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Pornography's Temptation

The pornography debate portrays its contestants within sex and gender stereotypes, its contending figures drawn in the broad outlines of a Harlequin romance. Rapacious men with libidos of mythological proportions heartlessly brutalize innocent women as the hopeless victims of their lust, while the anti-pornography feminist poses herself as the sacrificial victim, the barrier to a tide of male sexuality that threatens violence. Bold freedom fighters ride out, drawing their lances against the oppressive feminists, the purported enemy of these brave warriors.

Meanwhile, there thrives an eight to thirteen billion dollar a year industry, churning out hundreds of low-budget videos every month.[1]

If Pornography was once a powerful political tool, produced in secret places by revolutionary groups, it is now also big business.[2]

How can a feminist approach to pornography that challenges rather than replicates gender stereotypes be developed? How can we both recognize the nitty-gritty reality of the industry and the suffering it can impose upon its workers at the same time that we affirm the need for women to freely expose their own sexuality? The first step in answering these questions is to insist on an important distinction. Feminists need to separate political action from legal action in the sphere of pornography. I advocate an alliance with two forms of representational politics currently being undertaken by women pornographers and porn workers that are challenging the terms of production in the mainstream heterosexual porn industry. Political action, not legal action, should be the main mode of intervention in the *production* of pornography. In accordance with this distinction between the political and the legal, a second distinction must be made, one which can help us clarify what kind of legal action should be taken – and at what point it should be taken – in the arena of pornography.

We need to separate legal action to be taken in the *production* of pornography from action addressed specifically to the *distribution* of pornography. I insist on these distinctions primarily to serve the feminist purpose of treating women, including porn workers, as selves individuated enough to have undertaken the project of

becoming persons. To treat women in the industry as reducible to hapless victims unworthy of solidarity refuses them that basic respect.

The alternative to such solidarity has been an attempt to correct for the abuse in the production of pornography through indirect, primarily legal means that focus on curtailing the distribution of pornography. This approach treats the women in the industry as if they were incapable of asserting their own personhood and, in this way, assumes that others need to act on their behalf. The wealthy woman as a moral rescuer has a long history in both the United States and England. The prostitute, in particular, has always been a favourite candidate for rescue. By remaining 'other', the epitome of victimization, she stands in for the degradation of all women. Her life is then reduced to that figuration of her. Now, porn workers have become the ultimate figuration of the victim who needs to be rescued. But this is certainly not how most porn workers see themselves.[3]

Indeed, women in the industry are 'acting up'.[4] Ona Zee, porn star, producer and director, fought in 1990 and 1991 to unionize the mainstream heterosexual pornography industry. Her vigilance led her to be named the 'Norma Rae' of the porn industry and, for some time, she was blackballed for her efforts. Yet, in spite of Ona Zee's difficulties in unionizing the industry, she remains convinced that unionization and self-representation must remain at the heart of the political programme to change working conditions in the production of pornography. Unionization and self-determination both represent and respect the workers's own sense of their worth as persons.

Ona Zee's efforts are also not the only form of political action that has taken place in and around the pornography industry. Two of the women initially involved in the National Organization of Women Against Violence Against Women broke away from that organization over the issue of how to grapple with the reality of the industry and still affirm the exploration of new forms of sexually explicit material.[5]

Those feminists who have primarily directed their work towards experimenting with new expressions of the feminine 'sex' are engaging in a different kind of 'representational politics' than the union efforts of Ona Zee. This is a phrase that accurately describes the effort in these materials to unleash the feminine imaginary into new representational forms that challenge the stereotypes of femininity governing the presentation of the female 'sex' in the mainstream heterosexual porn industry.

The sets used in the production of these explicitly 'femme' videos already incorporate some of the most basic demands of the movement for self-organization. Candida Royalle, for example, insists that condoms be mandatory for all sex acts performed on her sets.[6] Here we have an example of how the formation of two kinds of representational politics has had a major impact on the industry's production of pornography. If academics have difficulty defining pornography, mainstream industry producers have had no such problem. If there is a 'cumshot', then it's pornography.[7] Thus, the simple demand for a condom will be seen as a threat to free expression in the production of pornography.

My affirmation of the representational politics of 'femme' pornographers such as Candidida Royalle also expresses the emphasis in my own feminism on unleash-

ing the feminine imaginary, rather than on constraining men.[8] I place myself on the side of those feminists who have stressed the importance of expanding the horizons of feminine sexuality.[9]

The split between feminists who have insisted on sexual exploration and the redefinition of sex itself, and those feminists who have sought to protect women from the imagined brutality of male sexuality, has recurred frequently in Anglo-American history. The social movements to close brothels and shut bars[10], which stand in sharp contrast to Victoria Woodhull's zealous writings on the transformation of our heterosexual congress on behalf of a feminist revolution for women, exemplify this split.[11] Emma Goldman made it clear that she wanted no part of a revolution which foreclosed the explorations of her sexuality and forbade her 'to dance' differently.[12] Our generation, then, is certainly not unique in this split. Although the previous movements always had at their base some kind of appeal to state and organizational authority, the present situation is unusual in its explicit focus on the role of the law. Perhaps we should not be surprised that this focus occurs within my generation, because it is only within this generation that so many women have entered law schools and have graduated to become lawyers, judges, and law professors.[13] By now it should be clear that I do not believe law is our only mode of intervention into the field of significance laid out by pornography, particularly in the *production of pornography*.

My emphasis on the imaginary domain as crucial to the thriving of feminism demands a different analytical approach, not only to law, but to the problems of sexuality and representation inherent in pornography. The imaginary domain is the moral and psychic space we as sexuate beings need in order to freely play with the sexual persona through which we shape our sexual identity, whether as man or woman, straight, gay, lesbian or transgender. The call for a new feminist approach to pornography, and for an analysis of what law can and cannot achieve in its intervention into the pornographic world is inspired by the recognition of this need. Feminism must struggle to clear the space for, rather than create new barriers to, women's exploration of their sexuality. I am suspicious of overreliance on law in the regulation of pornography for two specifically feminist reasons. The first is what we must not entrench stereotypes of femininity as the basis of discrimination law. We do not, in other words, want law to endorse the culturally encoded femininity that, in the work of Catherine MacKinnon, reduces women to the 'fuckee', or the victim and demands her protection as such. Thus, I reject most aspects of MacKinnon and Andrea Dworkin's civil rights ordinance as an appropriate legal means to regulate pornography.[14]

Second, law is, at least in part, a force for accommodation to current social norms, even if it also provides us with a critical edge in its normative concepts such as equality. But feminism expresses an aspiration to struggle beyond accommodation, beyond those symbolic forms that have been deeply inscribed in and by the structures of gender. Feminism, particularly in the complex area of sexuality, demands that we live with the paradox that we are trying to break the bonds of the meanings that have made us who we are as women.

Nevertheless, there should be some legal regulation of pornography. It sentimentalizes pornography to forget that it is anywhere from an eight to thirteen billion dollar industry and that in the mainstream of heterosexual pornography some women are both used and violated for profit on a daily basis. The cynicism of a First Amendment organization sponsored and promoted by the pornography industry is only too evident. In their more honest moments, they readily admit that what is at stake for them in the pornography debate is their profitability and not the value of freedom.[15] Whatever the pornographer's intention, however, the First Amendment and the value of free expression is unavoidably implicated in the debate. The idea of the imaginary domain can help us think more fruitfully about relationship between freedom of expression, sexual freedom more generally, and equality for women.

We need to recast the debate over whether or not pornography is speech by analysing exactly what the scene is that pornography signifies. Mainstream heterosexual pornography does not communicate an idea as much as it graphically portrays an unconscious scene of rigid gender identities played out in explicit sex acts. But it is not politically or legally desirable to argue that pornography is not speech. We need to explore the temptation of pornography; exactly how and what it communicates. My disagreement with the argument that pornography has direct behavioural implications is inseparable from my overall wariness of too great a reliance on the law to intervene in this field. It also informs my analysis of why pornography is speech. I will argue against Catherine MacKinnon's notion that pornography can simply be reduced to a trigger for sexuality, understood in a mechanistic fashion. MacKinnon's hope that law can and should function as a form of reconditioning and re-education implies a kind of behaviouristic analysis of the structures of desire. If pornography is not removed from the arena of speech altogether, does that mean that it is only representation, only fantasy; that it has no 'real content?' The answer lies in viewing the real content of pornography via its power to lure us into a scene which clearly pervades some of our deepest unconscious fantasies about gender.

For MacKinnon, the reality that sex is performed in pornography leads her to the conclusion that pornography is two-dimensional sex and therefore more act than speech. It is not a representation of sex in the traditional sense that it is about sex, or that it represents an erotic scene which indicates sex. Due to the fact that sex is not simulated in a pornography scene, MacKinnon concludes that the sex portrayed there should be viewed as sex that has happened as an act on the woman's body and that the portrayal itself is also, in some way, sex itself. The temporal aspect of MacKinnon's ordinance is important for two reasons. First, that MacKinnon is not advocating prior restraint turns on the past happening of the abuse. A woman *was* raped on a porn set and therefore she *has* been harmed and has the right to seek redress for the harm that *has* happened. Second, for MacKinnon the sex itself has happened in real time. It took place on the set and occurs again and again in real time whenever the male viewer sexually responds to it. If there is violence in the sex as presented, the man continues to live out that violence in his sexual response in his own arousal at the violence. The 'past sex' becomes present sex in this spe-

cific sense. The past and present become one as the man responds, gets an erection, and then proceeds to masturbate. As MacKinnon writes:

> "What is real here is not that the materials are pictures, but that they are part of a sex act. The women are in two dimensions, but the men have sex with them in their own three-dimensional bodies, not in their minds alone. Men come doing this. This, too, is a behaviour, not a thought or an argument. It is not ideas they are ejaculating over. Try arguing with an orgasm sometime. You will find you are not match for the sexual access and power the materials provide."[16]

MacKinnon then proceeds to make an argument of 'addiction', premised on her understanding of the viewing of pornography as two-dimensional sex. The man who has two-dimensional sex will want more. He will want to enact the scene on a real woman. A fantasy object will no longer be enough for him. MacKinnon is arguing here that the presentation of the coercing in pornography and men's response to it has a direct effect on men in terms of their actions; first, as they masturbate and second, as they move to violate actual women.

Before returning to my own psychoanalytic account of why pornography tempts, and what lies at the basis of its power to tempt consumers into its scene, I want to note here that MacKinnon's view of men and masculine sexuality precisely mirrors the pornographic world which she critiques. Pornography usually involves an abstraction or a reduction of a human being into its elemental body parts. There is no self there, only the body reduced to the genitals in a pictoral language of lust. MacKinnon's argument represents an exact, if gender-inverted, reinscription of Freudian insight that anatomy is destiny.[17] A man becomes his penis. He cannot help it. The penis asserts itself against him. He is reduced to a prick.

In pornography, the prick is always presented as erect, as eternally lustful, as having the positive 'attributes' of the one who at any moment 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. This fantasy of the dick controlling the man is inseparable from the sexuality of the pornographic world. MacKinnon's own view of masculinity, which enables her to insist that pornography is in no way speech, mirrors the very pornographic world she abhors:

> "In the centuries before pornography was made into an 'idea' worthy of First Amendment protection, men assumed themselves and excused their sexual practices by observing that the penis is not an organ of thought. Aristotle said, 'it is impossible to think about anything while absorbed in the pleasures of sex.' The Yiddish equivalent translates roughly as 'a stiff prick turns the mind to shit.' The common point is that having sex is antithetical to thinking. It would not have occurred to them that having sex *is* thinking."[18]

I think that men can think and have an erection at the same time. And perhaps more importantly, that they can think themselves out of an erection. This is only the

beginning of an analysis of the ways in which the complexity of desire involves the most profound recesses of the mind: unconscious fantasies, semi-conscious constructs, longings and hopes that are inadequately described if they are not rendered as having cognitive competence.

The power of pornography to tempt its consumer is extracted through sexual arousal. In order to give an account of how it tempts the consumer, I will discuss Jacques 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. We need an analysis of how and why pornography has become so pervasive. MacKinnon's contribution has been to force us to confront the pervasiveness of pornography and the way in which it has become completely enmeshed in our social reality. Some of MacKinnon's critics have implicitly dismissed the extend to which pornography plays a role in our social, cultural, and emotional lives. For example, Ronald Dworkin argues that 'most men find pornography offensive'.[19] In her response to Dworkin, MacKinnon argues that he is denying the extent to which pornography pervades our lives and the extent to which there are harms to women inevitably caused by pornography. An effective answer to MacKinnon must provide us with an account why pornography is pervasive and how that pervasiveness operates. We need to have an analysis of both of these aspects of pornography if we are to adequately account for an industry in which the market base is continually expanding. Thus, I set forth a psychoanalytic account so that we can adequately come to terms with pornography as a cultural phenomenon. Let me stress again that the analysis that follows is of the portrayal of sex by the mainstream heterosexual pornography industry. It does not address the sexually explicit materials produced by those tangentially related to the industry or outside of it altogether. The psychoanalytic account not only helps us to understand the pervasiveness of pornography but serves as the basis for determining the type of display regulation measures we should take; it relies on the work of Jacques Lacan because it is he who provides us with a field of significance for gender and sexuality.

According to Lacan, the genesis of linguistic consciousness, and obviously with it what has come to be called the rational-cognitive aspect of human beings, occurs when the infant is forced to register that the mother is separate from himself.[20] She is not 'just there' as the guarantor of his identity. The registration of the mother's desire beyond the infant's needs is inseparable from the recognition of his separateness from her. And such registration is inevitable because mothers are also women. There can be no desiring mommy in the imaginary infant/mother dyad. Therefore, it is fated to be broken up by the third, the one the mother desires. But does the third necessarily have to be the father? Or, if not the actual father, whatever the father symbolizes? According to Lacan's rendering of the Freudian Oedipal complex, the answer is in the affirmative. But to understand why the third will inevitably be unconsciously identified as the imaginary father, we need to explore the effects of his primary narcissistic wound. It is this wound that can explain the tempting of the consumer/reader into the pornographic scene.

The primordial moment of separation from the mother is literally life threatening because of the absolute dependence of the infant on this Other. The terror of

the threat that the mother presents in her separateness initiates a struggle to overcome the dependence and the need the infant has for her. The move from need to demand, to 'give me', is in part infant's expression of the vulnerability of his need. The resistance is against the mother because it is her desire that is registered as robbing the infant of his security. Of course, this kind of absolute security is a fantasy. The condition of this fantasy is that the mother not 'be sexed'. Thus, the fantasy is inevitably associated with the pre-Oedipal stage, the time before the registration of the full cultural significance of sexual difference, or its imagined graphic simplicity that men have dicks and women have holes.

The fantasy of absolute security rests on the corresponding fantasy that mother is whole in herself, a being unscathed by the rending of desire. This fantasy figure on whom the infant is totally dependent in its need is the Phallic Mother. This fantasy figure is envisioned as 'having it all', thus Lacan names this figure the Phallic Mother; the one with the phallus as well as with the female genitalia. Once the fantasized mother/child dyad is shattered, the Phallic Mother remains in the imaginary as all powerful and threatening in her power to both bestow and take away live. One result of the Oedipal phase marked by the infant's awakening to the mother's desire is sheer terror of the fantasized otherness of this imaginary all-powerful mother. The terror of, and yet longing for return to, this figure accounts for the repression of this figure into the unconscious. This terror can also potentially explain the drive to enter into the symbolic realm so as 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'. Registered as separate from the infant, and therefore as incomplete, the mother as a woman comes to be abjected for her lack, which is inseparable in the unconscious from her failure to be the fantasy figure who can guarantee the fulfillment of the infant's desire.

This primordial moment of separation is not only experienced through sheer terror and fear of loss; it is also the gaining of an identity separate from the mother. The attempt to negotiate the ambivalence of a loss that is also the gaining of identity is demonstrated in the fort-da game of Freud's grandson, Ernst. The game enacts the fantasy that the child is separate, but nonetheless in control of the Mother/Other. But this negotiation, in turn, demands an unconscious identification with the one who is at least imagined as capable of bringing the other back, because he is the site of her desire. The narcissistically wounded infant thus turns toward the imaginary father, because the imaginary father is who mommy desires. But what is it that singles out the imaginary father? What makes him so special? What is it, in other words, that Daddy has that Mommy desires? The simple answer is the penis. For Lacan, however, it is not so simple.

It is the Name of the father and the symbolic register of his potency that is the basis of the identification with him, not the simple fact that he has a penis. The biological penis takes on the significance it does only through its identification with the Big Other that secures identity through the power to control the Mother/Other. But in pornography, it is precisely that biological penis, the simplistic conflation of the penis with the phallus, that is portrayed in the ever-erect prick that mimics 'the great fucker in the sky' who can always take the woman at any moment. The

ever-erect prick we see in pornography is the imagined prick of the father who can control the terrifying figure of the Phallic Mother.

It is this fantasy that protects the man from ever having to face the other possibility of unconscious dis-identification between the phallus and the penis. In his anxiety 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, he turns to pornography that portrays and positions him as the one imagined to be the all-powerful Father, the one with the erect prick. It is this prick that keeps him safe from the Phallic Mother. It is this fantasized prick that he uses to dis-identify with her. It is this prick that he uses to ultimately control her, bring her back, and dismember her. That other body is acted out as the phantasmatic Other, the bleeding hole, the lack in having, that lurks in man's consciousness as an unconscious fear of what he truly is.

The beating and stabbings of erotic violence implemented by the prick and its other symbols, as the ultimate weapons against this terrifying Other, protect the man from being overtaken by the unconscious realization that this Other, the bleeding scar left by castration, is a projected image of what he fears he might be. In an ultimate act of dis-identification and abjection, he rips her apart. But precisely because she is a phantasmatic figure, and therefore always there in her absence, she returns to haunt him again. The pornographic scene has to be repeated because the Phallic Mother, pushed under, dismembered ripped apart, will always return to the level of the unconscious. Here we see the connection between the pornographic scene and the abjection of the Phallic Mother, and the unconscious terror that the man himself is the lack-in-having that the woman represents. The pornographic scene is driven by the death drive in the explicit Freudian sense that it is frozen into a repetitive dance of dismemberment that can never achieve its end.[21] And what is that end? That end is to have ascended once and for all into the position of the imaginary father who can absolutely control the Woman/Other. Real women are never successfully reduced in life to objects. A woman can, of course, be killed. But even in her absence, to the degree that she is identified with the Phallic Mother, she will continue to haunt the man.

In *Psycho*, Hitchcock portrayed a serial killer who endlessly had to kill the Phallic Mother. But she forever rises again in the very absence left after each killing. The wake he left behind of mutilated bodies is a terrifying testament to how dangerous and threatening is this unconscious scene.[22] For Lacan, the dismembered pieces of the body of the mother take the form of the 'object a'. We have breast men, leg men. We have women who are only their cunts. In the place of a rich and diversified account of the actual power of women as sexed beings, whose sexuality is defined and lived by them, we have a phantasmatic figure who threatens and lurks and who must be controlled. The excitement and the sexual arousal in pornography is inseparable from the fantasy of transcendence in which one has finally separated himself absolutely from that bodily Other upon which one was once utterly dependent. Marquis de Sade understood this when he insisted that killing was the ultimate act of transcendence and control.[23] Ironically, for Sade, all that one did when one 'fucked' was think oneself beyond the body. As one 'fucked', one knew oneself to be the master of the Other. As a believer in the sexual ideology that was part of the

rationalist materialism of his day, Sade's ultimate conception of self-knowledge was 'I am, because I fuck and I know that I do it to you.'[24]

But of course Sade's belief that the knowledge given to him was the knowledge that he had mastered the feared Woman is itself a fantasy, one that lies at the very basis of the pornographic scene. Without the fear, I am arguing, there wouldn't be the arousal. Unless one had the fantasy that one has controlled the desired object, and yet also, at least unconsciously, had registered the knowledge that this is impossible, one would not experience the desire for repetition and the desire to return again and again to that woman, bound and chained. The separation of the Phallic Mother from the actual mother explains her profound association with figures of the 'bad girl'. To explain: the Phallic Mother is the ultimate object of desire. She is remembered as a lost paradise. But she is also unconsciously identified as a threatening power, one who can potentially rob the man of his independence. The 'bad girl', the seductress, is the woman who tempts the man to pursue his desire only at risk to himself. The unconscious association of desirability with threatening power is what accounts for desirable women becoming identified as 'bad girls'. These 'bad girls' stand in for the Phallic Mother.

Given the way that race is played out on the level of fantasy, it is not at all surprising to find African-American women figured in pornography as these ultimate 'bad girls', and therefore as ultimately desirable. The raging African-American woman in chains represents exactly that terrifying Other who is controlled, but only barely so. The terror and the fantasy of control come together in the orgasm. Without the terror, without the unconscious fear of the woman fully remembered as herself, without the memory of the actual mother being erased into the unconscious identification with this figure, there would be no explanation of this temptation. Indeed, the whole scene of pornography as forbidden, as an entrance into another 'adult' world, 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 and bring the Other back.

What, then, is the bottom line of my argument? First, pornography tempts because it enacts a powerful fantasy scene. In any sophisticated account of fantasy, we have to note that fantasy never simply consists of the object of desire, but also of the setting in which the subject participates. In fantasy no subject can be assigned a fixed position. The fantasy structure of pornography allows the subject to participate in each one of the established positions. This explains why it is possible for powerful men to fantasize about taking up the position of a dominated Other, and for women to imagine themselves in the position of phallic agency, as the one who 'fucks' back. It explains the possibilities of reversal. But as I have also argued, the dominating pornographic scene is frozen. There are two positions: the prick, the imagined phallus in the position of agency and assertion; and the woman, the controlled dismembered body, reduced to the bleeding hole. The rigidity of the scene and its connection with the death drive explains why the reversal of positions cannot lead to the disruption of the setting itself, or achieve anything like a 'true' heterosexuality in which men and women could meet in a sexual encounter.[25] The result is that male role reversal or cross-identification is not adequate to shift the meaning

inherent in the presentation of the scene. For example, the figure of the woman dominatrix as the desired other of phallic agency does not in any way undermine the identification of the phallus as the figuration of sexual agency itself.

Is there a representation of the fantasy of the dominatrix that is more than an unconscious reaffirmation of the identification of the phallus with sexual agency? I believe that it can be found in the explicit presentation of the production of the fantasy of the dominatrix itself. The best example of any such presentation that I have seen is Ona Zee's *Learning the Ropes*,[26] a film which presents us with ritualized sado-masochism. In my analysis, pornographic fantasy has no straightforward connection with what would be presumed to be 'real life', even if the scene cannot be separated from profound unconscious fantasies of how sex and gender are produced. In ritualized sado-masochism, the stylized enactment is part of the performance which remains under the fantasizer's control. In MacKinnon's understanding of pornography, the pervasiveness of sado-masochism goes beyond its ritualized enactment as a specific form of sex. It becomes the truth of heterosexual sex. On the other hand, in this movie the real couple is explicitly separated from the fantasy enactment of one form of sex.

In *Learning the Ropes*, the dominatrix is not presented as 'real'. She is presented as a character who is produced in Ona Zee's performance. Thus, the fantasy of ritualized sado-masochism is separated from the 'real' Ona. In the name of education, Ona and her husband Frank both move into their roles, into sado-masochistic rituals, and out of their roles again. One finds in the film an insistent separation of the pornographic fantasy and the 'real' life of Ona and Frank. The separation of performance and real life is made in the presentation of a 'how to' sado-masochistic performance. It is not simply the reversal of Ona Zee' position of the phallic agency as the dominatrix that makes *Learning the Ropes* subversive of the realism associated with mainstream heterosexual hard-core porn. Rather, it is the presentation of the dominatrix as a performance that undermines the realism of the scene. Thus, the irony in *Learning the Ropes* is that it is in the presentation of a ritualistic sado-masochistic performance that we see what is being produced and the fantasy behind it. Paradoxically, in the presentation of the frozen scene, the scene itself becomes unfrozen as it is presented as ritual. This presentation unfreezes the scene in its encoding as reality.

Let's now turn to another example, a sexually explicit video, but not one produced in the pornography industry, Candida Royalle's *True Stories in the Life of Annie Sprinkle*.[27] In this 'porn film',[28] the Annie Sprinkle character begins to have sex with a man. A mainstream heterosexual porn movie is playing in the background during their sexual encounter. The man becomes increasingly distracted by the image of sexuality playing on the television set. He mimics the sex performed there. The mirroring of sexuality that is often performed outside the setting of pornography as the enactment of the truly masculine persona is mirrored again. Annie, in turn, grows distracted by her lover's distraction. We, the viewers, see a woman watching a man watching a porn movie. We watch as Annie becomes increasingly dissatisfied that her lover is not having sex with 'her', and she eventually opts to throw him out. Annie's ensuing monologue evokes her despair of ever finding a

'true' heterosexual encounter. The monologue is interrupted when her own fantasy object, a genie, appears. The genie is far from the usual porn character. With hair down to his shoulders and the phantasmatic costume of the genie, he mimics a kind of androgynous appearance foreign to the pornographic scene. From there the film proceeds through the imagined lover's continuing and deepening recognition of who Annie Sprinkle is.

Annie and the genie begin to have sex after a period of dramatic, emphasized eye contact. The genie describes the difference between 'looking' at someone and truly 'seeing' them. For the genie, to truly see into the soul of the Other is the ultimate erotic act. Although the film moves into graphic, explicit sex acts, does so with a cinematic blurring effect that makes it impossible to tell the difference between oral sex, kissing, and other forms of licking and touching. Finally, there is the ultimate act that purportedly marks the film as pornographic: Annie and the genie have sexual intercourse. The cinematic portrayal of their sexual encounter makes it difficult for the viewer to enter the scene as if he were present as a voyeur. In other words, the cinema appears in its own cinematic role.

Does turning pornography back into a self-conscious presentation of cinematic positioning make the presence of fantasy itself the 'truth' of sex? In this film, it does so on many levels. The first is the so-called challenge that takes place by making the cinematic presence obvious. The second is that the male lover is himself a fantasy object. The third level is the critical distance that the woman maintains from the counter-phantasmatic production of the porn movie her lover is watching. At the conclusion of the sexual act with the genie, and following the lesson of the experience that a 'true' heterosexual encounter is possible, Annie's original lover returns; this time without all the paraphernalia of a so-called hard-core pornography scene. The scene is now set in terms of Annie's fantasy.

Ona Zee and Candida Royalle are, in this way, engaging in 'representational politics'. These politics do not just challenge mainstream pornography as the one possible form of sexually explicit material. They also, as is particularly the case within Candida Royalle, provide representational forms which enrich the imaginary and symbolic resources in which women's sexuality can be expressed. It is a mistake, then, to reject out of hand the argument that 'more speech' is one feminist weapon to take up against the pornography industry. Candida Royalle's films should be understood as a form of feminist practice. Without new images and new words in which to express our sexuality, we will be unable to create a new world for women.

There is yet another reason to affirm the representational politics of women pornographers as a more potent threat to the pornography industry than, for instance, lawsuits. The psychoanalytic account of pornography argues that pornography speaks not to the penis but to the unconscious, and is an expression of the fantasy underpinnings of so-called heterosexuality. Thus, it is not easily reached by the law. Underlying the unconscious structure of pornography is the ultimate forbidden object of desire, the Phallic Mother. The lure of the forbidden object makes the temptation to pornography indissociable from its being a prohibited or shameful activity. The murkiness of the pornographic world is part of its deep attraction.

Push it underground and it becomes even more desirable. Thus, the challenge from within women pornographers may ultimately be more unsettling to the mainstream pornography industry than any outside legal challenge to it: just one more reason why we should focus pornography regulation not on constraining men and their fantasies, but on protecting the breathing of the feminine imaginary.

Because pornography appeals to powerful unconscious fantasies, it cannot simply be disregarded as speech. If we accept the behaviourist assumptions that MacKinnon makes about pornography and men's pricks, we not only would be more optimistic than I am about the success of direct legal regulation, we could also accept that pornography was a type of two-dimensional sex. On my analysis, on the other hand, pornography communicates an unconscious fantasy scene. This scene clearly speaks to us. We have to rethink, then, how the analysis of pornography can lead us to justify modes of regulation that give women breathing space and yet, at the same time, accept that it is speech.[29] Without such an analysis, we reinscribe the very kind of mind/body dualism that feminism has critiqued over the years. We need to have a much richer account of the way in which the human mind and body operate together in the complex activity we know as sex. What I have offered is an explanation of why the pornographic fantasy scene has come to be frozen through profoundly and deeply engendered structures.

I recognize the silence of those of us who have been designated as women as we struggle to find the words to say how we might 'be' differently. But the struggle is possible, the struggle is happening, the struggle has already begun as soon as any woman claims for herself the name 'feminist'. The lack of phenomenality of the female body, profoundly attested to in psychoanalytic literature, leads to the sense that the feminine has been turned over to the gaze of the other. But this is not inevitable, given that the feminine imaginary cannot be foreclosed. When Annie Sprinkle steps out on stage, takes off her blouse, puts her breasts in ink, imprints them, holds them up and says, 'these are not tits, they are other', and then creates an array of names for what that other is, she is critically engaging with the symbolic order's claim to capture her, and the possibility that her breasts are more than just 'tits'. Meaning changes in the flow of words in Annie Sprinkle's monologue, as she holds up the imprint, the seeming object. The distance between the reprint of her breasts, the representation, and correspondingly between the fantasy of them and their reality is brought home to the audience who would otherwise simply see that what is presented are 'tits'.

When Sula, in Toni Morrison's novel of the same name, evokes the time and place when there will be a 'little left for a woman with glory in her heart', she too is evoking the feminine imaginary:

> "Oh, they'll love me all right. It will take time, but they'll love me.' The sound of her voice was as soft and distant as the look in her eyes. 'After all the old women have lain with the teen-agers; when all the young girls have slept with their old drunken uncles; after all the black men fuck all the white ones; when all the white women kiss all the black men fuck all the white ones; when the guards have raped all the jailbirds and after all the whores make love to their grannies; after all the faggots get their mothers' trim; when Lindbergh sleeps

> with Bessie Smith and Norma Shearer makes it with Stepin Fetchit; after all the dogs have fucked all the cats and every weathervane on every barn flies off the roof to mount the hogs then there'll be a little love left over for me. And I know just what it will feel like."[30]

There is a space for the woman with glory in her heart as long as we insist that we are already dwelling in it. We must write that dwelling into being, as a space for us to 'be' differently, to be beyond accommodation.

Anmerkungen

1 See Nick Cohen: „Reaping Rich Rewards from the Profits of Pornography", *The Independent*, 19 Dec. 1989.

2 One central disagreement that I have with Nadine Strossen is her failure to take into account the fact that there is a pornography industry with documented working conditions. See Nadine Strossen: *Defending Pornography: Free Speech, Sex, and the Fight for Women's Rights*, New York 1995. The vast majority of workers in the mainstream industry are paid off the books, without the secure benefits of contract employment such as health insurance, pensions, etc. Also, most workers in the industry are young and have fairly short careers. Obviously, economic protection of their futures is crucial. There are, of course, other industries in which the working career is relatively short, and, as a result, workers are aware of their need for some sort of economic protection in regard to their futures. Consider, for example, the difference between porn workers and athletes who also rely on physical characteristics associated with youth in their working life. The degree to which baseball players, for instance, take seriously their need to protect their economic future is evident in the lengthy strike that, as of March 1995, continues.

As a result of Strossen's failure to confront the reality of the industry, she ignores the porn worker's reform struggles for what they are: a challenge to the conditions of their work. She also conflates all pornography with the mainstream heterosexual industry while many pornographers, such as Candida Royalle, work either outside industry norms or peripherally to them. For example, Candida Royalle's insistence on all-condom sets already allies her with the efforts of porn workers aiming to reform working conditions. If we are to take porn workers seriously as workers, then we should also take their reform efforts seriously. There are also problems with Strossen's absolutist interpretation of the First Amendment.

But my primary disagreement with Strossen has to do with her failure to confront the actual working conditions that dominate the mainstream porn industry. As a former union organiser, the title *Defending Pornography* would be, for me, the equivalent of a demand to defend big business. I do want to stress, however, that Strossen and I share a commitment to a feminist politics that celebrates women's sexuality and demands the protection of sexually explicit materials. Indeed, I would argue that my defence of the imaginary domain is perfectly consistent with the feminist political argument – if not the legal argument – made in Strossen's book.

3 Taped interview with Ona Zee, on file with the author.

4 I borrow this phrase from the name of the gay rights, AIDS awareness group, ACT UP.

5 See Lisa Katzman: "The Women of Porn: They're not in it for the Moneyshot", in: *The Village Voice*, 24 August 1993, p. 31 and Gary Indiana: "A Day in the Life of Hollywood's Sex Factory", *The Village Voice*, 24 August 1993, p. 27-37.

6 Ibid.

7 Ibid.

8 Please see Drucilla Cornell: "Feminine Writing, Metaphor and Myth", in: *Beyond Accommodation*, New York 1991.

9 See, for instance, Judith Butler: *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits*

of 'Sex', New York 1993 and Wendy Brown: *States of Injury*: *Essays on Power and Freedom in Late Modernity*, Princeton 1995.

10 See Bonnie Bullogh: *Women and Prostitution: A Social History*, Buffalo 1987 and Jack Blocker, Jr.: *Retreat from Reform: The Prohibition Movement in the United States, 1890-1913*, Westport 1976.

11 See Marion Meade: *The Life and Times of Victoria Woodhull*, New York 1976.

12 See Emma Goldman: *Anarchism & Other Essays*, intro. by Richard Drinnon, New York 1969.

13 See Dorithy and Carl Schneider: *U.S. Women in the Workplace*, Santa Barbara 1993.

14 See Andrea Dworkin and Catherine Mac Kinnon: *Pornography and Civil Rights: A New Day for Women's Equality*, Minneapolis 1988.

15 Lisa Katzman: "The Women of Porn: They're not in it for the Moneyshot", in: *The Village Voice*, 24 August 1993, p. 31.

16 Catherine MacKinnon: *Only Words*, Cambridge 1993, p. 17.

17 See the lecture on 'Femininity' in Sigmund Freud: *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, New York 1965.

18 MacKinnon: *Only Words*, p. 17. I reject this kind of dichotomization between thought and sexuality as reinstating a divide between mind and body that I believe has been profoundly undermined in the last 50 if not 100, years of philosophical discourse. See, generally Drucilla Cornell: *Beyond Accommodation*, New York 1991.

19 See Ronald Dworkin's response to MacKinnon's reply to his review of *Only Words* in *The New York Review Books*, 3 Mar. 1994, vol. 151, no 5.

20 My use of the male pronoun here is true to Lacan's (and Freud's) narrative which is of an explicitly masculine subject.

21 See Sigmund Freud: *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, New York 1975.

22 See Slavoj Žižek: *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, London 1989.

23 For an excellent portrayal of the graphic representation of the heterosexual relationship inevitably failing, see Marquis de Sade: *Juliette*, New York 1968.

24 For a discussion of the relationship between 18th-century materialism and pornography, see Margaret C. Jacob: "The Materialist World of Pornography", in: Lynn Hunt (ed.): *The Invention of Pornography*, New York 1993, p. 157-202.

25 Catharine MacKinnon: *Feminism Unmodified: Discourses on Life and Law*, Cambridge 1987, p. 149.

26 See *Learning the Ropes* (Ona Zee Productions, 1993).

27 See Candida Royalle's *True Stories in the Life of Annie Sprinkle* (Femme Productions, 1992).

28 I place 'porn' in quotation marks precisely because Candida Royalle's films would not be pornographic under the definition I have offered.

29 See Stanley Fish: *There is no such Thing as Free Speech and it's a Good Thing Too*, New York 1993. Ultimately I agree with Fish that First Amendment analysis does not proceed wisely by trying to establish a continuum of what forms of expression are to count as speech.

30 Toni Morrison: *Sula*, New York 1973, p. 145-6.

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