent example for the ways in which this brand of pornography breaks with the heteronormative and often sexist traditions of the genre. The eponymous crash pad is a house where people meet to have sex, but that only the initiated have access to. A limited number of keys exist, and no one can use their key more than seven times before they have to pass it on to someone else. That arrangement sets the scene, and pretty much takes care of the plot, which consists of various couples and groups having sex in the rooms of the crash pad.

26 The movie begins in the middle of a sex act involving two women, one white and one African-American, and a strap-on dildo. They are soon interrupted by Jiz Lee and another women, and Lee is invited to join them. This scene undermines the standard porn narrative in several ways. Firstly, there is a diversity when it comes to body types and race that is not usually seen in pornography. Secondly, it is the woman coded as the most femme of the three who takes charge of the situation, giving directions and asking for what she needs. And thirdly, though the condom-use is not negotiated on-screen, both of the characters who wear strap-on dildos are shown using condoms.

27 The following sex scenes continue in this vein, showcasing women of various races, body types and gender expressions and placing an emphasis on pleasure and communication. In the second scene, especially, both partners stay in contact throughout, ask what the other wants and wait for explicit answers. The portrayal of an unusually high comfort-level and obvious fun finds its climax in the third scene, between Jiz Lee and their then-partner

Blakovich. The movie also presents an interesting twist at the end, when the performer of the last scene (a masturbation scene) waves at the camera. The camera closes in on the gesture and then zooms back, revealing a computer that shows the scene we just saw, through a camera trained on the kitchen of the crash pad. The person sitting in front of the computer is also a woman, which finally turns the heteronormative porn-paradigm on its head completely. Not only are all of the performers (at least biologically) female, but the scenes are also “directed” and consumed by a woman.

28 To be clear, the topic of porn remains a deeply problematic one, and the views on it cannot be neatly divided into pro-porn/anti-porn camps. The vast majority of pornography that is produced and circulated is the kind of mainstream pornography that is overwhelmingly heterosexist, that is focused on phallogentric power and pleasure, that perpetuates “unhealthy” ideas about women and sexuality and that supports the image of the ideal woman as surgically altered and sexually subservient. This kind of pornography has been, and continues to be, met with valid criticism by conservatives as well as liberals, including sex-positive feminists.

29 While there is a small but growing number of feminist, sex-positive pornographers, they at this point constitute only a small subset of the industry, and the average consumer can fulfill their needs without ever coming across a movie by Taormino or Jiz Lee.

30 However, I do think that feminist pornography presents an interesting and fresh perspective on this tricky subject. Feminist pornographers have carved out a niche for themselves in a very unlikely place, and they have effectively demonstrated that there are ways to engage with sexuality that are healthy and pleasurable for everyone involved. They provide a space where everything is optional except everyone’s enthusiastic consent and earnest desire to participate in sex acts that are mutually pleasurable. When contrasted with the regular narrative of sexuality that we are exposed to almost daily, that seems revolutionary in and of itself. And while this presentation is not front and center, it is freely available on the Internet for anyone who is looking for it, and it should provide some hope for anyone who is fed up with mainstream pornography and the way it has hijacked sexuality.

Works Cited

- Bright, Susie. "Andrea Dworkin has Died". 11 April 2005. *Susie Bright's Journal*. 20 January 2012.
- Chancer, Lynn S. "From Pornography to Sadomasochism: Reconciling Feminist Differences." *Annals of the American Academy of Social Sciences*, Vol. 571, Feminist Views of the Social Sciences (September 2000): 77-88.
- Cornell, Drucilla. *Feminism & Pornography*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- Dworkin, Andrea. *Pornography: Men Possessing Women*. London: The Women's Press, 1979.
- Friedman, Jaclyn. "The (Nonexistent) Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Consequences of Enthusiastic Consent". 3 January 2011. *Yes Means Yes: Visions of Female Sexual Power and a World Without Rape*. 10 January 2012
- Lee, Jiz. "An Exciting Time for Queer Porn." 12 November 2009. San Francisco Bay Guardian Online. Interview by Juliette Tang. 11 January 2012.
- Levy, Ariel. *Female Chauvinist Pigs. Women and the Rise of Raunch Culture*. London: Pocket Books, 2006.
- MacKinnon, Catherine A. "The Roar on the Other Side of Silence". *Feminism & Pornography*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000. 130-153.
- Taormino, Tristan. "What is Feminist Porn?". 2011. *PuckerUp.com: Tristan Taormono's Sex-Positive Salon*. 10 January 2012 < <http://puckerup.com/feminist-porn/what-is-fp/>>
- The Crash Pad*. Dir. Shine Louise Houston. Pink & White Productions: 2005. DVD.
- Thorn, Clarisse. "Interview with a Sex-Positive Feminist." 16 December 2011. *Feministe: In Defense of the Sanctimonious Women's Studies Set*. 10 January 2012
- Tristan Taormino's Expert Guide to Oral Sex, Part 2: Fellatio*. Dir. Tristan Taormino. Smart Ass Productions: 2007. DVD.

Fragments of Fear and Power: On the Pornographic Construction of Masculinity

By Samuel Horn, Cologne, Germany

Abstract:

The degrading "objectification" of women in pornography has been widely debated. By implication, men in pornography are often perceived as overbearing "subjects". In this paper, I want to argue however that pornography reduces men visually and symbolically to fragments of a preliminary subjectivity. A brief discussion of pornographic cinematography identifies visual strategies of fragmentation. I then discuss symbolical strategies as revealed in Drucilla Cornell's Lacanian approach to pornography. Cornell's suggestion of infantility in the men of porn is invaluable to my hypothesis: pornography does not represent adult masculinity and sexual power conveyed by men but an infantile fantasy of masculinity and sexual power conveyed by fragments of men. In conclusion, I want to add that in times of ubiquitous online pornography, masculinity is at a loss for alternative models of sexual behavior. The last chapter of this paper explicitly moves from academic to creative questions and offers suggestions from an artist's point of view on how such alternatives could be effected.

Editorial Note: In 2006, I wrote a seminar paper on men in American internet pornography. The article at hand is a revised version of that paper that I translated from the original German and abbreviated considerably for this publication. For legal reasons, I left out a chapter closely analyzing specific pornographic visuals. I would be happy to provide the original paper to interested fellow researchers.

Introduction

1 In my research on the public and academic debate of pornography, I found much criticism on the pornographic visualization of women but very little on the visualization of men. The focus of this paper is explicitly narrowed to the pornographic construction of men and masculinity.

2 I will briefly discuss the influence of pornography as a socio-cultural means of masculine identification. The ensuing questions are, how is male identity constructed visually in pornography and to what ends are the specific strategies of narrative construction employed?

3 The technical side of construction will be discussed in a brief excursion into film theory, offering the suggestion that pornographic visibility reduces men - as much as women - to specific fragments that do not add up to identifiable bodies. The question of possible motives for this reductionism will be addressed by discussing a Lacanian reading of pornography.

4 This reading, particularly Drucilla Cornell's "Pornography's Temptation", claims that an infantile fear of the phallic mother is at the core of the pornographic construction of masculinity. I will argue that the Lacanian approach is problematic because it seems to apply the same foundations to masculinity that is pornographically reduced as to masculinity outside pornography.

5 Overall, pornography is ascribed an enormous role in the process of male identification. Since I am not an academic, I will close this paper by giving an artist's point of view: what can be done to overcome pornographic simplifications? What alternatives might be created? How can pornography be beat at its own game?

The Social Weight of Porn

6 One particular claim is often found in the context of pornography criticism: the ongoing reproduction of patriarchic structures in pornography is an influence - especially on the young - that must be avoided and should even be legally banned from the public.

7 The matter of public influence will not be addressed empirically in this paper. I have not found a single large-scale empirical study that would help ascertain answers to questions such as: do male audiences really assure themselves of their masculinity by means of a pornographic representation of male supremacy? Are male audiences content with such representations? Do female audiences really "learn" from pornography to be submissive? These issues remain dramatically, yet opaquely virulent in the debate on pornography. It is highly desirable that empirical studies be undertaken in order to define pornography's influence on society, particularly young audiences, male and female alike.

8I n lack of such empirical data, I want to discuss some theoretical considerations on the influence of pornography. For example, social constructivist Michael Kimmel takes the view that pornography has enormous educational relevance: "Pornography ... instructs young men about the relationship between their sexuality and their masculinity. ... [It] is an important part of the male sexual script, which, in turn, is a vital confirmation of masculinity" (12).

9 The term "script" echoes both a sociological and a cinematic meaning. On the one hand, a social script is the sum of socially and culturally available elements from which real-life, everyday masculinity is acquired. On the other hand, a narrative script is the foundation of any cinematic product, simplistic thought it may be in the case of pornography.

10 According to Kimmel, both scripts amalgamate over the course of socialization so that pornography becomes an institution of cultural and social influence at a level with sex

education as offered by schools and parents, and even with young men's own sexual experiences.

11 In a somewhat Butlerian line of thought, Kimmel's argument implies that the symbolism of pornography, among other sexual scripts, is inseparably linked with the physical experience of sex. This socio-performative view seems to make out pornography to be a social “agens” acting upon a socio-physical “patients”.

12 However, Kimmel's view on pornography as a powerful influence in sexual education does not exclude the possibility of change. Scripts can be analyzed and reevaluated. Dependent on patriarchic structures that are, in turn, culturally inherited, the influence of pornography as one of the sexual scripts is amenable to cultural influence.

13 Kimmel's view is certainly more differentiated than Catharine MacKinnon's. MacKinnon describes male pornography audiences to be no more than “slaves” to the genre:

Sooner or later ... the consumers want to live out the pornography further in three dimensions. ... It makes them want to. When they feel they can, when they feel they can get away with it; when they believe they can get away with it, they do. ... [T]hey may use whatever power they have to keep the world a pornographic place. (MacKinnon in Cornell, 123, *emphases in orig.*)

14 Cornell comments that this view "represents an exact, if gender-inverted, reinscription of Freudian insight that anatomy is destiny" (125) and goes on to argue that MacKinnon simply equates masculinity with its pornographic representation: "MacKinnon's view of men and masculine sexuality precisely mirrors the pornographic world which she critiques. ... The fantasy of the dick controlling the man is inseparable from the sexuality of the pornographic world" (125)

15 MacKinnon's essentialist claims of causality make for a dead end in the debate on pornography. Kimmel's term “script”, however, allows for a multitude of layers to be analyzed in the pornographic making of masculinity. As this clash of views on pornographic masculinity shows, it cannot be emphasized enough that the depiction of men in pornography is not a mimesis of “real masculinity” but a cultural fiction. In the following, I want to offer a brief excursion into film theory to analyze how this fiction is visually conveyed.

Visual Fragmentation and (Re-)Assembly

16 For technical reasons, all visual media must make choices concerning perspectives on and details of their depictions. I want to argue that the technical choices made specifically in pornography - angles, details, editing - and the underlying symbolism go hand in hand in the pornographic “construction” of men.

17 German film critics Hißnauer and Klein summarize the principle of cinematic construction in general: "Cinematic language makes use of [...] visuality beyond a simple task of representation and navigates the audience's gaze" (33).¹ How is this "navigation" achieved? Roughly speaking, there are two stages in cinematic production that determine the finished product: the division of scenes into single shots and the montage of these shots into a new cinematic "whole".

18 In non-pornographic film-making, an abundance of details and angles is recorded to allow for the montage to provide a certain completeness of the film's bodies. As virtual as this completeness may be though even in the most "conventional" films: in pornography, it seems, such completeness is never even aspired to.

19 Pornography typically uses close-ups of the genitalia and other particular areas of the body. I have no empirical data at hand for a proper statistical ranking,² but from my observations, the choices made in pornography are few: faces, mouths and eyes seem to be some of the other typically emphasized areas. The division of scenes – and bodies – typically found in pornography can therefore be described as a visual fragmentation.

20 A montage, or (re-)assembly of bodies from these fragments must fail. I want to go as far as to say: there are no bodies in pornography. Pornography goes on to show nothing but fragments and thus deprives its protagonists of being "whole" bodies as well as "whole" subjects. The men of porn, therefore, seem not to be granted identification.

21 On a symbolic level, with reference to Jacques Lacan, Hißnauer and Klein tie the technical process of cinematic body-making to the infantile process of self-identification: "[T]he montage merges the fragmentary body images into a new entirety. The image becomes the imago" (34). Jacques Lacan himself calls the mirror stage "the transformation that takes place in the subject when he assumes an image - whose predestination [...] is sufficiently indicated by the [...] ancient term imago" (2). "To assume" means to "take on" an image. Lacan seems to imply that a conscious decision underlies the infantile process of self-identification.

22 According to Hißnauer and Klein's argument, a conscious decision is the foundation also for the identification of bodies, or "whole-body-making," in film. This decision lies with the filmmakers. The assembly of bodies from images of body fragments is an endeavor consciously planned and carried out on the set and in the editing room.

¹ All quotes from Hißnauer and Klein: my translation.

² Also, the visual examples I used in my 2006 version of this paper have been excluded for legal reasons from the version at hand. Examples are however abundantly available online.

23 Yet, the editing process can only merge what the footage offers. The infantile subject in Lacan's argument is always already fragmentary and unifies herself - successfully or not³ - through the assumption of her own reflection in the mirror. A film, on the other hand, must produce its own fragments first and then address the issue of assembly. That is to say, the fragments always already contain the pre-formulated motives that motivated their production in the first place. I will discuss below, with regard to Cornell's Lacanian reading of porn, what some of these motives might be.

24 Pornographers and critics alike must realize: the depiction of men in pornography is not a representation but a construction, a fiction effected by certain narrative strategies. The beginning of this event is always marked, for each production, by the same conscious process of decision-making: what fragments are to be produced to serve as a selection for later assembly?

25 The technical aspects of film-making in pornography tell us one very important thing about the symbolism that goes with it: on a symbolic level, the men of porn, with their bodies cinematically incomplete, are no more than roughly sketched, pre-imago patchworks. How, then, can they be taken for men, i.e. representations - or constructions - of adult masculinity when they seem to be, in a Lacanian sense, infantile? With such little cinematic cohesion - when, visually, they are on the verge of dissolution - what is it that still holds them together on a symbolic level? Pornography criticism seems to find an abundance of power in the men of porn. But, in Lacan's word, how can they possess the "phallus" when they are literally premature? Or do they, in fact, not possess the phallus after all? I want to take a closer look at what the Lacanian concept of the phallus is - and whether or not it can be made out in the men of porn.

Phallocentrism: From Infancy to Pornography

26 In "Pornography's Temptation," Drucilla Cornell finds both femininity and masculinity to be drastically reduced in pornography. Arousal is achieved, she argues, through "the graphic description of woman's body as dismembered by her being reduced to her sex and stripped completely of her personhood" (106). On masculinity, she remarks:

In pornography, the prick is always presented ... as having the positive 'attributes' of the one who can fuck and come. But this depends on an anatomical reductionism in which a man's sexual difference has had extracted from it all evidence that he is a self, and leaves behind only a single aspect of his life - a being whose sexuality completely takes him over. (125)

³ I am skipping at this point the Lacan's more complex argument concerning the limitations of self-identification in the mirror stage, namely the concept of "méconnaissance".

27 Women and men alike are thus pornographically reduced to their anatomy, and anatomical fragments at that, as I have discussed above. The difference, however, according to Cornell, lies in the attribution of different meanings to the genitalia. With reference to Lacan, Cornell shows that in pornography, the penis is identified with the (Lacanian concept of the) phallus, whereas female genitalia are made to be threatening. Central to Cornell's discussion is "Lacan's insight that at the very basis of Western culture lies the repressed, abjected figure of the ultimate object of desire, the phallic Mother" (126). In Lacanian theory, this imaginary character is the substrate of an infantile myth. The infant's life depends on the mother, and the male child emancipates himself for the first time in the oedipal phase, overcoming that threatening power only in desiring to obtain it, to become one with it.

28 However, the boy realizes the sheer physical difference between him and the mother. The first sense of completeness in self-identification - the result of mirror stage - is threatened. A re-identification with the mother becomes impossible to imagine: the mother's lack of a penis is rationalized as an incompleteness, a lack, a castration, and to become one with her would mean to be castrated also. The young boy can now define himself exclusively by the difference.

29 He is drawn to an alternative identification model "to seek the fulfillment of desire that can no longer be guaranteed by the fantasy of the phallic Mother who is only 'there for the infant'" (128, *inv. comma in orig.*). This model is found in the "symbolic father", a figure that, according to Lacan, can stand in for anything the mother desires. What she wants - what she lacks - is in a position to dominate her. Thus, the boy's identification with the symbolic father, his "drive to enter into the symbolic realm" (128) is not a redemption of his desire for the phallic mother but is an identity that offers him domination over that which he desires.

30 This position of dominance is what Lacan - ambiguously - calls the "phallus". Elizabeth Grosz defines the phallus thus: "The phallus seems to function as the signifier of the presence and absence of access to power and self-definition" (Grosz 141). As a "signifier", the phallus is of course more than a mere "sign" of power, as a detective's badge would be. Doerte Bischoff argues that "what makes the phallus more than a sign and therefore a skandalon, is the fact that it has been claimed to create all-encompassing power" (Bischoff 294).⁴ It is by the grace of the phallus that one is capable of entitling oneself to power over others who lack the phallus and the capability of self-empowerment that comes with it. These others are therefore driven by desire for the phallus or, vicariously, one that possesses it.

⁴ All quotes from Bischoff: my translation.

31 Bischoff goes on to emphasize that the phallus itself is as much a cultural construct as is its patriarchal implementation. Inasmuch as it offers a metaphorical alliance between masculinity and power, Bischoff argues, "the phallus is to feminist criticism a symbol of patriarchal cultural tradition" (294). In other words, the phallus itself is a symbol among symbols and does not transcend symbolic systems inherent in a culture evolved through tradition.

32 In patriarchy, the phallus is ascribed to the symbolic and the actual father, not least due to the father's sheer ability "of stamping [the mother] with his name" (Cornell 129). By accepting the father's name, the mother officially declares her lack – and his ownership – of the "phallus".⁵ Accordingly, the identification of the penis and the phallus in patriarchy takes place in the boy's realization of (1) the physical difference between him and his mother and (2) the fact that the equally penis-bearing father has official and physical dominion over the mother: "The biological penis takes on the significance [of the phallic signifier] only through its identification with the Big Other that secures identity through the power to control the Mother/Other" (129).

33 According to Cornell, pornography makes use of these unconscious processes to visualize a masculinity that coheres with the dominant, powerful father. From Cornell's psychoanalytical point of view, this is the very core of pornography: The fantasy of identification with the ideal "omni-potent" man "protects the man from ever having to face the other possibility of unconscious dis-identification between the phallus and the penis" (129). Still, the fear "that he too is lack, i.e., that the penis is never the phallus and cannot be because the phallus does not exist except as fantasy" (129) is ever present in the unceasing desire for the mother who is still perceived as potentially phallic. Otherwise, it would not be necessary that a man "turns to pornography that ... positions him as the one imagined to be the all-powerful Father, the one with the erect prick" (129). For Cornell, this is exactly what male pornography audiences do, securing pornography's substantial role in the preservation of patriarchy.

34 To this Lacanian interpretation, pornography is a means of coping with infantile trauma in adulthood: "The pornographic scene has to be repeated because the phallic Mother ... will always return on the level of the unconscious" (130) - in the guise of every woman encountered. Therefore, the pornographic scenario becomes the only - albeit unreflected and infantile - escape: an "escape into power," as Andrea Dworkin calls it (Dworkin 64). Cornell

⁵ At most, marriage grants her a nominal pseudo-participation in his "phallus", e.g. in German-speaking countries where it was common until the middle of the 20th century that women would be addressed according to their husbands' credentials ("Frau Doktor").

summarizes that pornography "mimics the male child's ascendance into the adult masculine symbolic in which he too becomes a man, proud of his prick, with its power to control women" (Cornell 131).

35 I want to argue however that pornography does not offer a straightforward reassurance of pride and power. In fact, pornography weakens the confidence of male audiences and questions their masculinity by presenting a sexual act that is too specifically constructed to be experienced in everyday life: infantile fear confronted with particular physical features (size matters!), improbable stamina and, of course, the most subordinate and "easy-to-be-convinced" sexual partners. This strategy is peculiar. Why would pornography confront paying customers with a male sexuality thus unattainable? It is of course common in capitalist businesses to offer products that will soon outdate and leave customers wanting the updated model. In this sense, lasting reassurance must not be the product of pornography lest the business of pornography become obsolete. Yet, in pornography, updates are not taking place, the product is stagnant. The Lacanian reading suggests that male audiences hold on to this straw to keep patriarchy alive, even at the cost of diversity and potentiality of their own masculinity. I want to add that if there were more and better alternatives to pornography, perhaps male audiences would opt for very different models of masculinity that are not founded on fear and physical fragmentation. I will address this thought further below in the last chapter of this paper.

Conclusions

36 In Cornell's view, the men of porn remain in the possession of the "phallus". The price however is staggering: the men of porn are stuck, powerfully, in an infantile fear of their mothers and therefore, by projection, all women. While Cornell labels the pornographic male "a being whose sexuality completely takes him over" (125), her own argument reveals this male as a being completely taken over by his fear. In pornography, it appears in this reading, fear, sexuality, and power are the same – which amounts to the psychopathology of rapists. And what is more, the desperately fearful fragmentation and reduction of men as found in the Lacanian analysis resembles an inverse castration that hails the infantile fantasy of the penis-phallus but sacrifices all other qualities of men.

37 Cornell's Lacanian reading offers valuable insight into possible motives for the pornographic reductionism that leaves women and men visually fragmented. The sexual power of the fragments identified as "male" exercised violently over the fragments identified as "female" is very real within the narrow-minded narrative framework of pornography.

38 However, the influence of pornography on masculinities outside this framework remains to be discussed. The implications here seem to be that masculinity is always already patriarchal in a Lacanian sense and that pornography - as a reiteration of patriarchy - corresponds to needs always already present in male audiences. Accordingly, Cornell claims a psychoanalytical approach to be the only adequate means of analysis: „I set forth a psychoanalytical account so that we can adequately come to terms with pornography as a cultural phenomenon“ (Cornell 126).

39 Cornell argues against MacKinnon that her "view of men and masculine sexuality precisely mirrors the pornographic world which she critiques" (125). The dynamics of pornography and its Lacanian reading seem no less problematic. On the one hand, the theorems of psychoanalysis of Freudian and Lacanian traditions have long since found their way – albeit in simplified form – into popular culture and thus into the very social and cultural scripts that are substantial to the making of masculinity – according e.g. to Kimmel's argument as discussed above. Pornography, too, is thus informed by simple notions of Freudian and Lacanian gender role templates.

40 Therefore, psychoanalytical theory may in fact be adequate in finding within pornography elements of a psychoanalytical origin. In turn, infantile fear and a desire for an “escape into power” may in fact be the foundation of pornographic masculinity. I want to emphasize however that masculinity outside pornography must not be reduced to pornographic – or psychoanalytic – simplicity. Otherwise, pornography as informed by psychoanalysis and the psychoanalytic reading of pornography are at risk of falling most unfortunately into coalescence.

41 Brutality and submission out of fear are of course means to the assertion of a certain kind of power - the fearful power of rapists and tyrants. However, all male exercise of power or sexuality is not founded on infantile irrational fear and desperation because it does not exclusively induce violence and oppression. Many other qualities can also be found in male sexual behavior outside pornography, such as creativity, foresight, tenderness, responsibility, prudence, attentiveness, sensitivity, spontaneity and many more.

42 I want to emphasize at this point that masculinity must be more than a socially and culturally inherited concept. In order for this concept to evolve, it must be informed at least to some degree by the constant reevaluation that is taking place in the very moment of physical and emotional experience. Simply put, masculinity is as much shaped by sensation as by cultural knowledge.

43 A suggestion along these lines is found in Robert W. Connell's introductory reader

"Masculinities." Connell claims that "[m]asculine gender is [...] a certain feel to the skin, certain muscular shapes and tensions, certain postures and ways of moving, certain possibilities in sex" (52-53). Such possibilities do include "definite social relations" (54) and are therefore imbedded in, and dependent on, social and cultural traditions.

44 A diversity of male sexualities, then, would have to be a "combination of force and skill" (54) and thus the result of a dynamic gathering of physical and conceptual components: "the performance is symbolic and kinetic, social and bodily, at one and the same time, and these aspects depend on each other." (54)

45 Explicit depictions of male sexuality of such a kind, rich in nuances and subtleties, are hardly to be found in or marginalized by currently established pornography. On the contrary, the poverty of the prevailing narrative construction of masculinity in pornography is abysmal. The problem lies with the lack of alternatives. Pornography has a monopoly; no alternatives are readily available on a mass distribution level. The following appeal is dedicated to a few suggestions for such alternatives.

To Beat Porn At Its Own Game: An Afflicted Artist's Appeal

46 I am no professional academic. As a writer, I have an artistic urge to break from an academic perspective and make suggestions on what can be done, concretely, publicly, artistically, outside the range of academic debates. Call the following a utopia. I believe it's our only hope in standing up against the simplifications of pornography.

47 First of all, debates on a legal ban of pornography are in fact futile. Prohibition has never stopped pornographers from producing their material. Also, it lends an air of political protest. Let's not give pornographers the excuse of noble-mindedness. Besides, the legal situation - especially concerning the internet - is complex to say the least. Online distribution is very hard to control, and as teachers and social workers from all over the world report, even active parental control over their minors' use of the internet is extremely limited.

48 Access to pornography has never been as easy: many popular porn websites are free of charge, and the only hint of legal responsibility is a hilarious button that says "Yes, I'm of age". The categories of porn that these websites offer include contents that are only recently available to a wide public, such as bestiality, mass rape, and many more. This makes today's porn a more terrifying influence than ever. I agree: We must somehow protect our minors - and ourselves - from this influence.

49 However, the unpleasant and often publicly avoided fact is that this endeavor has already failed. The influence is at work. Audiences worldwide, including minors, are

consuming porn online at this very moment.

50 We keep discussing the ubiquity of porn and its massive influence on our minors. Meanwhile, we yield the floor to the very agent we so desperately hope might somehow, magically, lose its appeal.

51 I propose that we create something better, something that will outshine porn, something that will deserve the title “sexual education,” something that will give our minors access to an understanding of sexuality so rich that they will put pornography aside as something impoverished and boring, something that - in the long run - will famish the porn industry and hang it out to dry.

52 I propose that we produce alternative explicit visuals, a multitude of diverse and opalescent depictions of sexuality that are rife with qualities so painfully lacking in porn: Diversity. Playfulness. Courage. Sensuality. Boundaries. Confidence. Curiosity. Prudence. Tenderness. Care. And many, many more.

53 We take possession of the channels of distribution that porn makes use of, and we make our alternative products as massively and easily available as porn is now. We publish our material online, using every viral marketing trick in the book. We broadcast it on TV at prime-time. We print it on the cover pages of magazines and on the billboards in our cities and along our highways.

54 We need a change of paradigm – yes, one that is actually worth this overused term. We have to pick up the pieces of the 20th century beginnings of sexual liberation and bring it, finally, thoughtfully, lovingly, to fruition.

55 Pornography will not stand a chance.

Works Cited

Bischoff, Doerte. "Körperteil und Zeichenordnung. Der Phallus zwischen Materialität und Bedeutung". In: Claudia Benthien and Christoph Wulf, Ed. *Körperteile*. Hamburg: Rowohlt, 2001.

Connell, Robert W. *Masculinities*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995.

Cornell, Drucilla. "Pornography's Temptation". In: Drucilla Cornell Ed. *The Imaginary Domain*. New York: Routledge, 1995.

Dworkin, Andrea. *Pornographie*. Frankfurt: Fischer, 1990.

Grosz, Elisabeth. "The Penis and the Phallus". In: Sue Vice Ed. *Psychoanalytic Criticism*. Cambridge UP, 1996.

Hißnauer, Christian and Thomas Klein. "Visualität des Männlichen". In: Christian Hißnauer and Thomas Klein, Ed. *Männer-Machos-Memmen. Männlichkeit im Film*. Mainz: Bender, 2002.

Kimmel, Michael. *Men Confront Pornography*. New York: Crown, 1990.

Lacan, Jacques. *Écrits: a selection*. Trans. Alan Sheridan. London: Routledge, 1977.

**Kevin Floyd: *The Reification of Desire: Toward a Queer Marxism*
(Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009)**

By Japhet Johnstone, University of Washington/Seattle, USA

1 Kevin Floyd begins *The Reification of Desire* at an impasse between Marxist and queer theory on a snowy night in New England when he missed Judith Butler's appearance at a *Rethinking Marxism* conference. From there Floyd attempts a reconciliation between Marxism and queer theory via historicizing arguments that scrutinize social, economic, and political practices and norms in the twentieth and twenty-first century. Floyd's path "toward a queer Marxism" traces economic and sexual regulation over the last one hundred years in the United States. The path is marked by vivid examples and theoretical complexity—for example, a fishing scene from *The Sun Also Rises* appears as an intersection of failed masculinity and deskilled labor, and gay pictorials from the 1950s and 1960s serve as evidence for an unregulated, covert economy of desire. Floyd's combination of textual analysis with philosophical reflection promises to make the book a new classic in queer studies.

2 Floyd's comparisons of theoretical positions and his analyses of films, magazines, and novels build upon a chronological structure that starts with Taylorism and psychoanalysis in the early twentieth century and arrives at neoliberalism and queer worldmaking in the twenty-first. The critique of capitalist and heteronormative structures during this period benefits from Floyd's ability to develop arguments on multiple levels and at different pitches. This quality also enhances the connections he makes between perhaps unlikely interlocutors such as Lukács and Foucault; Butler and Hemingway; or Jameson and *Midnight Cowboy*.

3 Floyd's book makes the most of queer theory's eclecticism and strategic ambiguity. He argues throughout for keeping theoretical frameworks flexible and exploratory instead of drawing stark lines of demarcation and setting up boundaries between terminologies and ideologies. Indeed, he explicitly characterizes his treatment of Marxism as an open theoretical system. Those wishing for clear, but predetermined, definitions of Floyd's key terms—"reification" and "totality"—might find his recursive method too labor intensive. But in order to develop new ways of understanding the term "reification," Floyd claims that we need to follow its diverse connotations and permutations (25). Floyd never does deliver a simple answer or final definition. However, it is clear by the end of the book that his early abstract formulations are part of the book's architecture and ultimately connected to localized instances of both reification and totality thinking. For instance, in the introduction Floyd

writes, “Reification compels an experience of privatization and isolation, an experience of exchange relations as impermeable to human intervention” (17). Each link in this chain of terms becomes part of the material history of regulating desire. From Lukács’s implicit heteronormative moral imperatives in chapter one to the final discussions concerning the sexual, racial, and economic rezoning of Greenwich Village, the book links past and present, abstract and concrete. Floyd’s self-description of the book as “a queer variation on the dialectic of reification and totality” (32) implies more than just a codetermining relationship between the two terms. The book is also dialectic in a Hegelian sense, as it leads the reader through a cognitive process to help us grasp terms that, at first, seemed mere abstractions.

4 Part of what makes this history and dialectical journey coherent and innovative is the incorporation of regulation theory throughout the book. By focusing on the accumulation of capital, Floyd presents his most compelling parallels between Marxism and queer history. He shows how the regulation of financial capital functions similarly to the regulation of sexuality and, thus, connects Taylorism and psychoanalysis, skilled labor and masculinity, and cowboys and Fordism. The notion that the production and consumption of psychoanalytic knowledge of the self was similar to the controlled environment of the factory under Taylorism implies that, according to Floyd, the personal, individual body--of the skilled worker and of the sexual (male) individual--was no longer within the realm of personal knowledge of one’s self. This connection between labor and sexuality opens the door to a critical rethinking of central tenets of queer theory regarding the body, performance, and questions of agency. Indeed, Floyd takes up this task and challenges aspects of Michel Foucault’s and Judith Butler’s writings on the body and power. The critique of queer theorists, in turn, draws attention to the premises of the Marxist theorists that Floyd vigorously questions. The result is dialogue facilitated by Floyd’s willingness to explore possibilities.

5 While Floyd proves his competence in navigating multiple theoretical texts at once, his own theoretical stance vis-à-vis the body seems essentializing, which from a queer perspective is problematic. Though he makes quick work of Žižek’s posturing with the “real,” he himself relies on a natural, real masculine body that exists somewhere beyond/before twentieth-century America. This reified body appears when Floyd differentiates between manhood and masculinity. This terminological distinction is important to his criticism of both Butler and Žižek, as he indicates various ahistorical elements in their conceptualizations of (gender) reality and shows how “performativity” itself is a historical concept that follows the nineteenth-century physiological understanding of gender and identity. To be sure, this

critical perspective on Butler and performativity is one of Floyd's most interesting contributions to future gender theory debates. However, in the broader scope of his argument, the distinction between manhood and masculinity risks reinscribing modes of regulation that Floyd otherwise deconstructs and to which he clearly objects. While Floyd does admit that even manhood (and womanhood) might be understood as performative (90), the distinction between manhood and masculinity destabilizes the book's queer critical edge—as it turns to a nostalgic logic of gender identity. Floyd posits a pre-capitalist male body with its manhood intact. With Taylorism's deskilling of labor and psychoanalysis's deskilling of sexual self-knowledge comes the severing of man from manhood. The new term "masculinity" appears as a superficial semblance of what the working man once was.

6 And yet, *The Reification of Desire* itself sensitizes us to the very kind of critique that one might level against it. Floyd's treatment of the manhood-masculinity divide is less a blemish on his otherwise admirable blend of theoretical debates and cultural analysis than it is a testament to the book's critical potential. One of Floyd's greatest strengths is his way of simultaneously invoking a theoretical stand point, criticizing it, and exploring new approaches to think through it. A case in point: when he presents *Midnight Cowboy* as an allegory, he also investigates the idea of allegory itself, situating it within the context of Fredric Jameson's work. He then complicates his analysis of the film by way of a critique of Jameson's concept of national allegory. The book is full of these recursive moments, in which Floyd demonstrates sharp reflexive thinking. Thus, any criticism of the book's lacks or oversights might be better framed as invitations for continued debate.

7 Floyd does not engage in the type of "totality thinking" that he disparages, one that would supply his readers with a master schema for understanding all aspects of society—even when the current relevance of his arguments seems quite pervasive. Indeed, one of the most telling signs that *The Reification of Desire* will become a key book in the field of queer theory (and perhaps beyond) is its knack for contributing to an understanding of even the most recent economic and political events. While writing this review, the Occupy Wall Street movement was evicted from Zuccotti Park, a "Privately Owned Public Space" (Foderaro). Within the context of Floyd's work, this designation takes on a relevance that extends beyond OWS. The privatization of public spaces is just one of many instances related to issues of sexuality, identity, and modes of desire. Floyd's treatment of the sexual rezoning of New York City provides a historical context for the acute tensions that are finding expression today in demonstrations across the United States. Not only does *The Reification of Desire* encourage broad analytical thinking, but it also invites us to consider how abstract concepts and concrete

realities shape the past and, moreover, how they might give way to a future that is more integrating and less violent in its regulation and reification of desire.

8 *The Reification of Desire* should be a required book in any library collection that supports research in the fields of queer theory, gender studies, cultural studies, and Marxist-based literary theory. Floyd's clear style and efficient prose make the book ideal for advanced undergraduate courses and graduate seminars that examine the relationship between sexuality and culture, especially in an American context. As his first published monograph, *The Reification of Desire* establishes Kevin Floyd as an innovative voice in philosophical and cultural debates on sexuality and desire.

Two Poems from *Night Coffee*

By Wanda Coleman

Night Coffee (14)

The life of my cup begins with his rose-hipped
lips pursed to blow things cool, a smooth texture with
stubble at the edges. Filled with dark sob-sweet brew,
I go for the lift. He follows the contour of my flow.

We percolate

In the east, dark-nippled mountains loom. The
western horizon is a field of tongues licking the stars
out of the night. Down river, on the silt bed,
trembling erupt. Sleep will arrive as late as ever,
red-eyed but

satisfied. In the morning I will invite the wind,
take out the filter and feed the grounds to the white-
blossomed oleander, wash my cup clean in chamomile
and lavender

Night Coffee (8)

no chicory, please

down the ill-lit hall someone watches television in a realm exuding cigarette smoke
and laughter. in this reality they still use metal keys, dead bolts and chains. the high-
tone girl who tends the cleaning cart is exceptionally feline- eyes straight out of an
Egyptian tomb. outside, the wind-driven branch of a ficus scratches its way into
memory. windows rattle beneath black-out shades, the kind that went out with
gingham oil cloth. inside, they're flanked by dingy abbreviated lavender drapes.
inside, there's a bed that beckons like a siren. inside, there's a wall calendar on
which every day is a Saturday, every month a June. there's a drip-drip-drip that
hangs at the edge of consciousness. the thermostat is spastic. under the colt

automatic, there's a dresser with one broken drawer. the clock no longer functions.
the radio is a thing of hotels past. the ceramic ashtray on the nightstand offers up a
blank glossy red matchbook. the Devil behind the bathroom door promises Heaven

no chicory, please

List of Contributors

Stefan Offermann studies Medieval and Modern History, Theatre, Film and Television Studies and Philosophy at the University of Cologne. He will finish his education at the end of 2012. In 2007 and 2008, he received a scholarship for two-month language courses in Turkey. In 2009, he spent six months in Italy studying at the University of Rome *Tor Vergata*. From 2007 to 2009 he worked as student assistant at the cultural research college *SFB/FK-427 Media and Cultural Communication*. Since 2010 he has been working as a tutor in Ancient History. His main areas of interest are Cultural- and Media-History as well as Gender- and Body-History.

Johanna Schorn is a doctoral candidate at the University of Cologne, where she is teaching courses on gender theories and anglophone culture and literature. She is currently working on her dissertation on representations of trans* identities in contemporary queer film. She holds an MA in Intercultural Anglophone Studies and a BA in English and European History, both from the University of Bayreuth. Her main areas of research are Queer and Gender Studies.

Samuel Horn is a freelance writer. In 2010, he completed his M.A. thesis titled "Pathological Structures in Selected Works of Philip K. Dick" and received an M.A. degree in English/American Studies, Dutch Studies, and Philosophy from the University of Cologne. He has worked as a leading actor in six productions of Cologne-based theatre company "Port in Air" and has written and directed two of his own plays. His first film script "AMERIKA" was turned into a short film in 2011; his second script is being realized in 2012. He is currently finishing a children's novel on cancer treatment. An active blogger, he presents a selection of his (German) prose at: <http://samuelhorn.de/>.

Japhet Johnstone

Born in 1946, **Wanda Coleman** grew up in the Watts neighborhood of Los Angeles. She is the author of *Bathwater Wine* (Black Sparrow Press, 1998), winner of the 1999 Lenore Marshall Poetry Prize. A former medical secretary, magazine editor, journalist and scriptwriter, Coleman has received fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Guggenheim Foundation for her poetry. Her other books of poetry include *Mercurochrome: New Poems* (2001); *Native in a Strange Land: Trials & Tremors* (1996);

Hand Dance (1993); *African Sleeping Sickness* (1990); *A War of Eyes & Other Stories* (1988); *Heavy Daughter Blues: Poems & Stories 1968-1986* (1988); and *Imagoes* (1983). She has also written *Mambo Hips & Make Believe: A Novel* (Black Sparrow Press, 1999) and *Jazz and Twelve O'Clock Tales: New Stories* (2008).