

**PROBLEMS WITH FEMINIST PRO-PORN DISCOURSE AND ITS
FANTASY ABOUT THE MALE SUBJECT OF PORNOGRAPHY**

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, one can witness an intensifying celebration of pornography in online feminist media, a strengthening popular discourse claiming that pornography can be a feminist project. Although this discourse is problematic since it seems to contradict the lived experiences of many people who are affected by pornography, it has been scarcely criticized systematically. In my thesis it is this critical analysis of pro-porn feminist arguments that I attempt to do by investigating the growing body of academic pro-porn feminist scholarship, which seems to serve as inspiration and a point of reference for feminist popular discourse that is celebratory about pornography and by doing an ethnographic research on pornography consumption to evaluate pro-porn discourse's hypotheses about this practice, which hypotheses are often used to support the discourse's claims about the harmless nature of pornography. Regarding the analysis of pro-porn discourse, I argue that in order to be able to achieve its ideological goals, the discourse has developed a contradictory understanding of the speech act forces of pornographic speech. It downplays its illocutionary and perlocutionary force when arguing for its "harmlessness", yet it assigns strong perlocutionary force to it when arguing for the liberating and transgressive potential of pornographic speech. Through a critical discursive analysis of representative texts of academic pro-porn discourse, mostly papers published in *Porn Studies* and in *The Feminist Porn Book*, I demonstrate that this ambiguity around the speech act force of pornography is concealed by generating knowledge about the aspect of representation and production of pornography and by keeping the aspect of consumption – where the speech act forces of pornography most prominently figure – in the blind-spot of the discourse. Not paying critical attention to the consumption aspect of pornography led to the birth of a *fantasy* about the consumer of pornography in pro-porn discourse. This consumer is imagined to consume pornography with similar agency, consciousness and critical distance than he or she would consume any other kind of media. I challenge this fantasy through an ethnographic research carried out by interviewing nine heterosexual men, aged 18-35 about their practices of pornography consumption and masturbation. My results suggest that pro-porn discourse's fantasy about the consumer is unfounded. The respondents disregard those structures of the narration that are typically important resources of the meaning-making process in relation to fictional products and they predominantly perceive pornography as documents of non-fictional events. What is more, for my respondents the experience of watching pornography while masturbating to it seems to be closer to having sex with those women represented in the material than to consuming media texts. My findings support those anti-porn feminist claims according to which pornography plays an important role in maintaining the union of capitalism and patriarchy by providing men with micro-power in the form of endless possibilities of virtually having sex with easily and freely accessible female bodies.

Keywords: pornography, feminist porn, ethical porn, pornography consumption, sex-positive feminism, speech act theory, qualitative research, *Porn Studies*

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1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, one can witness an intensifying celebration of pornography in online feminist media, a strengthening popular discourse claiming that pornography can be a feminist project with the potential to empower women, including those who seek intimate relationships with men. Simultaneously with the establishment of a feminist consensus about the beneficiary nature of pornography to women, there have emerged different online communities the very existence of which suggests the non-viability of such a stance. These communities are populated by mostly heterosexual men who self-identify as “porn addicts” and who want to get support for giving up or decreasing their pornography consumption. Their numbers are too big to dismiss them as an extreme minority (one of the biggest community, *NoFap*¹ has 154,000 members alone). The fact that they are concerned about how their consumptions affect their attitudes towards women makes it difficult to dismiss the harm as mere speculations about the undesirable effects of pornography. Two of the most frequently mentioned harmful effects are that these men lose interest in partner sex, therefore are unable to enact sexual intimacy with their female partners, and that those who are single often try to “recover” by focusing their “sexual energies” on women, who come to be treated as instruments of the men’s well-being.

The academic feminist discourse that is supportive towards pornography figures within the wider debate about the “sexualisation of culture”, i.e. the perception that representations and discourses of sexuality have proliferated in Western societies (Gill 2012a). While the participants in the debate agree that this “sexualisation” is a substantial development, its significance and evaluation is strongly contested. Some scholars – e.g. Brian McNair (2002), Feona Attwood (2009), Kath Albury (McKee, Albury, and Lumby 2008) – argue that what we witness is a democratisation of sexuality and an emergence of a “more pluralistic sexual culture” (McNair 2002: 11) that is liberating for women, while others – e.g. Angela McRobbie (2008), Gill or Sheila Jeffreys (2008) – claim that “sexualisation of culture” is a postfeminist and neoliberal rebranding of patriarchal interests.

Those who celebrate the “sexualisation of culture” claim that pornography can be a vehicle of emancipation for women, while the critical camp argues that pornography reinforces the gender status quo. What is alarming about this debate in the light of the concerns presented by the members of the various porn-addict online communities is that the celebratory camp – whom I will refer to as “pro-porn feminists” – seem to have achieved near hegemony regarding the issue of pornography within the wider topic of “sexualisation of culture”. They have

¹ <http://www.reddit.com/r/nofap>

published several anthologies, a few monographs and a journal dedicated exclusively to pornography (for a list of these publications see Williams 2014, 32) in the last decade or so, while those who are, crudely speaking, against pornography – I will call them “anti-porn feminists” – have produced a much smaller body of academic texts (Cornell 2000; Boyle 2010; Langton 2009a). There is also a thematic difference between the two discourses that might further contribute to the success of the pro-porn camp: while pro-porn feminists invest substantially in criticizing anti-porn scholarship regarding their methodology, underlying ideology and the logic of argumentation (see Smith and Attwood 2013; McNair 2014; Weitzer 2011; Williams 2014), representatives of the anti-porn discourse seem to be preoccupied with pornography itself and does not provide a systematic critical analysis of the pro-porn discourse. Making up for the lack of this critical approach by the anti-porn position I am going to take issue with the central argument of the pro-porn discourse about the liberating effects of pornography on the consumer. I will show that lacking any empirical backings, this idea is just as unfounded as the conviction that pornography is “empowering” for women and therefore qualifies more like a *fantasy*. As much of pro-porn discourse’s claims practically rely on this fantasy of the empowered consumer, the empirical part of my thesis will be a qualitative discourse analysis of the lived experiences of male consumers to expose the unfoundedness of the celebratory ideas about porn-consumption.

In the first part of my thesis I will explore the discursive strategies of argumentation of the pro-porn discourse employed to posit pornography as liberating and transgressive for women. I will do my analysis within the framework of the Foucauldian (1972) approach to discourse using speech act as the main category of analysis. In order to establish the meaning making processes I will make use of Josette Féral’s (2002) theory on theatricality. I shall identify the major points of contradiction that will be then substantiated by the analysis of the empirical data in the second part of the thesis. I will show that pro-porn discourse imagines the consumers to watch pornography in a way similar to the practices of watching non-pornographic texts. They are imagined to critically distance themselves from the text. Drawing on the critical discourse analysis of the interview data I gathered from male consumers of pornography I will show that the lived experiences of those viewers do not support pro-porn discourse’s fantasy about this allegedly favourable experience.

The data for my analysis of the academic pro-porn discourse consists of all the five issues of the pro-porn journal *Porn Studies* and *The Feminist Porn Book* anthology for establishing the debates and approaches and some academic articles published elsewhere by pro-porn scholars. As for the empirical part of the data, it includes nine semi-structured interviews with regular

consumers of porn aged between 18 and 35, all heterosexual males. The details about the selection process and the methods used will be discussed in Section 3.2.

2. CHALLENGING THE LOGIC OF FEMINIST PRO-PORN DISCOURSE

The different positions in the current debate on pornography seem to be more complex than they were in the “porn debate” in the 1970s and 1980s (Attwood 2002, 92) when there were basically two sides: the “anti-porn” feminists who called for legal regulation of pornography on the basis that they considered it as a form of *discrimination and violence* against women (MacKinnon 2000; Dworkin 1981) and the “pro-porn” feminists who treated pornographic materials as sexually explicit *representations*, the legal regulation of which therefore would count as censorship. Furthermore, according to the latter position, pornography was imagined to possess some liberating potential in that pornography could validate non-normative (gay, lesbian) sexualities and expand “the realm of knowable sexual expression” (L. Ross 2000, 300), while others argued that pornography is beneficial to heterosexual women, too, as it “enhances women’s ability to attain sexual pleasure on their own, as well as with men” (Strossen 1995, 166) hence its regulation would be “an attack on women’s sexual autonomy and on women’s rights in general” (15).

Regarding the current debate, Laura Harvey and Rosalind Gill treats it as part of a more general debate on the “sexualisation of culture”, which phrase is commonly used to “capture the growing sense of western societies as saturated by sexual representations and discourses, and in which pornography has become increasingly influential and porous, transforming contemporary culture”. They compare the current debate with the old one and call their opponents the “radical” feminist position that they see similar to the anti-porn feminist positions of the 1980s, and self-identity as “third wave” position that they consider as the successors of the “pro sex” feminists of the “sex wars” (Harvey and Gill 2011, 52).

Those who are critical of post-feminist positions in the sexualisation of culture debate, like Rosaline Gill, Angela McRobbie or Rebecca Coleman, see post-feminism as a set of practices that aim to secure gender relations, “paradoxically, through the wide dissemination of discourses of female freedom” (McRobbie 2008, 55). They doubt that the pop cultural representations of sexually active, agentive and desirable females proliferating in the last few decades mean a positive change and argue that the image of the new woman for whom “sex is stylish, a source of psychical pleasure, a means of creating identity, a form of body work, self-expression, a quest for individual fulfilment” (Attwood, quoted in (Harvey and Gill 2011, 53) is actually the old, sexist, objectifying male fantasy rebranded as empowering subjectivity. Their opponents are celebratory of “sexualisation of culture”, seeing it as the result of old-age feminist aspirations for sexual

autonomy and self-determination. They are having a strong pro-porn stance and cannot be neatly separated from the “third wave” pro-porn position, however, there seems to be a difference: while the “third wave” discourse emphasizes the liberating potential of pornography in the context of non-normative sexualities, those who see female empowerment in the “sexualisation of culture” are mainly talking about empowerment in the relation of heterosexual women, about the benefits they assume heterosexual women can gain from the popularization and wide acceptance of “pornography, burlesque or... pole dancing as a recreational activity” (Gill 2012b, 736) It is this latter stance that I am taking issue with in this thesis.

2.1 Pornography as speech act

The more than three decade long feminist debate on pornography I have referred to can be seen as debate about the speech act status of pornographic texts. Feminist philosopher Rae Langton and Judith Butler have discussed the issue in great details and in dispute with each other (Langton 2009b; Butler 1997), but here I will only shortly present the debate because for the aims of the theses it is not relevant who is right regarding the illocutionary force of pornography: what is important is to see that there is much at stake in this philosophical and practical dilemma, a dilemma that pro-porn discourse glosses over.

Speech act theory originates in a series of lectures by J. L. Austin (1975), where Austin argues that linguistic utterances have not only “content” – which describes truly or falsely some aspects of reality – but also constitute some action. In other words, Austen pointed out that saying something is also doing something. There are basically three different kinds of things that utterances do and he names them *locutionary acts*, *perlocutionary acts* and *illocutionary acts*. To demonstrate the difference between the three, he uses a theoretical situation in which a man says “Shoot her!” to somebody, who obeys and shoots the woman (101). The *locutionary* force in this utterance can be captured by relating the story to somebody, by repeating the content of what was said. Locution is therefore the *meaning* of the utterance, the entirety of the references (the act of shooting, the woman). But since the utterance led to a change in the world, there are other acts involved, too. For Austin, the *perlocutionary* act done by uttering the sentence is that the speaker *persuaded* the killer to shoot the woman. Perlocution is therefore the effect of an utterance. There is also a third act executed by saying the order and this is the *illocutionary act*, which is the *urging* of the second man to kill the woman (102). This belongs to the same category of actions as marrying somebody, naming a ship or promising something to somebody. In all these cases – and this is what is distinctive about the *illocutionary* speech act force – the action is “performed simply

in saying something”, while when it is *perlocutionary* force that dominates the action is “performed *by* saying something” (Langton 2009b, 32).

2.1.1 Pornography’s speech act status in feminist anti-porn discourse

Langton argues that *illocutionary* speech act force can subordinate certain groups of people. Her example is the utterance “Blacks are not permitted to vote” (34) uttered by a legislator during the apartheid. It has locutionary force (it refers to something, i.e. to black people), perlocutionary force (it has an effect, i.e. black people will not go to vote) and most importantly strong illocutionary force: “it makes the case that blacks are not permitted to vote” (35), therefore it subordinates black people. For Langton, subordination is made possible by three aspects of the illocutionary force of this utterance: it *rankes* black as inferiors, it *legitimizes* discriminatory behaviour against them and it *deprives* them of power. Similarly to this racist speech, Langton claims, pornography has the illocutionary force to subordinate a group of people, in its case women. She uphold this claim even if she admits that pornographic speech “falls short of the illocutionary paradigm” (46), that is, differs from the unambiguous situation of saying “I do” at a wedding where *every* felicity condition is met. She claims that what matters is that *some* important felicity conditions are met, most prominently that pornographic speech has authority in patriarchal societies – enough authority to not only *hurt* women, which is one of its possible *perlocutionary* effects but to *subordinate* them.

Most anti-porn feminists emphasize the illocutionary force of pornographic speech, either by explicitly claiming that it *does* things (“[pornography] sexualizes inequality and in doing so creates discrimination as a sex-based practice” (Dworkin 2000, 26)) or implicitly, by accepting the evidence that shows that pornography has certain effects on its users (Russell 1988). These scholars are usually in favour of some legal regulation and argue that restricting the production and distribution of pornographic material would not count as censorship because pornography is not protected speech but a form of discrimination.

2.1.2 The Butlerian approach to pornography’s speech act status

A second position in the pornography-speech act matrix is occupied by Judith Butler (1997), who considers pornography a kind of hurtful hate-speech against women but argues that it lacks particular illocutionary force. As opposed to Langton, who takes the current gender regime as a warrantor for the authority that lends pornography extraordinary illocutionary force, Butler claims that the authority of a “divine voice” should be needed so that pornography may “realize

what it dictates” (65), which it does not have. For Butler, pornography has mainly locutionary (“representational”) and perlocutionary (“affective”) force, both of which can be refigured by those women whom it aimed to hurt. In Butler’s account, this refiguration would take the form of feminists reading pornography against itself by exposing the impossible norms it presents. Pornography, in Butler’s view, “repeatedly and anxiously rehearses its own unrealizability” (69), which leaves a gap for defusing it.

2.1.3 Pornography’s speech act status in feminist pro-porn discourse

Moving on to pro-porn discourse, what is most striking is the lack of theorizing on the speech act status of pornography and the resultant obscurity and contradictions regarding the relation of pornographic texts and its audience. This obscurity is a deeply ideological construction: thanks to it, pro-porn discourse can switch inconspicuously between claiming that pornography is mainly “representation” (having primarily locutionary force), something that its viewer can interpret as he or she wishes (it is of “polysemic nature”, with a “potential fluidity of readings” (Attwood 2002, 93)), and claiming that pornography has the potential for inciting pleasure in their viewers and informing their “construction of sexual identity” (Attwood 2002, 103) and even their behaviour (having strong perlocutionary force). The oscillation between these two ways of implicit classification of pornographic speech is governed by the overall interests of the discourse: when the aim is to refute anti-porn concerns regarding the harmful “effects” of pornography (or their “sex panic”, as Clarissa Smith mockingly frames it (Smith and Attwood 2013, 55)), pornography is conceived as having mainly locutionary force. When, however, pro-porn authors argue for the transgressive or subversive potential in pornography – for instance, when Laura Kipnis celebrates *Hustler* magazine’s “ranting against all forms of power” (quoted in Attwood 2002, 97) – it is immediately imagined to have some perlocutionary force. As they deny that pornography would subordinate women, the possibility that it has illocutionary force never occurs.

To make its take on the speech act nature of pornography even more obscure, pro-porn discourse sometimes treats pornography as not even speech act but as if it were some documentation of people having sex that they would have anyway, i.e. as if the consumer of pornography were simply peeping into spaces where other people have sex. I do not have the space to analyse this type of accounts here, but one can find an example for this conflating pornography with the sexual activity it represents in Attwood’s (2011) analysis of webcam-pornography and “alternative porn sites”.

2.2 Strategies to keep the speech act status of pornography in the blind-spot of the discourse

So far, I have argued that contrary to anti-porn feminists and Judith Butler, who claim respectively that pornography is most prominently illocutionary/perlocutionary speech, pro-porn feminists evade the explicit theorization of the question and tend to oscillate between two positions: a locutionary understanding of speech (i.e. pornographic texts are statements about the world that the viewer can accept if he or she finds them true or reject if they seem to be false), and a perlocutionary understanding (i.e. pornographic texts can have perlocutionary effects in viewers, which contribute to some transgression of sexual/gender-regimes). I also argued that the illocutionary aspect is disregarded, which makes it possible for pro-porn discourse to dismiss the possibility that pornography can work as conduct. This lack of a consistent approach to the speech act force of pornography is very much ideological, making it possible to dismiss anti-porn feminist claims about the potential dangers of pornography while allowing for celebrating pornography for its transgressive potential.

Its self-contradictory take on the speech act nature of pornography, however, makes pro-porn position quite vulnerable to deconstruction. In this chapter, I will try to expose those discursive strategies that the discourse employs to distract attention from this self-contradictory account of the speech act status of pornography and keep it in the blind-spot of the discourse.

As the various forces of a speech act (locutionary, perlocutionary and illocutionary) figure most prominently from the perspective of the listener², one would expect that the logic of pro-porn discourse diverts attention from the consumer of pornography and tries to keep other aspects of the issue in focus. I will try to show that pro-porn discourse does this by focusing on the aspect of *representation* of the pornographic text and on the aspect of *production* of this text, while theoretical and empirical investigations of the *consumption* aspect are constantly projected into the future as an important project (Barker 2014; Attwood 2002) but, as I will point it out later, not much is done in the field.

² i.e. Does she accept that the ship that has been named Elisabeth is called Elisabeth and not something else? (illocutionary force); Is he shocked by the other person's order that he should shoot that woman? (perlocutionary force); Did the concept of the "sun" occur in his mind when heard his friend saying "It's a sunny day"? (locutionary force)

2.2.1 Focusing on the aspect of representation of the pornographic text

In the paper in which she outlines the new direction of pornography theory and research, Attwood (2002) argues in favour of a

detailed textual and generic analysis', which would open up 'the analysis of sexual representation through an examination of style, narrative, iconography address of a range of texts and enables a comparison of the ways in which bodies, sex, pleasures and relationships are presented in anything from an erotic novel, a medical textbook, a women's magazine, to a hardcore film. (102)

Taken together with her argument concerning the importance of "cultural categorization and social regulation" for the "meaning of pornography" (97), Atwood's agenda in favour of a product analysis promises a contextually situated critical analysis of representations. At other places, she even promises a Foucauldian analysis of pornography as sexual confession (100) or as discourse whereby women practice "technologies of the self." (Attwood 2011, 210) One would assume that these references to Foucault lead to analyses about what "subjects" are produced by pornographic discourse³ and what power relations are reinforced or challenged; all in line with a situated conceptualization of pornography as the Foucauldian concept of discourse as a text/context nexus would have it. This would necessarily entail the possibility that by creating certain subjects and circulating certain kinds of knowledge some pornographic texts do reinforce existing power relations, therefore they are problematic.

Having looked at all the five issues of *Porn Studies* and *The Feminist Porn Book*, however, this body of research seems missing. What there is, instead, are some statements that indirectly argue for the theoretical impossibility of the existence of sexist or racist pornography. Smith and Attwood, for instance, argue that defending pornography as a form of free speech is a problematic road to take because "in making arguments for free speech, [pro-porn feminists] often cede the ground that some forms of pornography are indeed awful, damaging, and to be abhorred" (Smith and Attwood 2013, 62). Although only indirectly, but the authors here imply that a speech act approach is counter-effective as that would allow for such thing as "bad"

³ In the Foucauldian account of discourse, discourse produces "subject" in "two different senses or places. First, the discourse itself produces 'subjects' – figures who personify the particular forms of knowledge which the discourse produces" (Hall 1997, 56). Such figures are the madman, the homosexual, the hysterical woman etc. It is logical to assume that pornographic discourse also produces similar figures, for example, the "women who finds pleasure in every act in which she participates" or the "woman with constant consent". If we accept that the figures of the madman or the homosexual have had some impact on how we can make sense of mental illnesses and sexuality, we have reason to suspect that the subjects produced by pornographic discourse also have some impact of how we make sense of the world.

pornography. But if this is the case, why do they urge elsewhere for a contextually situated Foucauldian criticism of these texts that implicates the relevance of such value judgements?

The example of implicit rejection of the legitimacy of analysis of power in pornographic representation can be found in Linda Williams's recent paper (2014), which gives an evaluation of porn studies' accomplishment in the last two decades and is setting out new directions. In the section in question, Williams discusses the complaints of film scholar Daniel Bernardi about pornography scholars' alleged acceptance of racism in pornography. In Williams's account, Bernardi's problem is that pro-porn scholars usually do not declare that a pornographic text that arguably perpetuates racism is racist but are discussing instead its "further cultural and social interests" (27). Bernardi's demand for a more accounted criticism of race issues in pornography, in Williams's view, "brings us back to the same kind of false dichotomy between 'anti' or 'pro' pornography with which feminists debates of the 1980s and 1990s were so entangled" (28). Williams warns against "superficial judgments" (17) concerning a pornographic text's sexism or racism, which in this context relies on the value assumption that scholars of pornography should not declare certain texts sexist or racist. This, however, undermines the alleged objectives of critical analysis of power relations in pornography.

In sum, pro-porn discourse sets as one of its goals the "analysis of sexual representation" (Attwood 2002, 102) with an eye on the figuration of social regulation but at the same time its prominent scholars question the possibility of critically analysing *particular* pornographic texts (that is, not the genre as such). However, that would require a situated reading to the effect that the text in question is racist or sexist, in other words, perpetuates gender or racial hierarchies.

What aspects of pornographic texts are then examined in pro-porn scholarship if not the subjects that are constructed in/by them and the power relations those subject positions entail reinforcing or challenging the status quo? Despite the fact that the authors self-identify as feminists, the essays in *Porn Studies* are strikingly lacking the awareness of the existence of sexism and patriarchy. Even the few that are political – such as "The erotic anatomies of Charles Estienne and Annie Sprinkle" by Meghan Chandler, that discusses how pornography can "function as a type of visual strategy and provide new ways to visually experience and come to terms with medicalized human bodies" (Chandler 2014, 401) or "Zombie porn: necropolitics, sex, and queer socialities" by Shaka McGlotten, that aims to show how zombie porn films "seem to offer a... response to the political dilemmas posed by homonormativity and homonationalism" (McGlotten 2014, 373) – are not interested in investigating the status quo between men and women.

Among the miscellaneous writings on pornographic texts/representations that are either non-political in general or just disinterested in the power hierarchy between men and women, emerges the category of “feminist porn”. The proliferation of talk about “feminist porn”, I would argue, does not merely distract attention from the question of the speech act status of pornography but works to make the very issue of speech act irrelevant to discuss in the first place. If there is pornography made by women, made for women, and arguably enjoyed by women, this kind of pornography can be taken for granted not to have any harmful perlocutionary or illocutionary consequences: i.e. it does not perpetuate women’s subordination (illocutionary force) and does not foster sexist attitudes (perlocutionary force). My objective here, however, is not to contribute to the debate whether circulating sexually explicit representations of women can be empowering for women (McNair 2002; Taormino et al. 2013) or not, if this sexual visibility should be a new means of normative control over women (Gill 2012b) or a result of the Symbolic’s delegation of duties to the pornographic industry intensifying “prescribed heterosexually-directed pleasures and enjoyment” (McRobbie 2008, 61). Instead, I focus on the logic of argumentation of the feminist pro-porn discourse and point out that, on the one hand “feminists pornography” is an elusive, excessively inclusive concept where basically everything can be labelled as “feminist porn” and, on the other, that even if certain samples of “feminist porn” seem to be significantly different from mainstream pornography, they are theoretically unfit for accomplishing one of their (usually quietly pronounced) mission, which is counterbalancing “sexist, mainstream” pornography. That the concept is elusive is connected to vagueness of this mission: if “feminist porn” were a well-defined and appropriately identifiable concept then the mission of tackling sexism in mainstream pornography should be more pronounced. The visibility of this mission, however, would expose a contradiction within pro-porn discourse: why is there a need for “feminist porn” if pornography as such is claimed to not perpetuate gender regimes?

Chanelle Gallant, founder of The Feminist Porn Awards, which is said to have great significance in the “feminist porn” movement defines feminist porn as follows:

- (1) A woman had a hand in the production, writing, direction, etc. of the work; (2) It depicts genuine female pleasure; and/or (3) It expands the boundaries of sexual representation on film and challenges stereotypes that are often found in mainstream porn. (quoted in Penley 2013, 16)

Below I will focus on Points (2) and (3), as Point (1) will be discussed in the next chapter that deals with discourse on the production of pornography.

Point (2) on “genuine” female pleasure is often paraphrased as “authenticity” in pro-porn discourse (Penley 2013; Miller-Young 2013; Ryan 2013 etc.), and has become a “mantra” when “feminist” pornography is distinguished from the “mainstream” one. Authenticity is, however, a very problematic term. First, because it assumes a reflective approach to representation, where “language functions like a mirror, to *reflect* the *true* meanings as it already exists in the world” (Hall 1997, 24, italics added). It is surprising, to say the least, that media scholars ignore the workings of the endless mediating factors (point of view, lighting, editing, music) that shape the construction of a (pornographic) representation. Second, “authenticity” is problematic when it is used as a qualifier of the actual sex acts that are “documented” in pornography, too. Talking about “authentic” female sexuality postulates an essentialist view on sexuality. Yet, it is difficult to see how this essentialism could be reconciled with the constructivist approach applied by the same pro-porn feminist scholars when they point out the multiplicity of sexuality and refer to “genderqueerness, transfemininity, feminized masculinity, transgressive racial performance, and disability” (Penley et al. 2013, 25).

The contradiction between the desire to pinpoint “authentic” forms of sexuality and the acknowledgement that sexuality and gender are “fluid” (Ryan 2013, 175) gives rise to the third problem with “authenticity” in “feminist porn”, which is the ideological expansion of the category. In other words, almost anything can be labelled – and *is* labelled – to be the expression of “authentic” female sexuality and pleasure in pornography, which eventually makes “feminist porn” indistinguishable from “mainstream” and, by implication, non-feminist pornography.

This unboundedness is perhaps the most problematic when it includes representations of “authentic” sexual acts in which women are evidently overpowered, submissive, in distress or in pain. Penley et al. account for the existence of such representations in “feminist porn” as follows:

Feminist porn explores sexual ideas and acts that may be fraught, confounding, and deeply disturbing to some, and liberating and empowering to others. What we see at work here are competing definitions of sexuality that expose the power of sexuality in all of its unruliness. Because feminist porn acknowledges that identities are socially situated and that sexuality has the power to discipline, punish, and subjugate, that unruliness may involve producing images that seem oppressive, degrading, or violent. Feminist porn does not shy away from the darker shades of women’s fantasies. It creates a space for realizing the contradictory ways in which our fantasies do not always line up with our politics or ideas of who we think we are. (20)

My concern here in the first place is not to deny that there are women who have rape-fantasies or gain pleasure from being dominated and as a man maybe I am not even in the position of problematizing these desires. Yet, if it is only the “feminist” label that distinguishes images of

women humiliated “for their own pleasure” in “feminist porn” and images of women humiliated for male pleasure in non-feminist “mainstream porn” then a surface homonymy comes into existence which makes the whole concept of “feminist porn” meaningless on the level of representation.

The homonymy between “feminist” and “mainstream” pornography can be demonstrated, for instance, when one visits the “Feminist Porn Award Winners” section of the goodforher.com site⁴ and watches the sixth scene of *Tristan Taormino's Rough Sex #2*⁵ then goes on to a non-feminist free porn streaming site, search for “rough gangbang” and watches a random scene. The “feminist porn” scene may easily pass as “mainstream porn” and can be used the same way by male viewers, as it is argued by a review of the award winning piece:

This time, there was a larger cast and wider array of sexual acts covered [compared to *Rough Sex #1*], from food fetish to ponygirl, to toys, to gangbangs; amounting to almost something for every taste in the book. *Even as a stroke flick, once the introductions were over for each scene, they played out like porn people can appreciate that don't want a "message"*, making it what some might call the best of both worlds. (Houston, online, emphasis added)

It would be less problematic if only women watched “feminist porn” and witnessed the visual representation of the alleged “darker shades of [their] fantasies” (Penley et al. 2013, 20), but as the review quoted above shows, this is clearly not the case. Logically enough, those “feminist porns” that are found pleasurable by men are consumed by men, too. A more convincing evidence for this is the presence of male guests on the online forums of the BDSM pornography company *Kink.com*, considered a role-model in creating “feminist” porn (Zeischegg 2013). Discussion on these forums shows how the “feminist” vocabulary regarding pornography makes defensible even the crudest cases of violence against women in pornography. The case of “brutaldick95”, a new user on the forum belonging to one of Kink.com’s sub-sites, *Bound Gangbangs*⁶, can exemplify this phenomenon. “brutaldick95” came to the site because “pornhub just wasn’t hard core enough to satisfy [his] cravings any longer” and is “really into creampie gangbangs and the women being overpowered by the crowd of men”. He is happy that he has found the site because he “just wanna see chick’s get brutalized”⁷. At this point, he is informed

⁴ <http://vod.goodforher.com/content.jhtml?id=feminist-porn-awards&src=gla4185>

⁵ It can be watched for free at: http://www.xvideos.com/video6539217/black_sub_dominated_by_two_guys

⁶ It “features submissive women living out their wildest gangbang sex and bondage fantasies. Whether they are sexy amateur babes overwhelmed and outnumbered or gorgeous bit-titted milfs who need to learn a lesson by multiple men, BoundGangbangs delivers the most extreme penetration and humiliation online.”

<http://www.boundgangbangs.com/site/?c=1>

⁷ http://forum.kink.com/index.php?p=/discussion/comment/25178/#Comment_25178

by an admin, “kimberly556” that “It’s called ‘rough sex’ here”⁸. “dommealex” is also quick to assure everybody that “rough sex” is “better way to say it”⁹, and “brutaldick95” promises that “[he]’ll make sure to call it ‘rough sex’”¹⁰.

What happens here is that so-called “feminist” terms are simply adopted by men who seek out representations of “humiliated” women and end up watching “feminist porn”. I argue that this proves that the concept of “feminist porn” as pornographic text that should be different in that it challenges sexism and misogyny in “mainstream” pornography becomes meaningless. It seems that the same “feminist” material can have very different uptake depending on the consumer’s social embeddedness: for men who have interests in maintaining patriarchy “feminist porn” registers as pleasurable material depicting powerless women. The fact that for women it can register as something completely different shows the crucial importance of reflecting on the consuming aspect of pornography, which is the very aspect that pro-porn discourse tries to keep in its blind-spot by concentrating on the representational and production related aspect of pornography.

Returning to Gallant’s definition of “feminist porn”, in Point (3) she argues that “feminist porn” “expands the boundaries of sexual representation on film and challenges stereotypes that are often found in mainstream porn.” (Penley et al. 2013, 16) This is a very vague definition, but it is usually understood as an imperative “to portray women with real bodies, of all ages and types” (Royalle 2013, 87). I argue that this criterion is also meaningless, partly because it does not free “feminist porn” from its surface homonymy with “mainstream porn”, and partly because offering models of diverse bodies for as wide a range of women as possible is not necessarily a feminist move. What is more, “diversity”, once decontextualized, comes to be void of any particular meaning and “difference” comes to be universalized, just like Haraway’s (1988) relativist gaze, which claims to “be everywhere equally” but in fact is nowhere specific (584).

As for the politics of homonymy, “mainstream” pornography has just as varied bodies to offer to the viewer as “feminist porn”. Browsing through the categories of the popular free streaming site xhamster.com, one can find videos with BBW (“Big Beautiful Women”) or skinny women, small breasted and big breasted women, silicon implanted or “all natural” women, with woman having shaved or hairy pubic areas, with “teens” or MILF (“Mom I’d Like to Fuck”), with “muscular women”, and with women belonging to different ethnic groups. Attwood’s emblematic representatives of “alternative” and “agentive” female sexualities, the tattooed, the

⁸ http://forum.kink.com/index.php?p=/discussion/comment/25217/#Comment_25217

⁹ http://forum.kink.com/index.php?p=/discussion/comment/25219/#Comment_25219

¹⁰ http://forum.kink.com/index.php?p=/discussion/comment/25232/#Comment_25232

pierced and the gothic women are just further categories in these mainstream porn-streaming sites. This means that there is nothing new or special in “feminist porn” when it embraces bodies that are not young, slim, full breasted and white. If we adapt Celia Lury’s (2011) criticism of the “Real Beauty” campaign of Dove, we can even argue that there is nothing feminist in claiming that all kinds of bodies are “beautiful” as this is simply the encouraging of individual differences within the logic of commodification without challenging the idea that “beauty is an essential part of women’s identity, personhood and social success” and without emphasizing “structural hierarchies or collective strategies for change” (131).

Regarding the question whether there is any feminist potential in offering identification models for as many heterosexual women as possible in pornographic movies, I would argue for the applicability of McRobbie’s (2008) idea of the phallic girl. According to McRobbie, the Symbolic reacted to the threat posed by feminism and queer theory by “pre-emptively endowing young women with the capacity to become phallus-bearers as a kind of licenced mimicry of their male counterparts.” As part of this mimicry, they are invited to internalise a definition of sex as “light-hearted pleasure, recreational activity, hedonism, sport, reward and status” (85). The problem here, on the one hand, is that the possibility to present masculine behaviour without punishment gives the false impression of gender equality and more to the point, these women are encouraged to perform masculinity without giving up femininity that should guarantee their desirability to men.

In other words, since watching pornography and identifying with its diversely embodied, sexually adventurous characters is possible for heterosexual women thanks to “some prior feminist demands in relation to the right or entitlement to sexual pleasure” (85), inciting them to do it gives the impression that women have achieved sexual freedom and that sexual freedom – ironically including “feminist porn” itself – equals “gender equality”, hence, by the implied force of this logic, there is no need for feminism. As for the relation to men, because the phallic girl is always heterosexual, setting her figure into the luminosity of pornographic light works to reinforce the heterosexual matrix instead of criticising masculine hegemony, which has been always the agenda of feminism. In short, the allegedly feminist motive of presenting diverse bodies in pornographic movies can be exposed to be not feminist at all, but “women centred” only.

To sum up my critique of the knowledge produced by the pro-porn discourse on the *representations* in pornography, I have argued that despite its promise to investigate the “cultural and social context” of these representations – which should entail an analysis of gender hierarchies – I have found an abundance of depoliticised essays and explicit admonitions of those

authors who dared to argue that a particular texts can be racist or sexist. I have also argued that the qualifier “feminist” in relation to porn is meaningless; partly because of the surface homonymy between “feminist” and “mainstream” pornography and partly because it is debatable if offering sexually pleasurable material for women is a legitimate feminist agenda. My main claim, however, was that all this preoccupation with the textual analysis of pornography serves the ideological agenda of diverting attention from the consuming aspect of pornography, that is, of keeping the question of the speech act status of pornography in the blind-spot of the discourse. The corollary of this work of argumentation is inciting interest in the *production* aspect of pornography – instead of its actual consumption, which I will discuss in the next chapter.

2.2.2 Focusing on the production aspect of the pornographic text

Pro-porn discourse has a problematic position when it comes to the critical analysis of the production of pornography: it has close ties with the pornographic industry both on an ideological level and on the level of personal interests. Even Linda Williams (2014) finds this closeness problematic when discussing the motives of pro-porn academics for opting for the word “porn”:

Inherent to my own terminological shift, from “pornography” to “porno” to “porn”, is the act of placing oneself “on the side of” an industry whose main purpose is to make money by enacting sexual fantasies... I believe there is a risk in aligning our own work of scholarship too closely with the work of the pornography industry – even when what that industry produces seems more diverse, transgressive, or experimental than the usual fare. (43)

Williams is talking about the bias towards the “non-mainstream” or “non-feminist” actors of the industry (a problematic distinction itself, I will argue), however, it seems that interpenetrations are deeper and some important representatives of both the academic and the non-academic camps of the “feminist porn” movement are personally associated with the biggest companies of the pornographic industry. Tristan Taormino, for example, who is the editor of *The Feminist Porn Book* and a self-identified feminist pornographic director has worked for Evil Angel¹¹, a company which dominates the US market (Slade 1997) and which distributes material which seems clearly non-feminist¹². She also has a regular column in the pornographic magazine *Taboo*, which is

¹¹ http://www.adultdvdmarketplace.com/dvd_view_29882.html

¹² Evil Angel’s owner, John Stagliano describes his products as follows: “I was the first to shoot Rocco. Together we evolved towards rougher stuff. He started to spit on girls. A strong male-dominant thing, with women being pushed to their limit. It looks like violence but it’s not. I mean, pleasure and pain are the same thing, right?” (quoted in Jensen 2007, 135)

published by Hustler. In an interview for *Porn Studies*, she admits that not only her, but other “feminist” pornographers are in close relation with the “mainstream” industry (Voss 2014).

With these interests in the background, it is no wonder that when analysing the production aspect of pornography, pro-porn discourse only provides some indirect criticism of the pornographic industry, which usually takes the form of praising the “feminist” film producers for being more ethical than “mainstream” ones. Smith and Attwood (2014) themselves acknowledge that in critical porn studies there are some areas where “remarkably little work” has been done, and that “in particular... the industry has received little detailed attention”. The criticism provided by the other camp, by “critics of pornography” – according to whom industry practices exploit actors and actresses, deteriorate their mental health, lead to physical and emotional damages and that actors and actresses often have to work under conditions “akin to those in sweatshops” – is dismissed by Smith and Atwood claiming that they are “often so general and all-compassing that they foreclose questions about the *changing* nature and conditions of the labour they seek to explore” (15, emphasis added). Smith and Attwood, therefore, claim that those who problematize the production aspect of pornography are unreliable and exaggerating problems but they claim this without quoting or even referencing to these critics, which means that they do not share their methodological reservations about the studies they criticize¹³.

Their solution to the problem is that pro-porn scholars should take the issue into their own hands and start posing critical questions about the workings of “pornography as a capitalist industry” (15). This plan, however, despite the fact that it was announced in the first issue of *Porn Studies* seems to be a plan projected still into the future. I have found only one paper in the so far altogether four issues of the journal that has anything to do with a critical analysis of such kind (Berg 2014). The author, however, only *outlines* a research that she wants to “do on wage and hour issues, worker organizing, and labour policy” (75). She identifies with those Marxist feminists who “un-exceptionalize” sex work and treat it as not more violent than the work of academics or retail workers. Though I take the side of radical feminists in this question and do not consider “sex work” work (Pateman 1988), therefore could not accept the theoretical premises of such an analysis, it is telling that even this research has remained a promise.

What *Porn Studies* has instead on the topic is a light-hearted, superficial field research conducted in an Adult Entertainment Expo that aims to “examine the wider industry context” (Comella 2014, 64), another one that explores the production of amateur straight couple

¹³ Some of their arguments suggest that their criteria for evaluating anti-porn paper’s methodology might be contingent, e.g. ‘Claims that porn workers have an incredibly short working life ignore the numerous employees who stay long term in the industry’ (ibid. 16).

pornography (Hofer 2014) and two other essays on “ethically” made “feminist” and queer pornography (Tibbals 2014; Voss 2014). In short, despite having been declared as important, pro-porn critical analysis of the pornographic industry is virtually non-existent.

It is not only Tibbals and Voss who are concerned with the question how can pornography be produced in an “ethical” way, but this is the topic that generates the most talk in connection with the production aspect of pornography in pro-porn discourse. In this sense, “ethical porn” is a similar buzzword to “feminist porn”, and the two concepts are also related in a sense that “feminist porn” is always imagined to be produced “ethically”. In Chapter 2.2.1 I pointed out that “feminist porn” is a problematic concept, now I intend to do the same with “ethical porn” and show that it is also a meaningless construction, which can be used to silence anti-porn concerns (i.e. “What can be harmful and wrong about something that is produced ethically?”)

To begin with, the very existence of the concept seems to have the potential to destabilize pro-porn discourse’s image of the pornographic industry as an ordinary branch of the entertainment or film industry, as there is no other genre of cultural products which has an “ethical” version. Music industry, for instance, often makes huge profit out of the artists’ work and often interferes in artistic issues, yet there is no such thing as “ethical” rock. This in itself indicates that there is something special about pornography industry. In order to evade acknowledging this “exceptionality” of pornographic industry and to conceal the contradiction between defending the industry in general and stressing the importance “ethical” pornography, pro-porn discourse locates the problems of the industry not on the level of the system but on the level of individual producers and directors.¹⁴

The definition of “ethical” production is almost as vague as that of “feminist porn”. “Ethical” production consists of a “fair and ethical process, safe working conditions, collaboration with performers” (Ryan 2013, 174). Taormino (2013) describes her own “ethical” employment practices as such:

performers set their own pay rates and know up front what I am hiring them to do; there is absolute, explicit consent and no coercion of any kind. They choose their sexual partners for the scene. There is mutual respect between performers and production crew. The work space is clean and safe. (349)

¹⁴ “Porn agents run the gamut from professional to unscrupulous” (Voss 2014, 203); “While there may be examples of performers who have felt some kind of pressure from a particular agent or director (the industry, like all industries, is comprised of both scrupulous and unscrupulous people), it is just as easy to count women with long porn careers who will tell you they chose to do each of their at-work performances as freely as many people choose to work in office buildings”(Lee 2013, 273).

The main problem here is that authors fetishize consent and agency by disconnecting them from the power relations in which they are expressed and practiced. Stating that “performers set their own pay rates” creates the illusion that there are no other factors present in the negotiation than the actresses’ preferences and that the negotiation process happens between equal parts. Regarding consent, it is not just Taormino who mentions it, but it is a reoccurring claim that actresses have a total control over what is happening during the shootings. In pro-porn discourse, pornography is often celebrated as a paradigmatic arena of “consent, communication, boundaries, and negotiation” (Voss 2014, 204) and pornographic actresses are presented as self-contained individuals who make decisions with some absolute agency.

There are at least two problems with this fetishization of consent and agency. First, as all fetishization, it conceals the practices that give rise to the fetishized concept or object. In other words, it makes it seemingly irrelevant that in what kind of social context women decide to work in the pornographic industry. Pro-porn discourse lacks any theory of agency, all it has to say about women’s choices to do pornography is that it denies the relevance of the earlier sexual abuse some actresses report on (e.g. Griffith et al. 2013). In contrast with those critiques of “sexualisation of culture” who come up with theories about how pornography industry constructs an illusion of agency that might incite young women to participate in the production of pornographic (e.g. Pitcher 2006), pro-porn discourse sticks to the idea of free choice and free will.

Theoretical considerations aside, talking about consent is also problematic because it ignores the reality of production of pornography, such as the pressure on the actresses to carry through the scenes. Once they gave consent to certain sex acts and the shooting has begun, their agency to snap out or renegotiate the conditions of their participation is diminished. They might have to pay severance pay for failed shooting and producers may be less willing to hire them with the reputation of “being problematic”. Pro-porn discourse forgets about these factors and portrays consent in pornography as given independently of power relations as negotiable.¹⁵

To demonstrate that pro-porn discourse’s abundant talk about consent and “ethical porn” is mainly an ideological strategy to legitimise pornography production without any empirical investigation into the actual context of pornographic performance, I briefly analyse the nature of consent in the videos available at *Hardcore Gangbang*, a site created by a “feminist”

¹⁵ Even some male consumers see the illusionary nature of consent in pornography: “Now, I know rough sex fans will cry ‘She could have stopped the scene if she wanted to’, and again you are right, she could have. But for two seconds realize you are dealing with girls who for the most part have never done a porn before and they really need the money. They think if they refuse to do something that they won’t get paid. Think about it, you get throat pumped to the point of puking for 10-15 minutes, then you refuse to eat the guy’s ass, and are sent home with no paycheck. If that is what you think will happen, then most likely you are gonna eat the guy’s ass even if you don’t want to.” (Whisnant 2010, 126)

company, underscoring explicit consent¹⁶. At this point I would also like to point out a second problem with fetishizing consent, which registers on the consumer's side: by accepting pro-porn claims about the presence of consent in "ethical" pornography, consumers can now conveniently believe that there are no sex acts too painful or humiliating for women to enjoy.

Sexually explicit scenes in *Hardcore Gangbang* are always framed with talk about consent. These videos all follow a very similar structure, always beginning with an interview with the usually 18-19 years old woman who is going to be filmed. "How are you feeling about doing your first BDSM-shoot?", asks the interviewee usually¹⁷, who is at the same time the female director of the videos, and the actresses usually reply that they are excited about what comes next, they are ready to have sex with 4-6 men, interested in BDSM, rough sex and find pleasure in pain etc. The interviewee/director repeatedly assures the women that nothing will happen that they do not want to happen and asks them if they remember the safe word, the uttering of which halts the shooting. The women always remember the safe word, so the director wishes "great fun" and the scene begins. The scenes always consist of sadistic sex acts, "rape-fantasies": the actresses are violently penetrated, spat on, ejaculated on, hit and forced to lick the anuses of the men. The practices of "double anal", "double vaginal" and "ass to mouth" are common here. After the scene ends, there is always a cut then the women are shown again sitting relaxed for a short "after-scene" interview, where they always assure the director that they enjoyed the shooting and everything was "fun".

To emphasize it again: *Hardcore Gangbang* is considered to be a "feminist" BDSM website¹⁸ and its producer, Kink.com is posited as a company where consent is of uttermost concern¹⁹. Yet, to claim that what we witness here is really practicing consent on part of these women is ignoring the obvious signs of power imbalance and the reduced agency of women. For instance, how can pro-porn feminists take seriously the consent of those 18 and 19 years Russian women who are typically featured in these "rape-fantasies" and who barely speak English and often communicate

¹⁶ "San Francisco BDSM porn company Kink.com have become known for their ethical approach to making edgy porn, giving respect to their performers and doing their best to present a positive depiction of kinky sex. The Training Of O is a story-based site centred on the training of female slaves in sexual submission. The content is relatively extreme but always consensual and safely performed" <http://www.feministpornguide.com/sites.html>

¹⁷ <http://www.kinkondemand.com/kod/shoot/24493-Naughty-Maid-18yr-old-Maid-gets-Punished-by-Boss-Rough-Sex-Gangbang.html?c=1>

¹⁸ "Among the main studios that support feminist ideas is San Francisco's *Kink.com*... *Kink's* popularity among adult film feminists is remarkable and some have filmed at the facility repeatedly" (Moreland 2015)

¹⁹ "We've created a space where someone is free to do that while still maintaining control of their agency throughout the process." http://www.vice.com/en_uk/read/inside-kinkcoms-san-francisco-porn-palace; "Kink outlines its tough ethical standards in its lists of models' rights and shooting rules, both of which are posted on the site." <http://www.sfweekly.com/2013-02-20/news/sex-workers-allege-endangerment-mistreatment-at-local-porn-company-kink/>

through a male interpreter?²⁰ Some of these women tell the director that they have never participated in BDSM before²¹, that is, they are not part of the BDSM subculture. Taking all this into consideration, it seems certain that pro-porn feminists are wrong when they assume that the boundaries of these women are respected during the filming. Compared to the majority of “feminist porn”, consent is spectacularly missing from *Hardcore Gangbangs* with its very young and unexperienced performers and its clearly painful acts, which makes the site a good illustration of the fact that there is no desire within pro-porn discourse to connect the talk about consent and “ethical porn” with the realities of the pornographic performance, therefore this talk serves mainly ideological means.

To sum it up, I claim that pro-porn feminists make two mistakes when arguing in the name of “ethical” pornography and repeating the buzzword “consent”. First, they ignore the power relations that give rise to the consent that pornographic actresses *really* give when signing a contract and they conflate the representation of consent (what we can see in the movie) with the real act (somebody actually giving consent that is potentially renegotiable). This conflation of representation and conduct is similar to the conflation of pornographic speech acts and sexual acts, as I pointed out in Section 2.1.3.

The second problem with fetishizing consent in the pro-porn discourse is concerned with the position of the consumer. Rebecca Whisnant (2010) argues that most male consumers routinely come across and take pleasure in images in which females are treated in ways that most of these consumers would “not choose for themselves nor accept for those they care about” (114). According to her, this leads to ethical dilemmas in users who are not psychopaths. These ethical dilemmas –about the pornographic material itself (the circumstances of its production, the abuse it must have inflicted on female performers) and about the user’s own sexual excitement (“How can I enjoy such material?”)– must be silenced if users want to go on with their consumption. She, like me, can identify some of these silencing strategies by analysing actual user comments in the forums of various porn sites. They commonly argue that the women in the videos who clearly seem to be in distress or pain are, for some reason, still enjoying what is happening to them. I claim that the effort the pornographic industry puts into reassuring users that these women “like doing it a lot” (125) and the effort consumers put into reassuring themselves and each other about that actually show that the argument is a vulnerable one. In

²⁰ <http://www.kinkondemand.com/kod/shoot/24502-Take-Down-Challenge-Russian-Cutie-Takes-Two-Dicks-in-her-Ass.html>
<http://www.kinkondemand.com/kod/shoot/32490-Russian-cutie-fucked-by-5-guys-double-anal.html>
<http://www.kinkondemand.com/kod/shoot/32742-Petite-Russian-Lawyer-has-her-Rough-Gangbang-Fantasy-Fulfilled.html?c=1> etc.

²¹ <http://www.kinkondemand.com/kod/shoot/24493-Naughty-Maid-18yr-old-Maid-gets-Punished-by-Boss-Rough-Sex-Gangbang.html?c=1>

other words, when consumers happen to be not aroused by disturbing images, many men feel that these images are problematic. This provides a gap in the seamless reiteration of pornography watching practices and could lead to reconsider their usage of pornography. With the arrival of pro-porn fetishizing of consent, however, this gap is closing. Why would anybody speculate about the damage some women may suffer in pornographic industry and their personal responsibility for providing demand for this damage if there are women – *feminist* women – who come forward and reassure everybody that pornography is actually the field of explicit consent and constant negotiations of boundaries?

2.2.3 The blind-spot of the pro-porn discourse: the Consumption

Having demonstrated what are those aspects of pornographic speech on which feminist pro-porn discourse generates a lot of knowledge (representation and production), I would like to move on to the aspect from where the talk about representation and production diverts attention. This is the aspect of consumption, the analysis of the uptake of the pornographic speech acts. As I have argued, pro-porn discourse is interested in diverting attention from the consumption of pornography because keeping this issue in obscurity makes it less conspicuous that their theories about the speech act force of pornographic speech are contradictory. However, pro-porn discourse cannot entirely ignore the existence of consumers, especially after psychologists having been researched the effects pornography might have on them for decades (e.g. Russell 1988; Hald and Malamuth 2015).

Pro-porn discourse employs a triple strategy to deal with the threat effect-research poses to its agenda and to maintain the vagueness around consumption: first, it *rejects* the above mentioned body of quantitative effect-research as unfounded, unscientific, methodologically defect; second, it *misinterprets* the findings of the very few qualitative research carried out in the field to create the impression that pornography is speech that causes no problems to users who can “navigate in the pornographic landscape in a sensible and reflective manner” (Lofgren-Mårtenson and Månsson 2010, 579); and third, it stresses that although pornography surely does not have “effects”, it would be necessary to conduct *proper* research on “audience readings” (Attwood 2002, 103), that is, on the ways porn is “used, worked on, elaborated, remembered, fantasized about by its subjects” (Wicke, quoted in *ibid.*). This research, however, seems very reluctant to come into being: in the last thirteen years or so, Attwood has repeatedly urged her pro-porn colleagues to do it (Attwood 2002; Attwood 2005; Smith and Attwood 2014) and others have outlined possible theoretical frameworks for it (Paasonen 2014) but not much effort

has been put into actually doing this “audience reading” research, which reinforces my claim that pro-porn discourse is interested in keeping production and representation in the focus of attention.

This triple strategy, I will argue, makes it possible for pro-porn discourse to create an imaginary subject position that it presents as the subject of pornographic discourse, but in fact it is just the discourse’s *fantasy* about this subject. Due to limited space, I will discuss only the second strategy, which is pro-porn scholars’ misinterpretation of (often their own) qualitative research, although the grounds on which pro-porn discourse rejects the vast amount of research done into the effects of exposure to pornography on men’s attitudes and behaviours towards women as a pile of useless, narrowly focused, inconsistent papers, with “very crude and simplistic view of text-audience relationship” (Attwood 2005, 67; see also McNair 2014; Weitzer 2011) would also be worthy of a detailed analysis.

Though their amount is incomparable smaller than that of quantitative research, a few pieces of qualitative research into the practices and consequences of pornography consumption have been also carried out in the last decades in English. Their number is so small that a nearly exclusive list can be easily given: Hardy 1998 (its results have been reappraised in Hardy 2004); Lofgren-Mårtenson and Månsson 2010; Mattebo and Larsson 2011; Böhm et al. 2015. It would be worth analysing in detail how the answers given by the interviewees were often taken at face value and how the problems, fears, distresses reported by interviewees and presented in the “Results” sections of these papers disappeared or have been downplayed by the time they reached the “Conclusions” parts. Due to lack of space, however, I will present just a few typical examples of misinterpretation from one of these researches.

In the latest of these studies (which is the only research about consumption that *Porn Studies* has published up to now), Maika Böhm and her colleagues (2015) did 135 semi-structured interviews with German students aged between 20 and 30 to find out what kinds of pornography these young people prefer, how they negotiate their usage with their relationships, what they think of the effects of their consumption and what their attitudes towards pornography are like. In the “Overview” part of their paper, Böhm et al. many times come up with data or short interpretations of their data that suggest that their interviewees have problems with pornography or have difficulties, for example, with separating “fantasy” of pornography from “reality” of their lives.

Men were considerably more likely to judge the frequency of their pornography consumption critically... 38% within the active group thought their own consumption in the previous four weeks was too high... In fact, problematizing personal level of porn consumption was common amongst men: one half of all the male students had at some

time decided to reduce their consumption and one-third had at some time felt that their consumption was ‘difficult to control’. (79)

Some male consumers problematized their porn consumption and worried about the frequency of use... This concern was focused in many cases on the extent of consumption, accompanied by a vague fear that they might lose desire for real sex. (84)

It is hard to overestimate the importance of these findings: they show that a great proportion of young men have problems with controlling their pornography consuming habits. This should be a sign that pornographic texts possibly have different speech act force than other cultural products and that we should treat them accordingly. Böhm et al., however arrive at a different conclusion (*italics mine*):

[A] level of ‘pornography competence’ was observed..., as well as the ability to make use of individual critical faculties where consumption was felt to be problematic... many men said that they thought they watched too much, made self-deprecating comments about their consumption, and were concerned about the phenomenon of addiction. However, *they were perfectly capable of finding strategies for dealing with these concerns*, by stopping all pornography usage temporarily. (88)

They dismiss the whole issue by claiming that these men can “perfectly” solve these problems. Many questions arise: Can *all* of them solve “perfectly”? What does a solution exactly look like? If they have solved the concerns, why have they reported that they have them?

My other example from this study is related to downplaying the reported effects of pornography on young people’s sexual behaviour. In the discussion part of the paper the authors report that:

many respondents did, in fact, report that they got ideas for partner sex from porn; most commonly ‘positions’ or ‘changing positions’, and occasionally also oral or anal sex, or use of sex toys. For the most part, respondents depicted these events as ‘nothing special, no big deal or anything. A second group mentioned a variety of sexual ideas taken from pornographic material (e.g. ‘sex in a threesome’, ‘bondage’, ‘sex in unusual places’, ‘with older women’), but these had so far remained sexual fantasies and not been integrated into partner sex. (87)

Maybe it is the authors taking respondents’ verdict about the influence of pornography being “no big deal” at face value or it is their bias towards defending pornography, but these findings reach the conclusion part of the paper in the following form:

[I]hey were media literate enough to actively use the internet and aware of the fictional nature of pornographic material... The reports... support the idea postulated by Gagnon (1998) of a peaceful coexistence between a virtual sex world and a sex life in the real world... While male and female students often drew inspiration from solo consumption,

this was primarily in order to enrich their own sexual fantasies and affected partner sex to a lesser extent. (89)

It is hard to imagine how can drawing ideas from pornography and seeking to realize them in sex with partners be interpreted as a “peaceful coexistence” of pornography consumption and sexual activity, considering the one-way flow of the influence from pornography to partner sex. The qualifier “primarily” in the next sentence silences those respondents who actually reported on acting out pornographic fantasies and directs attention to those cases where it remained fantasy (without discussing the significance of these pornographic “fantasies” for the respondents). And lastly, referring to the possession of “media literacy” as a safeguard against the unwanted effects of problematic representations is an unfounded and precarious move (see Gill 2012b).

With all these movements of meanings, it is not surprising that the paper concludes on an optimistic tone: “Our results indicate that male and female students select precisely and carefully from the range of material available online, employ it in a self-directed manner and according to their own desires, and confidently integrate it into their solo and partner sex” (Böhm et al. 2015, 89)

In this section, I have argued that even in the rare occasions when pro-porn academics set out to research the consumption aspect of pornography, in some way or another they tend to downplay those findings that suggest that pornographic speech might have strong illocutionary force. The impression these research papers make in the conclusions is not that pornography cannot have “bad effects” but that pornography cannot have effects *at all* as their meanings are interpreted by a conscious process of negotiation on part of the consumers. This impression is necessary so that pro-porn discourse can create its fantasy about the subject of pornography. It is the tenability of this fantasy that I will examine in the next chapter through the results of my qualitative research.

3. EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION OF THE VALIDITY OF PRO-PORN DISCOURSE'S FANTASY ABOUT THE SUBJECT OF PORNOGRAPHY

As I have stressed, it is in pro-porn discourse's interests to divert attention from the listener of pornographic speech. Its representatives can preclude formulating a coherent theory about the speech act status of pornography and oscillate between stressing its locutionary or perlocutionary force, depending on which serves best the agenda of defending pornography as a harmless and transgressive genre. At the end of the day, however, pro-porn discourse cannot remain completely silent about the consumers, as not offering an alternative conception would leave anti-porn feminists' worries about the harmful influence pornography exercises on consumers unchallenged. The alternative conception pro-porn discourse offers is a consumer who consumes pornography with as much consciousness as he or she would do with other kinds of media content. This subject is imagined to actively negotiate the meanings he or she finds in pornography and be able to critically distance those meanings that he or she finds problematic, unpleasant etc. Typically, this fantasy about the subject of pornography is constructed in an indirect way, by arguing that it is the most recent approaches in media studies that should be employed if one wants to examine pornography consumption²². In this chapter, I challenge pro-porn discourse's fantasy and through the findings of my ethnographic research I will deconstruct its tenability.

The main objective of this inquiry is to learn as much as possible about the ways actual heterosexual male consumers engage with pornography and the meanings pornography has for them. Is pornography watched, used and perceived as other kinds of cultural representations or is there something unique about it? How much space is there for negotiating its meanings? What kind of critical distance is typically maintained during the consumption? What is the typical degree of identification with the characters?

During the analysis stage, nevertheless, my data pointed towards a further question that I did not formulate in the preparatory process but is of major relevance in the contestation of the

²² For instance: "In their discussion of gender and media consumption, Ien Ang and Joke Hermes describe a movement from early studies underpinned by rather simplistic notions of mis-representations and passive consumption to a more sophisticated contemporary stance that aims to investigate 'how gender might be articulated in practices of media consumption' (Attwood 2002, 103) or "[M]edia texts are seen simply as kinds of 'messages' and their consumption is presented as forms of 'exposures' [by anti-pornography critiques]... Such approaches make no use of theories of media representation, production and consumption, or of theories of how sexuality is constructed, or of the ways in which knowledge is socially and culturally wrought" (Smith and Attwood 2014, 11)

logic informing the pro-porn discourse: Does pornography function as a representation at all, or is it something else, more like an opportunity or an invitation to participate in particular sexual acts? Is it possible that consumption of pornography has more commonalities with having partner sex than with consuming other kinds of media?

3.1. Methods and Sites of Data Collection and Research Participants

Since there is little research available about men's actual practices of consumption, I employed an inductive approach – I tried to gather as much data as possible relating to the following aspects of consumption: personal history of pornography consumption; practices of consumption; negotiation of identity, perception of masculinity and self-image; perceived effects of pornography; possible interpretations of pornographic material; negotiation of pornography with interpersonal relations (for my interview questions, see the Appendix) I used all the data I gathered to form hypotheses specifically about my research questions, which I tested in the light of other data. This means that I was to establish the significance of any concept emerging in the data from the perspective of consumption practices and the meaning of pornography as a genre. Therefore, articulations of concepts such as masculinity and identity fell out of the focus of present research.

Since I considered this research as a pilot project for further qualitative research, I selected a pool of potential respondents as varied as possible. However, not all of my recruiting strategies proved equally successful. I posted advertisements on Facebook, which gained only one respondent (35 years of age). I also tried to access people through friends with only one respondent (21 years of age) and I contacted secondary school teachers and asked them to let me advertise the research in their classes. The latter proved to be the most fruitful: from a grammar school and a technical school I recruited 7 interviewees altogether (18-19 years of age). They were all awarded by the highest grade (5) for their time and effort in the subject of ethics. During the recruiting process, I told the potential respondents that I was interested in their attitudes towards pornography and I did not mention that I would also pose questions about their own consumption. I reckoned that this omission would make it more comfortable for the students to volunteer in front of the whole class and the teacher. I had some concerns about how they would react when I start to question them about their personal experiences and masturbation habits but every interview went in a relaxed and smooth manner.

I met my respondents where we could talk undisturbed (in parks, in their places, in a classroom after classes). I conducted 6 individual interviews and one focus group interview with

3 participants. The latter was unplanned – the participants turned up together claiming that it was more comfortable for them – eventually it provided a good opportunity to see how group dynamics can work in a small group of young men talking about pornography and masturbation. The interviews last between 45 and 90 minutes, with an average of 55 minutes. I recorded and transcribed them in Hungarian. The quotations I provide here are my own transliterations.

3.2. Theoretical Framework

I will analyse my findings, on the one hand, using different ideas about the meaning making process related to visual narrative fiction, and on the other hand, employing Josette Féral's (2002) theory about theatricality. As for the meaning making process, pro-porn discourse's claim that consumers of pornography typically negotiate the meanings of pornography like they do with other visual fictional narratives postulates that the consumers must engage in at least one of the most crucial aspects of this meaning making process. One of such crucial aspects is temporality, which is attributed an important role in creating the meaning structure of narrative representations (for a detailed discussion of the topic see Mroz 2012). The sequence of the events, their duration and their rhythm are crucially significant from the point of view of the possible meanings and affects that may register on part of the viewer. Talking specifically about genres that typically evoke strong bodily responses in the viewer (pornography, melodrama, horror), Williams (1991) also argues that pornography's temporal structure is essential for the viewer to experience what the genre has to offer to him or her (11). It can be said, therefore, that in media theory, consuming a narrative piece of motion picture – let it be pornographic or not – is imagined to follow its temporality and obeying the demands of its time structure. I will examine my interviewee's engagement with the temporal structure of pornography to see if the meanings that the narratives of pornographic movies have to offer for them via their temporality – putting aside the question whether these meanings are misogynous or not – can even have a chance to register on their part.

The analyses of my interviewees' experiences in the light of the importance attributed to respecting the temporal structure of narrative fiction makes it possible to judge if they make sense of pornography the same way people usually do in relation to other narratives. Employing Féral's concept of theatricality allows me to arrive at conclusions about more fundamental issues relating to consumers' perception of pornography and will raise the question whether pornography functions as a representation at all, or it is something qualitatively different.

Féral (2002) defines theatricality as a “*process* that has to do with a ‘gaze’ that postulates and creates a distinct, virtual space belonging to the other, from which fiction can emerge” (97). For Féral, theatricality has a transcendent nature: it can occur not only in theatres but anywhere, including quotidian spaces if certain conditions are met. She demonstrates the workings of non-staged theatricality through two different examples. In the first one, one witnesses a seemingly genuine fight between two passengers in the subway but then something happens (the spectator sees a certain billboard) that makes it clear that the whole thing was actually a scripted performance. Here, theatricality stems “from the spectator’s awareness of a theatrical intention addressed to him” (96). This awareness reveals

both the fictional nature of the performers’ behaviour, and the presence of illusion where only commonplace reality had been expected... *theatricality appears as a result of the performers’ affirmed theatrical intention. The spectator must be aware of the performers’ secret; without such awareness there is misunderstanding and absence of theatricality.* (97, emphasis mine)

The point is that if the spectator realizes that the performers are performing, theatricality comes into existence and what was initially perceived as a quotidian event becomes fiction. In her second example, she describes a person who is sitting at a sidewalk café and watching passers-by. These passers-by are unaware of being observed and going on with their businesses uninterrupted. Still, the spectator perceives “a certain theatricality in their figures and gestures, in the way they occupy the space around them... It is the simple exercise of watching that reassigns gestures to theatrical space.” (97) In both cases, a certain “cleft” is framed or sliced from the quotidian space either by the conscious act of the performers (first example) or by the gaze of the spectator (second example). (In “ordinary” theatres, this cleft is already created by the organisation of the psychical space, by building a stage.) For Féral, the creation of this cleft is the primary condition for the emergence of theatricality. Without this cleft, what happens is not “perceived as illusion, fiction, or play” (104) but as everyday reality. It is, however, not only the lack of this cleft that can hinder theatricality but also the violation of a framework that authorizes certain freedoms in the performance and forbids others. There are certain “interdictions” the violation of which would mingle the space of the theatrical cleft with reality and would therefore destroy theatricality. The most fundamental interdiction is that no irreversible events can happen, for instance, nobody can be killed or mutilated (this is the “law of reversibility” (104)). If such activities happen notwithstanding, they break

the tacit contract between spectator and theatre that guarantees that what one witness is representation, inscribed in a time and space different from the quotidian... In actually attacking his own body (or that of an animal), the actor destroys the conditions of

theatricality. Henceforth, he is no longer in the alterity of theatrical space, but has crossed back into reality. (104)

There seems to be, therefore, two fundamental conditions that are required to meet so that the spectator can perceive certain performances as fiction: a cleft should be created that separates the “outside” of the quotidian from the “inside” of theatricality, *and* nothing irreversible can happen during the performance. Although Féral discusses only “live” theatricality, her theory seems to be perfectly adaptable to mediated theatricality, such as theatre broadcasts or fictional cinema. Similarly to stage-related theatricality, we have an already established cleft there –not in the form of stage but in the form of screen– and the “law of reversibility” must be obeyed so that spectators perceive what they see as fiction (a war movie, for instance, and not footage of real war incidents).

Féral’s theory of theatricality is related to the most important finding of my research: it seems that for my respondents pornography does not convey the quality of theatricality. Although the issue will need further investigation, my data suggests that in ideal viewing situations, the “tacit contract... that guarantees that what one witnesses is representation” (104) is somehow broken and “theatre as such” disappears or is being transformed into a “circus ring” (105). To put it differently, while all my interviewees expressed that they believed that pornography *was* fiction and representation, it seems that at the same time it registered with them as the documentation of non-fictional events in which they themselves participate to some extent.

3.3 Results

First, I present those findings that suggest that neither the temporal structure of pornographic movies nor the integrity of its content are enacted by consumers, therefore they are not in the position of registering the meanings of what they watch as imagined by the producers. The way the material is selected and the context in which it is watched seem to be also unique and differ from practices typically used with other media.

Then, I show that while my respondents often stress that they are aware of the fictional nature of pornography, it still registers on their part as documentation of non-fictional acts and events. The explanation I propose for this phenomenon is that in my respondents’ view the “law of reversibility” seems to be violated in pornography.

In the third subsection, I present the findings suggesting that my interviewees can immerse themselves in the material via sexual pleasure to the extent that the theatrical cleft disappears. Perceiving pornography as documentation and immersing themselves into it seem to give rise to an experience that, I argue, is actually close to the experience they would have participated in the actual sexual acts presented in the porn films. In other words, my data suggests that it would be more adequate to treat watching pornography together with masturbation as a sexual encounter and not as an act of media consumption outside the logic of actual sexual practice.

3.3.1 Practices of consumption

All of my nine respondents reported that they never follow the temporal structure of the pornography they watch. It seemed obvious to everybody that this is the way pornography is supposed to watch.

Sure, I always jump forward and backward in porn... (Isi, 19)

[everybody approves excitedly]

Yes, I jump forward... (Ákos, 19)

I keep jumping in (Isi)

I jump forward, or it's even possible that I'm so much into it that I replace it, because, ouch!, I'm not gonna fuck about it (Ákos)

I kept jumping in it.

(How?)

I jumped forward, because there is this undressing–foreplay thing which didn't interest me much, then it got sped up, like oral satisfying, stimulation, but this took too long, too, so it was like boring, so I jumped to the sex part. (Árpi, 18)

Typically, the reason for jumping forward was that the respondent found boring what he saw because the rhythm of his sexual excitement was out of synch with the narration. While in the case of other narrative fiction hampering the spectator's satisfaction is an important tool in the meaning-making process (often this is the condition for suspense, drama, and relief), in the case of pornography the viewer seems to take full control over the timing of his relief. It also seems that acts not directly sexual are also deemed devoid of interest:

Let's say something neutral action is happening in the background, or a certain part of the scene lasts for five minutes, but I get bored with it after fifteen seconds... I find these things very protracted.

(Is it important that you can adjust what you see to your needs?)

Yes (István, 35)

Some of my interviewees were very reflective about this process, making sense of their own jumping back and forth:

Well, I start watching it, then if I get bored with the warming-up I jump ahead a bigger one and from that point actually I watch it part by part... when they do something interesting I watch it... and actually I always find... search for the change... when I see that something different is going on I go back and see how they ended up there. For me, it's always very important to see when and how people get from one situation to another. (András, 21)

A strong and constant desire for novelty is present here, which, combined with the perceived abundance of freely and instantly accessible pornographic material might contribute to the fact that consumers violate not only the temporality of the chosen video, but they also dismiss its narrative integrity by switching between different videos:

Sometimes I watch two-three films simultaneously, but sometimes I open ten tabs [in the web browser], dip into all of them for a minute, I don't like it, close it, check the related videos. Or sometimes I go through like ten-fifteen films and keep the good ones. (András, 21)

I contend that these practices of jumping freely within one narrative and routinely switching between narratives make it impossible for the viewer to make sense of what he sees in a way viewers of media typically do. Instead, he creates a *montage* of the available material, which is perceived as virtually unlimited:

We're spoiled. Whatever you come up with, whatever setup, whatever people, you push two buttons and it's there, in front of you. I don't know, maybe it has negative effects, too, because everybody is damned spoiled, watches whatever he wants. Everything is within an arm's range (András, 21)

Earlier it was not possible to go home and then, like, I'm alone and I can choose from... I don't know, million or billion movies, and I can choose the one that is suitable for me. (Ámon, 19)

All my respondents told me about the considerations that informed their process of initial video selection, that is, the way they decided with which movie to start a masturbation session.

Although these considerations showed some variety, they were all very different than factors that might guide us when deciding which non-pornographic movie to watch.

I don't know, for instance, I'm browsing Facebook and I see a girl whom I fancy... (Isi, 19)

Like you saw a women in real life, who is, let's say, a bit older, and then you try to find somebody similar [in porn] so that you can put them together in your head, I get it...

(Ákos, 19)

Yeah, that's the way it is (Isi)

I think every guy does this way (Ákos)

For these respondents, it was a sexual stimulus that influenced their choice (they got aroused by a certain "type" of woman whom they saw). Translating this process to the practice of selecting non-pornographic material, it would roughly correspond to watching a crime film when somebody spotted an officer in the streets. I contend that this is not the case with non-pornographic media and that selecting a certain movie because its protagonists have a certain look most probably limits the spectator's sensibility to other levels of meanings.

The appearance of the characters in the videos seems a determining factor for all respondents including the ones who do not react on "real-life" stimuli when it comes to selection:

When I start watching [porn], I never browse the categories but I just type the webpages... (György, 19)

Main page? (Ákos, 19)

Yeah, and what I like there. If I see something with a little girl then I look only for videos with little girls... It's not that I already know [what to watch]... something must hit me.

Sometimes I go at random: little girl, big girl, older women, this and that (György)

I have an ideal... In porn, I look for women who are my ideal. Tanned skin... (Isi, 19)

Initially, I went after Asians. When I was younger, 16-17 years old, that was when Asian girls came into the picture. Not all of them, just the pretty ones... It was after this that MILFs came, I think (Árpi, 19)

While with non-pornographic fiction it is common that people recommend films to each other, my respondents seemed to go strictly after their own preferences. Knowing that they do not have a tolerance for watching something that they do not find arousing or exciting enough (which is clear from their jumping forth and back), I argue that this "individualism" in taste can be interpreted as knowing what one wants and not wanting to risk meeting their carnal needs. This seems to undermine pro-porn feminist claims about pornography's capacity to extend/transgress/undermine consumers' traditional notions of sexuality/gender. My

respondents' unwillingness to spend precious masturbation-time on material they might not find pleasurable enough can be most strikingly demonstrated by the quote from András below, whose girlfriend is also a regular consumer of pornography, yet he never felt the urge to check out on the pornography she watches:

Once she mentioned [what kind of porn she likes] but I never made inquiries, but there are porn site with movies typically made for women, but I don't even know what they are really like. There is this "for women" category in the sites, but I have no idea what it is, though I should have checked it out. She mostly watches that. It must be very emotional and romantic, I don't know. (András, 21)

So far, my data relating to the consumption practices suggests that contrary to typical viewers of non-pornographic fiction who select films to watch out of different considerations (they want to be entertained, moved, excited, scared etc.) and who typically respect the temporality and the integrity of the narrative they watch, consumers of pornography decide to watch pornography solely to get sexual satisfaction, they select material that provides them the most sexual pleasure, and instead of simply watching a film as it is, they create a montage for themselves – either out of one video or out of several ones. Instead of simply being consumers and interpreters, they engage in an activity that consists of masturbation and exercising constant control over what they see. I argue that this activity is unique and cannot be treated as the consumption of any other kinds of media.

This uniqueness is further bolstered by the wider context of the consumption, namely by the processes that precede and follow the act of consumption. All respondents found the idea absurd that they go on watching pornography after they ejaculated.

I switch it off, I'm not interested any more. I don't know... tissue, or I wash my hands, I don't know... then I sit back to my computer, or keep laying, checking Facebook, but I don't go on with watching it because it is totally uninteresting (Ámon, 19)

This kind of losing interest in a narrative – not because of the narrative itself (e.g. it turned out to be boring) but because of an external reason (the consumer has come) – seems unique and perhaps cannot be found in relation with other media. It hints at the fact that contrary to what pro-porn discourse suggests, for most viewers pornography does not figure as a "cultural product" and they do not approach pornography with the same expectations as they would approach other media. Ámon was explicit about this:

If I watch a series, let's say I watch Walking Dead... Why do I watch it? Because I'm interested in what happens to the people, I'm interested in the construction of its whole universe. Now... why would anybody watch porn in his free time? (Ámon, 19)

As for the processes that can lead to watching pornography, some of them seem unique, too. All nine respondents reported that they have had periods in their life when they had difficulties in controlling their urges to watch pornography. Four of them claimed that they are over it now:

There was a period when, so to speak, I was addicted to it, I mean, I badly needed it, but which teenage boy doesn't have hormones working in him? It's approximately the last two years that this urge has sunken to a much lower level. (András, 21)

Others, however, realized during the interview that their agency diminishes when it comes to the decision whether or not to watch pornography:

I think that this is an addiction, just like cigarette. Or like any other addictions... (György, 19)

Yes... sex-addiction... (Ákos, 19)

Actually, I've already tried to give it up... (Isi, 19)

Me, too, me, too... (Ákos)

Me, too (György)

To give up this everyday thing... (Ákos)

I can't... (Isi)

I also said [to myself]: what's good in it?... that I surely wouldn't do it for a week... (György)

I swear, I tried... [sounds incredulous] I tried... and I swear... (Ákos)

I endured for like two weeks, then relapsed... (Isi)

I'm like... I must [watch porn] because that's how I get relaxed, how I discharge daily stress, I swear! [sounds excited] (Áki)

Yes, but yeah, really (György)

I feel then that everything comes out... so I'm like, wow, that's just great, now I can go to sleep. Because if not, I swear, I lay down my head on the pillow and... (Ákos)

You have a feeling of lack... (György)

I can't sleep... and after it, I go to sleep so quickly (Isi)

Sex addiction.. [laughs] I'm a sex addict... (Ákos)

The discussion above was part of the most moving moments of the focus group interviewing process. Hearing each other's experiences and reflecting on their own, these startled and astonished young men realized and voiced maybe for the first time in their life that their pornography consumption is problematically out of their control. Their lived experiences might be in correspondence with the findings of Mark D. Griffiths (2012), who reviewed fourteen studies carried out in Western countries, and concluded that consuming online pornography "can

go awry and result in Internet sex addiction, as it can lead to a wide variety of negative consequences for the individual affected” (111).

There are two points to stress here. First, not all of my respondents reported problems with their control over present consumption, which means that pornography does not always and necessarily “go awry”. However, the fact that it *can* “go awry” suggests that, again, there is something unique about the consumption of pornography compared to other media. This leads to a second thing to emphasize: although there is a popular discussion about being “addicted” to TV-series and people “binge watching” these shows, I contend that the case of self-identified “porn-addicts” is different. Most importantly, they do not crave for going on with the storyline of a particular series, like “series junkies” do, but just want to watch *any* pornography and masturbate to it. It is like not being able to go to sleep or concentrate until one watches *any* horror movies or an episode of a random TV-series that he does not even necessarily know.

3.3.2 Perceived level of fictionality in pornography

Having argued that my interview data suggests that pornography is consumed and made sense of *differently* than other fictional narratives, I will now try to outline what pornography *is* for my interviews, if not fictional representation. The most important finding to present here is in relation with the perceived fictional status of pornographic material. There seems to be a peculiar ambiguity between the conscious and the not-so-conscious interpretation of my respondents: while all of them expressed directly or indirectly that they are aware of the fictional nature of pornography, simultaneously they were talking about pornography as if it were the *documentation* of non-fictional and non-performed acts:

I switched to Blue Hustler, and there was a porn in which a woman dressed in leather was putting off a cigarette on a guy’s chest and it really scared me off, I even switched away... but I was younger then... and it stayed with me like a trauma, that how terrible things are. Because I think it’s tough... It was bad to see that such things exist, that things degenerate that much... that people cause so much pain to each other.

(Did you think about why those performers did it?)

Sure, I thought it was exciting for some. There are people who enjoy it, watch it and love it. They get aroused by it... it’s called fetish. (Erik, 19)

In the situation recalled by Erik, he could have been terrified for two reasons: either because he took what he saw as a hint that somebody somewhere might have gone through similar experiences (similarly to the re-enactment scenes in documentaries, with the cigarette not really

burning the guy) or because he took what he saw as the documentation of the actual sexual act (similarly to a CCTV-footage shown in documentaries, with the cigarette really burning the guy). His response to my question about the feelings of the performers suggests the second scenario, but whatever the case, he interpreted the scene as a documentation of some truth about human sexuality.

Similar ambivalence was reported by Marci when he talked about his favourite niche, “reality porn”:

Well, what I found also interesting were these so-called staged... these street-things... that there were these girls to whom the person – I say it in quotation marks – randomly went over, like they didn’t know each other, and he started to chat her up, and he put 500 euros into her hand so that they do XY things in exchange. And somehow it was strange to see that... I could never decide, but more probably than not the whole thing was staged, but still I was interested in seeing how people reacted to things (...). Somewhere I read that if you offer people money, first they would say “no”, but if I produce the money and show them and put it in front of them and, let’s say, it’s a significant amount, they would surely think about it (...) And I think it’s possible that single girls, who haven’t had a boyfriend for a few months, who are a bit horny, tired and want some relief from stress, and can hardly pay the rent, I think they would be easily in for a bigger amount of money... if the man is not very repulsive... (Marci, 19)

Marci says that he tends to believe that “reality porn” is fiction, however, he then goes into long speculations (longer than I presented here) based on the assumption that these films actually document “real” events. His confusion can be partly accounted by the filmmakers’ apparent intention to make the viewer unsure about the fictional status of the narrative – which intention realizes in its entirety in the so-called “gonzo” movies²³ and in the “casting” niche²⁴ – but from the following remarks made in relation with “ordinary” pornography by other respondents it seems that there is something inherent in pornography that can make it register as documentary.

Some of these remarks are speculations about the “real” feelings of the actresses. As in the case of paradigmatically fictional films similar questions are hard to imagine to emerge²⁵, the fact that my respondents were thinking about them suggests that they perceive pornography as a kind of documentary to some extent.

²³ Gonzo films invest a lot in the illusion that what the consumer sees is the spontaneous, unscripted sexual encounter of the performers; they are often filmed through a first person perspective, the performers are “themselves” in the sense that they are presented as pornographic actresses and actors who have sex in the presence of a camera.

²⁴ “Casting-porn” literally diminishes the boundary between fiction and documentation as it pretends to be (any maybe is) footages of women having sex with pornographic producers as part of their entry into the pornographic industry.

²⁵ e.g. “Was the actor playing Luke Skywalker in Star Wars sad and surprised when the actor playing Darth Vader revealed that he was his father?”, „How terrified were the actors playing the family of Jack Torrance in *The Shining* when actor Jack Nicholson was playing that he was chasing them and wanted to murder them?”

It is hard to tell through the screen what it is that two girls [in “lesbian” movies] are really enjoying and what it is that they just undertake to get money. We’ll never find this out, because they can be very good actresses, who just play that they enjoy the things, and it’s also possible that there is a movie in which the girls really enjoy themselves, but don’t express it that much. (András, 21)

[talking about actresses having sex with men who have large penises] She must [have sex with them], because she is an actress... but of course there are cases when she deliberately enters the situation thinking, how good it is, I mean, because it’s so big. But of course you don’t find yourself in such situation in daily life... even if you have a big penis. Maybe with a prostitute, for whom it basically doesn’t matter. But for a normal girl... she doesn’t do such things, having sex with a complete stranger just because he has a big penis.... not realistic at all (Ámon, 19)

The latter paragraph condenses some key beliefs regarding the relation of fiction and “reality” in pornography. First, András allows for the possibility that the actresses would do what they are expected to do *anyway*. In other words, he accepts that what he sees is performed fiction but he maintains that it could *coincide* (because of the actress’ desire to “try out” a big penis) with the events that would have taken place without the camera rolling. The fiction of the pornographic movie becomes simultaneously a document of not-performed sex acts.

Second, Ámon makes a distinction between women in pornography and “normal” women. I argue that this distinction only makes sense if he assumes that pornography does not simply represent women performing something (putting on a role and playing it out) but it documents also something about the “real” nature of the individual actresses, about the part of their personhood that is behind performance (e.g. they are not “normal”). In Ámon and András’s perception, actresses were present with their “real” self in these acts. Pornography documents what they do to their “real” self (having sex on camera), while simultaneously acting out their parts as “good” or bad actresses (horny nurse, babysitter, whomever). It seems that for my respondents, behind the level of contingent storyline and stylistic ornaments (where the “acting” takes place) there exists a level of non-fictionality in pornography. This consists of “real” women having “real” sex, which then gets documented in a film. This document might get on the side some fictional wrapping, but this fictional wrapping is of secondary importance.

That fictional wrapping is really of secondary importance or even a burden for my respondents can be seen from their universal preference for pornography that is “realistic”, “genuine”, “believable” etc.:

I felt that I didn’t really see examples in my life of how intimate relationships can work, and maybe porn helped me in this, too. If I give it a thought, maybe my eagerness for things that resemble real life originates here. (István, 35)

[on pornography he does not like] (...) the set-up, the way they are filmed... it was not realistic. (István)

[I love those] that I perceive as natural, which sets off from a situation which is like they were showing a couple... I mean, I guess they are often a couple anyway (István)

I prefer those that are natural... not those unnatural, acted out films... (Ákos, 19)

Yeah, that's "reality" (Isi, 19)

I don't like it either when, for instance, they make a porn parody of a movie... (György)
(What do you like about "reality porn"?)

The story... I mean, that there is no story... that I don't see that they pass in front of a luxury hotel with an HD-camera and the woman is dressed in a way that you are sure that there's going to be something... but... I don't know... let it be sudden and spontaneous (Áki, 19)

If it has an introduction, like they meet in the street, a realistic story, then I see it to the end (Ámon, 19)

That all of the nine interviewees stressed that they wanted as much realism in pornography as possible (in terms of narrative, visuals, women's appearances, etc.) indicates the importance of the issue. This seemingly universal desire for perceived realism is not at all self-evident: one could have guessed that some viewers would prefer fantastic plots or highly stylised visual language, which is often the case with other fictional genres. I have two possible explanations for the phenomenon. The first one is that consumers aim to immerse in pornography as much as possible, and perceived realism facilitates this immersion. (I will return to this issue in the next section.) The second explanation is related to the perceived non-fictional status of pornography. If my hypothesis is right and viewers perceive pornography to some extent as documentation of non-fictional events (i.e. people having non-simulated sex on camera) then being presented with "not-realistic" elements can cause disturbance in the viewing experience – preventing ejaculation.

I would like to propose a model of the meaning structure of pornography from the point of view of the consumer and argue that in pornography there are two layers of fictionality, which are intertwined. One dimension is the layer of non-fictionality: on this level, consumers seem to take images of people having sex as documents of performing these sex acts, and as such, being non-fictional. It is as if they would treat *Star Wars* as a document of people acting and performing the story of *Star Wars*. One respondent had a remark which seems to support this idea:

Maybe it's a bit harsh to put this way, but [porn] is actually peeping. (Ámon, 19)

Non-simulated sex acts seem to have a quality that makes them so "real" that they break the conventions of fiction. It is as if in crime movies people were really shot and the viewer knew this. This knowledge about the real death of the actors might or might not allow space for being

interested in the *story* of the crime, which constitutes the other, inner layer of fictionality. This layer is the plot of the story played by the people whom the consumer spies upon doing: they might enact an emphatically fictional script and be filmed in a way that underlies this fictionality, or they can “be themselves”, engaging in seemingly spontaneous, non-scripted activities. In other words, pornography is perceived either as a document of people behaving “naturally” while having sex or as a document of people behaving “artificially” while having sex. My respondents preferred the former scenario, when this inner layer of fictionality became practically invisible and they could observe people in situations they perceived as “realistic”. Using the crime film analogy, they seem so fascinated/shocked by the knowledge that these people really die that the additional level of fiction is just unnecessary, annoying and distracting.

3.3.3 Suspension of theatricality

So far I have tried to demonstrate that my respondents interpreted pornography more as documentation of people’s sex acts than representation of fictional events. According to Féral’s theory of theatricality there are two things that can lead to the collapse of theatricality. One is the violation of the “law of reversibility”, that is, when the actors do something that cannot be undone (e.g. mutilate themselves, kill each other or an animal), the other is when the cleft that separates the “inside” of the theatrical space and the “outside” world of the spectator disappears. My interview data suggests that in the case of pornography both of these two things can occur.

As for violating the “law of reversibility”, further investigations should be made but it seems that the actresses’ crossing of the boundaries of the private and the public while having non-simulated sex is something that can register as “irreversible” according to my respondents. It is as if the performers were perceived as suffering some damage in the course of the filming:

[talking about a scene that my interviewee did not like] It has a bad effect on them, too ... I mean, that it happens to them.. after that, they will be thinking in a different way... I guess (Erik, 19)

Or even committing some kind of “social suicide”:

I guess the money is the most important. That’s all... I’m sure it’s the money that makes them do it.

(Some claim they love sex.)

I don’t think so, because they lend their faces... they won’t wash this off ever. (Erik)

Perhaps it is this notion of “social suicide” that informed Ámon’s already quoted remark about the difference between “normal” girls and women in pornography:

for a normal girl... she doesn’t do such things, having sex with a complete stranger just because he has a big penis.... not realistic at all (Ámon, 19)

In his interpretation, by performing in pornography, women seem irreversibly move from one category of people to another, which amounts for breaking the “law of reversibility”.

This would suffice to collapse theatricality in itself, but I claim that in the case of pornography Féral’s other condition for theatricality, the existence of a cleft is also violated. This happens through the viewers’ immersion in the material they watch. All of my respondents were reporting on a desire to project themselves into the pornographic universe they observe:

I preferred the more realistic categories, those that I could realistically project myself into, younger couples, for instance (Marci, 19)

It happens to me that I start watching a film and then I project myself and a girl whom I fancy into it (Isi, 19)

The bodily pleasure provided by masturbation seems a strong facilitator in the immersion process:

[answering why he always watches the final moments of the videos] Because for me... I’m interested in the end (György, 19)

Because you come just the same time, don’t you? When... (Isi, 19)

Actually, yes, I always time it to that. For instance, when I’m in the middle of it and feel... that I’m close... I jump to the end, no? (György)

[all laugh] Me, too!

Tell me you don’t... (György)

You come at the same time... (Ákos, 19)

The same time... and I totally have the feeling.. (György)

But why? I thought it’s only me doing this... (Ákos)

No, me too... You can better imagine... the chick is there, you saw the chick... suffering... (Isi)

You believe that you’re there, too... (György)

Yes, it’s a bit like you were in it, too... (Ákos)

Sure, sure... (György, Isi)

It seems that consumers experience some mixture of immersion and identification: György, Ákos and Isi seem to have felt as if the penis in the video had belonged to them (the visual framing of men in most pornography makes this identification easier), while others were speaking as if they were present as an invisible person. Whatever the case, the phenomenon suggests that consumers

feel as if they were inside the theatrical cleft. This logically entails the collapse of this cleft, and consequently the suspension of theatricality. My last example to support the claim that while watching pornography viewers do not observe events taking place in a cleft but are themselves part of the action is the account of a moment when the respondent got torn away from his immersion because of the perceived discomfort of the woman. (The quotation also illustrates my claim about the perceived non-fictionality of pornography, as witnessing discomfort that is taken as merely fictional is hard to imagine to result in this kind of sobering.)

(What do you mean by “weird”?)

When it was explicit that some characters bloodily didn’t enjoy the situation... it happened a few times...

(What did you think then?)

It was as if I suddenly saw the whole thing a bit from the outside. That here are these films, and I’m now watching them... and like what can be behind them... It was a bit eye-opening. It absolutely jolted me out... (István, 35)

3.3.4 Watching pornography as an act of having sex

It seems now that pornography is experienced not as fiction but as documents of people having sex (either enacting some fictional roleplaying at the same time or just “acting naturally”) and that viewers ideally project themselves into it, which projection is facilitated with the pleasurable bodily sensations accompanying the consuming process. This is already very different than pro-porn discourse’s imagined viewing situation, and the subject of pornography –a bodily and mentally immersed viewer who seems to participate in the events rather than observing them – also seems very different than pro-porn discourse’s fantasy about this subject. The exact characteristics of this situation need to be investigated in the future, but some preliminary hypotheses can be formulated based on my data. Most importantly, there emerges a pattern that suggests that my respondents experience watching pornography as if they were having partner sex. This pattern is not the result of direct comments – that is, claiming that watching pornography is like having sex – but arises indirectly, mostly by placing pornography consumption on the same level of human activities as having sex or, seemingly paradoxically, by claiming that it is different – better or worse – than having “real” sex, as the fact that a comparison makes sense in the first place suggests that we have practices of the same sort.

István, for instance, assured me that he would not watch pornography together with his partner:

Well, I have only intuitions about this since I haven't tried it. But somehow... if I'm having the impression that it's not just the two of us, but there are others there, too, well, it's a bit repulsive for me... (István, 35)

This quote suggests that István somehow perceives the characters in the movies as if they were present and spoiling his intimacy with his girlfriend. The fact that contrary to my expectations none of my respondents found it a good idea to watch pornography with their partners (even if the partner knew about their consumption and herself consumed pornography, like the girlfriend of András) also hints that watching pornography and having partner sex are complementary alternatives to each other. István's next remark also reinforces that he experiences watching pornography as analogous with having partner sex:

[talking about the time when he decreased his usage] I realized that if I hadn't watched [porn], that part of my life would have been very bleak. And this started to frustrate me a bit, I mean, I absolutely felt that this whole business [of watching porn] is some kind of substitute thing. (István, 35)

István claims that he has a “part of his life” that could be filled either with watching pornography or having sex, which suggests that the two practices are indeed perceived as interchangeable and analogous. This does not mean, of course, that they are perceived as same: István esteems partner sex as more authentic and desirable, other respondents, however, stressed the advantages of watching pornography over having partner sex:

(Have you ever wanted to watch porn more than having sex with somebody?)
Yes, I have. Simply, physiological reasons: less tiring, I only do what I want to do, I don't have to make compromises, I don't have to undress, it has no emotional aspects, you don't have to invest anything... wow, I rattled this off quite fast... What else? I do with whomever I want to do. You don't have to commit yourself, don't get tired, get sweaty, you don't have to take a shower either (András, 21)

The wordings “do with whomever” and “do what I want to do” can be made sense if we assume that for András watching pornography is qualitatively similar to having partner sex in certain regards – regards relevant enough to be able to provide a substantial list of the similarities of the two practices. It was not only András and István who put these two in comparison: all my respondents reported that in some sense pornography has some advantages over partner sex or the other way around. It was also reported that while watching pornography, memories of partner sex were sometimes recollected and re-enacted in a more pleasurable way (“the

difference? five thousands decibel” (Isi, 19)) and while having partner sex memories of pornographic experiences were evoked and acted out (“mostly different sex-poses” (Árpi, 19).

This permeability between the memories belonging to the two practices and the fact that my interviewees made the comparisons spontaneously (without me asking about it) suggest that watching pornography and having partner sex provide experiences that are identical in some important ways. Establishing the differences and the similarities between the two needs detailed investigation, and at this point I just propose a figurative approximation: my assumption is that for my respondents watching pornography (while masturbating to it) relates to partner sex as a bungee jump relates to falling free from a cliff and *not* as watching a movie about somebody falling from a cliff relates to falling from a cliff. I assume that it is the bodily sensations that both pornography watching and partner sex incite that pull these two experiences approximately as close to each other as falling with a cord on our ankle and without it.

4. CONCLUSION

In the first part of the thesis I argued that in order to defend pornography feminist pro-porn discourse must leave its take on the speech act nature of pornography ambiguous. It allows for simultaneously claiming that pornography is harmless because it cannot have “effects” on viewers and that pornography is transgressive/liberating for oppressed groups (women and LGBTQ people) because it can have beneficiary “effects”. I argued that the main strategy pro-porn discourse employs to divert attention from its contradictory approach to the three forces of speech act may generate a lot of knowledge about pornography as a matter of representation and production of pornography while keeping the consumption aspect in the blind-spot of the discourse. I also tried to point out that the vacuum of critical inquiry around consumption gave rise to a fantasy about the subject of pornography, constructed in a way that seemingly verifies the discourse’s claims about the harmless nature of pornography. This subject is imagined to consume pornography in a conscious and critical way, negotiating its meanings similarly to other kinds of fictional media. The importance of this fantasy lies in that if it happened to be in correspondence with the lived experiences of the consumers, anti-porn feminist concerns about pornography’s contribution to gender status quo would be indeed unfounded.

In the second part of the paper, however, I argued that this fantasy is untenable. Although the empirical research I conducted has many limitations – primarily because of the small number of the participants and of the homogeneity of the sample regarding age, race, and class – the consistency of the findings allowed for drawing the conclusion that male consumers’ practices of watching pornography seem to undermine the argument of pro-porn discourse. They

disregard those structures of the narration (temporality and even content) that are typically important resources of the meaning-making process in relation to fictional products and they predominantly perceive pornography as documents of non-fictional events. Put together with the ideally established immersion in the material, this results in the phenomena that respondents' claim that their experience of watching pornography is close to having partner sex.

Perhaps this similarity between watching pornography and having partner sex is the most important finding of the research. It exposes pro-porn discourse's fantasy about the subject of pornography and seems to reinforce the argument that pornography is a crucial tool in maintaining the union of patriarchy and late capitalism. As Jennifer Johnson (2010) points out, in the era of late capitalism "men's power over women is collectively positioned and individual men increasingly fall under the domination of the larger rubric of imperial capitalism". This leads to "the male paradox of power where institutional male power coexists with a personal sense of powerlessness among men" (151) This paradox results in what Harry Brod calls the "crisis of masculinity" and can threaten the union between patriarchy and late capitalism. Johnson's idea is that capitalism tries to save this union by offering micro-power to men via easy, unlimited and democratic access to free pornography. I contend that this theory is more substantial if we consider watching pornography not simply as watching images of female bodies but as virtually having sex with those women, therefore having easy and unlimited access to women's bodies in an almost "real" way. Pornography and a celebratory discourse *about* pornography therefore support imperial capitalism and patriarchy *and* also their union in two different domains and in the context of the two sexes: pornography by providing the above mentioned micro-power for men, and pro-porn discourse by defending pornography and propagating post-feminist ideas for women.

APPENDIX – INTERVIEW GUIDE

Attitudes

- How widespread you think pornography is nowadays, how common is it that guys and girls of your age watch porn? How good or bad is it in your opinion?
- Could you tell me three good and three bad things about porn?

Personal history of consumption

- Try to recall the first time you saw any kind of pornography. What was the experience like? How did you feel about it? What were you thinking? What kind of material was it? What were the circumstances in which you saw it?
- What was it like when you started to seek out pornography by intention? Where were you seeking it? What kind of porn did you like? What were you thinking of the existence of such material? How were you consuming? How often, in what circumstances?
- Have your preferences in porn changed in time? How? What were your favourites then and now?
- Have you ever felt that you should watch porn less or more frequently? Have you ever decided to watch more or less porn?

Interpretation of pornography

- When first seeing porn, what were you thinking about those men and women in it?
- What were you thinking about the relation of sex in porn and sex in real life?
- Have you ever bumped into porn that you didn't like? What were they like? What did you not like about them? What were you thinking and feeling about them? What were you thinking about those men and women participating in these films?
- Do you know porn which portrays “rougher sex”? How do you define “rougher sex”? What do you think about these movies? About the actors and actresses in them?

Influences of pornography, negotiation with other practices

- Do you think it is possible that porn influences the way people want to have sex? Their expectations regarding their partners and themselves?
- How have you negotiated your porn consumption with your intimate relationships? Did your partners know that you watch porn? Have you ever watched porn together with a girl? Have you had any conflicts because of porn?

- How do you think watching porn has influenced your relationships – either the sex you had or in general?
- To what extent can one gain inspiration from porn? Has it ever happened to you that something that you saw in a film occurred to you while having sex?
- If you got together with a girl who wanted you to stop watching porn, what would you do?

Identity, self-image

- Have you ever experienced that you found something disturbing and exciting at the same time?
- Have you ever been surprised at what aroused you?
- Has it happened to you that you followed recommendations and you ended up somewhere you felt uncomfortable about? How did you feel about it?
- Do you think pornography affected the way you think about yourself as a man in any ways?

Actual practices

- How often do you watch porn presently?
- What are your favourite genres? Do you have favourite actresses, directors?
- Do you ever watch porn without masturbation?
- How do you watch porn exactly? How do you decide what to watch? Do you start from the beginning and watch to the end? Or you jump back and forth? Do you watch one film at one go or more? How do you decide when to stop watching it?

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