

Sexual Discourse: Power, Knowledge, and the Docile Body

by

Janelle McLeod

A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of

The University of Manitoba

in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of Sociology

University of Manitoba

Winnipeg

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**THE UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA**

**FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES**

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**OF**

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## ABSTRACT

Human sexuality is a product of sociocultural and historical constructs. In modern, contemporary society, pornography has emerged as the dominant form of sexual discourse, transforming the human body as an object to be manipulated, shaped, and trained. In this thesis, I will argue that pornography is the vehicle for disciplinary practices that transforms human bodies into sexual bodies that are mere representations of itself. As Michel Foucault describes it in *Discipline and Punish* (1977), discourse does not function all by itself to produce effects of power, but, rather, the efficacy of discourse is tied to the systematic and calculated use of force by definite agents on definite human bodies. Modern pornographic sexual discourse is only part of a power-knowledge formation that includes subtle and often direct coercion over the body. Men acting as sexual partners extract from pornography a 'knowledge' of sexuality that they use to organize their personal domination over women, in order to turn women into docile bodies that learn to adopt various positions or gestures. Even though, if discipline is successful, coercion is minimized, economized, to generate the maximum effect of control through the minimum expenditure of force, a force that never disappears completely. When society is saturated with pornographic representations as a normative standard, which in turn operates as an ideal to which people 'voluntarily' aspire, it is only because of the operation of this efficient economy of force, which goes mostly unnoticed. Perceived as a natural, innate human characteristic, sexuality is instead a social construct, where all of the body's movement, gestures, and attitudes are manipulated, and thus obedient to a pornographic ideal of sexual experience that is limited in its heteronormative expression.

## INTRODUCTION

The performance of pornography is not a given but instead an invention that over time transformed from the written word into moving images and sounds which then evolved into the performance of sex. Pornography, and the performance of sex, involves a proliferation of sexualities that are heteronormative in nature and are expressed in the form of a pseudo-confessional discourse. Through the mechanisms of consumption and pseudo-confession, pornography deploys sexualities within a disciplinary system of power that breaks down every movement and gesture of the body and rearranges them into a pornified representation of sexuality.

Sex embodies a multiplicity of purposes, including pleasure, procreation, the formation and definition of relationships, the communication of norms, values, attitudes and expectations, and, finally, sex is the provision of a major mechanism of subjection, abuse and violence. For the purposes of this thesis, the focus will be on the articulation and materialization of sex within a broad range of social and cultural arenas in an attempt to establish the significance of sex discourse in the form of pornographic material. Sexually explicit pornographic material, images, expressions, and discourse refer to mainstream adult heterosexual sexuality and not material involving child pornography, lesbian or gay porn, or bestiality. Pornography, in the context of this thesis, is defined as a medium of sexual discourse that is designed to elicit sexual arousal in its audience through images deemed obscene by some and exciting by others. What differentiates the pornographic material I will be discussing from other forms of sexually explicit material, such as *The Joy of Sex*, or the *Kama Sutra* lies in the highly constructed commercial appeal of pornographic images and text. The original intention of *The Joy of Sex* was to be a manual of sexual practices that resembled that of a cook book. Like the *Kama Sutra*, both books

were written as a guide to enhancing sensual pleasures, with newer editions balancing out male and female perspectives. Ultimately, these texts were focused on building healthy egalitarian sexual relationships between men and women, while maintaining the message that sex should be fun and enjoyable. Pornography, on the other hand, places greater emphasis on the phallic power and pleasure, as depicted in the popular “money shot”, versus the pleasure of sexual practice in and of itself (Williams 1999:95). By playing on the gender differences and power relations between the sexes, pornography sells the exploitation of women as a form of sexual appeal. Through costumes, make up, set designs, special lighting, props, and hired models with surgically altered body parts, the pornography industry manufactures sex and peddles it in commercialized packages intent on making a financial profit. The contradictory aims of consumer and producer very quickly create a situation in which it no longer matters what the actual use value of a commodity is so long as the commodity appears useful to the consumer (Williams 1999:107). It is my intention to map out how pornography has become such an indelible force, reaching audiences far beyond *The Joy of Sex* or the *Kama Sutra*, while exploring public acceptance of pornography’s version of sexuality. In an attempt to map out emerging characteristics of sexual discourses I will discuss how pornography relates to existing ideas about sexual practices, forms of expression, and the relations between the body, machines or practices, and representations.

The first chapter will begin with a chronological review of the female body in performance as a “spectacle”, beginning in burlesque and moving forward to hard-core videos that speak to the evolving explicitness of feminine sexuality. With reference to *Horrible Prettiness* (1991) by Robert C. Allen and *Porn Studies* (2004) by Linda Williams, the chronicle begins with an examination of burlesque in American Theatres during the 1860s which instigated

a new form of novelty, that being the female form turning the female body from something “respectable” into the “spectacle”. The chapter will explore the cultural transformation of the burlesque to the pre and postwar pinups of the 1920s and the 1940s. Next, the advent of exploitation films will be discussed plus the rapid acceleration to hard-core pornography, all within the period of a few decades. The growing demand for sexually explicit images can be traced to the ease and accessibility of pornographic material along with social changes in attitudes towards sexuality. Images once regarded as obscene and immoral are now consumed at an exploding rate and emulated as expressions of sexual liberation, also referred to as ‘porn chic’. I will discuss two very influential books written by Linda Williams, *Hard-Core: Power, Pleasure, and the "Frenzy of the Visible"* (1989) and *Porn Studies* (2004). Williams examines the reasons how pornography has become so popular in modern society and why it has made such a permanent mark on sexual discourse. This chapter will explore the history of pornography to explain how and why sexually explicit images have become so prevalent in North American and American culture.

The second chapter will review the primary arguments between pro- and anti-censorship feminists of the second and third wave movements. Pro-censorship feminists tend to draw on radical theory as they battle head to head with the pornography industry with the objection of eliminating all production and distribution of sexually explicit material they define as exploitive, misogynistic, and abusive to women. Alternatively, anti-censorship feminists tend to take a different approach to feminism, defending the rights of all women to express their sexuality in whatever manner they desire, even if it is through pornographic material. Sexuality is perceived by some feminists, such as Carole Vance and Alison Assiter, as subjective, and therefore no one, man or woman, should dictate what women find sexually erotic or offensive, thereby focusing



more on choice and inclusion versus regulations and exclusion. In addition, I will review arguments by Sonja Foss and Karen Foss who describe some third wave feminists as having an alternative interpretation of current discourse whereby women redefine their social reality according to their personal satisfaction and not in adherence to what someone else prescribes. Throughout this chapter I will examine competing conceptualizations of gender, sexuality, oppression, and empowerment with arguments made by radical pro-censorship feminists like Catherine MacKinnon and Andrea Dworkin and other anti-censorship contributing writers such as Nadine Strossen, Jennifer Baumgardner, Carol Vance, and Amy Richards, to name a few.

The third chapter will discuss power relations, docility, and sexuality. I will review Foucault's theory of power relations where power is defined as exercised through relations between people, places, and things. Within power relations are disciplinary practices involving the correlation of knowledge with the body, which fosters creativity and productivity. Through discourse, knowledge is gained and then exercised through the body in the form of disciplines that break down and manipulate every gesture and movement of the body, thus forming a subjected and practiced body, known as the "docile body". A key component to Foucault's theory of power relations is resistance as the force that facilitates individuals as active participants that manifests in the constant evolving and transformations of these relationships. I will discuss power relations and resistance, as well as Foucault's theory of sexuality. In his examination of sexuality, Foucault looks at early Greek society and the definitions of *ars erotica* and *scientia sexualis* and questions how these forms of sexual discourse are evident in modern society. As a part of this discussion I will review Foucault's research on the confession and the search for 'truth' in regards to the exploration and discovery of new pleasures and desires. Confession allows one to speak about sex and thus liberates a 'truth' about oneself that is

otherwise inhibited. As sex becomes incessantly spoken about in contemporary society, traditional boundaries are transgressed and new spaces and discourses are created where individuals can explore their sexuality and discover new pleasures and desires. The chapter will conclude with a discussion of the process of desexualisation and the elimination of gender identification within contemporary society that will allow new discourses of sexuality to emerge and expand.

The fourth chapter will introduce a theory of power relations between pornography and a sexual docile body. This discussion will begin with a brief overview of current studies in pornography with a look at what the primary focus has been in research. I will discuss Foucault's theory of sexuality wherein he defines sex as the site for creativity and the discovering of new pleasures. As a non-essentialist, Foucault did not define sexuality as a natural phenomenon, but rather a social construction where the individual is an active participant in the exploration and creation of sexual experiences. At this point I will engage in an analysis of essentialism and sexuality with reference to Foucault and feminist writers Diana Foss, Lois McNay, and Sandra Bartky. To illuminate Foucault's theory of sexuality I will also discuss the production of knowledge as an essential element in the construction of sexuality including how it is interpreted and experienced. Accordingly, knowledge has the power to make itself true in the sense that once it has been related through discourse it produces a form of knowledge that is continuous and reaffirming. In modern society, the dominant form of knowledge and meaning related to sexuality is produced in the form of pornography. At this point I will discuss how knowledge is exercised through disciplinary practices and the power relations certain disciplines have with the sexual docile body. Pornographic knowledge and discourse disciplines the sexual body to represent those gestures, movements, attitudes and behaviours representative of a

heteronormative porn industry. As pornographic images and texts shape modern sexual discourse it proceeds as a normalizing power, with no single source of authority or headquarters. Through internalization, pornography acts as an internal panopticon that fosters a constant self-surveillance through which subjects monitor and regulate their own sexual behaviours in accordance with pornographic norms. This chapter will conclude with a discussion of resistance against traditional heteronormative forms of sexuality with a look at how, and in what form, resistance exists.

More than simply a means of entertainment, pornography acts as a social force with its own disciplinary practices that manipulate and coerce the sexual body into a highly practised pornified body. The act of a pseudo-confession, by which individuals consume pornographic material, allows sex to be spoken about with less regard to traditional social norms while transgressing existing boundaries in sexual attitudes and behaviours. Despite arguments made by re-powered feminism, the discovery of new pleasures through pornographic material has not opened new places or discourses on sexuality. Instead, pornography reinforces heteronormative values where female sexuality is regarded more as a sexual spectacle, rather than a site of creativity. Free choice is an oxymoron since there are few to no competing sexual venues that offer alternative discourses on sexuality. Lacking a critical interpretation of pornographic material, society embraces it as a normative standard, one which creates its own form of truth and in turn produces an ideal that people wish to aspire to all the while under the false pretence of a liberated sexuality open to new experiences and pleasures.

CHAPTER 1  
THE SPECTACLE OF FEMALE NUDITY: THE HISTORY OF HARD-CORE  
PORNOGRAPHY

In recent years, pornography has grasped the attention of academia, finding its way into the classroom and thus gaining the respect of researchers and authors from various disciplines. The proliferation of pornography into mainstream entertainment speaks to the incessant desire of contemporary society to speak and see sex. Hard-core pornography should not be dismissed as a matter of mindless, gratuitous, masturbatory sex, but rather as a representation of sexual discourse that reinforces heteronormative gender values. In this chapter I will investigate how pornography came to be so profitable and resilient as the dominant, normative discourse, despite its socially aberrant nature. I will study the value and interpretation of live performances before an audience, including the gestures and rapport developed between the female model and the male audience. Like any genre of performance, the female spectacle generated by the performer, who puts on display her sexuality to satisfy the carnal desire of male spectators is not monolithic and has a history of its own. For the purpose of this thesis, the history of the female spectacle will begin with an examination of the burlesque, continuing with the pin-up girl, strippers, men's magazines, stag films, hard-core pornography and finally, cyberporn, all of which glorify the female body as a symbol of ideal feminine sexuality. When women's bodies appear in spectacular pieces, whether it be burlesque, stripping, or pornographic films, their bodies are burdened with the struggle to define female sexuality. On display, the female spectacle opens the stage to pleasures other than those generated by words. As Robert Allen describes in *Horrible Prettiness*, "...what was seen onstage, displayed for the audience to see, was a woman's body, that body was transformed into a more fascinating and terrifying specter...: the

specter of female sexuality” (Allen 1991:81). The cultural relevance of hard-core pornography can only be understood by examining the history of sexually explicit images and the body, specifically the female body, as a sexual spectacle. The advent of new technologies has been instrumental in the proliferation of hard-core images and the pornification of mainstream entertainment.

### *The Origins of the Female Spectacle and Erotic Art*

The story of pornography is one of debate, not only over censorship, but also over the question of its inception and over how the term itself is defined. Historians refer to primitive cave paintings found in the Nile’s Delta that speak to the existence of pornography as early as 70,000 B.C. (Davide 2004:1). In 1524, Marcantonio Raimondi published sixteen sexually explicit engravings by Giulio Romano, depicting Greco-Roman figures engaging in various acts of copulation, entitled the *I Modi* (ibid). During the eighteenth century, *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* (also known as *Fanny Hill*) by John Cleland was published, telling the story of a 15 year old orphan girl named Fanny Hill who loses her virginity, falls into prostitution, and succumbs to a diverse range of sexual exploits, only to fall in love with a wealthy benefactor, marry, and live happily ever after (Davis *et al* 2010:2). Considered the first pornographic novel, *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* was deemed obscene and swept underground for over two centuries. In addition to this, artists such as Édouard Manet pushed the boundaries of contemporary audiences’ tastes with their realistic painting style, as illustrated in the case of Manet’s *Olympia* (1863), which was met with jeers, laughter, criticism, and disdain and was publically condemned as “immoral” and “vulgar” (Lucie-Smith 1991:171-173) (See figure 1). Manet rebelled against tradition by painting a real woman in the nude as opposed to a nude

modeled after a biblical, historical, or mythical theme. *Olympia* is in fact a prostitute, lying on a bed, nude, with her head turned and her gaze directed toward her audience. She is not ashamed of who and what she is and demands that her spectators acknowledge her. At the time, images such as these were considered pornographic; they were shocking in their subversion as they questioned authority and challenged social mores regarding established sex roles.

Some scholars define pornography as “any media with sexual activity or nudity that stimulates erotic as opposed to aesthetic feelings in a community. Such feelings are subjective and change with the passage of time” (Davis *et al* 2010:2). Originally, the word pornography came from the ancient Greek *porne* and *graphos*, meaning, “writing about whores”. ‘Porne’ refers to the lowest class of prostitute, the brothel worker available to Greece’s male citizens. These women received the least respect and protection, even less than slaves (Dworkin 1981:199). Pro-censorship feminist Andrea Dworkin drew from this Greek definition of pornography that the term became an epithet for women’s subordination in the way they are represented as vile whores. In addition, Dworkin claims that pornography resurrects men’s deeply rooted obsession with violence and death, directing it towards women:

The word pornography does not ‘mean writing about sex’ or ‘depictions of the erotic’ or ‘depictions of sexual acts’ or ‘depictions of nude bodies’ or ‘sexual representations’ or any other such euphemisms. It means the graphic depiction of women as vile whores. In ancient Greece, not all prostitutes were considered vile, only the porneia (Dworkin 1981:200).

The current legal definition of pornography was established by the Supreme Court of Canada in the *Butler* (1992) case, in which pornography was defined in three categories: (1) explicit sex with violence, (2) explicit sex without violence but which subjects people to treatment that is degrading or dehumanizing, and (3) explicit sex without violence that is neither

degrading nor dehumanizing (James 1992:1). Violence in this context included both actual physical violence and threats of physical violence.

For the purpose of this thesis, pornography, specifically hard-core pornography, will be defined as sexually explicit material that reproduces gender heteronormativity and, thus, patriarchal sexism. Hard-core pornographic material is exploitive and misogynistic towards women in nature and represents a form of sexuality that is highly manufactured and sold to the public as a consumable product. Heteronormativity refers to the social construction of sexuality where heterosexuality is the “norm”, assuming that the concept of sexual identity is unified and fixed (McKay 2000:286). Pornography, with the exception of some lesbian porn, perpetuates socially hegemonic beliefs, sustaining patriarchal morality within a social system where “heterosexuality is dependent on the notion that sexuality is a natural given and this is used as a means of controlling the individual who is reduced to his/her sexual desire” (ibid). What specifically makes hard-core pornography sexist and repressive lies in the way gender relations are represented and its proscriptive nature that sustains heteronormativity. While hard-core pornography is embedded within institutionalized heterosexuality that is predominantly sexist, privileging the female body, it does not do so exclusively. Male sexuality is also taken for granted and assumed, and the politics of hard-core pornography emphasizes the roles of dominance and power between the sexes. The values of heteronormative pornography require vigilant maintenance and enforcement through stigmatization that renders any gender or sexual alternatives unthinkable. While it is not my intention to disregard the exploitation of the male body in hard-core pornography, I will focus on the female body as the preferred vehicle through which heteronormativity and patriarchal sexism is exercised. Masculine sexuality reinforces the

politics of hard-core pornography, more often than not, to men's advantage, whereas female sexuality is exploited and oppressed at the detriment of their own sexual expression.

To understand how the female body has been distorted into what Robert Allen (1991) calls a 'spectacle', my discussion will begin with a look at the history of pornography, beginning with the burlesque performer. Burlesque speaks to the historical problem of gender, emerging at a time when the question "what does it mean to be a woman?" was constantly being asked and answered in various and conflicting forums and voices (Allen 1991:27). The refiguring of the female body that occurred on the burlesque stage modelled female sexuality for future establishments that would become extremely powerful and influential in the problematic issue of sexual politics in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In an attempt to reconstruct heteronormative definitions of feminism, the burlesque performer set a precedent for future performers that allowed them to free their bodies from the repressive "Victorian" ideals that women were expected to embody, thus allowing them to present a liberated female form, one that the performer would have a greater influence over. Furthermore, burlesque also presented a model for the sexual objectification of women in entertainment, thereby laying the foundation for modern pornography.

The glorification of the body in burlesque was visual as well as linguistic. In *Horrible Prettiness* (1991), Allen argues that the "nudity" of the burlesque performer challenged the bourgeois inclination to assess female sexuality as invisible (Allen 1991:147). By making a spectacle of herself, the burlesque performer aroused instinctual, and irrational sexual urges in her male spectators by persuading them to see her for what she is. Both sensuous and sensual, the physical and sexual spectacle of burlesque was contradictory and controversial.



Synonymous with burlesque is the name Lydia Thompson, a celebrated burlesque performer, who debuted in New York in the summer of 1868 and quickly became a popular sensation (Allen 1991:21) (See figure 2). A student in dance, Thompson toured Europe and Russia performing various pantomimes and dance routines (Allen 1991:21). Gradually, Thompson added other renowned burlesque dancers to her show, forming a dance ensemble known as Lydia Thompson and her troupe. Thompson's style of burlesque was enormously popular despite the controversy it aroused, hitting a sensitive nerve among a wide range of outspoken individuals. Through such performances as *Ixion* and *The Forty Thieves*, Thompson transformed burlesque. Exhibiting their bodies in the form of a spectacle, Thompson and her troupe questioned how a woman should be "allowed" to act on stage and how femininity should and could be represented (Allen 1991:21). Their contradiction of traditional femininity was castigated by an incensed Protestant minister named Charles Smyth who gave a three hour sermon that addressed the shocking obscenity he endured while attending the performance of *The Black Crook* in 1866. The sermon was heard by three thousand people and in the following week, the following excerpt was printed in the *Clipper, Herald*, and other papers:

The first thing that strikes the eye is the immodest dress of the girls; their short skirts and undergarments of thin, gauze-like material, allowing the form of the figure to be discernible through it in some instances; the flesh colored tights, imitating nature so well that the illusion is complete; with the exceedingly short drawers, almost tight fitting, extending very little below the hip, also of this material, arms and back apparently bare, and bodice so cut and fitted as to show off every inch and outline of body above the waist...the attitudes were exceedingly indelicate – ladies dancing so as to make their undergarments spring up, exposing the figure beneath from the waist to the toe, except for such covering as we have described; stretching out a foot so as to place the lib in a horizontal line drawn from the hip, and turning the foot thus held out towards the audience (Allen 199:114).

Clearly, what made the skits, gags, and jokes of burlesque "remarkable" were its costumes, gestures, tone, inflections, and attitudes of the performers and their relationship with

the audience. At a historical period when women were almost socially invisible, Thompson and her burlesque troupe put female sexuality at centre stage, refusing to be ignored. Shedding the repressed conservative middle class domination, the “leg business” formed an unpredictable and uncomfortable relationship between performer and spectator (Allen 1991:78).

Well into the twentieth century, the undisguised female sexual spectacle became a regular feature of the stage taking on a somewhat carnivalesque appeal . This dependence on sexual display is evident with the introduction of the “cooch”, “cootch”, or “hootchy-kootchy” phenomenon of the period (Allen 1991:227). Performed in plays such as *Hot Time in the Old Town Tonight* in 1899, the “cooch” dance linked the female performer more directly and intimately with the male patron than any burlesque dance before (Allen 1991:231). Here, the intention of giving sexual pleasure is obvious and uninhibited. The spectators’ desires are focused exclusively on the body of the performer, while she directs all her bodily movements towards one function only: to arouse and please her audience. In its perfected form, the female body has become an “exhibition of direct, wordless, female eroticism and exoticism” (Allen 1991:231). The “cooch” of the 1890s was later jazzed up with the “shimmy”, which eventually evolved into the striptease of the late 1920s and 1930s (Allen 1991:30). Considered “most obscene”, this new display of dance featured “a rhythmic shaking of the shoulders and chest, as well as other tremblings and quiverings of the body” (Liepe-Levinson 2002:113).

Excited audiences would eagerly fill the music halls, cabarets, and vaudeville theatres for a glimpse of the lavish musical spectacles. These shows would tantalize their male spectators with exotic dancers, French maids in uniform, Parisian prostitutes in sexy stockings and suspenders, as well as a cheeky chorus line of cancan girls, ballet and belly dancers, actresses, artists' models, courtesans, Mata Haris, strip teasers, nudes, risqué lingerie, artistic poses and soft focus portraits.

Some of these pretty ladies, the beauty queens of their day, became stars whose legendary names are still familiar: Mata Hari, Jane Avril, Gaby Deslys, Cleo de Merode, Lili Damita, and Josephine Baker, each performing dances such as the French Cancan, or dressed as the veiled and seductive Salomé in belly dancing routines inspired by so-called Indian or Oriental dances (See figure 3). In addition, small hand-held cards with pictures of female performers posed in their costumes were sold to and collected by male customers.

*The Female Spectacle in Pictures: Pin-Ups to Soft-Core Pornography*

It was a smooth transition from the pictorials of exotic and erotic women on photo cards to the pin-ups of the 1930s and 1940s. Published in men's magazines, pinups represented a largely nostalgic and 'innocent' sexuality as a "symbol of freedom and opportunity, American way of life and innovation" (Williams 2004:335). Like burlesque, the image of the pinup challenged social boundaries of sexual conduct, as they blurred the lines between soft-core erotica and an increasingly more pornographic image. The soft-core pinups typically showed singular bodies in their entirety, not involved in any form of sexual encounter, while still maintaining a strong sexual energy (Kakoudaki 2004:338). Pre-war pinups were primarily designed as propaganda, embodying patriotic values with mainstream images such as the Varga Girl posing in *V is for Victory* (See figure 4), published in *Esquire*, April 1943 (Kakoudaki 2004:338). In addition to sexually suggestive titles, a distinct feature of the pinup was the direct eye-line connecting the model with the viewer, as illustrated in *Target for Tonite*, published in *Esquire*, March 1944 (Kakoudaki 2004:338). Pre-war pinups emphasized the sexual elements of the model by posing the model with her chest pushed out, her buttocks slightly turned out, her lips parted with a teasing expression of sexual pleasure, whereas post-war pinups models were

posed in more provocative positions with greater nudity, which superseded the patriotic focus, portrayed in *Love at Second Sight*, published October 1940 (See figure 5) (Kakoudaki 2004:358). Other factors, such as pose, captions, clothing, facial expression, degree of nudity or genital exposure determined the level of acceptability in mainstream publications (Williams 2004:339). The proliferation of the pin-up was seen in men's magazines, women's magazines, on war posters, in adult and/or pornographic publications, musicals, cartoons, mainstream movies, and popular songs (Williams 2004:338). Where once there were images of race cars, landscape, or animals for example, these spaces were now occupied with sexualized female bodies: "The presence of the smiling young woman is often what actually initiates and animates these various spaces, media, or print forms before anything else can occupy them" (Williams 2004:344).

The multiple definitions of pin-ups and their mainstream status illustrate contemporary flexibility and subconscious acceptance of pornographic images. As a significant illustration of cultural transgression, the pin-up funnelled the excitement and arousal of a sexually explicit scenario into non-pornographic media. Men's and so-called girlie magazines facilitated the proliferation and exploitation of pinup production. At this time, 1951, "Blitz Wolf" studios produced pictorials of girls in bathing suits in every possible setting, occasion, and pose imaginable (Williams 2004:363).

In 1953, Hugh Hefner capitalized on the popularity of the pin-up girl, expanding the concept with the first publication of *Playboy* Magazine in the United States, with a nude Marilyn Monroe as the first *Playboy* centerfold (See figure 6). Although publishing images of nude females was not novel, Hefner's goal was to use the magazine to echo a "Playboy Philosophy, a... justification of a postwar good life that, he said, included sex as recreation" (Slade 2000:60). Controversial as it was, *Playboy* never showed pubic hair or genitals in its early conception,

maintaining relatively “respectable” photography (Watts 2009:37). Then in 1965, Bob Guccione published the first edition of *Penthouse* magazine in the United Kingdom, later followed by the first American edition, released in 1969 (Watts 2009:43). More risqué than *Playboy*, *Penthouse* photographs contained pubic hair for an audience wanting more explicit images of female nudity (See figure 7). Larry Flynt Jr. joined the men magazine market with the publication of *Hustler* in 1974. Unlike its predecessors, *Hustler* not only displayed pubic hair, but also female genitalia, hard-core sex acts, various fetishes, and sex involving sex toys (See figure 8). Challenging societal taboos and obscenity laws, Flynt broke legal boundaries, paving the way for future publishers and producers of sexually explicit material (Russomanno 2002:89). Having carved out a niche within the men’s magazine market, *Playboy*, along with *Penthouse*, and *Hustler* acted as a vehicle for pornographic distribution from the mid-twentieth century into the 1970s when its popularity declined with the advent of new technologies.

### *Sexploitation Films and the Beginning of Pornographic Mainstreaming*

During the 1930s through to the 1960s, a new form of sexual spectacle emerged in the form of “classical” exploitation films that quickly took precedence over the strip tease, the pin-up girls, and the men’s magazines. This new technology of sexuality, originally posed as exposés educational tracts, or morality plays, maintained its popularity in the market with spectacular images never seen before. The “classical” exploitation film typically featured scenes such as nudist camps, striptease dancers, footage of childbirth, victims of venereal diseases, and people engaged in various sexual vices (Williams 2004:372-373). Moving into the 1950s and the 1960s, “nudie-cuties” were introduced to the film market as a genre that featured that portrayed nudity but without any educational suggestion. Russ Meyer’s *The Immortal Mr. Teas*

(1959) was one of the first released films that fell into this new category of sex exploitation films (Williams 2004:373). Gradually, the “nudie-cuties” succumbed to the demand for a greater range of sexploitation films that consisted of fictional narratives, more nudity within sexual situations, and eventually simulated sexual activity. These short films, known as “Beaver Films” emerged from underground distribution to public theatre showings in San Francisco around 1967 (Williams 2004:370). Far more explicit, these sexploitation films showed full female nudity with a new focus on the genitals, mounting to a wide variety of beaver films such as; *Eager Beaver Films*, *Naughty Nymphs and Eager Beavers at Their Busy Best*, *Beaver Picnic*, *Beaucoup Beavers*, *Beavers at Sea*, *Beavers in Bloom*, and *Eager Beavers Demanding their Rights in Beaver Protest* (Williams 2004:376).

It has been speculated that the uninhibited acceptance of sexploitation films may have been due to a shortage of Hollywood films and foreign “art” films during the 1960s (Williams 2004:373). The result was by 1969, approximately 150 feature-length sexploitation films were in distribution. During this period, a distinct line began to be drawn between low-end sexploitation theatres, which featured cheaper films, and high-end businesses, such as the Pussycat chain, which aimed to showcase only high-quality products (Williams 2004:374).

Perhaps the most important development that facilitated hard-core motion pictures’ entry into mainstream entertainment was the introduction of 16 mm and 35 mm film (Williams 2004:374). The major turning point was in 1923, when the 35 mm film equipment used by “professionals” was decreased to 16 mm, thus resulting in a new system of amateur film making and facilitating the transition of adult films from private home viewing to public exhibition at a fraction of the cost. Because the 16 mm film was less expensive and more anonymous in its production, pushing acceptable theatrical limits was easier and by 1967 full frontal nudity

became a regular feature of sexploitation films (Williams 2004:377). The distinct appeal for the 16 mm beaver films was the heightened sexual intimacy and spontaneity that gave a more “natural” feel than a grossly manufactured sexuality with actors, props, and artificial settings. Beaver films typically were between three to ten minutes long, constructed of a series of shots, showcasing naked women, posing for the camera as they licked their lips, ground their pelvises, and humped beds or couches (Williams 2004:376).

In order to keep the audiences from becoming bored, the 16 mm operations started to incorporate story lines and advanced technical features into their sexploitation films. Lasting almost one hour in length, the “simulation film” featured increasing genital exposure, sexual explicitness, combined with the narrative conventions of the established sexploitation films (Williams 2004:381). The key differences between the 16 mm sexploitation film and what would become hard-core features was the lack of camera angles and/or close-ups that showed genital, oral, or anal penetration (Williams 2004:388). It was in the 1970s that the first hard-core narrative feature, entitled *Mona* and directed by Bill Osco, was released onto the American theatre scene (Williams 2004:371).

At this time, in New York, one of the first automated 16 mm Mini-Cinemas, located at Seventh Avenue and Forty-ninth Street, began showing programs of “San Francisco hardcore”, also known as stag films (Williams 2004:388). *Electro Love*, also known as *Electro Sex*, was one of the earlier stag films produced and released in New York that gained rapid success and popularity (Williams 2004:388). With a loosely written plot, tied together by a series of sexual episodes, *Electro Love* was the story of a ‘jeans-wearing counterculture type’ who introduces his friends to the three female robots he had created to give him (and each other) sexual pleasure.

He and his friends partake, trading off periodically, until they realize the robots cannot be turned off and they end up literally devouring the “gentlemen’s credentials” (Williams 2004:389).

The stag film or dirty movie, Williams argues, is emblematic of the “forbidden”, where real people and real sexual activity were tangible and the aesthetic embodiment was so weak, as there were no actors, just performers:

In a time when verbal and visual images of sex were suppressed, when open art could only euphemize, the stags documented those isolated and unmentionable private experiences which were nonetheless in some form universal. By sharing the mysteries of sexual data through collective rituals of masculine emergence, American and European male (primarily the former) received through the stags a non-credit course in sex education (Williams 1989:58).

It was exactly this crude, raw “reality” that Di Lauro and Gerald Rabkin (1976), suggested was the crucial element of stag films, whose audiences were primarily interested in being schooled in the hidden mechanism of sexual practices.

These Mini-Cinemas could gross approximately \$40,000.00 U.S. per week. The high profit gained on a minimal investment sparked an intense interest in producers and exhibitors to abandon simulation production for the more lucrative hard-core features. This full transition, Williams suggests, from stag films to authoritative hard-core sexploitation films was marked by the debut of *Deep Throat* (1972), directed by Gerard Damiano (See figure 9). The 61 minute long movie, starring Linda Lovelace, is the story about a sexually frustrated nurse who seeks help from a doctor due to her inability to achieve an orgasm. The doctor discovers that Linda’s clitoris is located in her throat. With the discovery of her abnormality, Linda is employed by the doctor as a therapist, performing a particular technique of oral sex, thereafter known as “deep throat” on various men, ending with the line “The End. And Deep Throat to you all” (McGrady 1980:58). One of the first pornographic narrative films to feature a plot and character



development, *Deep Throat* earned mainstream attention and propelled Linda Lovelace into a porn celebrity and the mother of a new fad known as “porn chic”, a trend that would soon launch its own capital interest.

In addition to the narrative feature of hard-core films, the intensity of arousal is also heightened in comparison to the stag film. Level of arousal, excitement, climax, and usually satisfaction from hard-core films allows both the male characters in the films and the male viewer to “withdraw satisfied” after getting into and then back out of the picture (Williams 1989:72). Alternatively, in stag films, the ending is typically abrupt, followed by a close-up “insert of an insert”. In contemporary hard-core narrative films, Williams (1989), describes the term for the “insert of an insert” as the “meat shot”. This shot is the definitive stag film image: a close-up of penetration that shows that hard-core sexual activity is taking place. The purpose is to illustrate that not only penetration has taken place, but also sexual satisfaction. This satisfaction can also be signalled with the use of sound that permits the performers to vocalize their pleasure in groans, moans, sighs, and actual verbal expressions (Williams 1989:72-73). Perhaps the most popular and dramatic conclusion to sexual penetration in feature-length hard-core films is signified through external penile ejaculation, or as the industry refers to it, the “money shot” (Williams 1989:73). Arguably the most representative instance of phallic power and pleasure, the “money shot” is the optimum example of cinematic heteronormativity.

Hard-core narrative films flourished until the mid 1980s, when the introduction of the home video changed the viewing space from the theatre to the privacy of home. Within this new set of conditions and viewing practices, there was a shift in the interests of the consumer from narrative story lines back to an emphasis on pure sexual spectacle. The VCR revolution replaced film with video as the primary medium of moving-image pornography where “video’s lower

production costs and broader distribution provided the ideal vehicle for increasing niche-conscious pornography” (Williams 2004:402). Currently, most, if not all, pornographic movies are produced directly on video. Williams (2004) argues this shift from the theatre to the living room has not only drastically altered the look and feel of pornographic films, but also the spectators’ relationship to, and experience of the sexual image.

In the shadows of the video era, a new and unprecedented medium of entertainment technology, the internet or the World Wide Web, was introduced. While the video dominated the pornography market of the 1970s to the 1990s, the internet immediately captured the attention of consumers and soon took its place as the largest distributor of porn. Cyberporn offers a wealth of sexually explicit images and a heightened freedom of sexual exploration with just the click of the button. Despite certain regulations to restrict access to pornographic websites, sexually explicit material can still be intentionally or accidentally discovered by internet users. As with the advent of the 16 mm film, the video, and now the internet, pornography takes advantage of technological advancements to facilitate access and exposure to pornographic images and text.

#### *The World Wide Web, Pornography, and the Advent of Porn Chic*

The anonymity of internet pornography use has allowed users to consume any type of sexually explicit material desired in the comfort of their own homes any time of day or night. There are no boundaries in internet pornography, providing a market for less mainstream sites representing marginalised sexualities (Lillie 2004:45). Gorman and McLean suggested that the successfulness of online pornography can be attributed to the lack of regulation and degree of privacy (Gorman & McLean 2003:197). Highly lucrative, the internet porn industry

accumulated approximately US\$400 million in 2006 with over 260 million pages of adult content (Buskin 2002:2). A recent addition to the free pornography website market are thumbnail gallery post sites. These free websites post link to commercial sites, thus offering small glimpses of the commercial site in the form of thumbnail images, or in the form of free hosted galleries. Serving as a portal to entice internet users to become customers of their product, thumbnails are an extremely efficient and inexpensive means to view sites with adult content with just the click of a mouse.

Access to on-line pornographic images does not require proof of legal age and/or credit card payment. Many commercial porn sites now allow users to sample pornographic streaming videos in the form of MPEGs, WMVs, and QuickTime. Advertising-supported free pornographic video hosting service websites offer an endless menu of commercial porn movies ranging from a few seconds to over 20 minutes long, enabling their consumers to satiate their pornographic interest for a fraction of the cost of videos, while staying in the comfort and privacy of their own homes.

By the mid to late 1990s, public perception of pornography gradually grew more tolerant and a new consciousness emerged, reflecting an idealization of porn actors and actresses. Adult film stars such as Nina Hartley, Linda Lovelace, Marilyn Chambers, Annie Sprinkle, Lisa DeLeeuw, Juliet Anderson, Harry Reems, John Leslie, Ron Jeremy, John C. Holmes, and Jenna Jameson (See figure 10), have become celebrities, regarded with the status of a superstars, glorifying a hyper-sexualized image that young men and women seek to emulate, and selling the “porn chic” lifestyle (Lehman 2006:88). The career of a porn star far exceeds the borders of the film script, capitalizing on business ventures where her name and image become a trademark for various products and public appearances. Securing exclusive contracts, porn stars are featured in

reality shows, write and publish books, sell their own lines of sex toys, creams, and videos, attend sex conventions, and appear in Hollywood films.

Another format of adult content that emerged with the Internet offers members of an adult paysite 1-on-1 private sessions with adult models. Performing live, models can chat with clients, taking requests and perform sexual acts exclusively for the pleasure of the spectator. Webcam sex shows have created a unique international economic pool, employing professional and amateur models from around the world. Some companies will set up the websites, manage finances, and maintain spaces for the models to perform; other companies offer “space” on their website in which anyone, for a fee, can design and host their own private show. Webcams have created a new modern form of sexual spectacle in real time that fosters a more immediate, direct relationship between the performer and the spectator. There are over 2 million adult web sites with more “than a million people across the globe...now photographing themselves during various sexual activities, uploading these photos onto personal and commercial websites, and inviting the entire computerized world to enjoy them” (Lehman 2006:254). Overall, the \$2.48 billion in internet pornography revenue clearly illustrates the power of this medium, with over 95% of pornography consumed on the internet being produced by free amateur sites, free adult tube sites, and/or free file sharing (Lehman 2006:323).

### *The Spectacle of Internet Pornography*

The questions that often came to my mind as I engaged in this study of the history of pornography and how it is consumed in modern Western society were, “What exactly is heterosexual pornography?” and “What is being seen that has inspired so much discussion and controversy?” My own personal exposure to pornography has come through the men with whom

I have had relationships with, and I have not viewed pornography in several years. In the available research literature, very few articles or studies address the actual content of pornographic videos and the acts performed in them. Instead, the overwhelming majority of studies examine the effects of pornography on adolescent sexual schemas, attitudes and behaviours of men and women, and many more on the relationship between consumption of pornographic material and rape and other related sexual assaults by men on women. Clearly there is a dominant interest in the misogynistic nature of pornography and how it affects attitudes of men and women, but little has been done that breaks down the actual acts in these videos and how they directly influence those members of society not deemed to be sexual deviants or predators. There are a few studies, such as “Women’s Attitudes and Fantasies about Rape as a Function of Early Exposure to Pornography” (1992), by Shawn Corne, John Briere, and Lillian M. Esses, and “Men’s Leisure and Women’s Lives: The Impact of Pornography on Women” (1999) by Susan Shaw, that do look deeper into the images and values of pornography and the direct relation it has with the sexual practices of the viewers.

In an attempt to provide a detailed examination of hard-core heterosexual pornography, which is the focus of this thesis, I began my own research through the internet and the various websites that offer pornographic ‘entertainment’. By searching ‘free porn videos’ on the world wide web, I found a long list of web sites such as PornHub.com or Keezemovies.com that allow internet users free access to pornographic films without signing up for a membership to the website or proof of age. One particular website called XNXX.com, features distinctly violent and degrading sexual acts in a variety of vignettes that range from a few seconds to several minutes long. Some videos were fairly ‘soft’, such as *Amateur Teen*, which features an underage girl with a ponytail having sex with an older man, to more perverse videos, such as *Aurora Snow*

*Triple Sausage Threat*, where a young woman is seen being sexually penetrated by five different men, some two at a time, orally and vaginally. The majority of videos I previewed glorified the union of sexuality with violence, such as hitting, slapping, grabbing and pushing the woman's body into awkward contorted positions. In addition, these videos glorified the transgression of social mores as seen in the multiple videos that depicted a mother having sex with her adult son and teachers fucking their students. Each video is carefully crafted for the humiliation and degradation of women, for example, in *Bunch of Guys Pissing on a Degraded Brunette Slut*, a woman is seen sitting on the floor with a large dog collar duck-taped around her neck while five different men simultaneously piss into the collar, acting as a funnel around her head as she "drowns" in their urine.

These videos are the extreme representation of hard-core pornography. Intermixed, but seldom, are videos that are less violent and misogynistic in nature. My brief research and analysis did not result in any conclusive statements regarding the generalization of contemporary hard-core pornography. I am not making any claim as to the majority or trend in internet porn, but rather I am remarking on the ease and unrestricted limits to accessing pornographic material that is violent and degrading to women. It would be beneficial to have data collected that speaks to the volume of pornography that contains degrading and violent images compared to non-misogynistic images. An in-depth analysis on the content of contemporary hard-core pornography would offer a significant source of data for future research in which claims regarding the nature and representation of pornography could be made.

The history of filmed pornography has been largely ignored in academia, despite the cultural and economic influence it has had on American entertainment. An acute understanding and appreciation of the history of pornographic images and text is a necessary prerequisite for

contemporary sociological discourse on sexuality. Williams argues that the adult film industry has been accused of being monolithic and linear as it progresses through the 21<sup>st</sup> century (2004:394). In reality, the pornography industry and its consumer base are highly dynamic and require us to reconceptualise hard-core entertainment as reflective of social conditions. The financial capital that pornography has gained ensures a stable hold in the entertainment sector of Western society. Designed to feed a sexual appetite that is insatiable and growing, consumer demand guarantees pornography's presence for a long time to come. Pornography represents current sexual discourses and will adjust and reconfigure its terms and boundaries as society reconfigures its own definitions of sexuality. The mainstreaming of pornography speaks to the resilience and influence it has had in the daily lives of men and women. The pop culture image of women in modern society is one that is plasticized, scripted, hyper-sexualized, and surgically enhanced. Gail Dines argues that this image is the result of living in a society that has become increasingly infiltrated by pornography: "The image of the 'slut' that is central to porn has now seeped into pop culture to such a degree that media representations today look like soft-core porn from ten years ago. Whether it is an almost-naked Britney Spears writhing around onstage or a Victoria's Secret model clad in a plunging bra and thong, women and girls today are bombarded with images of themselves as sex objects whose only worth is their 'hotness'"(Dines 2010:xiii). The normalization of the porn star look is the modern spectacle of female presentation. With limited choices, young girls choose between being hot or invisible. The pornification of the female form has hijacked female sexuality. Through manipulation and coercion, girls conform to the porn star look, providing them with an identity that glorifies sex and trivializes every other human attribute.

Unrestrained and unapologetic, hard-core pornography pushes across predefined cultural boundaries, thus, redefining sexual attitudes, desires, and experiences. While the pornification of contemporary Western society is relatively recent, the female spectacle has existed long before hard-core pornography. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, pornography and the female body continue to be entrenched in a highly political and powerful relationship that challenges the definition of what it is to be a woman and the definition of sexual pleasure. The pornification of the female form is hegemonic and thus does not offer an ideal of femininity that is free of patriarchal influences. In response, feminists such as Andrea Dworkin, Gail Dines, and Alison Assiter, to name a few, have engaged in an ongoing debate questioning the authenticity of female sexuality as portrayed in pornographic material.

In the next chapter I will review the women`s movement and the definitions of pornography and sexuality as discussed by feminists who are pro- and anti-censorship. I will try to examine the question of whether the female body has been empowered and liberated by pornography or is the female body being used a vehicle by pornography to endorse gender heteronormativity. Have the gender transgressive bodies of the burlesque performer and the sexually explicit poses of the pin-up girls to porn actresses freed women from the repressive nature of patriarchy, or has the female body simply been subjected to a new form of power relations that is merely a fallacious image of sexual liberation?



## CHAPTER 2

### POLITICS AND SEXUALITY: PRO-CENSORSHIP AND ANTI-CENSORSHIP FEMINISM ON SEXUALITY AND PORNOGRAPHY

The nature and significance of pornography are controversial even within feminism. On one side are feminists who focus on the oppressive character of patriarchal society, challenging institutionalized power. On the other side are feminists who place more emphasis on reaching sexual freedom for women, while acknowledging how male dominated societies restrict women's sexual expression in order to control them. The big question is: Should sexual oppression or sexual repression be given more attention? The fracture between these two positions has led to more attention being focused on the political weakness of the feminist movement than to its strengths and successes. In this chapter I will review the arguments made by pro- and anti-censorship feminists of the second and third wave movements while focusing primarily on the question of sexuality and pornography. Through this discussion I will highlight the various discourses feminists have used to define the meaning of sexuality, pornography and women's sexual affect.

Pro-censorship feminists are defined as being opposed to traditional forms of obscenity as portrayed in pornographic material. MacKinnon and Dworkin and their supporters argued to have pornography banned on the merits that it was seen as a "central cause to women's oppression by a number of feminists... [perceived as] the root of virtually all forms of exploitation and discrimination against women" (Duggan et al 1985:131). Focused on completely eliminating pornography, versus merely regulating it, MacKinnon and Dworkin suggested that pornography be defined as a form of sexual discrimination and that there should be a civil rights law passed to proscribe it. Anti-pornography, pro-censorship feminists associate

pornography with feelings of hurt, sadness, anger, frustration, fear and nausea, caused by the exploitation, racism, sexism, and misogyny seen as innate to heteroporn (Paasonen 2007:47) However, feminists such as Gayle Rubin and Eve Sedgwick argue that pro-censorship feminists define pornography as a monolithic text embedded in negative affect. Reducing all pornographic material to the heteronormative, violent sexual imagery that caters to only male viewers makes it impossible to discuss the diverse practices, definitions, and attractions to pornography (Paasonen 2007:49).

Anti-censorship feminists argue that banning all forms of pornographic material results in an oversimplified demonization of sexually explicit expression (Strossen 2000:142). This reductionist approach to pornographic material, they argue, ignores the complex nature of sexually explicit expression and the subjective interpretation of such expression (Strossen 2000:145). Strossen argues that censorship of pornographic material disallows individuals' control over their thoughts and actions, assuming that the audience will simply react in a "do and see" manner (Strossen 2000:146). Describing censorship as a form of sexual repression, anti-censorship feminists argued that it would eliminate pornographic images that some women experience as liberating. Anti-censorship feminists invoke the free speech (and, in the United States, the First Amendment right thereto) to protect what they perceive as a source of pleasure for some women without a sense of shame or guilt (Chancer 2000:81). Feminists such as Ellen Willis and Carol Vance have opposed legally mandating restrictions to pornographic material (Chancer 2000:79) with an interest in defending the expression of sexual differences and in opposing the hierarchization of some sexualities as better, or more normal, than others (Williams 1989:23).

Neither side of this debate entirely disagrees with the other; their greatest theoretical differences lies in questions of emphasis. While pro-censorship feminists focus on systematic patriarchal ills of the past, anti-censorship feminists focus on the need for sexual freedom in the present (Chancer 2000:79). In general, anti-censorship feminists agree that pornographic representations are sexist, but they do not necessarily agree on which representations are sexist, or why (Williams 1989:25).

I shall begin by examining the pro-censorship feminists' definition of pornography, highlighting their depiction of pornography as a direct cause of sexual violence against women. Catherine MacKinnon and Andrea Dworkin fight to abolish not just pornography, but all forms of male supremacy. In contrast, feminists, such as Carole Vance, Celia Daileader and Karen Ciclitira argue that censorship would not alleviate male dominant relations of power, but rather limit a sexual medium that some women claim to find pleasurable. As a result, pro-censorship feminists are criticized for creating a new form of repression through censorship. Acting as a voice for women who are not harmed by but interested in pornography, some anti-censorship feminists focus on the right to freedom of speech, thereby opening unlimited channels to sexual expression. These consistent and distinctively opposing theories have ultimately led to a state of contradiction and confusion among feminists. The 'third wave' movement, composed of pro-porn, postmodern, anti-censorship feminist, begun in the 1980s. It acknowledges these dichotomies but suggests we need to move beyond our differences and begin to listen to the unique sexual experiences of women. It is argued by anti-censorship feminists of the third wave that women do in fact want pornography, a female orientated one, without coercion and patriarchal domination. By reinterpreting sexual discourse, some third wave feminists urge women to repower themselves by choosing the definitions that construct the discourses in their

lives. This is problematic, however, as pornography is defined by its heteronormative and patriarchal dominance. The question arises: women may choose to want some form of visual erotica; however, is it contradictory for women to engage in a form of sexual representation that is oppressive to their sex, and is their attraction to pornographic material simple due to the lack of alternative sexual representations to choose from? Finally, do women consume pornography due to an authentic sexual desire or as the by-product of social conditioning?

*Second Wave Movement: Pro-Censorship and Anti-Censorship Feminism*

Within the feminist movement the most politically influential arguments toward pornography is the one articulated by radical pro-censorship feminists. The radical feminist movement brought forth the position that gender, not class or race, was the essential contradiction and that all other forms of social oppression come from male domination and that it is this oppression that unites all women from all walks of life (Echols 1989:139). In addition, the radical pro-censorship feminist movement viewed sexuality primarily as a socio-political construction. As a result, individuals became politicised and ingrained by the prevailing patriarchal process:

I think that sexual desire in women, at least in this culture, is socially constructed as that by which we come to want our own annihilation. That is, our subordination is eroticised in and as female; in fact, we get off on it to a degree, if nowhere near as much as men do. This is our stake in the system that is not in our interest, our stake in this system that is killing us (MacKinnon 1987:54).

Politics are intricately connected with sexuality in that politics is the exercise of power, and it is within the sexual sphere that men exercise the most direct and oppressive form of power over women (Thornton 1986:28). Male sexuality has been defined as always aggressive, selfish, and more or less violent, while female sexuality is defined as non-aggressive, tender, and mutually

supportive (ibid). Radical feminists argue that through rape, sexual harassment, sexual molestation, and pornography, men maintain political power and control over women (ibid).

Politically radical groups such as Redstockings, founded in 1969 by Ellen Willis and Shulamith Firestone, committed themselves to public action and consciousness-raising (Echols 1989:139). Strongly influenced by the left and influenced by Marxist methodology, Redstockings worked to create a new theory of women's oppression. Willis described her theory of women's domination as a 'neo-maoist materialism' (Willis 1984:96): "women's submission is not the result of brainwashing, stupidity, or mental illness but of continual daily pressure from men" (Echols 1989:144). It is argued that female sexual freedom cannot be realized until society is more egalitarian, when sexuality and emotionality are fully united (Collins 1990:10).

Catherine MacKinnon and Andrea Dworkin were perhaps the most prominent writers of the pro-censorship movement whose sexual framework was influenced by many philosophies, including those of Immanuel Kant (Shrage 2005:45). As an essentialist, Kant interpreted sexual desire as an innate appetite that is exploited and consumed purely for pleasure:

A person becomes a thing and can be treated and used as such by everyone. This is the only case in which a human being is designed by nature as the Object of another's enjoyment. Sexual desire is at the root of it; and that is why we are ashamed of it, and why all strict moralist, and those who had pretensions to be regarded as saints, sought to suppress and extirpate it (Kant 1963:163).

Sexual desire was perceived as different from all other natural appetites in that it required the demoralization of another person in order to be satisfied (Kant 1963:172). As a result, human beings are turned into things to be consumed. Furthermore, sexual desire is not driven toward the person as a whole, but rather only their specific sexual body parts. Finally, Kant suggested that humans become feral as they seek out satisfaction of their sexual desire with the

acknowledgement that one's sexual impulse can be potentially more destructive than any other human appetite (ibid).

Kant's philosophy basically condemned all sexual acts, including extramarital sex, masturbation, and homosexuality. Only procreative sex within the confines of a heterosexual marriage was deemed righteous, as it did not involve the degradation of another person's humanity (Kant 1963:179). Laurie Shrage refutes Kant's theories, stating that many desires find their fulfilment through physical interaction with another person's body, for example, receiving a massage or haircut; playing contact sports; and/or practising medicine. In addition, Martha Nussbaum suggests that such activities as masturbation, voyeurism, and fetishism do not require the direct participation, hence degradation, of another person, but are usually solitary activities (Shrage 2005:60).

While Kant condemns most sexual acts, MacKinnon condemns only a particular representation of sexual acts, primarily pornography, because she claims it reduces women to sexual objects that are then consumed by men (Shrage 2005:62). In addition, MacKinnon rejects Kant's view that sexual objectification is located in a natural appetite, but rather believes it is constructed through social practices. Furthermore, MacKinnon argues that marriage is not the only site for moral sexual practices since marriage does not completely eliminate sexual harm, but may actually intensify it. The institution of marriage perpetuates the myth of mutual love and happiness and acts as a cultural institution that allows men to use women sexually and invoke female subordination (ibid).

Like MacKinnon, Andrea Dworkin was a passionate, persistent, and vigorous voice for the pro-censorship wing of the women's movement. She was a prolific speaker against male supremacy and patriarchal hierarchies and fought for its dismantlement and the creation of a new

society free of heteronormative values (MacKinnon 1997:25-36). In her fight against pornography, Dworkin identified violence against women as the greatest act of androcentrism. Her passionate opposition towards pornography came from her perception that it was built on cruelty and brutalisation, where the dignity of women was restrained, confined, tied up, whipped, branded, tortured, penetrated, and kicked, all the while, appearing to enjoy their abuse (ibid).

Dworkin identified sexuality as the source of male supremacy and power. She argued that sexuality and violence is at the core of male power and women's subordination is related to the violence committed against them (Assiter 1989:61). Pornography, according to Dworkin, acts as a major agent reproducing male power and women's subordination. This power relationship is vividly described in *Heartbreak: A Political Memoir of a Feminist Militant* (2002), as Dworkin illustrated a photo called "Beaver Hunters", which depicts two white men dressed as hunters sitting in a black jeep:

The jeep occupies almost the whole frame of the picture. The two men carry rifles. The rifles extend above the frame of the photograph onto the white space surrounding it. The men and the jeep face into the camera. Tied onto the hood of the black jeep is a white woman. She is tied with thick rope. She is spread-eagle. Her pubic hair and crotch are the dead center of the car hood and the photograph... The men in the photo are self-possessed; that is, they possess the power of self... They are armed: first in the sense that they are fully clothed; second, because they carry rifles, which are made more prominent, suggesting erection... The women is possessed; that is, she has no self... (Assiter 1989:62).

In the chapter *Androgyny*, from *Woman Hating* (1974), Dworkin makes an appeal to destroy all forms of sexism. She wishes to eliminate all patriarchal power at its source, including the structures of modern culture as we know it. Only then can human beings begin a cultural transformation with a new kind of community (Dworkin 1974:192). She describes a society built on an androgynous cultural structure that is non-coercive and non-sexist. Dworkin uses androgyny as the model concept because it "has no notion of sexual repression built into it and

becomes the realm for realizing the fullest expression of human sexual possibility and creativity” (Dworkin 1974:153).

Most pro-censorship feminists believe that pornography lies at the heart of women’s oppression, as it creates and sustains patriarchal sexuality, in which men dominate women (Assiter 1989:59). Their strong objection to pornography comes from the way women are mutilated and continuously subjected to violence. Radical pro-censorship feminists argue that it is not pornography in and of itself that is the problem, but heterosexual relations that form the basis of women’s subordination (ibid). Pornography is the vehicle in which this oppression is expressed. Helen Longino argued that pornography has nothing to do with love or mutually satisfying sexual relationships, but rather it is about domination, violence, and conquest:

Pornography is not just the explicit representation or description of sexual behaviour, nor even the explicit representation or description of sexual behaviour which is degrading and/or abusive to women. Rather, it is material that explicitly represents or describes degrading and abusive sexual behaviour so as to endorse and/or recommend the behaviour as described. The contextual features, moreover, which communicate such endorsements are intrinsic to the material; that is, they are features whose removal or alteration would change the representation or description (Thornton 1986:30).

Pro-censorship feminists insist that pornography exerts a powerful influence over the constitution of male sexuality. The reason why many men, and women, do not recognize the sexual oppression of women in pornography is because they have internalized the prevailing patriarchal values. The person who buys pornographic material is essentially contributing to the institutionalized abuse of women, even if he or she does not directly treat women this way himself or herself. MacKinnon claims that less exposure to pornography would mean that men would be less influenced to treat women as sexual objects and that this would be at least a small step in the right direction.



Together, MacKinnon and Dworkin published *In Harms Way: The Pornography Civil Rights Hearing* (1997), as a means to bring about public awareness toward sexual violence committed against women. Believing that most women simply try to distance themselves from the shame of sexual violations, MacKinnon and Dworkin suggest that women refuse to listen to the testimonies of female victims and therefore reject the politics of resistance to patriarchal domination (MacKinnon 1997:18). MacKinnon argues that pornography, as a public, available, and legal genre, has protected stature: “it is visible, credible, and legitimate. At the same time, its influence and damaging effects are denied as nonexistent, indeterminate, or merely academic, contrary to all the evidence” (MacKinnon 1997:3). As a result of their direct involvement with victims of sexual violence, pro-censorship feminists clearly denunciate pornography stating “pornography is the theory, rape the practice” (Morgan 1980:139). Ultimately, the victims of pornography, women, are left with no stature at all. Pro-censorship feminists in the United States have argued that their Constitution protects men with laws, justice, and honour, whereas women in the free market are bartered, bought, and sold (MacKinnon 1997:34-35).

While pro-censorship feminists regarded themselves as pro-women, they were highly sceptical of the sexual revolution during the 1960s and the 1970s. They were not anti-sexual but could not conceive a female sexuality free of repression and as a result may have taken for granted women’s desire for genital sexual pleasure. Voices such as MacKinnon and Dworkin may have appeared to be less interested in female sexual arousal as they were in male sexual arousal. By focusing on male violence and female objectification some feminists tend to inadvertently forget that women are sexually active bodies with their own desires and fantasies. Dedicated to the abolition of pornography, pro-censorship feminists began the heated debate that continues today. While there may not be any marches or boycotts presently being held, the pro-

ensorship movement still maintains a strong voice in the debate over what it means to be a woman and how women can define their own sexuality in such a sexually transient culture.

### *Anti-Censorship and Liberal Feminism of the Second Wave and Third Wave Movement*

Liberal feminism has a long history in the social construction of women's lives. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, its focus was on women's right to education and in the 19<sup>th</sup> century their focus turned to equality in civil rights and economic opportunities for women. During the twentieth century, liberal feminists continued their efforts to educate and inspire women and men to co-exist as equal partners in the economy, the family, and in sexuality. Rosemarie Tong suggests that different liberal feminists, such as Betty Friedan, Elizabeth Holtzman, and Pat Schroeder, may have some differences but essentially agree that the predominant goal of women's liberation is sexual and gender equality. Tong argues, "what liberal feminists wish to do is free women from oppressive gender roles – that is, from those roles that have been used as excuses or justifications for giving women a lesser place, or no place at all, in the academy, the forum, and the marketplace (Tong 2009:28).

Within these forums of education, economic and sexual equality, some feminists distinguish by acknowledging individuals who are members of minority groups, such as women in poverty, non-Caucasian, or members of religious affiliations other than Christian. Racialized and low-income women did not define women's liberation as women gaining social equality with men since they did not yet share the same social status with the dominant white female middle-class. As a result of the efforts of such women, race and class oppression, and not just sexism, came to be recognized as pertinent issues for some feminists. As feminists within the second wave began to redefine themselves according to this social and political reality, it united

the experiences of all women whose social conditions had been least studied, written about and changed by political movements (hooks 1984:25). A new emphasis was placed on identity, as opposed to the development of a women-centred space. The creation of a counter-cultural radical space was perceived by some to have fostered a world that was divided by barriers and that closed the women's movement off from most other women. Feeling abandoned and devalued, many women of minorities responded vehemently against feminism (hooks 1984:27).

Social class and race was not the only issue that separated some feminists who identified themselves as liberal from those who identified with radical feminists; sexuality also took a predominant place in feminist debate. For some feminists, sexuality is pre-eminently private in two notable respects. First, it is perceived as primarily pre-social or biologically based, and secondly, its expression by each individual is taken to be a vital element of human freedom. A major criticism by anti-censorship feminists is the over-generalizing by the pro-censorship feminists of the connections between sexuality, violence, imagery, and behaviour.

Micheal Foucault's *The History of Sexuality* has been one of the greatest influences for the liberal feminist scholars on sexuality. Foucault criticized traditional theories of sexuality as a natural phenomenon struggling to break free of social constraints (Rubin 1984:276). According to Foucault, desire is constituted throughout historically specific practices and as such, recognizes new sexualities as emerging constantly in our society (ibid). Due to Foucault's emphasis on the social construction of sexuality, he has been criticized for ignoring the reality of politicized sexuality. Foucault insists he is not denying the existence of sexual repression but is instead inscribing it within a larger framework. Within this framework, liberal feminists have adopted a philosophy that depicts sexuality as structured within highly punitive social structures,

subjected to various formal and informal controls. They argue that it is necessary to recognize these restrictions without turning to essentialist theories on sexuality (Rubin 1984:277).

In *The Politics of Pornography: A Critique of Liberalism and Radical Feminism* (1986), Neil Thornton suggests that in the view of some liberal feminists, sexuality consists of powerful psychological drives that are basically the same in all human beings with the exception of differences between genders (Thornton 1986:12). Sexual conduct is regarded as a matter of private morality, a place where personal and moral standards are most appropriate and where public rules regarding control or coercion have no place (ibid). In contrast to this, Carole Vance suggests that sexuality is a social construction and not merely a natural fact. As a socially constructed phenomenon, sexuality is subject to social, political, and economic structures (Vance 1984:8). The social constructionists approach illustrates that although gender and sexuality are socially constructed, they still remain separate but overlapping domains, or as Gayle Rubin calls them, “vectors of oppression” (Vance 1984:9). The question becomes: What is the site of their construction? Vance would claim that sexuality is shaped within the larger “public” structures of society, such as the political economy, religion, and the educational system. She also looks at how these social forces are then mediated through “private” formations such as marriage, family, intimacy and effect (Vance 1984:10).

If sex is a cultural product, then all sexual representations and descriptions would be as well. People understand that cultural representations such as movies, paintings, or photographs are not always an expression of reality, but instead are an expression of the artist’s style or perspective (Vance 1984:11). According to anti-censorship feminists, pornography is a representation of the explicit (private) sexual activity and its use is a sexual (private) activity, and therefore should not require any legal regulation, unless it spreads from the private to the public

spheres, thereby offending and causing people harm (Thornton 1986:27). Pornography has taken what was private and placed on public display depictions of explicit sex and sexual arousal.

Carole Vance (1984) argued that the anti-pornography position taken up by the pro-censorship feminists consequently left women feeling that their civil liberties were being compromised and that sexual repression continued to flourish under a new guise. Since the early 1990s, more and more women are claiming that some pornographic images were liberating for them, especially where sexual expression and feelings had historically been tabooed based on gender (Chancer 2000:81). As a result, feminists like Vance worried that censorship would threaten to remove a medium that for some women was a source of pleasure. Vance believed that there was little reason to conceive that censoring pornography would change male-dominated relations of power.

Lynn Chancer disagreed with Vance's argument, referring to the persistence of "hegemonic pornography" (Chancer 2000:82). By "hegemonic pornography", Chancer refers to pornography as representative of a society dominated by patriarchal politics and economics. As a result, certain sexual ideologies are more likely to become predominant or "hegemonic" over others (ibid). The external system of sexual hierarchy is internalized by each of us and thereby reinforces a status quo. Herein is where it holds power. As nonconformity remains hidden and invisible the dominant system sustains its hegemony and power becoming descriptive and prescriptive (Vance 1984:20). Vance notes that while some women find pleasure in viewing or participating in the making of pornography, other women feel alienated by the hegemonic nature of pornographic movies, magazines, and/or books. Women still feel that their own sexual desires, feelings, and needs are not being systematically portrayed.

Vance agreed with certain doctrines of the pro-censorship movement and urged women not to completely abandon their radical ideologies towards sexuality. Instead, Vance asks women to look deeper into themselves and to expand their own sexual identities, thereby encouraging all women to act in their own sexual self-interest (Vance 1984:3). Chancer refers to the feminist superego that intimates women who may have sexual experience that do not conform to the sanitized and idealized version of female sexuality. Instead, these women's sexual realities and pleasures are silenced. Inadvertently, the silencing of women's sexual realities has caused the pro-censorship feminist movement to risk reproducing another form of sexual repression.

While Chancer recognizes the challenge censorship poses to the First Amendment, she is also aware that placing so much attention on pornography distracts women from a multitude of other pertinent issues that had previously fuelled feminist movements (Chancer 2000:81). It is argued that sexual violence is more a symptom than a direct source of female oppression and while many researchers argue there is a causal relationship between the two, it is difficult to statistically show a correlation due to logical fallacy, circular logic, or exogenous factors. As a result, many feminists argue that censorship is redundant, even if it means still putting up with sexism (Hardy 2000:84).

One concern of anti-censorship feminists is that all feminists, and especially pro-censorship feminists, need to distinguish between pornography and non-degrading sexual representation, and that unless this distinction can be made, feminists political campaigns against pornography will put serious artistic and scientific writings about sex at risk (Thornton 1986:31). It is strongly believed that there can be an acceptable form of sexually explicit images that is purged of all morally objectionable material and still be sexually pleasing and even arousing

(Thornton 1986:32). This form of sexual imagery, in which human dignity is preserved, may be better described as 'erotica'. Helen Longino describes an erotic representation as "one in which the desires and experiences of each participant were regarded by the other participants as having a validity and subjective importance equal to the individual's own desires and experiences"

(Thornton 1986:32). According to Longino, female sexuality has been described as being more erotically diffuse, gentle, caring and respectful of the partner, though sometimes too submissive. On the other hand, male sexuality has been described as being genitally fixated and focused on sexual exploitation, domination, and violence (ibid). Thornton points out that sexuality is not a set of behaviour patterns with objectionable pieces mixed in, whereby one can extract these amoral pieces while leaving intact a non-degrading sexuality, the erotic (Thornton 1986:33). He believes that morality plays a vital role in constituting sexual desire that is determined by one's place and time in history. In contemporary Western societies:

Men see themselves as sexual initiators and women see themselves as sexual followers...So even though the male desire to subjugate (with its sadistic overtones) and the female desire to submit (with its hints of masochism) may not be genetically programmed, they are still deeply fused with male and female sexuality. They carry with them a considerable measure of moral legitimacy (ibid).

Thornton argues that pornography causes women serious harm even though there is no compelling evidence that it is related to acts of sexual violence. In addition, because it is not on display to the general public, it cannot be deemed offensive in the conventional sense. However, pornography is still considered harmful by Thornton due to the fact that by being intrinsically sexist it violates the legitimate interests of women (Thornton 1986:40).

Jocelyn Wentland and Any Muise suggest that the inclusion of intimacy marks the notable distinction between pornography and erotica (2010:98). Erotica consists of intimate and seductive components, whereas pornography is typically sexually explicit with the specific intent

of sexually arousing the viewer (ibid). Kerri-Ann Kuhn and her colleagues write that, “pornography is defined as material provided for the purpose of sexually arousing or gratifying a user and is often viewed in isolation of others” (Kuhn *et al* 2007:198). Feminists, such as Chancer, Vance, and Assiter, argue that there is an increasing demand for woman-centred pornography that is created by women for women (Wentland and Muise 2010:101). This would suggest that changes in the discourse on women’s sexuality are slowly infiltrating popular media, such as music videos, thus representing a new definition of female sexuality that had been deemed inappropriate in the past. Activities once relegated to strip clubs, such as pole dancing and stripteases, now have moved to dance and workout studios. For example, the female pop group called The Pussycat Dolls, capitalizes on the image of a stripper with tight and revealing costumes and choreographed dance moves where they wrap their bodies around and gyrate on poles, chairs, floors, each other and other men to gain popularity in the music industry. In this view, the definition of pornography is broadened to include the voices and experiences of women. Instead of contributing pornographic images and text to a heteronormative dominance, anti-censorship feminists argue that women can also participate, thus protecting their freedom of speech as they design pornographic material that caters to their needs and desires versus ridding society of sexually explicit images in its totality.

In “Pornography, Feminism and the Individual” (1989), Alison Assiter points out that pornography is not just about male domination, but is also about class, race, and big business. It cannot be dealt with in isolation as it is symbolic of a much wider power relation based on gender, class and race. Assiter argues that only by eliminating these power relations can feminists begin to deal with the ailments of pornography (Assiter 1989:x). Like Chancer, Assiter defends the freedom of speech and the equalization of liberty for all. As such, Assiter



believes that some pornography is an expression of ideas, which fall within the domain of “speech” (Assiter 1989:1). Speech is strongly defended by feminists like Chancer and Assiter because it is viewed as a central human activity; it gives one direct access to thought which in turn allows one a window into the world: “Speech is therefore the form of communication least liable to error, and the most likely to get at the truth” (Assiter 1989:10). While Assiter defends the First Amendment, she does acknowledge that in the case of pornography, freedom of speech is more likely to protect freedom for men to continue exploiting women (Assiter 1989:16).

In response, Dworkin accused anti-censorship feminists of denying the harm done by rapists, sadists, pedophiles, and pornographers (MacKinnon 1997:27). Despite the acknowledgement that some pornography is harmful towards women, anti-censorship feminists maintain their support of pornography stating that for some women it is sexually liberating, and they adopt the concept of free speech as their primary principle. For example, Camile Paglia argued strongly in support of pornographic expression for women, accusing feminists like MacKinnon and Dworkin of being guilty of arrogance, conceit, and prudery. In *Vamps & Tramps* (1994), Paglia ridicules these pro-censorship scholars for being so adamantly against pornography when they themselves have never actually seen very much of it (Paglia 1994:111). As a result, Paglia alleges, there has been a massive cultural ignorance on the part of feminists regarding what pornography is really about. According to Paglia, pornography is a form of art, revealing the deepest truths about sexuality: “Pornography is a pagan arena of beauty, vitality, and brutality, of the archaic vigor of nature. It should break every rule, offend all morality. Pornography represents absolute freedom of imagination” (Paglia 1994:110).

However, while Paglia accuses pro- and anti-censorship feminists of reducing sexuality to a monolithic definition, she defaults from one form of essentialism for another as she argues

that sexuality is a social construct that inhibits a true sexuality. According to Paglia, sexuality and eroticism are intricately woven with nature and culture. Paglia was not convinced that by transforming cultural norms and values one would be able to eliminate sexual inequality, leading to a non-sexist, non-coercive utopia (Paglia 199:5). Feminists who sought to dismantle all power relations out of sexual relations will have set themselves up against nature, since, according to Paglia, sex is power (ibid). In addition, Paglia theorized that whenever sexual freedom is achieved, sadomasochism will not be far behind and as a result, freedom through sex is doomed to fail. Clearly, Paglia believes sex cannot be understood because nature cannot be understood:

An organism is a domination, a surrender, or a breaking through. Nature is no respecter of human identity. This is why so many men turn away or flee after sex, for they have sensed the annihilation of the daemonic. Western love is a displacement of cosmic realities. It is a defence mechanism rationalizing forces ungoverned and ungovernable (Paglia 1990:5).

Paglia lashed out against pro-censorship feminists such as MacKinnon and Dworkin, describing them as “victim-mongers” (1994:110) who mistakenly identify pornography with society, which is characterized as patriarchal and oppressive (ibid). As a self-possessed pornographer (107), Paglia argues that pornographic material creates a space that is otherwise concealed by the artifices of civilization, where the dark truth about nature can be revealed:

Pornography is about lust, our animal reality that will never be fully tamed by love. Lust is elemental, aggressive, asocial. Pornography allows us to explore our deepest, most forbidden selves (Paglia 1994:110).

While the second wave movement, beginning in the early 1960s and into the 1970s, brought about a number of changes for women, such as education, the workplace, income, and reproductive control to name a few, the debate on sexuality remained unresolved. Within the second wave movement, pro-censorship and anti-censorship feminist brought to the forefront

questions such as how pornography should be defined and whether it is the protagonist in women's oppression or merely a vice or symptom of oppression depends on who is speaking. Pro-censorship feminists place great emphasis on the domination of an androcentric society over women and perceive pornography as a tool to maintain political power. On the other hand, anti-censorship feminists aim to refocus the women's movement toward the protection of the freedom of speech and as a result, the protection of all women's expressions, including those of a different race, class, and sexual orientation. Feminists, such as Assiter, Chancer, Vance, and Foss do not see censorship as the solution to women's oppression and instead encourage women to engage in pornography that pleases them, even if it means producing their own. In addition, these feminists attempt to focus on the unique experiences of women as something individual and specific to each one according to their social position; racially, economically, and sexually. In the next section I will review the arguments of some third wave feminist and try to navigate through the new idea of repowered feminism. As the question of pornography and its relationship with women continues, feminist writers, such as Celia Daileader, Karen Ciclitira, Amy Richards, Jennifer Baumgardner, Sonja Foss and Karen Foss, offer a much stronger, louder, and deliberate message of femininity that reclaims sexual control in a way that mirrors androcentric dominance but with lipstick, push-up bras, and nine inch heels.

### *Repowered Feminism in the Third Wave*

In "Our Journey to Repowered Feminisms: Expanding the Feminist Toolbox" (2009), Sonja Foss and Karen Foss propose a new definition of feminism, referred to as 'repowered feminism', "as the deliberate application of the capacity for unlimited and resourceful interpretation to engage exigencies for the purpose of creating a desired world" (Foss and Foss

2009:44). By this, they mean to change the current deliberate and conscious hegemonic way of thinking, believing, and acting. Repowered feminism endeavours to question and reinterpret dominant ideologies that have marked feminism from the beginning. By doing so, society will push for what has not been thought of, instead of being content with the identity already produced. Repowered feminism hopes to eliminate relationships of oppression and elitism, and replace them with relationships of equality, self-determination, affirmation, mutuality, and respect (Foss and Foss 2009:39).

Fundamental to the creation of a non-dominant way of life is the application of a new interpretation of oppression and the conditions thereof: “how we interpret the elements around us is what is controlling and determining, and oppressive conditions are solid and powerful only in an interpretation that names them as oppressive” (Foss and Foss 2009:45). According to Foss, what is interpreted as conditions of oppression are defined by the social meaning that is applied to it as oppressive, liberating, irrelevant, benign, or any other number of interpretations (ibid). The interpretative choices made are functional as long as they are conducive to one’s desired world, otherwise they cannot create the world that is stripped of dominance, hierarchies, alienation, competition, and elitism. For example, gender acts as a filter through which all experiences and interpretations must pass, however, there is always the choice to see or not to see the interpretations society has presented. In addition, how gender is defined and interpreted is also a choice that society can create according to its desires and needs.

Optimistic, Foss and Foss (2009), encourage women to empower themselves by defining for them what is liberating and what is oppressive. As free thinkers, uninhibited by dominating social definitions, women can create the world so as to foster their success and personal fulfillment. On an individual level this can be very beneficial and with the collaborative efforts

of individuals and the formation of a collective consciousness, certain interpretations that are designed to be disempowering may be dismantled. It is my argument that without a collective critique, there can be no change, and if everyone is living with his or her own interpretations without consideration of others there will continue to be oppression. However, Foss and Foss make a strong argument to empower women in order to stop being victims of social systems and to reanalyze their situation and decide for themselves what does or does not benefit them. As Foucault suggests, resistance and change involves being an active member of a creative process in which an individual can create and recreate the situation (Foucault 2006:168). For example, the fight for same-sex marriage in the United States continues to be stalled in certain states due to the power of right wing conservative politicians. Despite their minority status in the larger context of the United States, their resistance to social change has maintained the traditional definition of marriage as legally being between only a man and a woman.

Foss and Foss (2009) believed that the second wave movement failed to represent the changing and diverse interests of modern women. Feminist writers such as Jennifer Baumgardner and Amy Richards, who became prolific writers for the third wave, began their careers in the second wave movement, as they embraced contradictions, conflict, diversity, and change with no single homogenous feminist idea. While the writers from the second wave made great efforts to be racially inclusive, writers from the third wave accused them of still assuming a universal identity and emphasizing the experiences of middle class white women. According to third wave feminism, women would define feminism for themselves by their own experiences, identities, and belief systems. In their introduction to the idea of third-wave feminism in *Manifesta* (2009), authors Baumgardner and Richards suggest that feminism can change with every generation and individual:

The fact that feminism is no longer limited to arenas where we expect to see it-- NOW, Ms., women's studies, and red suited Congresswomen-- perhaps means that young women today have really reaped what feminism has sown. Raised after Title IX and “William Wants a Doll”, young women emerged from college or high school or two years of marriage or their first job and began challenging some of the received wisdom of the past ten or twenty years of feminism. We're not doing feminism the same way that the seventies feminists did it; being liberated doesn't mean copying what came before but finding one's own way-- a way that is genuine to one's own generation (Baumgardner and Richards 2000:7).

Incorporating new interpretations of gender and sexuality, third wave feminists included socially obscure topics such as queer theory, anti-racism, and transgender politics.

The most controversial position taken by some third wave feminists was its broader definitions of what sex, oppression, and empowerment mean. For example, some feminists, such as Celia Daileader and Karen Ciclitira, argued against censorship of pornography and challenged existing beliefs that sex work cannot be empowering. It was not going to be the position of anti-censorship feminists to tell women what is, and is not, good for them, what they should, or should not feel ashamed or guilty for, or what it means to be a woman, a question posed by Lydia Thompson and her burlesque performers.

In *Defending Pornography* (2000), Nadine Strossen argues that the word ‘pornography’ has been employed by pro and anti-censorship feminists as though sexually explicit expression is inherently subordinating and degrading to women and that sex had become a dirty word (Strossen 2000:17). It is this depiction of sex and sexually explicit material as endangering to women that has spurred the war on sex, also known as the ‘sex war’ among feminists in Western contemporary society. Women’s sexuality has become so incompatible with their identities, Strossen argues, that the suppression of sexuality ultimately equates with the suppression of equality.

A common theme among anti-censorship feminists is that pornography exposes the roots of our culture and the deepest hidden fantasies and desire of the self (Kipnis 1999:viii). Laura Kipnis argues that pornography should demand the same critical interpretation as art (Kipnis 1999:84) and that it is just as complex, thus avoiding the common terms used in the debate on censorship:

Whether pornography should or shouldn't exist is pretty much beside the point. It does exist, and it's not going to go away. Why it exists, what it has to say, and who pornography thinks it's talking to, are more interesting questions than all these doomed, dreary attempts to debate it, regulate it, or protest it. Just what is pornography's grip on the cultural imagination?" (x-xi).

In opposition to some pro-censorship feminists, anti-censorship feminists of the third wave argue that abolishing all forms of pornographic material would be irrelevant as it is not the cause for women's oppression. Instead, women should allow themselves to enjoy sexually explicit images and text if desired and in addition, produce sexually erotic material themselves that is woman-centred. Pornography's popularity lies in its hold over consumers as it allegedly transgresses social strictures but in reality remains within the confines of heteronormative boundaries of sexual identity. For many women and men, pornography was their initial form of sexual education (Daileader 2001:80). Celia Daileader suggests that children and young people are taught very little about human sexuality outside the medium of pornography (ibid). In order to de-pornographize porn one would need to abolish any forms of hierarchy, so that both men and women submit to each other (Daileader 2001:83). Daileader does agree with pro-censorship feminists arguing for the abolition of pornography and instead advocates a new medium of erotic art: "Let us imagine a field of representation that celebrates the complexity of heterosexual interactions, rather than reducing it to one gesture, one dynamic, repeated ad nauseum" (Daileader 2001:87).

Femme Productions has attempted to create sexually explicit films that are not male-dominated or involve any coercion. In addition, *More Black Lace* novels introduced a new form of erotica that has grabbed the attention of women. Promoted as a creative alternative to men's pornography, erotic novels have introduced an ever-accelerating commodification of sex for women (Ciclitira 2004:284). Referred to as 'domesticated pornography' by Jane Juffer (Ciclitira 2004:285), erotic literature is mainly produced by women for women. While *More Black Lace* positions itself as feminist erotic fiction, it still relies heavily on conventional male-orientated pornography. Women continue to be primary sexual objects with their sexual willingness and submissiveness as the central premise for most of the story line (ibid). Although *More Black Lace* claims to be centred on empowerment, it has not been able to escape the problematic aspects of pornography in that it still maintains a "characteristic preoccupation with conquest and power, and the objectification and symbolic subordination of women" (Hardy 2000:438). An example of this female willingness and submission is found in an excerpt from a Mills and Boon novel:

He crushed her to him and his lips found hers. He kissed her brutally with a violence which seemed to force the very life from between her lips. She wanted to gasp for air, but his arms held her closer and closer. She felt her lips quiver beneath his, she felt as if his mouth conquered her, possessed her utterly so that she had no longer any identity of her own but was a part of him... She could only feel that burning, passionate, possessive kiss upon her lips – a kiss which seemed to have seared its way right into her very soul (Assiter 1989:119).

While melodramatically romantic, Mills and Boon novels are pornographic. They are also pornographic because like *Penthouse* and *Playboy* they eroticise domination, which is used to stimulate sexual arousal without explicitly describing sexual intercourse or penetration (ibid).

Sex, if and when it does occur in these novels, is usually implicit and cloaked in corny romanticism (ibid). However, there are incidences where the 'lovemaking' is a scenario of rape.



The hero is aggressive and dominant and the heroine always submits and ends up enjoying the sex; “he is choosing, but she gratefully, joyously accepts his choice. She is passive and accepting; he is powerful, dominant and initiating” (Assiter 1989:117-118). A study done by Marion Bower (1986) suggested that despite the fact that women are socially conditioned to respond negatively to sexually explicit material, many women do respond favourably to pornographic material (Assiter 1989:120). Alison Assiter argues that this is because within every woman are sexual desires that override social conditioning. If this is the case, then the views of MacKinnon and Dworkin, that pornography is exclusively a male construct, is undermined.

On the other hand, Ciclitira argues that women who enjoy pornography are coerced by men into doing so and their sexual arousal has simply been socially-constructed to enjoy abusive material (Ciclitira 2004:293). This contradiction in female sexuality highlights how censorship and politicization of pornography as negative has also made women experience guilt, shame and confusion about their own sexual desires. The anti-censorship perspective within feminism aims toward respecting and incorporating diverse interests. It is counterproductive for feminists to focus their arguments over whether or not an individual likes or is aroused by pornography or not. Instead, anti-censorship feminist endeavour to rehabilitate women’s sexual pleasure with a perceivable shift toward a notion of sex that is indulgent, luxurious, and free of heteronormative domination. This pleasurable ‘autosexuality’ is now quite widespread in contemporary western cultures and is growing (Attwood 2006:87).

Feminists such as MacKinnon and Dworkin have focused on the legal and social policy issues arising from pornography as a genre that, in their view, violates women’s civil rights and freedoms while many anti-censorship feminists oppose any kind of censoring of cultural

products. Anti-censorship feminists dislike much of the pornographic material produced, however, they argue that censorship would allow a greater degree of state control over these products that are historically proven to work against the interest of pro-censorship groups or anyone committed to social change (Shaw 1999:198). The greater concern is that if censorship is condoned, who is to decide what is sexually acceptable and what is not? Who decides what form of women's sexual expression is "true" versus degrading and thus distinguishing if from pornography? Anti-censorship feminists fear that this form of decision-making lies on such a fine line that it could result in a broader spread of censorship of anti-establishment products such as gay and lesbian publications (Shaw 1999:199). The danger of the anti-censorship feminists' approach, however, lies in the downplaying of gendered power relations as they place a greater emphasis on diversity, personal agency, and multiple subjectivities. As Shaw (1999) explains, "attention to the variety of interpretations of pornographic representations and to individual freedom may mean that the question of harm to individuals, or to groups linked through class, race, sexuality, or gender, will be overlooked (200).

### *Heteronormativity, Community and Solidarity: Critique of Anti-Censorship Feminism*

While feminists such as Strossen, Vance, Daileader, and Ciclitira argue against censorship, claiming women do find pornography entertaining and arousing, they lack empirical evidence to support these statements. Few studies examine the relationship women personally have with pornographic material in contrast to the abundant literature available on the influence of sexually explicit images on men. Susan Shaw, in her article "Men's Leisure and Women's Lives: The Impact of Pornography on Women", examines the motivation for men and women's consumption of pornography as a form of leisure activity. While the pornography industry is

extremely popular it is still practiced as a hidden or covert activity (Shaw 1999:197). The pervasiveness of pornography means that most women will be exposed to it during their lifetimes (Senn and Radtke 1990:45). As a result, the images of women and sexuality portrayed in such representations in pornography will negatively impact their lives in a variety of ways (Shaw 1999:197).

Most empirical research on pornography involves psychological experiments conducted in laboratories. These studies primarily measure the effect of exposure to pornographic videos on men's attitudes and behaviours, such as their reaction to rape, their attitudes towards women, and their levels of sexual aggression (Shaw 1999:198); they do not identify pornography use as a risk factor associated with sexual violence (Hinson Shope 2004:68). However, a study by Janet Hinson Shope (2004) has shown that among battered women, pornography use by their male partners increased the odds of sexual violence with as much as 58% acknowledging pornography as having a direct influence on the sexually aggressive behaviour of the men (Hinson Shope 2004:66).

In her research, Shaw (1999) found that pornographic materials, such as adult videos and men's magazines, were not considered leisure activity by women (108-209). Rarely were these materials regarded positively or thought of as sexy or enjoyable entertainment (ibid). As a result, Shaw suggests that when women did watch pornographic video it was usually at the initiative of male friends, family members, or partners and not due to their own choosing or desire (Shaw 1999:209). Her results showed that women's reaction to pornographic material were to be shocked and distressed with a heightened fear about sexual violence (ibid). Even pornographic material considered "non-violent" also had a negative effect on women's self-esteem by making them feel inadequate about their bodies and appearance (ibid). In addition, the women in the

study believed men's attitudes towards women were negatively affected by pornography, making men dissatisfied with their female sexual partners and perpetrating views about women being inferior to men (ibid).

Shaw clearly shows how pornographic materials are consistent with heteronormative notions of gender reproduction through the objectification and inferiorization of women. Most revealing in Shaw's study was the silencing of women despite their expressed displeasure about their male's consumption of pornography (ibid). While pornography acts as a leisure activity for men, it also acts to mute women's rights to speak out, causing them to feel that "their own view[s] and feelings did not always seem legitimate. They worried about being seen as 'antisex', or as 'prudes', and they did not feel that they had the right to restrict their partners' and other men's leisure time consumption of pornography" (Shaw 1999:210).

As pornography emerged from obscurity into mainstream entertainment, the social pressure to accept this new form of sexual discourse was coercive and powerful. In "Women's Attitudes and Fantasies about Rape as a Function of Early Exposure to Pornography" (1992), authors Shawn Corne, John Briere, and Lillian M. Esses examined women's attitudes towards sexual aggression. They found that exposure to pornography fostered the internalization of social messages perceived in pornographic material as normative, for example fantasies of rape (456). The culture of pornography socializes women to accept the feminine sex role and to define themselves according to male values and expectations (Corne *et al* 1992:359). As Russell argues, "rape and other masochistic female fantasies are a reflection of women's powerless role in society, the intense socialization they receive to accept that role, and their sexual repression" (Russell 1980:229).

The role of exposure and socialization as a form of coercion and eventual resignation to pornographic images are ignored in anti-censorship arguments. Women who fantasize about rape are embraced by anti-censorship feminists minus the query as to why they would experience sexual pleasure from acts that are demeaning and violent. Instead, they are seen as dismantling the many issues in society that are repressive and standing up to fight for what they believe in, even if it is pornography.

Jean Bethke Elshtain argues that anti-censorship feminists, by placing a priority on individualism over community, are also preventing people from coming together and forming solidarity (Elshtain 1986:79). She states, “there is no way to create real communities out of an aggregate of ‘freely’ choosing adults” (Elshtain 1982:80). By emphasizing individualism, some anti-censorship feminists, such as Daileader and Ciclitira risk neglecting the influence and role of collective and social cohesion. With the existence of an individual consciousness, there is also a distinct collective consciousness that functions independently, but often in conflict of each other (Durkheim 1982:39). Emile Durkheim defines collective consciousness in relation to the division of labour as autonomous individuals who identify themselves within a larger group or structure (ibid). Through collective consciousness and patterns of commonality, the subject within the whole of society comes to view him or herself as a part of any given group and brings legitimacy to those structures (ibid). With the development of the division of labour, the collective consciousness began to decline as each individual began to specialize in her set of tasks (Grabb 1990:81). As more individual situations led to individual experiences there developed a “personal consciousness” with an emphasis on individualism (ibid). As a result, a new form of solidarity was formed, known as an “organic solidarity” characterized by dependence of individuals within the division and specialization of labour and certain

cooperation (Giddens 1971:77). Despite this individualization, there still existed commonly shared values and norms because without them, there would be no society (Cuff *et al* 1992:31). Durkheim described the collective as “a mass of like-minded persons who will (re)emerge to reproduce the production force. Thus, collective consciousness is the affect/effect upon and inside of any given public whose thoughts and actions are constantly mediated by outside pressures” (Durkheim 1982:39). Like the production force centred on the economy, there is also a patriarchal force centred on sexuality and the social morals and values around sexuality as a social fact. These social facts that operate within an organic solidarity define the commonality and collectiveness of a group or society.

Individuals are drawn together when they realize that they cannot attain their separate and conflicting goals independently (Tong 1989:35-36). Tong argues that the individual is created by his or her community as one’s identity is determined by his or her socially-constituted wants and desires (1989:36). Women and men exist in a social sphere of interpretation that gives meaning to the individual whose emotions, beliefs, abilities, and interests cannot supposedly be articulated and understood without any reference to social context (*ibid*).

Finally, there is a lack of acknowledgement on behalf of some anti-censorship feminists of the pressure of external coercion. The appeal and popularity of pornographic material as a social fact with its own set of morals and values is not critically analyzed. In Durkheim’s desire to understand the social consciousness and the reasons why individuals act in similar and predictable manners, he observes:

If I do not submit to the conventions of society, if in my dress I do not conform to the customs observed in my country and in my class, the ridicule I provoke, the social isolation in which I am kept, produce, although in an attenuated form, the same effects as punishment...  
(Durkheim 1982:3).

The influence of a social fact, such as pornographic images and text, should be recognized as being capable of exercising coercion over individuals and that the presence of this effect is endorsed by either the existence of some specific sanction or by the resistance offered against any individual that tends to violate it (Durkheim 1982:8). Anti-censorship feminists negate the acknowledgement of any collectivity in regards to sexuality and the need for commonly shared values and norms that assist the individuals in gauging their experiences and expectations as members of a group. Instead, there needs to be a reconciliation or compromise between individualism and freedom and social cohesion in modern society.

What began as a highly politicized movement that focused on women's oppression and male domination has evolved into a feminism that proclaims individuality with an emphasis on pleasure and desire as reinterpreted by women for women. Radical feminists fought to abolish society of all forms of sexism by eliminating patriarchal power at its roots, and pro-censorship radical feminists, such as MacKinnon and Dworkin, targeted pornography as a primary vehicle through which men maintained sexual power over women. (Other radical feminists, such as Shulamith Firestone, did not agree that censorship was the solution to women's economic and social oppression.) While the pro-censorship movement formed a collective sense of action, its theorists were criticized for implying that women all share in the same experiences of oppression. Alternatively, some other feminists focused more on race, class, and sexual divergences in women, thereby distinguishing themselves from pro-censorship feminists by redefining sexuality according to subjective experiences. Claiming to act in defence of all women's voices, anti-censorship feminists focus on the protection of the freedom of speech in reference to pornographic material. Supporting women's experiences with pleasure and expression, the focus on pornography was rechanneled to the production of sexually explicit

images and text that were produced specifically for women. More inclusive, anti-censorship feminists encouraged women to redefine and reinterpret their own experiences, identities, and belief systems according to their own pleasure and needs.

Does anti-censorship feminism liberate women from patriarchal oppression? Is this the answer to the question of sexuality and have they avoided the essentialist pitfall their predecessors succumbed to? Feminism has undergone some drastic changes in the past 50 years and yet the sex debate remains unresolved. While sexuality, pleasure, and the body are individual experiences, most feminists would agree that they are not free of social constraints. The expression of the body through its movements and gestures forms the sexual discourse that will be the focus of the next chapter. Foucault studied the history of sexual discourse and examined the incessant need of contemporary society to speak of sex, an issue pro and anti-censorship feminists continue to debate. Like Foucault, feminists ask the elusive question: What is the definition of 'truth' in respect to sexuality, namely women's sexuality?



## CHAPTER 3

### POWER RELATIONS, DOCILITY, AND SEXUALITY

This chapter will engage in a discussion of sexuality from the perspective of Foucault's relational model of power. I will begin with a review of Foucault's theory of power as an entity that is not diffused, concentrated, or distributed. I will discuss how power has a specific nature in the relationship between partners and exists only as it is exercised by some on others and only when it is put into action. Power is put into action through what Foucault describes as "disciplines" and it is at this point I will guide my discussion towards disciplinary practices and the transformation of the docile body. Through disciplines, a specific technique of power is exercised that treats the body as both instrument and object. As the body is presented with knowledge it gradually becomes a target for new mechanisms of power, which brings more forms of knowledge, skills, and productivity, thus transforming the body into a subjected and practiced body, known as a 'docile body'. Next I will discuss the process of resistance in power relations and how subjects are never completely forced or held captive by power but always have an alternative present and the choice to resist. Through the actions of the subject, power relations are never fixed but are constantly evolving and changing. At this point, my discussion will turn to power relations and sexuality and how Foucault challenged established conceptions of truth and sexuality. This section will begin with a review of *ars erotica*, defined as a focus on the intensity, quality, duration, and reverberations of pleasures, and its successor process called *scientia sexualis*, defined as a shift of focus from pleasure itself to new forms of knowledge and power as related to pleasure, that replaced the secrecy of sex and truth with an intense focus on forms of knowledge and power in the form of a pseudo-confession. In search of the truth, Western contemporary society produced an eruption in pseudo-confessions, resulting in the

creation of a uniform truth of sex that would adhere to all persons, despite their differences. Finally, I will end the chapter with a critical discussion of power, gender and sexuality. Gender should not be confused with sexuality, and yet they have become so interdependent that Foucault argues that society needs to be desexualized. Sexuality in contemporary society has become so defined and restricted by heteronormative standards it has lost any qualities of the *ars erotica*. In order to liberate sexual experiences, society needs to abandon gender norms to create unlimited spaces for exploration and the discovery of new pleasures.

### *Power Relations*

Foucault's conception of power relations was developed partially in response to the writings of Emmanuel Kant in *What is Enlightenment* (1784), in which Kant questions the definition and meaning of individual experiences as they occur in the present and how this defines one's identity and belief system. Foucault engages with Kant's position to explain his own meaning of what is present and all its elements that recognize, distinguish, and decipher these meanings (Foucault 1988(a):87). He looks to the attribution of a cause that is isolated within history that brings possibility of an effect: the effect of progress. Foucault undertakes a critical analysis of Kant's question of enlightenment and focuses on a precise moment in history, for example Greek society, to gain a greater understanding of our world and the individual's purpose within a given time and space. In his examination of the meaning of the present, Foucault began a critical study of various social institutions, namely psychiatry, medicine, and the prison system.

When Foucault began his studies, his primary interest was the "subject"; he wanted to create a history of the transformation of human beings into subjects. According to Foucault,

subjects are individuals who are subject to someone else by control and dependence, and/or an individual tied to his/her own identity by a consciousness or self-knowledge (Foucault 1984(a):331). In both cases, a form of power exists that subjugates and makes a subject of the individual. As a result, it was the subject and not power that became Foucault's general research theme as he commenced his studies on madness and the prison. What Foucault discovered was that the human subject was consistently involved in various continual power relations that were very complex (Foucault 1984(a):327). While Foucault's research began with the subject, he found that the question of power, specifically how it is exercised and what happens when someone exercises power over another, was essential in understanding the objectification of a human being. At the time, the dominant theory of power was a juridico-discursive model that, Foucault argued, relied too much on a legitimate or institutionalized practice of power and thus failed to acknowledge the relational structure system that functioned between subjects. As a result, Foucault believed it was necessary to expand the definition of power in order to study the objectification of the subject, which involved the conception of a relational model of power.

Foucault was strongly critical of the juridico-discursive model of power and formulated his own theories of power in opposition. In both liberal and Marxist theories of sovereignty, power was conceived as a legitimate authority exercised in laws and a theory of rights (Sawicki 1991:20). As such, power was embedded in the economy and the state as a privilege of the bourgeoisie. According to the juridico-discursive model, power could be possessed, as it flows from a central source from top to bottom. It was this essential form of exercising of power that Foucault characterized in terms of repression (ibid). Thinking of power as a possession, something that could be fought over and won, leads to a preoccupation with its location and legitimacy. In other words, the primary concern becomes who has it, who is resisting it, what are

its rights, and when it has been breached. Dissatisfied with this theory of power as a possession, Foucault introduces a relational model of power to replace the juridico-discursive model. Now power is located in the relations between subjects, for example the struggles between the bourgeois and the proletariats.

According to the relational model of power, there is no such entity as power, diffused, concentrated, or distributed. Power exists only as it is exercised by some on others and only when it is put into action (Foucault 2000:340). In other words, power is not simply a relationship between partners, individual, or collectives; instead, power has a specific nature in which relationships between subjects overlap one another, support one another reciprocally, and use each other mutually (Foucault 2000:337). For example, the power relationship between teacher and student exists so long as the individuals maintain their status as such and one or both do not separate from their roles, such as the teacher retiring. Through the exercise of the teacher giving out instructions in a classroom and the student performing these instructions there is a relationship where power resides and organizes the performances and thus skills of each subject. Throughout the school year, both subjects will become more proficient as they practise their roles of teacher and a student, such as training techniques, processes of domination, and/or the means by which obedience is obtained. This simple example illustrates what Foucault describes as disciplinary practices, which I will elaborate more on shortly.

Essential to the definition of power is that it is not a matter of consent; it does not involve the renunciation of freedom, a transfer of rights, or an unequal distribution of power (Foucault 2000:340). The relationship of power is a mode of action that is not directed immediately upon others, but instead, acts upon their actions, “an action upon an action, on possible or actual future or present actions” (ibid). Power relations consist of two basic elements: “the other” is the

subject that acts, the one who exercises the power; and the product of that relationship is a vast array of responses, reactions, results, and possible inventions (ibid). Power is conceived as operating in a field of possibilities in which the behaviour of the subject is able to inscribe itself. Foucault describes power as “a set of actions on possible actions; it incites, it induces, it seduces, it makes easier or more difficult; it releases or contrives, makes more probable or less; in the extreme, it constrains or forbids absolutely, but it is always a way of acting or being capable of action” (ibid). As such, the only opposite of power would be passivity, for power can only be exercised over free subjects who, as individuals or a collective, are always presented with a field of possibilities in which there are several kinds of conduct, ways of reacting and behaving that are available. Even the prisoner in prison has the choice to conform to prison rules or resist; each action has positive or negative consequences and it is the free choice of the prisoner as to what actions he or she will assume. Although the ramifications for not conforming to prison regulations can in some cases be severe, the prisoner can choose to suffer those consequences or not. Referring back to the example of the teacher and the student, the student is never absolutely trapped or forced into the relationship with the teacher, but always has the option of dropping out of class, moving to a new school, remaining in class but insisting on standing instead of sitting at his or her desk, and so forth. Without these alternative factors there would be no relationship of power as power relations cannot be forced. There must always be the possibility of resistance.

Power relations are coordinated with goal-directed activities and various systems of communication that are neither uniform nor static. Instead, these interrelationships are exercised in diverse places, occasions, and forms in which they establish themselves according to a specific model (Foucault 2000:338). In a medical institution, such as a hospital, there are assigned specific spaces where different activities are organized and exercised; there are meticulous

regulations that govern the internal functioning of these spaces along with specific persons, each with his or her own function, that collect and interact in these spaces. Through the capacity of the hospital itself, the communication of regulations and the power process that interconnect the system of health care, a process of active learning and the acquisition of aptitudes or types of behaviours are produced. By means of a whole series of power processes, such as order of intake, isolation wards, examinations, and discharge procedures, to name a few, power is exercised at each level through the relations the patient would have with the various processes of the health care system. Technical capacities, communications, and relationships of power interrelate into what Foucault calls “disciplines”.

#### *Disciplinary Practices and the Docile Body*

Through disciplines, a specific technique of power is exercised that treats the body as both instrument and object; this exercise forms what Foucault defines as the individual; the body endowed with instructions, discipline, and skills that now acts in a productive manner (Foucault 1977(a):170). As the body is presented with knowledge it gradually becomes a target for new mechanisms of power, which bring more forms of knowledge. In other words, as a student of violin learns the instrument his or her hands, fingers, body posture, head tilt, etc., are taught to move in a specific manner (a new form of knowledge). As the student practises these techniques he or she will become more skilled at playing the violin (power is exercised through the achieved success in playing the instrument). As the musician continues to exercise and practise these techniques he or she can advance to play more difficult pieces of music with greater proficiency. A power relation forms between the discipline of music lessons, as the site of production and

new forms of knowledge, and the body of the musician, as the object and instrument of power, with the product being the creation of beautiful music.

Discipline involves the correlation of knowledge with objects, and specific gestures of the body in a specific time and space. It is the aim of discipline to impose a relationship between a gesture and the overall position of the body in a manner that is most efficient and expedient (Foucault 1977(a):152). In the example of good handwriting, the slightest gestures of the body must be operationalized in correct use and must not remain idle or useless in order to be productive. As the body is subjected to new forms of techniques, a new object slowly supersedes what Foucault calls the “mechanical body”. Defined by Foucault as determined by speculative physics, and dictated by animal spirits, acting on instinct instead of intellect and reflection, the “mechanical body” is assigned movements and rational mechanics, but is not positively productive (Foucault 1977(a):155). Alternatively, through discipline, a new object is formed, one that is susceptible to specific operations and manipulated by authority or training. According to Foucault, discipline produces subjected and practiced bodies, known as “docile bodies” (Foucault 1977(a):138). This is a body that is manipulated, shaped, trained, obeys, and responds, becoming skilful as it increases its forces (Foucault 1977(a):136).

The term “docility” is essential to the concept of a malleable body that is the subject of power and thus is transformed and improved. Foucault uses the figure of a soldier as an ideal example to illustrate the production of a docile body:

The soldier has become something that can be made out of a formless clay, an inapt body, the machine required can be constructed. Recruits become accustomed to holding their heads high and erect; to standing upright, without bending the back, to sticking out the belly, throwing out the chest and throwing back the shoulders. Likewise, they will be taught never to fix their eyes on the ground, but to look straight at those they pass; to remain motionless unless the order is given, and lastly to march

with a bold step, with knee and arm taut, on the point of their feet, which should face forward (Foucault 1977(a):135-136).

Within these new techniques of discipline is a new scale of control, where the body is not treated as a whole, but instead regarded as a composition of various parts operating individually. Each part is exercised upon by a subtle coercion that emphasizes every movement, gestures, attitudes, and rapidity of the active body invested with a new form of power (ibid). Where dialogue around the body centred on controlling its language and behaviours, Foucault redirected the focus to the economy and efficiency of movements as an organization to the body where the only truly important function is that of exercise. Critical to the exercise of disciplinary practices is the modality of uninterrupted, supervised, and constant coercive forces that are exercised over the process of the activity rather than the result. It is the exercise according to its specific technique that partitions time, space, and movement that all together control the operations of the body (Foucault 1977(a):137). These methods assure a constant subjection of the body's forces, imposing a relation of docility that Foucault called "disciplines" that create a policy of coercion upon the body, thus entering it into a machinery of power that explores it, dismantles it and rearranges it (Foucault 1977(a):138). In other words, discipline dissociates power from the body by increasing its forces in economic terms while decreasing its forces in terms of obedience. The minute breakdown of gestures and movements required of soldiers at drill exemplifies this process:

Bring the weapon forward. In three stages. Raise the rifle with the right hand, bringing it close to the body so as to hold it perpendicular with the right knee, the end of the barrel at eye level, grasping it by striking it with the right hand, the arm held close to the body at waist height. At the second stage, bring the rifle in front of you with the left hand, the barrel in the middle between the two eyes, vertical, the right hand grasping it as the small of the butt, the arm outstretched, the triggerguard resting on the first finger, the left hand at the height of the notch, the thumb lying along



the barrel against the moulding. At the third stage... (Foucault 1977(a):153).

Discipline is further amplified through the distribution of individuals in a specific space, which sometimes involves enclosure. This would be a space that is heterogeneous and exclusive to all other places that protects disciplinary monotony, such as a factory or military barracks (Foucault 1977(a):141). The aim of a space that is enclosed upon itself is to collect constant information about the subject, who is individualized and separated from other subjects thereby breaking up any collective dispositions. Here, every moment and each movement of the individual can be supervised “to assess it, to judge it, to calculate its qualities or merits...a procedure aimed at knowing, mastering and using” (Foucault 1977(a):143). Through the coercion of surveillance, discipline is exercised with greater efficiency, making it possible to see the induced effects of power. Foucault suggests that all power would be exercised primarily through observation that acts as a specific production mechanism in disciplinary power: where knowledge is gained, subjects are disciplined, and productivity is constantly being observed.

### *Power and Resistance*

A key component of Foucault’s relational model of power that distinguishes it from a juridical model is that subjects are never absolutely trapped in these power relations, but rather individuals are engaged in a process of struggles. In his analysis, Foucault suggests that individuals are constantly involved in a form of resistance toward those whom the individual is related to, such as employers, spouses, or doctors (Foucault 2000:342). Foucault envisioned power as expanding to create a heterogeneous mosaic of power relations functioning at a micro-level in society. At this level, everyone is struggling for a share in power, resisting, and trying to obtain some dominance. Resistance is enacted in local struggles against various forms of social

relations - for example, fighting over a parking ticket when the driver feels he has been wrongly fined while the city supports the decision of the Parking Patrol and reinforces the payment of a fine. In order to truly understand the mechanics of power, how it functions and how to challenge it, one needs to begin analyzing it from the bottom up (Sawicki 1991:24). By performing an ascending analysis it becomes clear how powers at the micro-levels of society are interwoven into a larger, dominant network of power relations:

One must rather conduct an ascending analysis of power starting, that is, from its infinitesimal mechanisms, which each have their own history, their own trajectory, their own tactics, and then see how these mechanisms of power have been – and continue to be – invested, colonized, utilized, involuted, transformed, displaced, extended, etc., by even more general mechanisms and by forms of global domination. (Foucault 1980(a):122).

The presence of resistance speaks to the fact that a subject is never absolutely forced or captive in power relations; rather they always have the ability to change the situation they are in (Foucault 2000:341). While engaged in a power relationship, subjects may not be able to leave the situation as there is never any point of reference in which the subject is free from all power relations; they are diverse, complex, fluid, and operate in all aspects of one's life. People are constantly presented with a field of alternative possibilities, which keeps them from ever being trapped by power. It is important to note that overcoming resistance does not define power, for when resistance fails, power relations collapse and turn into forced relations, as in the case of a slave and his or her owner (Foucault 2000:342). Resistance redefines forces of power because power relations are obliged to change with opposition, whether a lot or just a little. These changes are not simply a matter of negotiations, but more an active process of recreation where the subjects are active members in a very strategic manner that transforms the situation.

Foucault does acknowledge, however, that change in power relations are not always feasible with mere resistance, as in some cases, mobility in power relations can sometimes be limited when forces of power are institutionalized and incarnated in social norms and laws (Foucault 2006:169). For example, the legalization of same-sex marriage involved years of political, social, and legal protests and battles to change fundamental religious beliefs that defined marriage as a holy union of a man, a woman, and God. It took years of debate and active participation by members of the gay and lesbian minority before federal and provincial governments took the steps to redefine marriage in Canada.

To summarize, Foucault redefined power by stripping from it presuppositions that attributed power as something that exists with its own distinct origin, nature, and manifestation (Foucault 2000:336). As such, it becomes necessary to distinguish what forms of power gives things the ability to modify, consume, use, or destroy, exercised through a complex system of interconnected relationships.

### *Power Relations and Sexuality*

As he did with his analysis of power, Foucault challenged established conceptions of truth and sexuality. He wanted to examine all of the mechanisms that collectively invite, incite and force society to speak so incessantly of sex (Foucault 1988(a):112). The question Foucault wanted to answer was how sex became more than a means of reproducing the family and the individual and more about obtaining pleasure and enjoyment. He questioned how sex had become a tool in which an individual's inner truths would be revealed (Foucault 1988(a):111). Foucault found the term 'truth' to be problematic, thus prompting him to write a political history

of the production of truth and how it applies to sexuality: he wanted to examine the relationship between sex and the search for truth in Western society.

To begin his examination of the production of sex and truth, Foucault engaged in an epistemological study of sexuality beginning with a look at ancient Greek society where sexual behaviour was a domain of ethical practice (Foucault 1990:36). Free to select, adapt, develop, and innovate their own sexual behaviours, the Greeks were studied by Foucault as a historically permissive society where pleasure and expression were more freely explored. By analyzing the logic behind what was forbidden and what was permitted, Foucault reflects and explores how Greek society differed from contemporary Western society. In order to maintain some governance over sexual behaviour the Greeks introduced strategies of moderation, including timing, quantity, and opportunity (ibid). By becoming skilled in these moderations, the individual becomes a master of himself or herself, as well as a master in the power he or she exercises over others, thereby becoming a self-disciplined subject (Foucault 1985:250). In Greek society there was no single concept of a universal law concerning sexual behaviour, but, instead, a “principal of stylization of conduct” (Foucault 1985:250). The Greeks were not interested in formulating a code of conduct that would blanket all sexual behaviours for everyone or to organize sexual behaviour according to any one set of rules.

There were three great arts of self-conduct in Greek thought that produced a single modulation of *ars erotica*. They were dietetics, economics, and erotics (Foucault 1985:251). Dietetics was a type of moderation defined by the measured and timely use of the aphrodisia, defined as “acts intended by nature, associated by nature with an intense pleasure, and naturally motivated by a force that was always liable to excess and rebellion” (Foucault 1990(b):91). Within this moderation was the expression of a fear of violence, exhaustion, and anxiety over

survival of one's species and so there developed a preoccupation with the experience of pleasures at the right time and at the right measure (Foucault 1990(b):251). Economic moderation was concerned with fidelity between a husband and a wife (ibid). Since the husband had authority over the wife, it was his responsibility to maintain his and the wife's privilege in society. To do this, the husband must fear all excesses and practise the mastery of self-control in his control over others. The wife must completely abstain from all forms of infidelity, whereas the husband may experience other pleasures so long as he remains within the economics of moderation. Lastly, is the moderation of erotics. In this regard, a man or woman knows how to respect the freedom of others while practising mastery over himself/herself and respecting the freedom in the love that someone has for them (Foucault 1990(b):252). This does not imply total and pure abstention but it does renounce all physical relations with boys, as it was a source of anxiety in Greek thought (ibid). The Greeks did not perceive love for one's own sex and love for the opposite sex as two mutually exclusive choices. What distinguished a self-possessed man and a man with weak morals was the latter's incapability to resist either women or boys (Foucault 1990(b):187). In Athens, a boy occupied a special position among various legitimate objects and as such the love for a boy was not a forbidden action. (Foucault 1990(b):217). While there were some laws that protected free children, there were no prohibitions against perceiving an adolescent boy being a sexual partner to a man (ibid). In summary, moderation of erotics implied the complex relationship between love, renunciation of pleasure, and the access to truth (Foucault 1990(b):187).

In *ars erotica*, pleasure was the focal point, defined by its intensity, quality, duration, and reverberations in the body and soul (Foucault 1990(a):57). As the subject learned to master the stylization of conduct through the practices of disciplinary power, he or she transformed into a

docile subject who has been manipulated, coerced, disciplined, and trained to possess the knowledge of ars erotica, and it is in the production of this knowledge that power is spread (Foucault 1990(a):44-45). This knowledge must not be contained but be deflected back into sexual practises themselves so as to continually reshape and modify it. In addition, knowledge must remain a secret for those who possess it because discussing and sharing it would lead to the loss of effectiveness and virtue of the pleasures of ars erotica (Foucault 1990(a):57). Finally, the production of this self-mastery produced an active freedom that was independent from structural, instrumental, and ontological forms of truth (Foucault 1990(b):92). Command of this erotic art would grant several privileges, such as mastery of the body, acquired bliss, obliviousness to time and limitations, and respite from death and all its threats (Foucault 1990(a):58). Ars erotica created a moral reflection that focused on the body, marriage, and love of boys that would resurface later in modern society.

The ideals of a free man, the exercising of his freedoms, forms of his power, and his access to truth have all been passed down into modern society. In time, gradually, ars erotica was replaced with a new process which Foucault calls scientia sexualis, in which the truth of sex became focused on forms of power/knowledge (Foucault 1990(a):58). Scientia sexualis stripped pleasure of its 'masterful secrecy' and adapted the procedure of confession, which has been used since the Middle Ages, as the main ritual for the production of truth (ibid). Through a pseudo-confession, we demand that sex tells us the truth and in turn tells us our own truth, a truth about ourselves buried deep inside each of us that we think we manage within our immediate consciousness (Foucault 1990(a):69).

*Confessions and the Search for the 'Truth'*

For centuries the confession has played a central role in the execution of civil and religious powers. It came to represent the acknowledgment of an individual's own thoughts and actions: "The truthful confession was inscribed at the heart of the procedures of individualization by power" (Foucault 1990(a):58-9). In modern Western society, confession has become a substantial technique for producing truth and we have since turned into a single confessing society. People confess publicly and privately about everything from sins, pleasures, family relationships, love relationships, to the most ordinary everyday life experiences. Over time confession has separated from its religious origins and has become part of scientific discourse (Foucault 1990(a):68). In addition, the obligatory and exhaustive nature of confession became so ingrained that people no longer recognized the constraining power it had over them (Foucault 1990(a):60). According to Foucault, confession acted as a mechanism of power in that if one did not confess it was because his or her inner truth was forced down, held in place and silenced by a power only interested in quiescence. For example, if a thief did not confess to his or her crime, the punishment would be harsher and longer. The courts, however, would have mercy if the thief were to confess and rule for a gentler sentencing. In this view, confession permits the truth to be revealed, thereby producing new forums of discourse:

The obligation to confess is now relayed through so many different points, is so deeply ingrained in us, that we no longer perceive it as the effects of a power that constrains us; on the contrary, it seems to us that truth, lodged in our most secret nature, 'demands' only to surface; that if it fails to do so, this is because a constraint holds it in place, the violence of a power weighs it down, and it can finally be articulated only at the price of a kind of liberation (Foucault 1990(a):60).

Sexuality came to be the result of a hundred and fifty years of processing complex mechanisms that aimed at the production of a true sexual discourse through a pseudo-confession. It is this discursive practice that makes up the *scientia sexualis* (Foucault 1990(a):68). Sexuality

was defined as a product of nature and therefore vulnerable to pathological processes. This being the case, it was targeted as needing therapeutic or normalizing intervention (ibid). Philosophical, moral, and medical thoughts came to dominate in the nineteenth century, declaring sexual activity as hazardous and in need of restraint. Sex was believed to hold some powerful fundamental secret that, on one hand, created suspicion and on the other hand instigated a demand for confession (Foucault 1990(a):69). In search for the truth, society experienced an eruption in pseudo-confessions and everyone was compelled to do the same, resulting in the creation of a uniformed truth of sex that would adhere to all persons, despite their differences. Instead of realizing the truth within himself or herself, *scientia sexualis* produced a knowledge of the subject that was based more on what divides him or her and what causes him or her to be ignorant of themselves.

Foucault argued that the specification of sexuality was accomplished not only through discussion but also through institutions and their practices. Furthermore, the various strict prohibitions on sexuality are part of a complex economy of incitements, manifestations, and evaluations (Foucault 1988(a):111). The result was a paradox of sexual inhibitions where sex was defined within a very strict code of conduct, while simultaneously it was constantly sought out and explored. Foucault claimed that Western society was convinced that to know oneself, one must know his or her sexuality and this would be achieved through confession, which he defined as:

The examination of the conscience, all the instance on the important secrets of the flesh, has not been simply a means of prohibiting sex or of repressing it as far as possible from consciousness, but was a means of placing sexuality at the heart of existence and of connecting salvation with the mastery of these obscure movements' (Foucault 1988(a):111).



As such, Foucault believed that sexuality is a part of an individual's behaviour, something that he or she creates, instead of the discovery of a secret part of one's desire. According to Foucault, sexual liberation is not about uncovering the secrets of a repressed truth about one's sexual desires but, rather, the process of defining and constructing one's own desires (Foucault 2006:163).

Rejecting the idea that truth is the reward of a free spirit or a privilege to those who have succeeded in liberating themselves, Foucault defined truth as the product of multiple forms of constraint that in turn produces regular effects of power (Foucault 2000:131). Each society has its own system of truth associated to its own particular form of discourse, mechanisms, and instances that distinguish the truth from the false statement (ibid). Instead of looking for the deeper meaning, or the source of meaning, that truth supposedly possessed, Foucault focused on the discursive and practical conditions for the validation of truth and meaning. By examining the principles of meaning and truth production in various discursive forums, Foucault realized that truth claims emerged during different historical periods on the basis of what was being said and written at these times (ibid). For example, in Foucault's study of madness and civilization, he found each epoch sustained its own meanings and truths that were very different from the other but no less valid. In the essay entitled "Truth and Power", Foucault argued that truth should be understood as a system of ordered procedures that produce, regulate, distribute, and circulate the operation of discourse: "'Truth' is linked in a circular relation with systems of power that produce and sustain it, and to effects of power which it induces and which extend it – a 'regime' of truths" (Foucault 2000:132). It would be inaccurate to believe that truth needs to be emancipated from various forms of power, such as hegemony, social, economic, and cultural, within which it operates at in the present time, because truth is already power in and of itself.

Power that represses sex is tolerated as long as its most substantial parts are invisible (Foucault 1990(a):86). In opposition to ars erotica, the silence and secrecy of power over sexuality is not an abuse or a form of repression but instead essential to its productivity (ibid). One has to wonder, would we be so obedient if we knew how power limits our sexual pleasures and desires? Modern discursive powers associated with the practice of sexuality, such as medical and psychoanalytical thought, and pornography, enforce a hetero-normalization versus liberation of pleasures (Sawicki 1991:23). Foucault proposes we free ourselves from these sexual discourses in order to discover new ways of understanding ourselves: “power as a pure limit set on freedom is, at least in our society, the general form of its acceptability” (Foucault 1990(a):86). Foucault describes sexual behaviour not as desires originating from natural instincts, but as “the consciousness one has of what one is doing, what one makes of the experience, and the value one attaches to it” (Foucault 2006:142). In modern society, there needs to be substantial progress made towards greater tolerance, and, despite the progress made, Foucault, in general, sees the situation as still less than encouraging (Foucault 2006:155).

### *Creating Open Spaces: Power, Gender, and Sexuality*

In contemporary sexual discourse, sexuality and gender, acts and pleasures, became blurred and conflated. Society needs to be more critical and less accepting of gender roles and how they are perceived, and, in addition, to question its own presuppositions about sexuality. In predominantly heteronormative societies, resistance is lost and subjects lose any possibility of modifying sexual discourse and therefore discovering the pleasures and truths of ars erotica. The more free and open sexual practice is, the more reserved subjects can be in talking about it and once more pleasure will regain its secrecy (Foucault 2006:161-164). For sexuality to be freely

expressed, explored, and experienced, it can no longer be perceived as an essentialistic quality, but liberated from social mores that bind it to gender norms.

Foucault argues that sexuality is a cultural phenomenon and not an innate natural process. Radical, pro-censorship feminists, such as MacKinnon, Dworkin and their supporters, tend to operate along the juridico-discursive model, identifying power as centralized in all male institutions and possessed by men. These thinkers have been criticized by anti-censorship feminists for relying on universal theories of sexuality in their discussions on the history and cultural constructs in sexual discourse. Accordingly, female sexual liberation would entail the restraining of male sexuality or even the complete destruction of same. Since male-controlled institutions are regarded as the most fundamental forms of oppression, women are urged to seize power over patriarchy and to begin a cultural revolution. Karen Rian addressed the issue of socio-cultural oppression in “Sadomasochism and the Social Construction of Desire” (1991:137):

Since our sexuality has been constructed for the most part through social structures over which we have had no control, we all ‘consent’ to sexual desires and activities which are alienating to at least some degree. However, there is a vast difference between consent and self-determination. The latter includes the former, but in addition entails *control over the social structures which shape our lives*, including our sexual desires and relationships....[S]exual liberation involves the freedom to redefine and reconstruct our sexuality, which in turn reshapes our sexual desires (Sawicki 1991:37).

Foucault agrees that sexuality is a social construct but distinguishes himself by allocating the repression of women not on the male species but on larger power relations functioning through the social body. A great deal of thought and energy has been expended on male desire and yet the social construction of male sexuality has been largely ignored. It is power, exercised through larger complex social mechanisms that dictate what form modern sexuality will take (Sawicki 1991:38). Repression is enacted through sexual discourses and practices in everyday

life that control and constrict desires for both men and women. Foucault believes the answer may be to desexualize contemporary society:

What I want to make apparent is precisely that the object “sexuality” is in reality an instrument formed long ago, and one which has constituted a centuries-long apparatus of subjection. The real strength of the women’s movement is not that of having laid claim to the specificity of their sexuality and the rights pertaining to it, but that they have actually departed from the discourse conducted within the apparatuses of sexuality...[This constitutes] a veritable de-sexualization, a displacement effected in relation to the sexual centering of the problem, formulating the demand for forms of culture, discourse, language... which are no longer part of that rigid assignation and pinning down to their sex (Foucault 1980(b):219-220).

Gender should not be conflated with sexuality. Rather, gender differentiation is achieved through social interaction and institutional rule; it is more accurate to say you “do” gender versus you “are” a gender (West & Zimmerman 187:126). Postmodern feminists have argued that gender identity is never static and is often developed under protest (Bartky 2002:25). Discourses within which genders are constructed are contradictory and diversified. There are strict gender social controls, both implicit and explicit, that enforce approval, rewards, or stigmatization for subjects who are conforming and non-conforming to their gender (Fausto-Sterling 2000:251). Simone de Beauvoir suggested that the term “woman” is a political category that exploits the deformed bodies of women as a “natural group”:

One is not born, but becomes a woman. No biological, psychological, or economic fate determines the figure that the human female presents in society: it is civilization as a whole that produces this creature, intermediate between male and eunuch, which is described as feminine (Wittig 1992:9).

The capacity to give birth has been what defines women and it is this biological differentiation between men and women that society has relied on in its definition. History has been naturalized along with the social consequences that produce women’s oppression (Wittig

1992:11). Lesbians are the only segment of the population who have breached the gender lines: they identify themselves as women, but refuse to singularly adopt female gender rules and instead exercise particular gender practices of both men and women as they personally select. Despite their composition of a unique gender, the lesbian is still a social construct and not a product of nature, because, according to Monique Wittig, there is not nature in society (Wittig 1992:13). To be a lesbian is simply to reject the ideological, economic, and political power of men and subordination of women.

Radical feminists argue for the destruction of all patriarchy, but Foucault's analysis implies that the problem is not in men themselves, but in their gender. Furthermore, the power that gave rise to patriarchy is only existent because of its relationship with women. The power that oppresses women resides in the relationship between the sexes and more specifically in their gender identities than in the innate nature of men. The struggle for women's freedom and liberation is not one against men necessarily but against their gender. If cultural ideologies constructed about male and female genders were dismantled, women would be freed from power relations with men: "once the class 'men' disappear, 'women' as a class will disappear as well" (Wittig 1992:15). Society needs to dissociate women from the "myth of women" and in addition, women need to dissociate from this myth inside and outside of themselves (Wittig 1992:15).

In contemporary society, the deployment of sexuality has taken the form of hard-core pornography, where gender is grossly exploited and heteronormativity is assumed to be the truth revealed through explicit imagery. Shrouded in a cloak of liberation, pornography speaks to its viewers in the form of a pseudo-confession that strips pleasure of all of its secrecy. The discovery of new bodily pleasure and desire are abandoned for a static and linear expression of

sexuality that closes spaces of exploration instead of opening new ones. In the next chapter I will examine the power relation between pornography and the body and how modern disciplines produce new forms of knowledge that break down the sexual body and rearrange it into one that is efficient and expedient in the production of pornified sexuality.

## CHAPTER 4

### PORNOGRAPHY AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF A SEXUAL DOCILE BODY

The relationship between pornographic images and the consumer is complex and controversial, as the location of the boundary between entertainment and misogyny is vigorously disputed. Numerous studies have examined the effects of pornography on sexual behaviour, largely focusing on young adolescents and adult men. While there is no disagreement as to the increasing availability and consumption of pornographic material in the past 20 years, scholars still debate how pornographic images and text directly influence an individual. Several studies predominantly focus on the relationship between youths and adult men with pornographic texts and images. In many studies, sexuality is largely perceived as a social construct with reference to Arthur Bandura's social learning theory, which states that we learn about how to act in a social situation by observing society around us:

Social learning theory approaches the explanation of human behaviour in terms of a continuous reciprocal interaction between cognitive, behavioural, and environmental determinants. Within the process of reciprocal determinism lies the opportunity for people to influence their destiny as well as the limits of self-direction. This conception of human functioning then neither casts people into the role of powerless objects controlled by environmental forces nor free agents who can become whatever they choose. Both people and their environments are reciprocal determinants of each other (Bandura 1977(a):vii).

Referencing Bandura's theory, several studies correlate sexual attitudes and behaviours with the rates of pornographic consumption. In this chapter I will discuss sexuality as a social construct but with the application of Foucault's theory of power relations, knowledge, discipline, and docility. I will argue that pornography acts as a social force similar to the military that breaks down the body and manipulates each gesture and movement through various disciplines. The sexual body becomes the site in which power is exercised through its relations with

pornographic material. All movements, postures, and expressions of the body are broken down, rearranged, and disciplined in the reproduction of pornographic sex. The discovery of new sexual pleasure and a suppressed inner truth evades the audience as long as they fail to critically interpret the pornographic images with which they are presented. As Foucault would suggest, there is resistance and struggle in all power relations; however, the question arises, what form of resistance is currently being exercised in relation to pornography? Pornography does not express an egalitarian sexuality, nor does it provide the open space for free exploration that Foucault and anti-censorship feminists speak about. Instead, pornography, cloaked in the assumption of free choice, is merely another form of heteronormative oppression that restricts gender exploration and the discovery of new forms of pleasures. When society is saturated with pornographic representations as a normative standard, which in turn operates as an ideal to which people ‘voluntarily’ aspire, it is only because of the operation of this efficient economy of force, which goes mostly unnoticed.

### *Current Studies on Pornography*

The current debate on pornography has generated a great deal of passion but little agreement. There are various interpretations concerning the nature, meaning, and function of pornography in contemporary society with several studies contributing to the debate by providing a deeper understanding of the relationship between the individual and the images in pornographic material. For example, in 2006, Gudrun Wallmyr and Catharina Welin found that the primary reason for watching pornography for men was to get aroused and to masturbate whereas women watched it out of curiosity (Wallmyr & Welin 2006:190). In addition, men responded to pornographic material positively while women responded to it in negative terms.



Christina Rogala and Tanja Tydén argue that there is a link between the consumption of pornography and practicing anal intercourse, reflecting the current shift from oral to anal sex in pornographic films since the 1970s (Rogala and Tanja 2002:43). Rogala and Tydén argued that changes in sexual behaviour mimicked pornographic trends despite negative feelings toward the act of anal sex. These studies are clearly consistent with the notion of gender reproduction as they provide confirmation of the role that pornography plays in reproducing hegemonic femininity and masculinity through the objectification and inferiorization of women (Shaw 1999:209). According to these studies, pornography is not perceived or experienced by men and women equally but is designed to enhance male sexual fantasies with the exploitation and objectification of women.

All of the above noted authors create strong arguments in support of a relationship between pornographic material and the consumer. However, correlational studies are difficult to substantiate and their data relies primarily on subjective responses by the subjects. Despite this limitation, I believe these studies are worth noting as they do speak to the personal experiences of those who are affected either directly or indirectly by pornography. While there are articles that refer to Foucault's thoughts on deviant sexuality and S & M, there is a lack of any published work that directly relates Foucault's theory of power, knowledge and docility with pornography. Although many contemporary feminist writers, such as Sandra Bartky, Jana Sawicki, and Rosalind Ann Sydnie have discussed Foucault and sexuality, their writings tend to focus more on sexuality and gender or pornography and the subject. I will argue that pornography itself is not the problem but is rather the vehicle in which androcentric standards and values are propagated; it is androcentrism that gives meaning and function to pornographic images and text, but, more importantly, it is the discourse surrounding sexuality and pornography that defines how society

interprets and experiences sex. As a result, I will not argue in support of, or against censorship, but rather for deeper analysis and interpretation.

### *Foucault and Sexuality and Pornography*

Sex, according to Foucault, is not a means to an end, but a forum for possibilities whereby desires create new relationships, and new forms of love, without any necessary or universal limits (Foucault 1994:163). It becomes a means of focusing, channelling, and transmitting power that determines the relationships between people, institutions, and concepts. Foucault described sexuality as one of the most creative sources of society and one's sense of self being; however, his primary interest was in the discursive aspect of sexuality and not sexuality itself. He wanted to know how and why sexuality is made into an object of relentless discussion. Foucault wanted to understand the drive behind why society spoke so much about sex and what are the consequences are of all this discussion. What transformed was a new kind of sexual knowledge, perspective, and power that was specific to this period in history and place; a discourse that took the form of modern pornography. Although Foucault never directly acknowledges the growing relationship between sexuality and pornography in any of his writings or interviews, his statements regarding S&M are applicable to pornographic material. Having both begun as underground subcultures, pornography and S&M transgressed and challenged sexual norms in the exploration for new pleasures. In *Sex, Power, and the Politics of Identity*, Foucault suggests that sadomasochism (S&M) represents a reinvention of new possibilities of pleasure where the eroticization of the body is derived from more than just bodily pleasures, but also through unusual situations (Foucault 2006:165). Without addressing the sexual politics of

pornographic material, Foucault argued that breaking from traditional constructions of pleasure and transgressing these limits should become an integral part of modern culture (ibid).

In Foucault's discussion of sexuality he focuses on the discovery of pleasures, as opposed to desire which, he claims, has been emphasized for centuries by people, including doctors, psychiatrists, and liberation movements (ibid). In *The Use of Pleasure* (1990(b)), Foucault describes pleasures, specifically of the body, as related to touch and contact that mark the ethics of the flesh (42). Desire refers to the focus, reflection, and recognition of oneself as a sexual subject that arises out of pleasure and is directed towards pleasure and thus constitutes it (ibid). Together, pleasures and desires form an ensemble that produces the notion of sexuality. The exploration and discovery of new and unrestricted pleasures will lead to the creation of desire, but the concentration should primarily be on pleasure. Foucault speaks simply of pleasure as a whole. There are all kinds of pleasures, including guilty pleasures that are powerfully suffused with feelings of guilt, shame, and fear, such as those feelings attached to a young schoolboy masturbating in the bathroom (Bartky 2002:57). There are even pleasures that derive from the infliction of domination and pain through rape.

In addition to Foucault's terms of pleasure and desire, pornography can be understood as a pseudo-confession that, in being consumed, acts as a mechanism through which sexualities are deployed within a disciplinary system of power. In traditional Catholic terms, the confession is the practice of being absolved by a priest after confessing of one's sins (Foucault 1990(a):60). Similar to the sin of lying or stealing, certain sexual behaviours have been socially condemned, such as multiple sexual partners, sex with an underage girl, or sex in a public place, which are frequently depicted in pornographic films (Foucault 1990(a):20). Pornography functions as a pseudo-confession as it exposes sexual practices that would otherwise be kept secret. Through

its incessant speaking and confessing of sex, pornography is absolved by its consumers of any shame. Once excused of any guilt, sexuality is free to be a productive and constructive force in society. Open to the exploration and discovery of new sexual pleasures, a truth, believed to be suppressed within us is now revealed. As consumption of pornographic material increases and gains popularity it transforms into a normalizing force that develops a consensus of legitimacy. Constructed with its own rules of conduct and codes of behaviour, pornographic material has become the new norm of sexual discourse in contemporary society. Pornography receives absolution by exposing sexual behaviours, attitudes, and practices that were traditionally defined as socially deviant, such as anal sex, multiple sex partners, and voyeurism. Thus, in gaining social acceptance and support, pornographic material is stripped of any condemnation. The secrecy and shame previously associated with pornography and those who view it is gradually being eradicated as the porn industry continues incessantly to speak of sex and its confessions. Foucault argued that an understanding of the role of sexuality in religious confessional discourse sheds new light on the role of pornography in contemporary society. People react to pornography as if it were a window into a hidden truth of the soul, even though it is a construction elicited by particular relations of power. Confession gradually lost its ritualistic and exclusive localization within the monasteries; it spread to be employed in a whole series of relationships, such as between lovers. Indirectly, Foucault implied that this discourse between lovers has been important in the historical deployment of sexuality. The confessional culture “endowed sex with an inexhaustible and polymorphous causal power. The most discrete event in one’s sexual behaviour – whether an accident or a deviation, a deficit or an excess – was deemed capable of entailing the most varied consequences throughout one’s existence” (Foucault 1990(b):65). If each sexual act is imbued with such power to explain who we are within the

confessional culture, that power must operate as lovers negotiate and engage in sexual acts (Duff 2010:688).

Pornography is more than a venue for sexual exploration, but is also a form of a pseudo-confession that invites, incites, and forces one to speak of sex. Of greater concern is the hypocritical nature of pornography that promotes itself as sexual liberation from prohibitions and repression when in reality it sustains a very narrow and sexist form of sexuality. As a form of sexual regulation, pornography deforms sexuality by restricting its expression to a heteronormative and misogynistic nature. As older traditions and restrictions have been lifted, there has occurred a “de-sublimation”, but this “de-sublimation” is still repressive, only in new ways; a repressive de-sublimation for women. Foucault does not deny that there is sexual repression, but instead focuses on the larger set of productive power relations that operate through the social body that constitutes the subject of modern sexual experiences and practices that are hegemonic and heteronormative (Sawicki 1991:38).

### *Sexuality and Essentialism*

As a non-essentialist, Foucault states that sexuality is not about desires born out of natural instincts or created according to permissive laws that tell us what we can or cannot do. Instead, sexuality is an ensemble of practices performed through relations of power. As a form of sexual discourse, pornography is dominated by a heteronormative standard of sexuality where sexual intercourse is performed by a man and woman with the focal points being the penetrating penis and the vagina. By assuming that sexuality is an essential and innate aspect of one’s being, pornography displays heterosexuality and misogyny as the norm, relying on gender roles and prescripts, which brings about the question of essentialism. Are sexual attitudes, preferences,

and behaviours an innate quality or a social construct? To answer this question I have reviewed the works of Diana Fuss, Lois McNay, Sandra Bartky and Foucault on gender and essentialism.

In *Essentially Speaking* (1989), Diana Fuss defines essentialism as “a belief in a true essence that is irreducible, unchanging, and therefore constitutive of a given person or thing” (Fuss 1989:2). In some feminist theory, essentialism is discussed in various ways but it most commonly refers to a pure or original feminine essence that transcends social systems and is therefore unattained and repressed by patriarchy (ibid). Conflation of the social existence of women with their biological functions as an essentialistic quality has been a problematic tendency for many feminists, notably some radical feminists such as MacKinnon and Dworkin. French feminist Annie Leclerc exemplifies this constraint as she argues that women need to learn to revalue themselves outside of male standards, thereby discovering a positive image of their biological selves, revealing their essential caring and nurturing functions. Unfortunately, Leclerc confuses biology of men and women with social categorization in a reductionist account that is based solely on biology as nature (McNay 1992:19). Despite its claim to acknowledge the differences within women’s experiences, some radical feminist discourse refers to an ontology that is outside of cultural and historical influences. Fuss argues that “man” and “woman” are assumed to be ontologically stable objects that are unchanging and predictable (Fuss 1989:3). There is little to no allowance for the historical production of these categories. Lois McNay (1992), states that it is necessary for feminists to analyze the processes through which the female body is transformed into a feminine one and not rely on essentialism to form the basis for their arguments.

In opposition to essentialism, many feminists have sought out new forms of discourse known as constructionism, which dismantles the interlacing processes that are often mistaken as

essentialistic. In *Essentially Speaking* (1989), Diana Fuss argues that constructionism is “concerned primarily with the production and organization of differences and therefore rejects the idea that any essential or natural givens proceed the process of social determination” (Fuss 1989:2-3). As a non-essentialist, Foucault proposed a new theory of power and the body that does not rely on biology to describe the experiences of men and women as “natural”. Without denying feminists’ concepts of women as an oppressed group, Foucault demassifies and localizes the category of women so that this concept is no longer a universal group (Grosz 1990:88). By localizing, making specific, and placing women in a socio-historical and discursive framework, women’s oppression cannot be explained by general structures of oppression, namely patriarchy, but rather in terms of the utilization of the bodies and speech of women in the extraction of knowledge, labour, services, etc. (ibid). Instead of a monolithic and total domination, Foucault describes a non-complete, non-hegemonic domination that ultimately elicits resistance and never fully succeeds in total subjugation. The site of this domination and resistance is the body that, according to Foucault, bears the marks of its discursive history:

The body is the inscribed surface of events (traced by language and dissolved by ideas), the locus of a dissociated self (adopting the illusion of a substantial unity), and a volume in perpetual disintegration. Genealogy as an analysis of descent, is thus situated within the articulation of the body and history. Its task is to expose a body totally imprinted by history and the processes of history’s destruction of the body (Foucault 1994:375).

Foucault’s notion of the body is that it is essentially a passive entity upon which power is exercised, thus creating a one-dimensional theory of identity (McNay 1992:12). The body is both shaped and reshaped by counteracting forces specific to its time and place in history. Radically anti-essentialistic, Foucault describes the body as constructed not by nature but by

social institutions: “nothing in man – not even his body – is sufficiently stable to serve as a basis for self-recognition or for understanding other men” (Foucault 1977(a)(b):153).

In *The History of Sexuality* (1990(a)), Foucault introduces a theory of the body and sexuality that clearly illustrated his radical anti-essentialism. Rejecting the concept of sex as unconstructed or a natural phenomenon, Foucault argues that sex is not the natural expression of desire, but a cultural construct produced with the aim of social regulation and control over sexuality:

We must not make the mistake of thinking that sex is an autonomous agency which secondarily produces manifold effects of sexuality over the entire length of its surface of contact with power. On the contrary, sex is the most speculative, most ideal and most internal element in a deployment of sexuality organized by power in its grip on bodies and their materiality, their forces, energies, sensations, and pleasures (Foucault 1990(a):155).

While feminists embrace Foucault’s constructionist theory of the body and sexuality, he is criticized for treating the body as though it were one and the bodily experiences of men and women as having the same relationship to social institutions (Bartky 1988:17). McNay accuses Foucault of neglecting to examine the gendered character of many disciplinary techniques where sexual differences simply do not have a place in his theory of power as the technology of subjectivity is referred to a desexualized “human” subject (McNay 1992:11). Sandra Bartky argues that while one is born a male or a female, one is not, however, born masculine or feminine (Bartky 1988:65). Femininity, and I would add masculinity, is an artefact, a practiced achievement, “a mode of enacting and re-enacting received gender norms which surface as so many styles of the flesh” (ibid).

Although Foucault lacks gender awareness in his theories, I would argue that the female body, like the male body, is an object of coercion and discipline by various social institutions,



each with their own specific gendered prescripts. Pornography maintains a very strict code of disciplines for men and women that manipulates and transforms the sexual body under the guise of innate desires and pleasures. I will argue that pornography, as a dominant form of sexual discourse, persuades consumers to perceive pornographic attitudes and behaviours as an expression of pre-existing desires and not a highly manufactured product. This product is designed to maintain heteronormative standards, female submissiveness, and generate a substantial profit. Without the knowledge of how pornography and power relations function, individuals will be unable to select, adapt, develop, and innovate their own pleasures. Simply put, freedom of sexual choice does not imply freedom of sexual acts.

*The Production of Knowledge, a Pseudo-Confession, 'Truth', and Sexuality*

While there are various genres of pornography, I have focused on hard-core pornography as having created a universal codification of sexual pleasure that acts as a mechanism of power in a complex system of patriarchy. Similar to the hysterization of women's bodies, the socialization of procreative behaviour, and/or the psychiatrization of perverse pleasures, pornography regards sexuality as an obscure domain which it tries to uncover. According to Foucault, the proliferating medical, psychological, juridical, and pornographic discourses of sexuality have functioned as transfer points of knowledge, power, and pleasure. They are places where sexualities could be specified and solidified. Foucault defines the twofold effect of this process: on the one hand, the power that took charge of sexuality itself becomes sexualized, and on the other, the pleasure thus discovered "fed back into the power that encircled it". Through this osmosis of a pleasure-feeding power and a power-feeding pleasure, the "implantation of perversions" gradually took place, and "scattered sexualities rigidified, became stuck to an age, a

place, a type of practice” (Foucault 1990(a):12). As such, hard-core pornographic films and videos “act as a modern form of ‘knowledge-pleasure’ of sexuality”. Foucault’s analysis of sexuality states that pleasures of the body are subject to historically changing social constructions. These pleasures do not exist in immutable opposition to a controlling and repressive power but instead are produced within configurations of power that put pleasures to particular use.

In the *History of Sexuality*, Foucault considers pornography and power, writing:

And accompanying this encroachment of powers, scattered sexualities rigidified, became stuck to an age, a place, a type of practice. A proliferation of sexualities through the extension of power; an optimization of the power to which each of these local sexualities gave a surface of intervention; this concatenation, particularly since the nineteenth century, has been ensured and relayed by the countless economic interests which, *with the help of medicine, psychiatry, prostitution, and pornography*, have tapped into both this analytic multiplication of pleasure and this optimization of the power that controls it. Pleasure and power do not cancel or turn back against one another; they seek out, overlap, and reinforce one another. They are linked together by complex mechanisms and devices of excitation and incitement (Foucault 1990(a):48, emphasis added).

To understand how power becomes a productive force it is necessary to begin with Foucault’s interest in the formation of knowledge and meaning, not through language but through discourse. Accordingly, discourse constructs a topic by defining and constructing the objects of our knowledge (Wetherell *et al* 2001:72). It deciphers the way a topic can be meaningfully communicated and interpreted while influencing how ideas are put into practice and function as a regulating factor in the conduct of others. As discourse permits certain forms of knowledge, it also restricts and limits other ways of talking and conducting ourselves in the production of the topic or knowledge about it (*ibid*). We can only have knowledge about things that have meaning and it is discourse itself, not the thing being discussed, that produces knowledge (Wetherell *et al*

2001:73). It is the meaning attached to porn and the form of discourse around porn that produces the knowledge of porn and these discourses and meanings are specific to this period of history.

Knowledge has the power to make itself true and once applied in the real world, has real effects and therefore the sense of being 'true' (Wetherell *et al* 2001:76). Foucault argued:

Truth isn't outside power... Truth is a thing of this world; it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint. And it induces regular effects of power. Each society has its regime of truths, its 'general politics' of truth; that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true, the mechanism and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned...the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true (Foucault 1980(b):131).

In other words, what is perceived as 'truth' is only true in the sense once it has been related through discourse and produces a form of knowledge that is continual and reaffirming. This is achieved with regulation and disciplining of practices. Thus, "there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time, power relations" (Foucault 1977(a):27). As such, there is not absolute 'truth' of knowledge, but rather a discursive formation sustaining a system of truth. Thus it may or may not be true that pornography inevitably leads to violence against women, but if everyone believed it to be so, and punishes those who consume pornographic material accordingly, then this will have real consequences for both men and women. The assumed link between pornography and violence against women will become 'true' in terms of its real effects; even if in some absolute sense it has never been conclusively proven.

In contemporary society, the dominant form of knowledge and meaning in regards to sexuality is produced in the form of pornographic material. Pornography defines and produces sexual knowledge by governing the meanings and ideas that are put into practice. The power relations between the consumer and pornography is portrayed through what Foucault describes

as the confession and the incessant need to speak about sex and the hope of having sex tell us the ‘truth’ about ourselves that we would not discover otherwise. Through a pseudo-confession, pornography produces a new form of discourse and knowledge that is then applied in the real world. Through consumption, pornographic material increasingly speaks and confesses a new discourse in sexuality that exposes traditionally condemned pleasures and desires. Bedrooms and living rooms now take the place of the confessional box and the individual who condones the pornographic images acts as a pseudo-priest, absolving the porn industry of any shame or penance for the sin of explicitly speaking of sexual pleasures. Within this new form of discourse, a struggle develops between what Foucault calls the *ars erotica* of sexuality and the formation of new pleasures, and a manufactured sexuality that is the product of manipulation and coercion used to control and restrict sexual pleasures, referred to as *scientia sexualis*.

In modern society, where *scientia sexualis* dominates, pseudo-confession demands that sex tells us the truth and, in turn, tells us our own truth, a truth about ourselves that we imagine to be buried deep inside each of us that we think we manage within our immediate consciousness (Foucault 1990(a):69). According to Foucault, confessions play a central role in the production of modern sexuality: it is the technique for exercising power over the pleasures that we seem to be “free” to confess, and it operates through various relational power relations such as medicine, law, psychoanalysis, and pornography. It is through these power relations that sexuality is constituted. Modern forms of sexualities are constructed according to the conjunction of power and knowledge which probes the confessable “truths” of a sexuality that governs bodies and their pleasures;

It is no longer a question of saying what was done - the sexual act - and how it was done; but of reconstruction, in and around the act, the thoughts that recapitulated it, the obsessions that accompanied it, the images, desires, modulations, and quality of the pleasure that animated it.

For the first time, no doubt, a society has taken upon itself to solicit and hear the imparting of individual pleasures (Foucault 1990(a):63).

According to Foucault, confession is a discursive act that individuates us. In *Subjectivity and Truth* (1997(a)), Foucault defines confession as, “to declare aloud and intelligibly the truth of oneself” (Foucault 1997(a):173). In *The History of Sexuality*, confession is a ritual which unfolds in relation of power, since one does not confess without the presence of a partner who acts as the agency that requires the confession, imposes it, weighs it, and intervenes to judge, punish, pardon, console, or reconcile (Foucault 1990(a):61). For Foucault, confession is also a ritual where truth is authenticated by obstacles and a resistance that it has to overcome in order to formulate. Finally, it is a discursive act in which articulation produces, in the person who articulates it, intrinsic modifications: it makes him innocent, it redeems him, purifies him, and promises him salvation (ibid).

However, the confession of truths in pornography is only an illusion. Male directors cater to male viewers as the ones who have been doing most of the speaking in pornography. Williams asserts that “if male viewers think that they are hearing confessions of female pleasure, spoken through close-ups of female genitals engaged in real sex, this involves mostly male pornographers ventriloquizing their voices into the vulvas of their female stars” (Williams 1989:63). According to the theory of disciplinary power as productive, the workings of power and the idea of repression are constitutive of desire. However, like the medical treatment of perversions, the sex industry results in a proliferation of sexualities that are constraining rather than liberating. Experts of the *ars erotica* are trained in practices that produce pleasures as they master the art of manipulating bodies, whereas the experts of the *scientia sexualis* are trained in diagnosing psychological perversions and desires.

We commonly believe that truth demands to be heard, that silencing is a result of a power repressing us, and that speaking leads to liberation. While pornography acts as a pseudo-confession, Foucault believes that with the loss of silence is also the loss of all the pleasures of ars erotica associated with it. Pornography falsely claims to be concerned with pleasures, in an attempt to simulate the forms of ars erotica defined by intensity, quality, duration, and reverberations in the body and soul (Foucault 1990(a):57). As the subject learns to master the stylization of conduct through the practices of disciplinary power, he or she transforms into a docile subject who possesses the knowledge of a pornified sexuality, and it is in the production of this knowledge that power is spread (Foucault 1990(b):22). This knowledge must not be contained but be deflected back into sexual practices itself so as to continually reshape and modify it. In reality, this pornographic form of knowledge is a highly produced system of disciplines that limits and restricts sexual pleasures with the effect of reinforcing heteronormativity and the production of capitalist profit at the expense of pleasures and desires.

These new forms of discursive practices, formations, and apparatuses in pornographic sexuality are not instantiated by a single authoritative body or act. There is no headquarters of pornography. To understand the practice of pornography requires recognizing how pervasive, diffuse, and 'normal' it is perceived by millions of individuals (Mason-Grant 2004:84). As a practice, pornography functions as a system where any one pornographic act always refers to another and its authority and force in the domain of sex is untraceable to a single source of origin. As I discussed in Chapter 1, pornographic images and the use of the female body as a spectacle have a long history that developed in style and explicitness over several decades. While there were significant persons, such as Hugh Hefner, involved in the idealization of modern pornography, individually their roles could not have resulted into the popularity of porn today.

Explicit pornographic images have deprived pleasure of its secrecy by its constant and profound pseudo-confessions. The demand to tell the truth has been exalted to the point where sex becomes easy, accessible and, as a result, risks being ordinary and boring. Within this new form of modification, the aesthetics of pleasure are no longer emphasized in the mastery of a self-disciplined body, the production of greater pleasure, the exercising of one's freedoms and forms of power, or finally, the access of truth. In pornography, *ars erotica* is completely lost. At the centre of this power relation and the formation of knowledge is the body. Engaged with different techniques of regulation, the body develops a relationship with new forms of apparatuses that divide, classify, and inscribe each part of the body differently in their respective regimes of power and 'truth' (Wetherell *et al* 2001:78).

#### *Normalizing Power, Discipline, and a Sexual Docile Body*

Pornography is an example of a cultural practice that exercises power over the sexual body through coercion. Foucault describes power as most effective when it is productive (Sawicki 1991:22). By this, Foucault means that power is exercised through disciplinary practices carried out through institutional and cultural forces to produce new forms of conduct. Operations of power within modern societies that are very subtle and complex, act as dispersed forms of micro-level power that are productive rather than repressive. These operations are referred to as disciplining or normalizing power. These forms of power, as institutionalized methods, generate forces that efficiently maintain order and meticulous control of the operations of the body and thus utilization of masses of people (Foucault 1984(b):181). It is in the relationships that people have with these forces that power is found, as disciplinary practices increase the power of the individual, transforming them into docile bodies. The human body

became subject to a slow, gradual coercion focused on the economy and efficiency of the body's movements, gestures, and attitudes (Foucault 1977(a):136).

Modern pornographic sexual discourse is only part of a power-knowledge formation that includes subtle and often direct coercion over the body. Men acting as sexual partners extract from pornography a 'knowledge' of sexuality that they use to organize their personal domination over women, in order to turn women into docile bodies that learn to adopt various positions or gestures. In one video segment after another, the female's body is put into various positions as the male, or multiple men, penetrate her from behind, with her on top, standing with one leg over his shoulder, in a chair, on the dining room table, vaginally, orally, and anally. If discipline is successful, coercion is minimized and economized, to generate the maximum effect of control through the minimum expenditure of force, force that never disappears completely. This is accomplished through surveillance, where men assume the role in the production of pornographic discourse and knowledge that then maintain disciplinary practices over the bodies of women and themselves. The internalization of surveillance as a form of self-monitoring over one's behaviour and acts is exercised through the power relations between pornography and the consumer. Foucault describes this mode of power most graphically in terms of Jeremy Bentham's panopticon model for penal institutions. The architecture of the panopticon is this:

At the periphery, an annular building; at the centre, a tower; this tower is pierced with wide windows that open onto the inner side of the ring, the peripheric building is divided into cells, each of which extends the whole width of the buildings; they have two windows, one on the inside corresponding to the windows of the tower; the other, on the outside, allows the light to cross the cell from one end to the other. All that is needed, then, is to place a supervisor in a central tower and to shut up in each cell a madman, a patient, a condemned man, a worker or a schoolboy. By the effect of backlighting, one can observe from the tower, standing out precisely against the light, the small captive shadows in the cell of the periphery (Foucault 1977(a):200).



For example, the penal institution illustrates the efficiency of the panopticon, which functions as a constant surveillance. Ultimately, the omnipresence of the ‘gaze’ makes each individual into his or her own overseer. The disciplines become the bearers of a code or rule of conduct, “this is not the juridical rule deriving from sovereignty, but...a norm, the code [that the disciplines] come to define is not that of law but that of normalization” (Foucault 1977(a):106).

The force of normalizing power does not derive from any one originating source or authority:

There is no power that is exercised without a series of aims and objectives. But this does not mean that it results from the choice or decision of an individual subject; *let us not look for headquarters that presides over its rationality*; ...the logic is perfectly clear, the aims decipherable, and yet it is often the case that no one is there to have invented them. (Foucault 1990(b):95 emphasis added).

In addition, the methods, techniques, and processes of normalization are not, according to Foucault, guaranteed by punishment (Foucault 1990(b):89). Instead, normalizing power is productive, not repressive, and operates through, not against, individuals by way of practices and discourses that regulate and shape desire (ibid). Drew Leder describes the body as ‘the ground of our experience’ and, as corporeal beings, this is an inescapable aspect of human life. In *The Absent Body* (1990), Leder explains;

Human experience is incarnated. I receive the surrounding world through my eyes, my ears, my hands. The structure of my perceptual organs shapes that which I apprehend. And it is via bodily means that I am capable of responding. My legs carry me toward a desired goal seen across the distance. My hands reach out to take up tools, reconstructing the natural surroundings into an abode uniquely suited to my body. My actions are motivated by emotions, needs, desires, that well up from a corporeal self. Relations with others are based upon our mutuality of gaze and touch, our speech, our resonances of feeling and perspective. From the most visceral of cravings to the loftiness of artistic achievements, the body plays its formative role (Leder 1990:1).

As the result of and a vehicle of normalizing powers, sexual practices are simultaneously imitative and creative. Foucault claims that normalizing powers are productive and non-

repressive; however, I will argue this is not always true. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it was considered 'normal' for women to assume the roles of wife and mother and to remain at home while their husbands pursued higher education and a careers in the public spheres. These were the codes of conduct and gender rules that prevailed until the first women's movement began to challenge these norms. Foucault does acknowledge the role of resistance in power relations and claims that without some form of struggle there would be no power relationship as it would succumb to one of force. As such, the normalizing power relation between pornography and the consumer may appear to be productive when in reality it is restrictive. Finally, while pornography is self-affirming and positive for men, it is repressive for women.

With this new form of modification, the aesthetics of pleasure are no longer emphasized on mastery of a self-disciplined body that leads to the production of greater pleasure, the exercising of one's freedoms and forms of power, or, finally, the access of truth. Instead, sexuality becomes a social construct where all of the body's movements, gestures, and attitudes are manipulated, and thus are obedient to a pornographic ideal of sexual experience. In terms of cinematography, Williams (1999) defines pornography as the most popular genre privileged to show close-ups of the body parts over other shots. This genre of pornography captures easily obscured genitals; selects sexual positions that show the most of the bodies and organs; and creates generic conventions, such as a variety of sexual acts and positions, including the ejaculating penis. The proliferation of sexually explicit images destabilizes the notion of pornography as a modern form of *ars erotica* as it repetitiously engages in a form of pseudo-confessions where sex is exposed, exploited, and mass-produced. The production of pornographic material is not for the dissemination of sexual knowledge that would produce bodies that are masters in sexual pleasures, but rather to generate a profit and maintain and

regulate heteronormative and androcentric standards that is more represented of scientia sexualis. As long as heterosexual men continue to be the main consumers of pornographic material, it is financially prudent to produce pornographic material that emphasises male interests, thus heteronormative ideals. The transgression of sexual boundaries are motivated more by profit than the discovery of new pleasures, and it remains largely still an androcentric sexuality that is developed at the expense of exploring sexual pleasures for men and women equally.

Pornography is an example of a cultural practice that exercises power over the sexual body through a gradual and largely unconscious coercion. Bodies are broken down into individual gestures and movements: the woman arches her back, pushing out her breasts while holding her legs and feet, clad in stiletto heels, high so as to provide a full view of her genitals; or the man grabs the woman by the hair so as to hold her head in place while he ejaculates on her face and around her mouth. Each movement, gesture, expression, and image acts as a pseudo-confession of the “truth” of sexual pleasures.

Similar to the new recruit, the consumer is disciplined by pornography which acts in place of the drill sergeant: collecting information about the recruit, practicing the recruit in various skills and postures, and placing the recruit under surveillance to continue gaining knowledge and to oversee all of the recruits’ behaviours. In military institutions, recruits are disciplined through punishments, such as the taking away of privileges or having extra work detail. Pornography, on the other hand, does not use direct punishment to persuade the consumer to follow its example, but, instead, uses manipulation and coercion to convince the consumer that he or she should want to learn and practise the acts and behaviours portrayed. The desire to sexually arouse and please one’s partner is strong incentive for people to consume and replicate attitudes, behaviours, and acts depicted in pornographic material. Social conformity and

acceptance is why many people behave in certain ways, for example, the reason why people don't wipe their noses with their hands or why people open doors for other people to pass through first. Similarly, as pornography becomes more mainstream and the 'porn chic' image gains popularity, individuals seek to replicate those behaviours that would gain them social acceptance and approval.

Foucault's account in *Discipline and Punish* of the disciplinary practices that produce the docile body has been criticized by Bartky for treating the body as if it were one, as if the bodily experiences of men and women did not differ but were the same (Bartky 1990:65). Bartky argues that Foucault ignored the disciplinary practices that engender the docile bodies of women who maintain different relationships with the institutions of modern life. These gendered disciplines produce a modality of embodiment that is particularly feminine in size, manner, movement, and attitudes. In a similar tone, I will argue that by focusing on the public body, Foucault has ignored the disciplinary practices associated with the private body, the sexualized body.

Sexual practices vary over time and across cultures, as they reflect cultural obsessions and preoccupations. Today, sexual discourse is largely defined by pornographic images and these include significant gender differences in gestures, posture, movement, and general bodily comportment. The body must exhibit the constricted form of sexuality as practised by the pornography industry. A woman must perform various sexual acts which include being probed by numerous objects such as fingers, fists, dildos, and multiple penises simultaneously. She must allow her body to be pressed, squeezed, pulled, slapped, bitten, spit on, pissed on, and ejaculated on. Every movement and gesture is performed to a specific pornographic code: The way she dresses and flirts; the way she goes down on her knees, or straddles her male partner;

the way she holds him, moans or screams. These precise gestures and movements confound MacKinnon's arguments against pornography as a form of sexuality that depicts cruelty and brutality against women while reproducing male power and women's subordination (MacKinnon1987:6). For example, in 2010, *Gangland*, won the award for best orgy/gangbang series at the Adult Video News Awards. Described by Eduardo Anselmi in *Maxim*, June 2010 issue, as a "better-than-average gangbang tape" starring three girls:

First up is Alyssa Allure, who takes on five hung 'n' hungry porn studs who never lose their wood or their focus. Chloe isn't used to her potential, only getting three guys to entertain her. Bringing up the rear - in more ways than one - is anal queen Liza Harper, who squeals with delight as four horny dudes plow her again and again (Anselmi 2010).

In film like *Gangland*, the actress's bodies are fragmented and partitioned to create a highly manipulated form of sexual arousal. This micro-physics of power is not just exercised over the female body, but also the male. The male body is rigidly controlled with greater concentration on the penis that resembles the body-object articulation that Foucault discusses where the penis is more an apparatus to the male as a weapon is to the soldier.

Although pornography is institutionally unbounded with no specific headquarters, it does still function with the same coercive intensity as formal institutions. According to the 2005 and 2006 U.S. Pornography Industry Revenue Statistics, the United States (U.S.) was and is the top producer of video pornography. Notable producers in the U.S. include Vivid Entertainment, Hustler, Playboy, Wicked Pictures, and Red Light District. However, the U.S. is not the sole contributor to the porn industry as Brazil follows closely behind, facilitated by companies such as Frenesi Films, Pau Brazil, and MarcoStudio. Pornography producers vary widely in size and are located around the world, such as The Netherlands, Spain, Japan, Russia, Germany, and the United Kingdom, to name the top six. In addition, while the U.S. may be the top producer of

pornographic material, China's porn revenues ranked number one at \$27 billion whereas the U.S. accounted for \$3.62 billion on video sales and rentals, and \$2.84 billion in internet porn. Depending on whether the emphasis is on production, or revenues in videos, internet, or magazines, the porn industry is as diverse and expansive as the genre itself. I define it as lacking a formal institutional structure in comparison to the hierarchical organizations, such as the Catholic Church or the Canadian State.

The absence of a formal institutional structure and of authorities that carry out the directives of pornography carries with it the illusion that the production of pornified sexual bodies is entirely natural or voluntary. Discipline in the traditional sense is something imposed upon the subject in an essentially "inegalitarian and asymmetrical system of authority" (Bartky 1988:75); for example, schoolchildren are disciplined in this way. In addition, discipline can also be voluntarily sought out as in the example of women who undergo electrolysis for hair removal in an attempt to master the rituals of beauty. Whether it is imposed or voluntary, disciplinary practices rely on the subordination of bodies posed in a system of oppression that is part of a much larger inegalitarian discipline that aims at turning specifically women into docile and compliant companions of men just as the army turns raw recruits into soldiers.

There is a reluctance to part with the rewards of compliance, to abandon a machinery of discipline that may be essential to her or his sense as a sexually desiring and desirable subject. Non-compliance may be apprehended more as something that threatens them with desexualisation and even social annihilation. The questions becomes: Is there any form of resistance and what shape and effect does this resistance have on the disciplinary practices of pornography?

*Pornography and Resistance*

As one of the most creative forces of society and our beings, the sexual body is the site where new pleasures are formulated and articulated in the arena where power operates through the disciplinary practices of pornography. Pornography is the result of power relations that do not operate primarily by denying sexual expression, but, instead, it is the product of power relations that manifest into the current form that modern sexuality has taken. In effect, Foucault claims that individuals have been constrained by sexuality, particularly through the production of discourses in the human sciences and the practices associated with them, but also in our own everyday practices. “Repression” refers to the efforts to control socially constructed desires (Sawicki 1991:39). Sexuality, not sex itself, is the arena of struggle. Resistance is not simply a negation of repression, but a creative process where situations are created and recreated and the subject can be a participant in that recreation (Foucault 1994:168). In the struggle to resist traditional discourse on sexuality, pornography emerged as a strategic practice whereby sexuality was made mobile, fluid, and free from the restraints of medicalization. However, Foucault notes that the objective of resistance and struggle is to attack not so much the institutions of power, or group, or elite, or class, but rather a technique as a form of power (Foucault 2000:331). As such, the Foucaultian notion of subjection gives rise to an apparent problem: If the gendered subject is constituted by power relations, how is it possible for that subject to be capable of agency, autonomy and resistance to these new forms of power? Foucault writes, “the individual is not [...] power’s opposite number; the individual is one of power’s first effects” (Foucault 2003:30). By understanding the relationship between power and individuals in terms of subjection, feminist theorists have drawn on Foucault’s concept of subjection to analyse the ways in which multiple

forms of subordination function along the lines of gender, race, and sexuality, thereby constituting gendered, raced, and sexed subjects (Butler 1990:57).

Is it possible to understand the subject as both constituted by subordinating power relations while also being capable of autonomous, critical resistance to subordination? I would answer this question by saying “yes” with reference to the heated feminists’ debate from the 1980s and 1990s about pornography. On one hand, women’s production and consumption of pornography could be understood as an act of resistance to a subordinating norm of female sexuality that claims good girls do not enjoy sex. On the other hand, it could be understood as a form of surrendering to masculine desire, where women’s bodies are the passive and inert targets of the male gaze. In either case, resistance and its outcomes are an ongoing, never-ending, open-ended contestation. In addition, in consideration of the notion of ourselves as gendered, raced, and sexed subjects, how does one objectively foster resistance when the subject has no choice but to start from where they are, as subjects who are constituted by and therefore attached to their subjection to subordinating gender norms?

Resistance is evident in the relationship between individual struggles against subordination and collective social movements. Collective social movements, such as the feminist or queer movements, generate conceptual and normative resources which individuals can refer to in their own attempts at critical resistance. For example; feminists working towards constructing a new language for describing social reality, including such terms as sexism, male chauvinism, sexual harassment, date rape, the double shift, and so on. These terms enabled many individuals, not just women and/or feminists, to redefine their identities and resist subordination in their daily lives. Similarly, the queer movement has performed a similar function by retranslating the term “queer” from a homophobic slur into a descriptor of a radical



and subversive understanding of sexuality. These social movements provide the discourse for ongoing deconstruction, negotiation, and reconstruction of subordinating modes of identity and recognition.

The possibility of resistance is constantly present, perpetually surrounding us with alternate options in which current reality can be challenged and transformed. Judgment regarding whether particular acts of resistance are genuinely progressive and emancipatory, or whether they serve to reinforce subordination, will have to remain permanently open to contestation. The shape that these transformations will ultimately take must be left up to what Foucault called “the undefined work of freedom” (Foucault 1984(a):50). Pornography, like heteronormative gender itself, proposes only a narrow discourse on sexuality. While there exists an overwhelming abundance of sexual material available, for the most part it singularly expresses sexual pleasure from a heteronormatively masculine male perspective. The vast majority of the pornography industry is owned and operated by men, for men. Pornography is the social representation of male fantasy and desires and women are the objects through which these pleasures are exercised. There are no moderations of any kind, either in timing, quality, or quantity of sexual acts. Sexual behaviour is often limited to just the penis and the vagina. Male ejaculation is depicted as the dominant climactic sexual experience; women in porn films do “come” as well, but in ways that are stylized to meet androcentric expectations. In modern society, pornography is the production of sexuality that is thought to be a natural expression that power tries to hold in place. Similar to the hysterization of women’s bodies, the pedagogization of children’s sex, the socialization of procreative behaviour, and/or the psychiatrization of perverse pleasures, pornography construes sex acts as an obscure domain which knowledge tries to uncover. This deployment of sexuality as a mechanism of constraint is superimposed on the

other mechanisms, maintaining the laws that govern them and securing their forms of control:

“the deployment of alliance is built around a system of rules defining the permitted and the forbidden, the licit and the illicit” (Foucault 1978:106).

## CONCLUSION

The relationship people have with pornography is not simply physically moving, but is symbolically moving. Understood as a form of sexual discourse, pornography constructs sexuality as something monolithic and oppressive. Functioning as a contemporary sexual discourse, pornography makes claims to the truth about sexuality through pictorial and written text that promises unrestricted pleasures. As Brian Duff observes, a good deal of mainstream pornography is characterized by an obsession with ‘authenticity’ and the depiction of ‘reality’: “care is taken to assure the consumer, in the text or discourse that accompanies the visuals, that everything they might expect to be true of the women who appear in pornography is very true indeed” (Duff 2010:690). Truth and sex become fused through pornographic discourse that acts as a form of confession, focusing on desires and pleasures that have been socially inhibited and repressed.

If each sexual act is imbued with the power of discourse that reveals one’s inner truth, this would be due to the multiplication and intensification of pleasures connected to the production of truth about sex as portrayed through pornographic images and texts. People do not simply stumble through their sexual experiences in some sort of ecstatic stupor, but rather engage in a process of dialogue that reconfigures sexual desires and pleasures that cater to a pornified ideal. As Duff explains, “it is not just the discourses that are occurring *after* sexual experiences, but before them and during them that have been made to carry the weight of privileged access to a ... truth about ourselves” (Duff 2010:689). These discourses help one partner to convince another partner to participate in particular sexual behaviours by suggesting they will enjoy it, or to introduce new experiences without any negotiation but a wordless one between bodies (ibid).

A major concern, expressed by feminists such as MacKinnon, is that the truth revealed through pornography is one belonging to men who hold a privileged position that they use to elicit sexual truth from women who have, in their view, repressed it (MacKinnon 1989:137). MacKinnon argues that the performance in pornographic images and texts maintains that women need to be forced in order to enjoy their sexuality. How, and in what form, women have explored and expressed their sexuality has and continues to be a question among feminist scholars.

In Chapter 1, I discussed how female sexuality evolved from the form of the burlesque dancer to the explicit nudity of a modern porn star. The female body, as portrayed in the burlesque, laid the foundation for modern pornography with the sexual objectification of women in entertainment, thus creating new discourses and truths in sexuality that are more fluid, diverse, and in some cases, misogynistic. As a sexual spectacle, the female form is reconfigured to satisfy the desire of the male gaze through such mediums as the Varga girl pin-ups to the printed magazines such as Playboy, Penthouse, and Hustler. The sexually suggestive costumes, poses and expressions eventually came to life with the introduction of sexploitation films, in which the female body once covered by scantily designed costumes, was now fully exposed. The social desire to see and hear sex speak was insatiable as pornographic sexual discourse became feasible and marketable through films and the internet. As pornography claimed to reveal sexual truths, social attitudes changed and embraced this new form of sexual discourse, permitting behaviours once deemed obscene and immoral.

In Chapter 2, I reviewed the intense debate among pro- and anti-censorship feminists on the meaning of sexuality, pornography, and women's sexual affect. Feminists, such as MacKinnon and Dworkin, argue for censorship of pornographic material as misogynistic and

oppressive to women, anti-censorship feminists such as Daileader embrace the notion of a sexual discourse that permits women to come forward and express their sexuality without judgment or discrimination. Through pornography, women can expand their sexual identities, thus choosing for themselves what images or texts bring them pleasure or not and thus empowering their own sexual self-interests. With a similar emphasis, feminists, such as Foss and Strossen, argue against censorship and encourage women to interpret and redefine contemporary sexual discourses according to their personal pleasures and desires. Pornography does not have to be enjoyed and produced just for men, but women can also participate in the design and manufacturing of pornographic material and thereby become active members in the social construction of sexual discourses.

As a growing number of women independently engage with pornographic material, they fail to create a discourse of shared sexual norms and values. Elshtain argues that by placing a priority on individualism over community and solidarity, feminists risk ignoring the pressures of the external coercion manufactured by the pornography industry. Patriarchal in character, mainstream hard-core pornography dominates sexual discourse. It is not clear what influences women to embrace this depiction of sexuality. Do women genuinely derive pleasure from these images or are they immersed in the process of social coercion? There would seem to be a need for a compromise between recognizing individual experiences and social cohesion. Within these social spheres, men and women give meaning to the discourses articulated, thereby producing knowledge and truth about sexuality. How they interpret and define sexuality reflects upon themselves and their partners, and that partner's next partner, and so on. Sexual discourses are not constructed and practiced in isolation, but by groups of people within a social context. Embracing pornographic material on an individualistic basis ignores the larger consequences

those attitudes and behaviours have to the individual to whom he or she relates. Sexuality, pleasure, and the body may be individual experiences, but they are not free of social constraints.

In the third and fourth chapter, I discussed Foucault's theory of knowledge and power as exercised through the body by discourse and disciplines and applied this theory to the analysis of pornography. Disciplinary power breaks down each movement and expression of the body, manipulating and rearranging them into a body efficient and skilful in its productivity. This docile body becomes the site of knowledge and power, and the deployment of sexualities where gender, acts, desires and pleasure are constructed. In addition, a new discourse is formed around the body, centered on manipulating and controlling its language and behaviours. The primary focus becomes the efficient economy of the body's movements. In the case of pornography, this involves the replication of pornographic expressions and gestures. Pseudo-confessions act as a catalyst in the construction of these new forms of discourse that permit the truth to be revealed. Foucault claimed that discourse came to focus on desire because it was perceived as the junction between the body and the soul:

The most important moment of transgression [shifted] from the act itself to the stirrings – so difficult to perceive and formulate – of desire. For this was an evil that afflicted the whole man, and in the most secret of forms... Discourse, therefore, had to trace the meeting line of the body and the soul, following all its meanderings: beneath the surface of the sins, it would lay bare the unbroken nervure of the flesh (Foucault 1990(a):19-20).

In this way, truth and sex became intricately intertwined within the confessional discourse. As a forum for all sorts of possibilities, sex, according to Foucault, is one of the most creative sources in society, and pornography as a form of discourse, plays an intricate role by inviting, inciting, and forcing sex to be spoken of freely.

Pornography has created a universal codification of sexual pleasures that act as a modern form of knowledge-pleasure that governs the meanings and ideas that are put into practice.

These new forms of discourse are subtle and complex acts, dispersed within contemporary society that transforms and constructs modern definitions of sexuality. As the site of these operations of power and knowledge, the movements, gestures, and expressions of the body are broken down, coerced, manipulated, practised, and transformed into a body that replicates the ideals of a pornified sexuality. In addition, the question of gender becomes confused with sexuality whereas it should be kept separate and distinct. Heteronormative in character, mainstream hard-core pornographic material presents a linear, monolithic sexuality that represses alternative forms of pleasures and desires that are not solely focused on the penis and vagina.

This study is not aimed towards censorship or drawing a relationship between pornographic material and violence against women, but is rather a critical look at how pornography relates to our bodies on a micro-level and thus creates new forms of discourse, definitions, and knowledge about heterosexuality. The normative nature of pornography has created a false sense of confidence and security in the expressions, acts, behaviours, and attitudes of sexuality. Unconditionally, a vast majority of society has embraced pornographic material as a true representation of sexual pleasures and desires. Are the images portrayed in pornographic material truly representative of the sexual desires of heterosexual men and women? Do women really fantasize about rape and double penetration? Does ejaculating on a woman's face create a more intense sexual climax for men? Future research would be beneficial to explore the relationship between the images depicted in pornographic material and the actual bodies of the consumer; their gestures, movements, and behaviours. Does pornography function as more than mere entertainment, but as a teacher that guides, instructs, and practices the art of sex to its student? Do people who watch pornographic films try to replicate the images seen with their partners, in an attempt to experience the same pleasure as portrayed by the porn actors? And if

so, are their sexual experiences more satisfying as a result? Finally, how do women relate to their sexuality when the main form of discourse is one focused primarily on the pleasures and desires of men? Does feminist porn alleviate this disruption or does it provide another restrictive form of sexual discourse, but one where men are alienated?

Empirical studies that record the frequency of particular acts in pornographic material and the frequency of these acts practised among consumers could reveal if there exists any direct relationship. While people's opinions about pornography are valuable, researchers need to be aware of the social construction of people's attitudes and behaviours within a specific period and place in history, and how this relates to current practices. While I agree with some anti-censorship feminists who argue that women should interpret and redefine sexuality according to their own unique needs and desires, this should be mediated with a larger social collectiveness and awareness. Individualism is not the answer to the repressive nature of heteronormative pornography, but, rather, is a collective agreement to be critical of the information presented since society is not yet freed of patriarchal norms and standards. An effective feminist response to pornography would be to advocate men and women become educated consumers who will challenge those representations that are misogynist towards women. It is not reprehensible to engage with pornographic material; however, it is problematic to do so without critical thought and awareness of how these images influence one's personal sexual experiences and the larger social consciousness. It is essential that choice is always available and those who choose not to participate in pornographic values should not be discriminated against by either their partners or society in general.



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## ILLUSTRATIONS

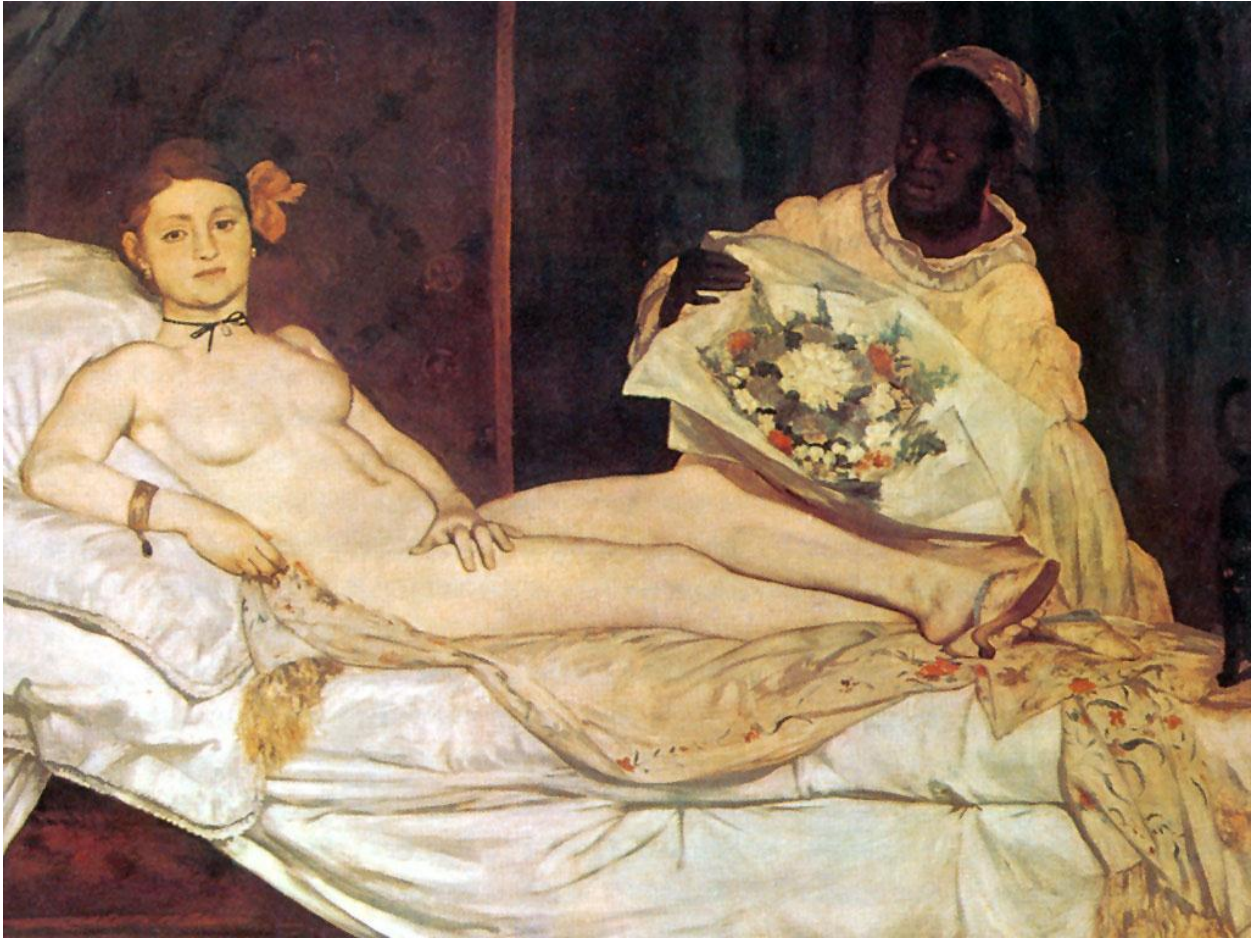


Figure 1. Édouard Manet, *Olympia* (1863).



Figure 2. Lydia Thompson



Figure 3. Indian and Oriental Belly Dancers.





Figure 4. *V is for Victory*, published in *Esquire*, April 1943.



Figure 5. *Love at Second Sight*, published in *Esquire*, October 1940



Figure 6. *Playboy*, 1953.



Figure 7. *Penthouse*



Figure 8. Hustler

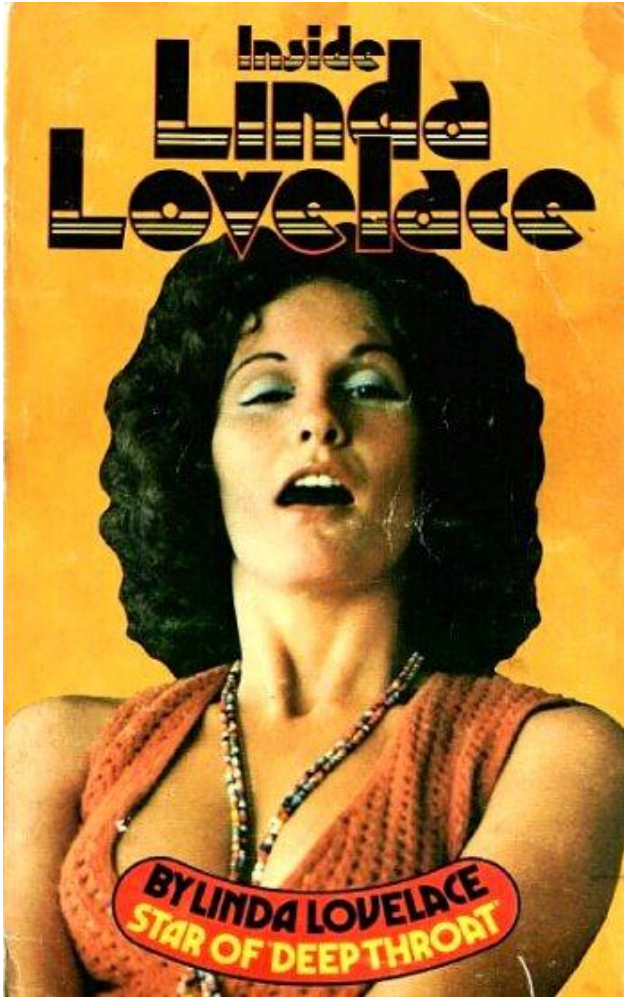


Figure 9. *Deep Throat* , 1972.



Figure 10. Jenna Jameson.