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DIGITAL NETWORKS, DIGITAL PUB(L)ICS (1): LABOUR, PLEASURE, PORN.

Panel Description

The Digital Networks, Digital Pub(l)ics panels (two panels in total) develop a critical conversation around the themes of intimacy, sexuality and embodiment and explore the ways in which these concepts are experienced, invoked and interrogated by different groups, communities and individuals in digital contexts. Speaking to the theme of the 2017 conference, the papers collectively identify, map and seek to understand the formation of publics constituted through the paradigms and practices of gender and sexuality. In this panel, scholars come together to explore the manifold ways in which pornography, historically framed as a 'private concern', has become a 'public object' in the digital age, around which new publics have formed.

The shifting forms of digital porn production, involving new pornographic styles and new methods of framing pornographic texts, require us to (re)consider the political-economy of pornography and the ways in which publics produce, access and consume pornography. Papers one and two directly address pornography at the point of production. In the first paper, the author challenges the notion that tube-sites, central to the distribution of digital porn today, have facilitated a democratisation of porn production. The author explores how issues of ownership and governance shape the working conditions of porn performers and undermine the potential for smaller, independent producers to succeed within the arena of commercial pornography. Tube-sites offer opportunities for performers and studios to share their work and communicate with their viewing public. However, such transparency and dialogue is contrasted by an opacity concerning the ownership of platforms, the regulation of content and the economic relationships that these platforms have with content producers.

The challenges that such tube-sites pose for performers working outside of the mainstream becomes the primary site of investigation in paper two. In this presentation, the authors look at regulatory and financial obstacles that queer and feminist sex workers face when working within the confines of privately owned and governed porn distribution platforms. Once more, the conventional rhetoric of sexual freedom and of a democratising of porn, which scholars have historically invoked when discussing NetPorn, is problematized, this time through empirical research. Here, the authors identify the disconnection that exists between a discourse of DIY and 'domesticate' porn production and the corporate politics that censor, restrict and discriminate against online sex work. Drawing on qualitative data from Australian-based research, the paper

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outlines the encounters that 'local' sex workers have with 'global' financial and technology companies, which seek to deny them access to digital publics.

Complementing this initial focus on production, the third, fourth and fifth papers explore practices of porn consumption, once more attending to themes of labour, while also engaging with the notion of 'porn publics'. In paper three, the author interrogates the production of interactive/instructional porn texts that repurpose found pornographic material to produce a new genre of sexually representation. Through an examination of 'popper-training' videos, the author identifies the methods by which a discourse of productivity and 'productive leisure' is brought to bear on the 'unproductive' act of masturbation. Beneath the promotion of a collaborative porn experience that these remixed texts celebrate, these videos reframe pornography as an instance of neoliberal 'scripting' of sexual desire and sexualised bodies.

In paper four, the authors consider the ways in which digital environments offer opportunities for collective consumption experiences. The paper outlines a taxonomy of public consumption in order to elucidate the manifest ways in which pornography has become a social object: something around which like-minded individuals gather. This gathering facilitates a range of interactions and rewards. In the case of collective porn appreciation, consumers share pornography in order to motivate discussions about the text (performers, sexual practices, aesthetics) and their own sexual desires. These discussions offer a space for sharing fantasies and material as well as eliciting metadata relating to the porn 'fragments' posted to the group. In the case of porn curation, the authors identify how subcultural capital becomes the reward for the labour invested into producing themed blogs that celebrate specific kinks and fetishes. Finally, in the case of porn hunting, the paper examines how self-identifying porn addicts frame their search for porn as a form of labour and, in doing so, create a collective narrative that allows them to explain and narrativise their 'problematic' use of porn.

Finally, in paper five, the author reports on and analyses data from a large-scale survey into porn use to discuss the ways in which 'problematic' fantasies and desires are articulated and framed by respondents. Understanding pornography as something that is always public, even when consumed in private, the author identifies how public morality shapes users' interactions with, and explanations of sexually violent material.

Together, these papers offer a series of critical interventions that signpost both the collaborative aspects of digital pornography and the challenges that the current political-economy of digital culture poses to notions of sexual freedom, sexual democracy and sexual publics.

PAPER 1: PORN WORK IN THE TUBE ECONOMY

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Drawing on a broader research project on pornography, social media, and work, this paper examines the implications of so-called tube sites for the porn industry. It asks how the work of porn is becoming redefined on the level of distribution and production as both grown increasingly centralized. By using examples connected to the market leader MindGeek in particular, it argues that this results in the simultaneous openness and opaqueness concerning the shapes and conditions of porn work.

Just as the traffic of views, links, and clicks connected to news items, memes, and video clips is driven through globally leading social media hubs, the traffic of online porn is increasingly centralized and organized through leading video aggregator sites. Select companies therefore have considerable power to modulate the accessibility of content and the user experiences and interactions that they are willing to facilitate. With the exception of Xvideos and Xhamster, the key video aggregator sites of Pornhub, YouPorn, RedTube, and Tube8 are owned by MindGeek (formerly Manwin), a company with something of a monopoly in contemporary online porn distribution (Auerbach 2014).

The centralization of porn consumption on select online platforms intermeshes with the increased centralization of ownership: MindGeek alone has bought up a number of production studios (e.g. Reality Kings, Digital Playground, Men.com, and Brazzers) struggling with the decreased profitability of pay content. Technology writer David Auerbach (2014) notes that the company has put “industry members in the paradoxical position of working for the very company that profits from the piracy of their work.” The profits of pornography have shifted from production to distribution more drastically than ever to date, yet the details remain opaque. While Pornhub shares its user data as catchy infographics that routinely gain broad social media circulation, there is no similar access to information concerning their business operations.

The work of video aggregator sites involves tasks such as running servers and database maintenance, the management of data, and the tweaking of algorithms. As early as 2012, the managing partner of Manwin characterized it as essentially a tech company (Morris 2012). MindGeek’s web site introduces the company as a responsible equal opportunities employer that aims to “promote ethical and responsible behavior” in ways far detached indeed from anti-pornography definitions of the porn industry as lacking in ethical principles, trading in violence, crime, and degradation of women (e.g. Reist and Bray 2011). In fact the careers advertised at the company do not vary from those in other high tech companies trading in social media. While IT skills, tasks, and profession form the backbone for porn distribution, content is sourced from production companies, amateurs, and uploads operating within and outside applicable copyright legislation.

Within this centralized yet dispersed corporate structure, the work of porn models involves precarious self-employment rather than exclusive contracts with studios that were standard up until the early 2000s (Author forthcoming). Porn models, from newcomers to stars, increasingly build and manage their careers through online platforms as independent entrepreneurs. The political economy of this “gig economy” builds on a reserve army of labor is “willing to perform in porn even when pay and conditions are poor” and where workers are placed “in shifting positions as entrepreneurs, independent contractors, employees, contracted and freelance managers, and producers” (Berg 2016, 161). It is increasingly difficult for performers to create lucrative careers in making porn alone: money is also made from webcamming, escorting, and strip club performances managed under one’s brand maintained through social media (Berg 2016).

Twitter in particular has grown central to how both porn studios and porn stars construct their brands and maintain relations with their fan base. At the same time, news on unethical demeanor also travel quickly, reaching journalists, performers, and fans, and damaging reputations and careers overnight. This was the case with James Deen, the porn star accused of sexual violence in 2015, as it was with Brazzers the following year when porn star Nikki Benz accused director Tony T in a series of tweets for choking and stomping on her head on set and shooting a non-consensual rape scene for the studio (which she was a brand ambassador for). Brazzers’ account soon grew rife with tweets defending the centrality of consent, the rights of women, and the unacceptability of violence and bullying within the industry, requests for fans to unfollow the company and to unsubscribe from their membership services. While condemning the incident, Brazzers ultimately failed to take responsibility for what had unfolded on set and, consequently, for that which may unfold in their production practices more generally.

The workplace assault experienced by Benz reinforces the connections of porn work, violence, as articulated in anti-pornography activism at the very same time when porn companies are refashioning themselves as branches of the IT sector and the creative industry (cf. McKee 2016). Porn tube sites are unquestionably part and parcel of social media landscape even though the content they cater is mostly weeded out from circulation on sites such as Facebook and Instagram. They emulate similar business models and employ the same professionals while building their brand through click-worthy publicity stunts. This corporate self-management requires openness that is in tension with the opaqueness of the operations of productions studios owned by the very same companies. Twitter offers a public platform for both brand building and for unraveling some of the opaqueness surrounding the work of porn, yet one that is differently available for porn workers. It takes stardom to create a Twitter storm of any visibility and this option remains increasingly unavailable to the precarious workers in pornography’s contemporary gig economy.

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PAPER 2: SAFE FOR WORK: AUSTRALIAN QUEER AND FEMINIST PORN PRODUCERS' ACCOUNTS OF DIGITAL LABOUR & PLATFORM GOVERNANCE IN NETWORKED PUBLICS.

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As Marwick (2010) and others have observed, the presentation of self in networked publics may demand highly crafted performances of authenticity in the pursuit of personal branding. This is especially the case for sex-workers who self-identify as queer and/or feminist, who must balance their 'authentic' self-presentation with the demands of a commercial marketplace (Ruberg 2016). This paper draws on 35 interviews with 20 Australian producers of queer and/or feminist porn, 16 of whom were also performers, conducted in 2015. Within these interviews, producers and performers reflected on the opportunities and challenges presented by their participation in paid and unpaid digital marketplaces. While many participants embraced porn production and distribution as a practice of self-representation and local/global community-formation, others struggled with the personal costs of developing and distributing commercially viable pornography in a digital environment where consumers are often unwilling to pay for content (Stardust 2016, Taormino et al 2013, Young 2016).

In Australia, online content is regulated by the Australian Communication and Media Authority, drawing on Federal guidelines for content classification (Flew 2015). In the early 1990s, a range of sexually explicit digital content was produced and hosted in Australia. By 2000 the Broadcasting Services Act was amended to specifically exclude material that would be classified as 'R18+', 'X18+' or RC (Refused Classification) from sites registered with .au domains (Hartley et al 2010). This regulatory shift caused some companies (such as Abby Winters) to shift production offshore, while other producers simply re-routed their locally-produced content via non-Australian hosting platforms.

Until the mid-2000s, local debates regarding the regulation of pornography have centred on the cost of classification (which allows legal distribution in Australian Territories), and the interpretation of classification guidelines at State and Federal levels. In this context, complaints by producers have focused on the ways that otherwise legal sex acts (such as spanking and fisting) have declared 'unrepresentable' according to classifier's understanding of what might be offensive to 'the reasonable person' (Huntley 1995). Queer and feminist producers and distributors have particularly taken issue with Federal

classifier's interpretation of legal definitions of 'community standards' (Stardust 2014). Advocates have argued for a less punitive approach to materials primarily produced and circulated within queer and feminist subcultures, deploying arguments that evoke Warner's (1998) conception of 'queer counterpublics' (with mixed success). These appeals to Australian law, we suggest are founded on a claim to sexual citizenship by queer and feminist porn producers, within a broader Australian public sphere (Plummer 1995).

However, many participants in our project focused not so much on struggles with Australian regulators, but with what they regarded as arbitrary or punitive content policies on US-based hosting platforms (such as Vimeo) or billing companies (such as CC Bill), and 'corporate censorship' from companies that refused to process credit card payments for sexually explicit content. While a Classification Board decision must follow precedent and publish reasons for their decisions (that may later be reviewed on appeal), private regulation of online space provides little transparency in decision-making, and may exceed legal requirements without explanation (see Gillespie 2010, Crawford and Gillespie, 2016). Where the low barriers to access for DIY digital production and distribution may initially have promised queer and feminist producers and performers access to new global networks of both profit and community-formation, they are now seen by many of our participants as equally (if not more) restrictive than Australian regulatory structures.

In this paper, then, we reflect on the tensions raised for independent queer and feminist porn producers who must simultaneously occupy multiple citizen/subject positions in relation to multiple publics. Drawing on Papacharissi's (2010) exploration of citizenship in the networked 'public/private sphere', and Igin and Nielsens (2008) concept of 'acts of citizenship', we explore participant's accounts of striving to perform the role of ethical citizen in the networked counter-public of DIY queer and feminist porn cultures, while simultaneously performing as an entrepreneurial, platform-savvy 'citizen-worker' in the digital gig economy (Berg 2016). Both these roles require deep attention to digital labour in terms self-representation, and 'authentic' modes of sexual and political performance within networked publics and counterpublics. Additionally, many of our participants reported a strong sense of accountability to queer community, and a desire to adhere to their political and ethical values not just in the process of production, but via the kinds of sexual practices they represented in their work. As one participant put it:

depicting S/M practices, fisting or g spot ejaculation was important because 'these are in my community. That's what happens. And that's how you fuck. Or it's one of a million ways in which you fuck'. And it was important 'to have those opportunities to see those things represented, to understand how they work, to feel in any way that they are normal.

In this context producing pornography might be understood as an act of sexual citizenship. It is also an act of labour however, and the majority of our participants were not satisfied to create porn solely as a 'labour of love' (Ruberg 2016).

Where governance and regulatory guidelines are unclear and/or not subject to appeal, porn producers must self-censor, or undertake many hours of frustrating post-

production when even non-explicit (but fetishistic) images and scenes are deemed unsuitable for commercial distribution platforms. This labour, we suggest, is especially frustrating for queer and feminist producers, who implicitly strive to exceed market norms regarding 'appropriate' representations of sexuality and gender. To this end, corporate regulation becomes just as onerous as state classification. The difference is that the threshold test for content has moved from *community standards* under classification law to *profitability and risk* under capitalist enterprise. While sexual citizen-subjects within a national public might have some grounds to appeal the former, the citizen-worker must conform to the latter, or risk take-down notices, and subsequent exclusion from both networked counterpublics, and global markets.

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PAPER 3: POPPERBATE: ONLINE VIDEO COLLAGE, THE NEOLIBERAL SCRIPTING OF THE GAY PORNOGRAPHIC BODY

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This presentation discusses the practice of making collage 'popper training' videos which involves repurposing a range of found sources, from still images to amateur video and webcam footage to extracts from commercial gay porn, with the express purpose of turning masturbation, fuelled by amyl nitrate use, into an activity that might be regarded, using the neoliberal rubric, as 'productive leisure' (Gelber, 1999:2). The intention of the presentation is to contextualise this creative practice of (what I am describing for the sake of simplicity and consistency as) popperbate or popper training video making, to provide some conceptual orientations to situate the materials and for the analysis of the textual qualities of the videos, and to discuss the sexual scripting that they produce.

The term scripting is used very deliberately here as it both has purchase as a term that is widely used in the sociological studies of sex and sexuality drawing, as it does, on the symbolic interactionism of Erving Goffman. Scripting is a particularly useful metaphor for thinking about the ways in which the production practices in evidence in online popper training videos connect to the emergence of a popperbating 'practice.' In *The Presentation of Self Everyday Life*, (1956) what has become known as Goffman's 'dramaturgical metaphor' of the cultural script, and his foregrounding of the importance of 'expressiveness' and 'dramatic realization' of everyday life has been profoundly influential on subsequent scholarship particularly in the field of sexology. William Simon and John Gagnon for instance, used the same metaphor in the foundational study *Sexual Conduct* (1973) with their development of sexual script theory.

In the case of the material that is my object of study in this presentation, scripting provides a framework for identifying and conceptualising a set of discursive and representational strategies that make meaning at three interconnected levels.

Scripting sexual representations: The formalising and conventionalising of a set of sexual activities as they are represented via the process of isolation and selection that is inherent in the video editing process. This is in effect the production of what I've described elsewhere as a 'demotic idiom' (Mercer, 2017) of gay porn.

Describing/producing a sexual script: What emerges from these representational strategies is a gay sexual script or, perhaps more accurately, a gay *pornographic* sexual script, where one activity leads inevitably to another in a relatively linear fashion.

Scripting the sexualised masculine body of gay porn: This third level of scripting is especially important for me here. The representational strategies in evidence here as elsewhere across gay pornography, commercial, amateur or otherwise produces the male body as a sexual spectacle that is to be read in circumscribed (and therefore scripted) ways.

The rather amorphous category of amateur porn has been written about quite extensively and continues to grow as an area of interest for scholars in the field (Attwood 2007, Van Doorn 2010, Paasonen 2010, 2011, 2014, Zecca 2014, Hofer 2014, Ruberg 2016, Mercer 2017). This breadth of critical interventions has brought a complex set of activities, texts, relations and interactions into view that have challenged simplistic assumptions about what amateur porn might be, exploring the textures of amateur aesthetics, the representational strategies of amateur porn makers, the connections between amateurism and ethical porn practices, as well as the emancipatory potentials that amateur porn offers, by responding to debates around inclusivity through representation of a plethora of social and subcultural groups, body types, ethnicities, genders and generations. Much of this scholarly work is predicated on a distinction being drawn between professional, commercial, material produced by a putative homogenous industry and the diversity and heterogeneity of amateur production practices. These categories though, as Susanna Paasonen (2014:33) notes, are not necessarily so easy to unpick.

Within this rich amateur ecology, (and I am firmly situating popperbate videos within this domain) I am identifying yet another production practice that yields results that are qualitatively different from much of the material that has previously been written about. I am mindful that popperbating is, ostensibly, a relatively obscure cultural practice and that the adjunct to this activity, the popper training videos that I am discussing here are an equally specialised and singular mode of amateur production. However, it is perhaps this particularity that motivates this intervention in a consideration of what gay porn *now* means in terms of thinking about what results from an amateur making practice and conditions of production and consumption where distinctions between amateur and professional, still and moving image, text and sound become blurred.

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PAPER 4: LENDING A HELPING HAND: THE NSFW LABOUR OF DIGITAL PORN CONSUMPTION

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Pornography is not something one usually thinks of as being consumed in public. The video revolution of the 1980s allowed pornography to go 'indoors', as lighter, more affordable technologies permitted the production, distribution and consumption of pornography to become 'domesticated' (O'Toole, 1998). Digital media have further extended (and eroticized) this domestication (Esch & Mayer, 2007; Hofer, 2014) and, news stories of public porn consumption (Cosslett, 2017; Tighe, 2017) reaffirm the belief that consuming porn is (and should be) a private, solitary affair.

Meanwhile, political economic critiques of pornography often focus on the production of pornography, the conditions in which performers work and the contexts in which they perform (see Hester, 2015 and Wilkinson, 2017 for review). Such discussions have found new traction within the context of digital pornography (Mowlabocus, 2010, Ruberg, 2016, Lee & Sullivan, 2016), yet the focus of such work continues to be on the creation of sexually explicit material, rather than on its consumption.

Following Patterson's (2004: 105) assertion that digital pornography is shaped 'through a particular logic of networked computer technology', this paper complicates understandings of both porn consumption and sexualised labour, by mapping the ways in which online pornography creates 'networked publics' (Varnelis, 2012) of porn consumers. This mapping identifies the informal, unpaid labour that porn consumers engage in as part of their consumption. The reasons behind this labour are numerous and include 1/ the acquisition of sub-cultural capital (Hebdige 1995; Thornton, 1995) and social capital (Ellison et al. 2007); 2/ access to new pornographic texts (Slater, 1998); and 3/ the enhancement of sexual pleasure through the creation of meta-textual 'stories', dialogue and fantasies.

Drawing upon a multi-sited analysis of digital spaces dedicated to the consumption of pornography, we outline three forms of informal labour (Jarrett, 2014) tied to the consumption of digital pornography.

The first type of labour we identify is that of *collaborative porn appreciation*. This shares much in common with notions of 'collaborative consumption' and the sharing economy (Hamari et al., 2015), and serves to increase both the individual's and the community's knowledge of, and access to, pornographic material. Based on a content analysis of co-constructed NSFW (Not Safe For Work) sub-reddits, we identify the co-production of meta-data relating to specific pornographic texts, which provides opportunities for

community members to share sexual interests and 'porn knowledge'. Our analysis reveals the process by which porn consumers expose personal desires and sexual interests in return for ascertaining additional information on these texts. This information can include the names of featured performers and details of the production studio. Given the fragmented nature of much digital porn, links to entire films or scenes may also be offered by the community in return for sharing the original text. Thus, in return for sharing content with the network, sub-cultural capital can be crowdsourced and access to similar pornography, secured.

The second form of labour we identify is that of *porn curation*. Unlike the collaborative work of porn appreciation, this second form of labour is often attributed to a single individual, although networked curation always carries with it a social dimension (see Zarro & Hall, 2012). Our analysis of porn Tumblrs reveal a similar exposure of libidinal interests to that found in networked appreciation. However, this revelation is shaped by a particular intensity of consumption (Paasonen, 2011), surpassing that of casual spectatorship. Through the production of detailed commentaries on each text, the curator reveals their investment of time and resources into the act of pornographic consumption. The quality and quantity of this labour is then recognized and rewarded through audience praise and the submission of other items for the collection.

Finally, through a discourse analysis of 'porn addiction' narratives, we identify the *inescapable work of porn hunting* as a third (often unwanted) form of consumer labour. Echoing research into online support networks (Kantrowitz-Gordon, 2013; Ouellette & Arcy, 2015), we identify the religio-medical discourse of the confessional (Foucault, 1990) that structures these narratives. In such narratives, community members position pornography as something to be *worked* at, framing their consumption as a form of unavoidable labour, which they become addicted to (and which, ironically, regularly results in the *loss* of 'legitimate' labour through unemployment). Our analysis reveals how the terminology of 21st century computational labour is appropriated by porn addicts in order to articulate the intensity of their addiction, together with the cost of that addiction.

Through this tri-partite analysis of networked porn publics, our research identifies the different forms of informal labour involved in digital porn consumption and the work that audiences undertake when consuming porn online.

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PAPER 5: DANGEROUS DESIRES, FANTASIES AND FORBIDDINGS: EXPLORING PORN CONSUMPTION

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A project undertaken by psychologist Brett Kahr (2008), using a representative survey of 19,000 UK adults, found that 90% of men and 60% of women have viewed pornography at some time. 29% fantasise about playing a dominant role during sex; 33% fantasise about playing a submissive role during sex; 4% fantasise about being violent towards someone else; 6% fantasise about violence being done to them by someone else. Many people enjoy submissive fantasies but the reasons for such enjoyment are complicated and its meanings and significances are disparate (see Corie, 2013 and Bergner, 2013 for useful case studies). There is little systematic academic research on consumers of 'mainstream' or 'ordinary' pornography, and even less on the particular interests in fantasies of rape, even as such fantasies form the basis of many kinds of narrative from formula romances (such as Mills & Boon/Harlequin) through cinema and television, and 'high culture' literature. Representations of rape and sexual violence constitute a significant part of the phenomenon of 'extreme cinema'.

This presentation will draw on research with more than 5,000 self-identifying consumers of online pornography and in particular those respondents who 'confess' to enjoying 'difficult' or 'extreme' sexual imagery or scenarios. Our broader findings in this research demonstrate that there are multiple reasons for accessing pornography and that such consumption is significant for many people, not least in enabling exploration of the possibilities and opportunities for sexual feeling; finding out about what interests and arouses and excites. Pornography is not 'only fantasy', it is much more than that: it speaks to the relations between bodies, selfhood, and social and cultural permissions and forbiddings.

Many of our respondents explored their interests in extreme topics through online literary erotica or hentai and there are interesting ways in which such material is seen to occupy a place in the developing of sexual literacies as well as sexual fantasies. Even so, it is clear that respondents are aware of the many criticisms that can be leveled at any expression of 'enjoying rape' thus respondents emphasised only enjoying watching scenes which are clearly acted.

Understanding audience pleasures and engagements with these is a fraught and risky business. The idea of showing sexual violence carries with it a host of perceived worries. A key one is the fear that depictions of rape may cause sexual arousal. Our culture maintains a pretty tight line on this – any depiction judged likely to arouse viewers, and especially male ones, is *per se* dangerous. There is however a powerful discourse of 'redemption' for representations of sexual desire (especially in 'arthouse' cinema), whereby critics and regulatory bodies, such as the BBFC, redefine unusual and/or dangerous images as 'unerotic' in order to make them 'safe'. To admit to films

being sexually arousing is to attach a smell of danger to them, because arousal is seen as basic, compulsive, overriding.

Equally, representations explicitly targeted to female audiences are often justified as 'safe explorations' of rape – interesting to women precisely because they allow them to experience the possibility of 'giving in' to kinds of sex they would avoid in 'real life'. Men are not given the same 'excuse': for a man to fantasise rape, or to enjoy a rape fiction, is to be complicit in actual violence against women.

Even so, the recognition of female rape fantasies has generated its own difficult concerns. Brought to prominence by Masters and Johnson's (1966) research and made concrete by the *Hite Report* (2003) and Nancy Friday's (1973, 1975, 1991, 2009) work into women's sexuality, 'force fantasies' are enjoyed by a substantial proportion of women - a recent meta-study concluded that between a third and half of all women experience rape fantasies (see Critelli & Bivona, 2008). But that has aroused powerful fears that this might be misread in for instance judgments by the BBFC on films containing 'sexual violence'. It is true that many people understand the viewing of fantasy rape to be de facto problematic behaviour but there is no robust evidence that such viewing leads to actual harm to others. As academic Brian McNair (2014) has recently argued 'Porn, like the knife in every household kitchen, is used by the vast majority of people in ways which cause no harm to others. Only a small minority will use it to injure another, which is why we do not ban kitchen knives (although some jurisdictions restrict possession outside the domestic zone).'

In addition to referencing rape fantasies, respondents (n. 63; 1.1%) also mentioned the fantasy of non-consensual sex, or simply just 'noncon' or some variation, often used as a euphemism for rape; in addition, terms like 'forced sex' or 'forced orgasm' appear many times. Other terms, such as 'reluctance' or 'control', seem to refer, less overtly, to rape, though they appear to continue this theme of a fantasy situation not entirely of the subject's choosing. Issues around consent and fantasy are also raised as qualifying or clarifying points when mentioning a 'forced' situation, as in this response:

I recall one film with a slow, very artfully shot 'forced' fellatio - the woman in question was in the role of a sex toy, and was being very gently directed by her 'master'. Please note this was all filmed with consent and was pure fantasy.

Thus there are complex and layered engagements with pressured or extreme sexual scenarios which this presentation will try to explore via a general overview of issues around taboos, extremes, religious undercurrents, and societal pressures/ perceptions in relation to pornography. This presentation will draw out some insights in relation to gender, sexual orientation, and porn viewing choices and their connections to taboo subjects including incest, child pornography, bestiality, fetishisms, and rape, among others.

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