

WAIT, WHAT JUST HAPPENED?
DESUBJECTIVATION, QUEERNESS AND REACHING FOR THE
REAL IN CONTEMPORARY PORN CONSUMPTION

ABSTRACT

While browsing for pornography viewers often appear to choose a clip that might initially seem to offer a prurient thrill. This thesis will ask the question of what the implications are if this choice results in an unfamiliar or unanticipated arousal. It will argue that these patterns of viewing may signal an ‘emergent sexual sensibility’, a way of engaging with pornography that operates apart from the individual’s understandings of their own identitarian frameworks of desire. It will define this pattern of porn viewing not as use, which suggests agency and intentional choice, or consumption, which suggests taking something into the body, but as a form of ‘radical exposure’ due to the unintentional nature of the affects that the pornographic materials have on the individual. Many of these viewers then articulate this arousal in what they write in the comments sections below the clip, which often express shock, surprise, anxiety or humour. This thesis will analyse this unintended arousal by examining these comments from the perspective of queer theory and philosophies of desubjectivation, Lacanian understandings of desire, post-truth political discourse and porn and sexuality studies. It is interested in the possibility that this ‘radical exposure’ is leading to ‘desubjectivation’, a term brought into use by Michel Foucault, and which signals a breaking down of an individual’s identitarian understandings of their own desire, which suggests a form of ‘primary queerness’. With regard to theories of desire, sexuality and pornography, the contribution that this thesis will make is in the way it argues that some viewers of pornography, many of whom seem to have a relatively normative understanding of their own frameworks of desire, appear to be exhibiting desubjectivising, or, as will be explained, queer manifestations of desire.

ABSTRACT	2
INTRODUCTION	5
CHAPTER OUTLINE	10
METHODOLOGY	15
DATA COLLECTION	19
GENRES	23
ALGORITHMIC TECHNOLOGIES	25
ETHICS	27
CHAPTER ONE: CRITICAL LITERATURE REVIEW	31
FEMINIST THEORY AND THE 'SEX WARS'	32
PORN STUDIES	37
DESUBJECTIVATION, QUEER THEORY AND LACAN	43
CONCLUDING REMARKS	52
CHAPTER TWO: THE TRANSGRESSIVE BOUNDARIES OF CONTEMPORARY PORN VIEWING.	54
PORNOGRAPHY AND POLITICS	54
PORNOGRAPHY AND EDUCATION: INCORRIGIBILITY, RECTIFIABILITY AND PORN LITERACY	59
TEENAGERS, PARENTS AND THE FAMILY	71
POPULAR CULTURE, PORNOGRAPHY AND PORNIFICATION	81
CONCLUDING REMARKS	86
CHAPTER THREE: DESUBJECTIVATION AND PORN COMMENTARY	88
FOUCAULT, THE MARQUIS DE SADE AND WRENCHING THE SUBJECT FROM ITSELF	90
KANT AVEC SADE AND THE ETHICS OF DESIRE	95
PORN STUDIES AND THE DESUBJECTIVISING EXPERIENCE	97
PORN COMMENTARY AND NORMATIVE ENGAGEMENTS WITH DESIRE	102
THE POSSIBILITY OF DESUBJECTIVATION IN PORN COMMENTARY	105
DELEUZE, DESUBJECTIVATION AND 'SMOOTH' AND 'STRIATED' SPACES	114
CONCLUDING REMARKS	118
CHAPTER FOUR: QUEER THEORY, QUEER PORN, AND THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF THE DESUBJECTIVISED SELF	120
FOUCAULT'S QUEER FOUNDATIONS AND 'MOVING ONTO SOMETHING ELSE'	121

JUDITH BUTLER AND 'PARODIC REPETITION' IN QUEER PORN	127
TOWARDS A THEORY OF PRIMARY QUEERNESS	132
JOAO FLORENCIO'S 'PIGSEX' AS AN EMANCIPATORY PRACTICE	140
THE UNEXPECTED ANTI-SOCIALITY OF MUNOZ'S QUEER UTOPIANISM	144
GAGA FEMINISM, MOVING ONTO SOMETHING ELSE, AND WISDOM IN THE UNEXPECTED	148
GUCCI, PRECIADO, AND THE PROBLEM OF RESUBJECTIVATION	150
DESUBJECTIVATION AND INITIATION INTO AGAMBEN'S 'COMING COMMUNITY'	152
CONCLUDING REMARKS	155
CHAPTER FIVE: POST TRUTH, AMATEUR PORN AND THE THIRD SLOPE OF REPRESENTATION	157
POST TRUTH AND THE ESCAPIST ROMANTIC FANTASY OF AMATEUR PORN	160
THE ALTERNATIVE REALITY OF ON-STREET PICKUPS	164
THE 'HOLY GRAIL' OF AMATEUR PORNOGRAPHY	169
POLITICAL REALITY AS A SUPPLEMENT TO THE REPRESENTATION	173
MAURICE BLANCHOT AND THE THREE SLOPES OF REPRESENTATION	179
POSTMODERNISM: SYMPTOM OR PREDICTION?	185
CONCLUDING REMARKS	188
CHAPTER SIX: LAUGHTER AND THE EMERGENCE OF THE SCHIZOPORNOLOGIST	191
LAUGHTER, COMEDY AND PORN STUDIES	194
THE INCONGRUENCE THEORY OF COMEDY	195
COMEDY AND SURREALISM	198
CRITIQUING PORN WITH LAUGHTER	200
THE BLACK SUN OF COMEDY	200
DELEUZE AND GUATTARI AND THE SCHIZOPORNOLOGIST	204
CONCLUDING REMARKS	215
CONCLUSION	218
BIBLIOGRAPHY OF WRITTEN MATERIALS	228
BIBLIOGRAPHY OF ONLINE MATERIALS	247

INTRODUCTION

The central question of this thesis lies in the tension between two things: the intentional consumption of pornography that occurs when an individual chooses which porn to view according to their identitarian understandings of their own desire, and those instances that signal an accidental exposure to an unfamiliar form of desire. Through this, an unfamiliar form of pleasure emerges that can on occasion be defined as ‘desubjectivising’. The objective of this project is to consider the following questions: What happens when an individual becomes unintentionally aroused in a way that is in opposition to the individual’s normative frameworks of identitarian desire? Can the comments beneath such clips, that often express surprise, shock, anxiety, humour and intense pleasure, be used as an illustration of an attempt by the individual to articulate this potential ‘desubjectivation’? Finally, can these forms of ‘radical exposure’ be used to argue that an ‘emergent sexual sensibility’ is becoming visible among those who would usually view porn according to their normative sexual identities? This thesis will attempt to answer these questions from the perspective of porn studies, queer theory, and psychoanalysis, arguing that if one significant form of desire resides in a place out of reach of the conscious decision making capacities of the individual, in what is known as the Lacanian Real, then does this form of desire have the potential to evade being inscribed into this ‘formation of dominant contemporary sexual culture’? (Saunders, 2023: 120). The contribution to knowledge that this thesis is making lies in its central argument, that some porn commentary appears to suggest the emergence of a form of ‘primary queerness’ from individuals whose porn viewing habits would otherwise be defined as ‘normative’.

The central topic of this thesis is the philosophy of desire and the emergence of queerness from normative sexual identities, and it approaches this topic by examining the comments that are

written underneath porn comments. Porn comments have not yet been researched by any of the current approaches to porn viewing, so one reason this study is significant is that it is a philosophical examination of something that is as yet untouched by academic discourse. It considers the comments underneath porn clips as a raw, untouched and valuable source of information with regard to contemporary understandings of desire, and the purpose of this study is to consider them according to a number of connected philosophical disciplines.

As Clarissa Smith argues, following the sexually liberal attitudes that emerged in the 1960s, and in line with the idea that the 'personal is political', debates around pornography 'moved discussion from moral to political outrage' (Smith, 2007: 33). When Robin Morgan wrote that 'pornography is the theory, rape is the practice' (Morgan, 1974: 280), she was making a casual claim regarding the connection between porn and sexual violence towards women, and many connections were made regarding the unequal power dynamics between genders. Other radical feminists of the time used Marx's notion of false consciousness to add theoretical strength to this more political approach, arguing that pornography weaves a cultural narrative that persuades both men and women that due to the pleasure that women in porn seem to be experiencing, regardless of how derogatory and humiliating the practice, it must be embraced as a liberating manifestation of female sexuality. Progressing from this is the assumption that Smith (2007: 35) critiques, that no woman would therefore choose to use or participate in pornography.

However, because the topic of this thesis concerns the 'emergent sexual sensibilities' that manifest following unexpected instances of desire, and that can mostly be defined as non-normative (though not exclusively), it is with Gayle Rubin's position within the sex wars that this thesis is in most agreement. Rubin's connection to queer theory and the theories of desire that will be used in this thesis is in the anti-identitarian element of the way she approach desire from the position of

‘benign sexual variation’, which can be understood as anti-normative sexual practices. Rubin views sexual variation as a ‘point of departure for politics’ (Mesli, 2015: 806).

In 2014 Feona Attwood and Clarissa Smith founded the journal *Porn Studies*. This journal seeks to increase a level of critical rigour beyond the often static dichotomy of the ‘sex wars’, or what Susanna Paasonen describes as its ‘binary legacy’ (2018: 5). It takes an interdisciplinary approach, and engages with porn content and porn use from the perspective of cultural studies, visual cultures, media theory, philosophy, psychoanalysis and literary theory, though this list is not exhaustive.

Beyond the fact that pornography is the journal’s central analytical object, the work contained within *Porn Studies* has a high level of specificity. An example of this might be Rama et al’s ‘The platformization of gender and sexual identities: an algorithmic analysis of Pornhub’, which examines the ‘algorithmic infrastructures through which platforms distribute and manage pornographic content’ (Rama, et al, 2023: 155). By examining 25,000 video suggestions, and analysing them according to Pornhub’s assumption of the user’s gender, this illustrates both the specificity of *Porn Studies*’ approach as a journal - a single site, a single analytical strategy, and in gender, a single identity signifier - and the way in which *Porn Studies* does not avoid a more critical approach to pornography in some of the articles it publishes. Other topics that appear in *Porn Studies* concern various forms of regulation, both through the state and socially, such as Katrin Tiidenberg’s ‘Sex, power and platform governance’, which assesses the deplatformization of sex on social media and makes a normative recommendation for ‘a more sex-positive platform governance’ (2021: 381). In this article Tildenberg makes use of Rubin’s theory of the ‘charmed circle’, and argues that the more vague the regulation, the more likely it will draw things back into the ‘charmed circle’ of acceptable sexual practices.

It is also important of course to reflect on the less positive or empowering elements of porn. Although this thesis is not centrally about this, much excellent work has been carried out that is not

from a stiflingly ideological perspective, but from a more balanced, considered and theoretically compelling perspective. One of these pieces of work is Kwasi D. Tembo's 'A sketch of two parallaxes of porn and its use: revelation and regulation' (Tembo, 2021), which will be engaged with in Chapter Three.

Porn Studies covers much ground in its varied analyses of pornography. However, the questions underpinning this thesis have not yet been addressed in the journal, nor has the broader question of how we read porn comments. This thesis will use the comments beneath a variety of porn clips to argue that many individuals who view pornography are doing so in a way that unintentionally draws them towards an experience of 'desubjectivation' (see: Huffer, 2010; Edelman, 2016; Foucault, 1994; Ruti, 2017), which can be defined as an abrupt and unexpected shattering of the self, initiated by the sudden emergence of the desire that resides within the Real. If desubjectivation is the process, then this form of desire, when it is understood as a symptom of this process, is known as a 'sinthome', which is the form of symptom that remains after the analyst and the analysand have determined and resignified the initial symptoms that comprised most of the psychoanalytical process (Ruti, 2017: 96). For Lacan, an engagement with the desubjectivating desire that is found in the Real is an engagement with a desire that is unregulated by the various determining factors that are imposed on the individual by society; this is what is known as a Lacanian ethical act and is the foundational theoretical structure according to which Lacanian ethics must operate. The Real is that part of the self outside of the remit of those often normative regulatory regimes of language, culture, ideology and identity formations, it is 'that before which the imaginary faltered, that over which the symbolic stumbles, that which is refractory, resistant' (1977: 283)

To understand the concept of desubjectivation it is first necessary to understand the concept of subjectivation. Gerald Bruns describes it as: 'being made into something familiar—something recognizable (and controllable)' (2010: 50). Subjectivation, however, occurs not only between the

social order and the individual, but also within the individual. It is bound up with self-recognition, with what Michel Foucault, an early and significant theorist of desubjectivation, describes as a 'relation to self by which the individual constitutes and recognizes himself *qua* subject' (1990: 6). Desubjectivation, then, is the unmaking of this subject, and the undoing of subjectivation. For Foucault it is 'displacement and transformation of frameworks of thinking [*des cadres de pensée*], the changing of received values...to do something else, to become something other than what one is...' (1990: 330). It must be 'absolutely refractory to normalization and, indeed, to rule of identity in all of its applications' (Bruns, 2010: 55). The key to experiencing desubjectivation is to find oneself confronted by a 'limit-experience', an experience 'which can no longer be framed within the categories of subject and object, same and other, identity and difference'. But desubjectivation cannot happen as a result of an intentional choice made by the subjectivised self; it must come as a surprise, a shock, or a sudden rupture. To embrace this rupture rather than turning away from it is how Foucault believes we are capable of 'practicing freedom as an essentially anarchic form of life...it is one in which nothing is settled in advance, and the idea is to keep things (and oneself) in motion' (Foucault, 2001: 282).

This thesis will make a theoretical contribution to the intersection between understandings of desire, online pornographies, and queer and post structural philosophies, and these are the three elements - porn comments, Lacanian ethics and unintentionality - that together open up a gap in existing research into which this thesis will attempt to intervene. This thesis considers the comments to be an important source of engagement with both pornography and intrapersonal frameworks of desire.

The rationale for the approach this thesis takes, which is a philosophical approach, lies in the fact that the comments in question are often raw, unpredictable and spontaneous. Their value can be derived from the fact that they are not sources of information that come from a research setting, or from a questionnaire or survey; the individuals in question are making articulations that are

determined by their own spontaneity. To attempt to understand the comments from a more traditional perspective, by approaching the commenters with a questionnaire, or asking them to participate as an interviewee, for example, would remove this spontaneous and raw element that this thesis considers to be important, interesting and original. The scholarship that will be used is that which, for the most part, takes the broad position that it is problematic to 'ignore the wide diversity of sexually explicit media and emotive experiences that are currently available' (Jacobs, 2014: 211), that porn users 'do not react to porn in a uniform manner' (ibid: 210), that relationship stability and healthy successful development are not co-dependent (McKee, Litsou, Byron, Ingham, 2022: 23), that pornography can 'unlock' aspects of 'sexuality that were previously unknown or suppressed' (Daskalopoulou & Zanette, 2020: 980), and that, broadly, porn viewing is not unequivocally bad, unhealthy, pathologically deviant or oppressive.

CHAPTER OUTLINE

Chapter One will provide a critical literature review, the purpose of which is to illustrate the gaps that exist in the research that has been carried out with regard to both porn studies, and desubjectivation. It will make clear the absence of any type of research on porn commentary in porn and sexuality studies, and it will also examine those books and journal articles that have been written from the perspective of these disciplines that will be useful throughout the later chapters of this thesis. In the second half of this chapter a close examination of the connections between theories of desubjectivation, queer theory and Lacanian theory will be carried out. This section of the chapter constitutes an attempt to devise a theoretical model of desubjectivation that can be used to understand the non-normative desires that are articulated in porn commentary.

Chapter Two will examine the various understandings of acceptability that exist in the UK with regard to the viewing of pornography. In an attempt to understand the various ways that different elements of society seek to influence individuals' engagement with pornography, it will examine the state, the family, education, contemporary anti-pornography campaigns and Western mainstream culture from the perspective of pornography viewing. After establishing the dominant position of each of these understandings of porn viewing, it will then attempt to iteratively examine them according to a form of methodological triangulation, whereby ideas such as Michel Foucault's notions of 'rectifiability and incorrigibility' (Foucault, 1991: 56), will be applied to these notions of acceptability in order to develop an argument that the state, education and the family tend to approach the viewing of pornography as something to be regulated, and in many ways condemned, while the individual who views the pornography is positioned as a person to be rectified and denounced. This argument will then be strengthened by the application of contemporary understandings of porn viewing, particularly from the perspective of the journal *Porn Studies*, as well as from works by theorists such as Linda Williams, Helen Hester, Susanna Paasonen and Margaret Grebowicz. The conclusion drawn from this iterative approach will suggest that although many elements of society make attempts to position pornography as unacceptable in an attempt to subjectivise the individual according to a specific set of Western values, particularly those of Christian conservative persuasion, what this in fact results in is what might be termed a transgressive boundary of acceptability. That is, by designating the viewing of pornography according to a binary of what is and what is not acceptable behaviour, the viewing of pornography is rendered transgressive, which consequently has the potential to hold more value than it otherwise might have held.

Chapter Three will consider porn viewing according to the ideas of the Marquis de Sade, Judith Butler and Jacques Lacan, and will again apply porn studies, as well as theories of desire and pleasure, to the forms of seemingly transgressive behaviour that appear to be expressed in various

porn comments. It will argue that although much porn viewing can be considered an act of transgressive behaviour according to the standards discussed in the previous chapter, these theories are not fully sufficient with regard to the ‘radical exposure’ at the centre of this thesis. This is because porn viewing as an act of transgression is most often an intentional choice, but this thesis is attempting to examine the unintentionality that determines whether an online experience of porn viewing can be defined as ‘radical exposure’, or, in contrast, as an act of consumption, defined with regard to this thesis as a wilful decision to ‘take something into the body’ (McKee, et al, 2022). Because the viewing at the centre of this thesis cannot be defined as consumption in this way, this chapter will argue that a connected but different definition of desirous behaviour is required to more properly understand the various emotional responses that manifest within some instances of porn commentary. It will therefore argue that this unintentional ‘exposure’ is more closely related to ‘desubjectivation’. By applying Jacques Lacan’s notion of the Real, which positions a specific form of desire as something connected not to the conscious mind, but to the de-signified, non-identitarian and more unintentional frameworks of the unconscious, this chapter will conclude that it is with ‘desubjectivation’ that this form of ‘exposure’ can be more fully understood. It is also in this chapter that various examples of porn commentary will be used to make this important distinction between transgression and ‘desubjectivation’. This chapter will seek to provide examples of the way that viewers often express shock, surprise, anxiety and guilt, as well as arousal and sexual pleasure, following an instance of ‘radical exposure’, and it is these emotional expressions that signal the ‘desubjectivation’ that is outlined in the early part of this chapter. The overall argument of this chapter is that these comments suggest that an ‘emergent sexual sensibility’ (Jacobs 2014: 218) is becoming visible in this form of online engagement, and that ‘desubjectivation’ is the most effective theoretical tool to understand this emergence. By connecting it to the Lacanian Real, the concept of ‘desubjectivation’ becomes reconfigured according to the ‘radical exposure’ at the centre of this

thesis, that is, it becomes the most effective theoretical tool with which to more fully understand what is taking place regarding these examples of porn commentary.

Chapter Four will continue to develop this reconfiguration of ‘desubjectivation’, but in this case it will do so according to queer theory. Because queer theory in its broadest terms designates an opposition to normativity, and ‘radical exposure’ also appears to often signal an act in opposition to the viewer’s sometimes normative identity formation, this chapter will first examine different approaches to queer theory in an attempt to position ‘radical exposure’ within this discipline. Having illustrated the connection between the specific form of ‘desubjectivation’ in operation within ‘radical exposure’ and the branch of queer theory known as ‘anti-social’ queer theory, the second half of this chapter will examine various examples of queer pornography to ascertain whether this form of ‘desubjectivation’ is also taking place within the genre of queer pornography. Queer pornography aligns itself with certain branches of queer theory, and often positions itself as transgressive and ‘desubjectivising’, in line with the anti-normative currents that run through all queer theory, but this chapter will argue that much queer pornography does not align with the theoretical configuration that this thesis is using to attempt to explain ‘radical exposure’. The difference, as will be argued, is with intentionality, which allows for the introduction of the concept of ‘resubjectivation’. When desubjectivation occurs, this chapter will open the question of what happens following this experience, when individuals become ‘resubjectivised’. Although queer porn does contain many significant elements of radical anti-normativity, this chapter will argue that because individuals who view queer porn do so as a result of language and intentionality, this means it is more closely connected to the social order and not to the radical unconscious desire of the Lacanian Real, which can only operate in opposition to language. This difference allows for a distinction between the wilful ‘consumption’ of queer porn, and the ‘radical exposure’ of desubjectivation and the experiences of porn viewing at the centre of this thesis.

Chapter Five will examine the concepts that have been developed in the previous chapters from a more political perspective, with a focus on representation, authenticity and contemporary theories of post-truth (Kalpokas, 2019). It will draw out the connections between the search for the authentic and the ‘real’ in the viewing of pornography, and the ways in which purveyors of post-truth narratives can be understood as entertaining an ‘escapist romantic fantasy’. By illustrating the similarity of intent between these two types of ‘consumers’, this chapter will then focus on those viewers who do not search for the ‘authentic’ in pornography, but instead appear to have abandoned any attempt at searching for such materials. This latter group of individuals, who consume pornographies that have little or no connection to authenticity or reality, are instead often drawn to animated, cartoon, and fantastical forms of pornography, and this chapter constitutes an examination of the significance of this distinction between these two types of viewers. Although there is intentionality in this latter group, rather than the unintentionality connected to ‘radical exposure’, the comments beneath these fantastical types of pornography do seem to express similar responses to those associated with ‘desubjectivation’, and the argument will be made that perhaps these viewers, in contrast to those searching for authenticity, are searching for further experiences of ‘desubjectivation’.

The sixth and final chapter of this thesis will more fully examine the common expressions of humour that can be found in the comments beneath many different types of pornography. The first half of the chapter will explore different theories of humour and laughter, making the preliminary argument that these forms of engagement can be understood as expressions and traces of resistant behaviour. According to the theories of Critchley (2002) and Zupančič (2008), as will be argued in this chapter, laughter is often used as a way to delegitimise oppressive, and especially normative, forms of power, and this chapter will then examine this theoretical understanding of humour from the perspective of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (1987). It will argue that many of the concepts that have been developed and reconfigured so far in this thesis - ‘radical exposure’,

‘desubjectivation’, and anti-normative engagements with pornographies - correspond with Deleuze and Guattari’s ‘smooth’ and ‘striated’ spaces. Although websites such as Pornhub and XVideos attempt to position themselves as a ‘striated’ and ‘territorialised’ space, a space that takes the form of a rigid framework of categories, that predetermines movement from one object of consumption to another (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987: 402), the use of humour in porn commentary suggests that these websites can now also be understood, in part, as ‘smooth’ and ‘deterritorialised’ spaces, that, in the way that this thesis has described, allow for freer and more exploratory forms of engagement, opening up what Deleuze and Guattari describe as ‘lines of flight’ (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987: 161), or opportunities for engagement that are less restricted and confined by the algorithmic strategies of these websites.

METHODOLOGY

The aim of this thesis is to examine the reasons why people often express feelings of shock, surprise, anxiety or humour in the comments beneath the porn they view. It will argue that these expressions suggest that a form of ‘desubjectivation’ has taken place in the individual, a ‘breaking down’ or ‘dissolution’ of the subjectivised, identitarian frameworks of desire that have been determined for them by the social order.

Desire that manifests as desubjectivation in porn viewing, or in this case, ‘radical exposure’, is a topic that has not been examined before. These are manifestations of desire that are unpredictable and unknowable until the moment of emergence, and it is the position of this thesis that these instances can be uniquely understood not by simply asking the individual within a formal research setting, but by examining and iteratively analysing the utterances that can be found in the comments sections beneath porn clips. The aim of this methodological strategy is to find and

identify comments that illustrate the possible occurrences of desubjectivation through ‘radical exposure’. Working from the idea that some forms of desire are elusive to the individual, that they are unknowable until the moment of emergence, it is important to establish and develop a methodology that can be used to understand these often fleeting and unexpected experiences.

Porn commentary and desubjectivation are two of the more unruly elements that play a part in discourses around desire and pleasure. Writing a study that brings desubjectivation and porn commentary together poses a number of methodological challenges. The reason for this is that desubjectivation operates in opposition to identity rather than as an effect of it; it is often contradictory to the decision making of the individual with regard to their pleasure and desire. Porn commentary is one part of the iterative methodological strategy that will be used to develop the understanding of the desubjectivising experience that is central to this thesis; in this way the study constitutes a moving back and forth between the comments themselves as a form of data, philosophical analysis from the perspective of theories of desubjectivation, and porn studies.

This thesis takes the position that the anonymity, spontaneity and playfulness of porn comments is a more productive way to understand desubjectivation than other, more prevalent research strategies, such as questionnaires or interviews. In agreement with Law, this methodology takes the position that while many ‘standard methods are extremely good at what they do’ (2004: 4), such as Jessica Pidoux’s use of participant interviews in her article, ‘A comparative study of algorithmic–user classification practices in online dating’, for types of research that seek to further understand the ‘ephemeral, the indefinite and the irregular’ (2004: 4), such methods are less effective, and these three words serve to describe the behaviours that manifest following an instance of the ‘radical exposure’ that is central to this thesis. One example of a study that utilises a methodological versatility in order to better understand an ‘indefinite and irregular’ social phenomenon is Katrien Jacobs ‘Lizzy Kinsey and the Adult Friendfinders: an ethnographic study of Internet sex and pornographic self-display in Hong Kong’ (2010). By examining online behaviours

as ‘autoethnography’ Jacobs does not seek to explain these behaviours, but to reflect on the ‘dual identities and boundary-crossing’ (ibid: 691) that took place on sex-meet websites in Hong Kong. The way she does this is not by setting up interviews within a research-setting, but by placing herself on the website as a potential sexual partner, and also making clear to respondents that this was part of a research project. This virtual ethnography is one example of how different research methods can be used to understand something that may be lost in more formal settings.

For Law, certain types of contemporary reality can be ‘messy, and methodologies that seek to convert this mess into something smooth, coherent and precise both miss out on particular textures of life’ (ibid: 5). He argues that most contemporary research methods tend to work on the assumption that, ‘the world is properly to be understood as a set of fairly specific, determinate, and more or less identifiable processes’ (ibid). But just as the social world changes, he writes, so too must the methods that attempt to develop an understanding of this world. Structures are now ‘imagined to be more broken or unpredictable in their fluidity,’ and therefore any attempt to understand a structure that is less familiar, less determinate and less stable, ‘tends to make a mess of what it does seek to understand, because it fails to account for complexity’ (ibid: 3). The complexity with regards to this thesis is that which is at play in the unintentionality of the arousal that manifests following ‘radical exposure’. The task, according to Law, with regard to these types of explorations, is to ‘imagine methods when they no longer seek the definite, the repeatable, the more or less stable’, as this will allow for ‘ways of knowing the indistinct and the slippery without trying to grasp and hold them tight’ (ibid: 6). This is why Coleman and Ringrose call for methodologies that are open-ended enough to engage productively with a world that is ever-increasingly ‘messy’, ‘creative’, ‘changing’ and ‘sensory’ (2013: 1), and the type of ‘radical exposure’ to pornography that is central to this thesis can be described in each of these ways. The desire that is under discussion in this thesis comes from the de-signified, unconscious and non-identitarian parts of the

self, and any attempt of the porn viewer to understand it reattaches it to identity and to the signifying regimes of subjectivation that it sits in opposition to, thus negating it.

Law's work is useful in the way it serves as an acknowledgement of the often inconsistent and chaotic multiplicities in operation in the social world, and the yet to be realised desires and instances of arousal at the centre of this thesis are one such set of multiplicities. Law's theory serves as a reminder that many social phenomena are not as stable and coherent as other methodologies may make them appear, but from the perspective of this thesis, porn commentary is already assumed to be unstable - notions of truth, honesty, seriousness are always in question - so it is important that some level of control is maintained over these materials. This is why an open-ended iterative approach will be used in this thesis, whereby the primary materials of porn commentary and porn clips, will be examined from the perspective of the secondary iterative materials of theories of desubjectivation and porn studies. This reflects Morris' description of iterative methodological approaches as, 'the convergence of meaning from more than one direction; multiple sources, methods, theories, or researchers are used to dispel doubts about a study's findings' (Morris, 2017: 1781). Iteration as a research method is understood as a form of triangulation, a moving back and forth between disciplines and approaches that allows perspectives to be woven together and that can result in a 'reflective balance' (Klein, 2012). In this way, these multiple analytical strategies reflect John Law's important approach to methods, while also retaining some level of analytical rigour. Each element is important and relevant, and each can add depth, understanding, and can open new directions for enquiry and new avenues for understanding. Iteration also allows for a fluidity that reflects the movement and instability that operates within both porn viewing and porn commentary. As Morris asserts, 'data or findings that are new, important, controversial, or surprising might qualify for the use of triangulation' (Morris, 2017: 1781).

DATA COLLECTION

Just as an interview or questionnaire might provide unstable results because the individual in question might not fully understand their desires, attempting to use the comments as evidence contains within it a different set of instabilities. The comments that are written beneath porn clips are highly individual, nuanced and complex. They can be inconsistent, dishonest, whimsical, contradictory, and often resemble a form of performative trolling. Some comments are written from the perspective of fictional characters. Other than a username, a few, often inconsistent details regarding geographical location and gender, and a few other clips saved to the viewer's profile, it is very difficult to determine much reliable information about the writers of comments. It is often impossible, for example, to even see the other comments that each viewer has written. It is raw, unverifiable data, but it is the contention of this thesis that within this chaos of information there may be found some compelling and illuminating understandings of specific forms of desire; many of the comments contain articulations that express emotions and experiences that cannot be found through other methods. It is a rich source of viewer interaction, rendered fascinating by an absence of the surveillance that often impedes other forms of participant engagement. In this way these comments streams become important laboratories in which a person's understanding, or lack thereof, of their own desire, can be articulated and understood in illuminating new ways.

Viewers 'browse, click, interrupt, fast forward, rate, tag or comment' on the clips they watch (Vörös, 2014: 9). Through these activities porn becomes 'an active and productive transformation of scripts and objects into pleasure and signification' (ibid), whereby it is 'subjectively appropriated, transformed and altered' (Paasonen, 2014: 1). As Smith argues, 'it is important to recognize the very individual personal histories that are intertwined with the sense-making and

pleasures of pornography’ (2012: 160) and it is the aim of this study to examine the ways in which porn comments express a disruption of the normative regimes that are the result of these histories.

Another issue with comments is that they are often liable to simply disappear. The primary example of this was when Pornhub deleted twelve million clips, and up to one-hundred million comments, without warning (Roberts, 2019). But they also do this on a regular, often daily basis when they remove all of the comments beneath a clip in order to remove the numerous attempts to draw viewers to other clips or to paid live shows. Throughout this thesis, footnotes will be added to make clear which comments have since been removed by Pornhub.

Because this thesis is interested in those instances of desire that act in opposition to formations of identity, and to intentional and wilful ‘consumption’, the gathering of comments was not confined to a single identity marker or a specific genre or group of genres. Instead, comments were gathered in a purposive way, according to whether or not they signalled the possibility of ‘radical exposure’, expressed in the comments as surprise, shock, anxiety or humour. According to Kozinets, purposive rather than representative sampling can be an effective way to examine ‘hard to reach groups’ (2010: 9), also arguing that there are six criteria that should be considered when choosing sites; they should be ‘relevant, active, interactive, substantial, heterogeneous, and data-rich’ (ibid: 89), which corresponds with the porn comments at the centre of this thesis. This means that the types of pornography that will be discussed in this thesis span many different genres. What is important is the type of desire that is felt, and whether it operates in opposition to the individual’s understanding of their desire as it is related to their identity, rather than the genre of the clip or its contents.

The methods that were used to gather data were done in a number of ways. Other than the websites that offer paid access to queer porn, which is one of the topics in Chapter Four, this thesis focussed its analysis on two websites: Pornhub and XVideos. Comments were often collected thematically, whereby a specific emotional response was searched for within a specific genre of

pornography. If, for example, a single expression of both shock and arousal was noticed in the comments during an examination of a particularly popular clip of monster-porn, then the links to similar forms of porn that are provided beneath the clip would be explored as a means to test whether similar responses were written beneath thematically similar clips. Regarding the more normative tastes of a viewer who has expressed a non-normative response to a non-normative form of porn, the viewer's profile was examined. Although a viewer's profile provides only a limited amount of information in this regard - a viewer's search history is hidden, for example - it is possible to see the porn stars and porn channels that they are subscribed to, which provides some indication of the normativity of their sexual tastes. If a viewer's subscriptions suggest a consistent taste in more mainstream porn, as previously defined, yet they have expressed both shock and arousal after having viewed a non-normative clip, then this can be further iteratively examined for the possibility of 'radical exposure' resulting in 'desubjectivation'. Part of the research that resulted in Chapter Three involved these types of searches for arousal *and* shock, surprise, disgust or anxiety. Chapter Four, which is an examination of queer porn from the perspective of 'radical exposure' and 'desubjectivation', involved searches for expressions that suggest that these viewers might be understood as a 'caring community' - themes such as solidarity, support, politicised forms of appreciation that make reference to things such as consent and safety. The central topics of Chapter Five are reality, representation, and the unreal in porn. This posed more of a challenge, as 'reality' or 'realism' in porn are very broad descriptors that can cover many types of pornographic materials; what is important is the reality, or assumption of reality, in operation in the clip. For this reason, I employed search terms such as 'real', 'reality', 'authentic', 'genuine', 'real life' and 'amateur'. The final chapter concerns the humour and comedy that can often be found in porn commentary, so this too required a more open-ended search strategy. This is because the topic of this chapter is the way in which viewers often direct humour at the lack of realism in mainstream forms of porn. Because the definition of mainstream porn that is used in this thesis covers a very

large amount of the porn that is available on Pornhub and Xvideos, these comments were gathered by scouring the most viewed mainstream clips, which is a search criterion that is provided by both of these websites.

The research I conducted constituted a shifting between porn websites (data collection), categorisation according to perceived emotions at play in the comments (data coding), and note taking (memo writing). As this continued, queer theorists such as Lee Edelman and Jack Halberstam, and theorists of ‘desubjectivation’ such as Michel Foucault and Jacques Lacan, informed the search for comments, the comments drew me towards different theories, and the new theories sharpened my search for further comments. As Sun makes clear ‘Coding and memo writing may also result in questions and insights about possible relationships among categories that lead the researcher to go back and examine data collected earlier in the study’ (2017: 147). If a comment expressed any of the above emotions, this comment was then examined more closely and assessed for consistency with similar comments. In line with Sheldon’s argument that ‘online data do not represent attitudes but only traces of behaviour’ (2017: 1140), this thesis does not seek to present empirical evidence of behavioural patterns, but rather illustrations of comments that correspond with theoretical understandings of desubjectivation. It is the traces that viewers leave behind in the comments beneath porn ‘exposure’ that are of interest here. These traces are unregulated and unmediated, and are closer to a manifestation of the individual’s recent experience of ‘radical exposure’ than any considered response to a questionnaire or interview might be.

In order to gain some level of control over data collection, an awareness of what is known as ‘noise’ (Johnson, 2017: 1425), was used in data collection. This is in reference to the sheer abundance of information from sources of porn commentary and the fact that much of it will be irrelevant to this study. Links to other websites would be an example of this, or comments that simply suggest an appreciation of the clip. By removing this ‘noise’ or excess data from the data collection strategy, this further confines collection to a number of interconnected patterns of

‘exposure’. In most research, ‘noise’ is often in reference to responses that might not be honest, but this is not a concern of this study, as it is the *unintentionality* of various engagements rather than their intentionality that are central to the thesis.

GENRES

The following section will briefly define a number of the genres that are included in this thesis. This thesis does not focus on one specific genre, but focusses primarily on traces of potential desubjectivation that are articulated in the comments underneath pornographies that can be considered non-normative.

Amateur porn is highly popular and extremely broad genre of pornography. Because, as will be examined in more depth in the thesis, authenticity is a quality that many viewers search for, amateur porn is also a space in which many professional porn producers attempt to provide a carefully constructed representation-as-reality. This can take place through short ‘verification’ videos, through handheld cameras, or through stories that appear to offer random meetings between strangers. Renato Stella writes in ‘The Amateur Roots of Gonzo Pornography’ (2016), that amateur porn is often made using ‘webcams, mobile phones, tablets, and so on, which enable low-definition recordings in a great variety of situations, with no need for film sets, props, or troupes’ (ibid: 351). Amateur porn is often unscripted, though can sometimes offer a preliminary story or interview, as with the producer and performer Public Agent (2014). It can be fly-on-the-wall, behind-the-scenes, or audition-based, but perhaps the most important element of amateur porn with regard to this thesis is that attempts made by professional porn producers to offer representations of amateur porn have become ‘increasingly evident in industrial production’ (Stella, 2016: 359).

Hentai porn is an animated genre of porn that originated in Japan and primarily involves characters from various anime and Manga series, computer games and tv shows. It often depicts impossible and diverse acts between humans and monsters, though its content depends on which series or game it is themed according to; a significant amount of Hentai also involves various high school scenarios involving characters taken from the corresponding series (Park, et al. 2021). This genre is also the source of ‘Ahegao’, which is in reference to the eye roll that takes place in the female character or performer at the moment of orgasm. Monster porn often contains the ‘belly bulge’, whereby the genitals of the monster are so large that the shape of the penis can be seen protruding from within the belly of the female character. Monster porn is in reference to the animated genre of porn that contains sex between otherworldly creatures and people. Paasonen describes ‘monster porn’ in ‘Monstrous Resonances: Affect and Animated Pornography’ as porn that offers depictions of ‘monstrous, impossible bodies, [and] hyperbolic scenes of domination and submission’ (2018: 2). The representation of pleasure, lust and sexual satiation is also hyperbolic, and as Paasonen continues, this porn is ‘unbound by physics or biology, enormous bodies penetrate tiny ones and human-like bodies sprout novel sexual organs’ (ibid). Although this genre of porn cannot be considered normative, Hentai and monster porn, argues Paasonen, have grown mainstream, at least with regard to their popularity. In 2022, according to Pornhub Insights (2023), Hentai was the most searched for term, and in 2023 it was the second most searched for term. With regard to data collection, the search terms ‘animated’, ‘monster’, ‘Hentai’, ‘demon’, were used, and the clips that were examined were the ten most popular after the search was refined to prioritise the most viewed clips.

Horror porn, distinct from ‘monster porn’ in that it is live action, often depicts extreme, transgressive scenarios that may involve characters who are zombies, wild beasts, escaped lunatics, or who behave in ways that are intended to disturb, by, for example, breastfeeding children’s dolls while masturbating or having sex in mud or on piles of rubbish; the sex acts that are included can

also be considered extreme, such as prolapsing, urine-drinking, or representations of non-step incest. The most popular producer of this type of porn is ‘Perverse Family’ (2019), who have produced 24 clips that have attracted over 5 million views, and one clip, ‘Shared Wife with Daddy’s Friends’, that has attracted 155 million views (2020).

A number of other genres are included in this thesis. One genre is ASMR porn, which is often non-explicit and incorporates elements of JOI, or jerk-off-instructions, whereby the performer speaks gently to the viewer and instructs them on how to masturbate and when they are ‘allowed’ to ejaculate, which is a practice known as ‘edging’, one example being Ohshititsisele (2018). The keywords that were used to collect examples of this genre were ‘JOI’, ‘ASMR’ and ‘edging’. Another genre is that of ‘gooning’, which is also often non-explicit, and might be considered an extreme form of JOI pornography, whereby the performer attempts to humiliate the viewer with phrases such as ‘follow me you dumb little gooner bitch...forget about time, just pump’ (Angel Au Lait, 2021), while the visuals provide hypnotic and repetitive visuals and music.

ALGORITHMIC TECHNOLOGIES

Online digital pornography now attracts more users than Twitter, Netflix and Amazon combined (Rama, et al, 2023). With 15% of all internet sites now pornographic, according to Saunders ‘the porn industry has come to represent one of the most rentable sectors of digital capitalism’ (2023: 128). Adam Arvidsson describes the short history of internet pornography as the emergence of the ‘masturbatory economy’ (2007: 74). For Rama this emergence has signaled a number of other changes, such as the shift from predominantly male audiences to a more diverse public, the growing acceptance of a wider variety of sexual interests, and many sexual communities

formally considered illegitimate are finding affirmation through online communication networks and sharing sites.

In 2023's second issue of *Porn Studies*, which focusses on 'the intersections between data cultures and contemporary sexual cultures', Attwood, Smith and Mercer make clear in their editorial introduction that 'online pornography [is] crucial to the rituals, practices and sensations of sex' (2023: 1). Together the articles in this issue constitute an important critical perspective on the various data-driven and algorithmically determined technologies that are used by porn hosting websites such as Pornhub and XVideos. In Rama et al's piece, 'The platformization of gender and sexual identities: an algorithmic analysis of Pornhub', the concept of platformization is foregrounded to show the ways in which 'the standardization of content based on criteria of popularity and predictability' (2023: 157) is promoted to optimise revenues from sources such as advertising and third party links that draw the viewer to other, often paid, websites. What this article makes clear is that anyone who uses Pornhub exposes themselves to its 'algorithmic content recommendation system' (ibid), whereby the viewer is recommended types of materials based on their registration information and their viewing history, which consequently, according to Rama et al, reinforces their sexual identity and sexual tastes.

Although this thesis agrees that such processes dominate online porn viewing, it also takes the position that there is another side to these types of websites. Following Brian Massumi's claim that capitalism always has to reach into its 'immanent outside' (2019: 9) in order to widen its consumer base, and freshen the materials that it has for sale, Pornhub and other websites like it will often attempt to draw the viewer towards new and unfamiliar materials; any visit to its homepage will always present the viewer with something that is disconnected from their search history or from any information the website has pertaining to the viewer's sexual identity. This forms part of the argument that any engagement with a website such as Pornhub is less rigid than Rama et al suggest. Although much of a viewer's homepage is an algorithmic reflection of the website's understanding

of their sexual identity, there is also an element of opportunism on the part of Pornhub, which signals their attempt to draw the viewer towards new materials and away from the encroaching boredom that often comes with repetition. This prevents websites like Pornhub from becoming fully algorithmically controlled spaces, and instead gives them an element of unpredictability. This is what French philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari would describe as a ‘smooth space’ in contrast to a ‘striated space’ (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987: 402). What this means is that it is a space in which opportunities for movement towards unpredictable and undetermined experiences are available, what Deleuze describes as ‘lines of flight’.

ETHICS

Regarding the ethical approach of this thesis, there are a number of important issues that it is important to acknowledge. As Whiteman writes, the ‘conflicting guidance on Internet research practice and the diverse nature and characteristics of different online environments’ (2012: vii) can make establishing any approach to ethics a difficult one. There are issues of anonymity, consent and privacy. If, for example, sources are anonymised and hidden, this becomes a referencing and sourcing issue. If they are revealed, this may become an issue of privacy and ethics.

As Whiteman makes clear, there are many different ways to approach the ethics of researching online materials, and there is no universalising approach to this problem. What is needed, she argues, is a form of ‘localised ethical manoeuvring’ (ibid: 11), which must be determined by the nature of the research.

The iterative methodology used in this thesis is an observational, non-participatory and open-ended form of netnography, and seeks to build an unobtrusive analysis of a previously unexamined and highly transient social phenomenon; a form of data produced by the interactions between people and digital technologies. It ‘traces flows in a fracturing digital

environment' (Barratt & Maddox, 2016: 714), and uses materials that are often liable to completely and irreversibly disappear. That the research and data-gathering is unobtrusive is critical to the thesis, as it is the unintentionality and unawareness of the underlying reasons for the nature of the comments that is being studied; this means that a requirement of the methodology is that the individuals in question remain unaware of the researcher, which discounts questionnaires, surveys and interviews, and thus the forms of informed consent that are usually associated with such research methods. Another reason why it is important that the materials in question are not completely anonymised through, for example, paraphrasing, is that the specific nuances of the comments are important, how things are said and the emotions they impart. A more universalising approach, whereby the researcher paraphrases the comments, assumes the 'internet researcher is configured as being interested in the broad nature of online behaviour' (Whiteman, 2012: 28). Because this thesis is interested in 'the local over the general, the substantive over the abstract' (ibid), such homogenising strategies are inadequate.

This thesis takes the position that the materials involved in this thesis should be understood as textual, and as published properties of authors, and therefore should be referenced as such. They are approached from a position of empathy and sensitivity, just as Robards approached his materials in 'Totally Straight', an analysis of contested sexual identities on Reddit, but also from the perspective of Hills, who writes that such online interactions 'are composed with an imagined audience in mind and are thus always already claims for attention prior to any academic scrutiny' (2002: 176). It should also be noted that the websites that are used in this thesis - Pornhub and XVideos primarily - do not allow other members, users, or in this case researchers, to obtain much information regarding each individual commenters' other activities. A commenter's other comments cannot be accessed or seen. What is visible through an examination of a user's profile is their favourite videos, their stream, and a number of disclosed personal details such as their likes and dislikes, their general location, their relationship status and their last login. Their exact location,

their name, their appearance, and any other identifying characteristics are all completely hidden, so unless a user utilises the same username on another website in which such identifiable characteristics are present, the risk of identification is minimal. What this means is that each comment is completely isolated from any other comments, there is a ‘disconnection between flesh and data’ (ibid: 93), and each user’s comments is not a part of any identity-continuity that might be found in comments in sites such as Youtube or Twitter. So a focus on ‘the textual nature of the Internet emphasises the *published* nature of online material, as equivalent to the circulation of films or books, put out on display and subject to the gaze of a viewing audience’ (Whiteman, 2012: 97). This allows the researcher to approach these utterances in the same way they would the work of an author or artist. As Whiteman argues, independent media sites such as the ones used in this thesis make no attempt to claim that they are private, and they ‘constitute a deliberate attempt to create a global public sphere through Internet use’ (Bassett & O’Riordan, 2002: 236). Commenters choose to make visible and public their opinions, comments, jokes, and expressions of appreciation, and they also ‘make a decision about the level of their visibility by controlling the degree of their disclosure of identification’ (ibid). This focus on these utterances as ‘textural’, emphasises the ‘constructed, performed, displayed nature of online activity’ (Whiteman, 2012: 94), and should therefore be ‘informed by different frameworks’ than the more common ‘human subjects’ model of researcher ethics, which depend on the application of universal ethical principles.

Finally, as Attwood, Maina and Smith argue, ‘despite an ongoing incitement to speak about sex (Foucault, 1990), the way we are encouraged to talk and write about sexual issues is strongly policed and ways of conceptualizing and researching them have been constrained and often contentious’ (2018: 1). Anti-porn rhetoric has positioned porn as something associated with ‘hurt, anger, frustration, fear and nausea’ (Paasonen, 2007, in Attwood, Maina and Smith, 2018: 1), and any engagement with it and any acceptable reaction to it, as a ‘negative affect’. The construction of these negative connotations has drawn the ethics of porn research into a process that appears to

require more caution than most other topics of research, and to work according to this positioning would be to fall into agreement with one of the power structures - that of anti-porn rhetoric - that this thesis is in opposition to. Instead, this thesis is more concerned with the idea that this ethical positioning as a pre-requisite to porn research is itself ethically troubling, because it contains the potential to close off possible illuminating and interesting forms of research. This thesis agrees with Bassett and O’Riordan, that preventing ‘inquiry into certain types of activity’, is itself an ‘unethical research practice’ (2002: 236), in the way it closes off various avenues of research. Another example of this was when, shortly after the publication of their first issue, various campaign groups attempted to have the editorial board and the title of *Porn Studies* changed. Many thought that porn should be studied from the starting point of violence, with an emphasis on ‘fault finding and condemnation’ (Smith & Attwood, 2013: 9). There were anecdotal comments about the life-changing benefits of giving up porn, the lack of representation regarding the ‘victims’ of porn, and many suggestions about what the journal’s new name should be: Pro-Porn Studies, Critical Porn Studies (suggesting an expectation that it would be critical *of* porn), etc (ibid: 8).

CHAPTER ONE: CRITICAL LITERATURE REVIEW

The original intervention of this thesis lies in its argument that the comments underneath various porn clips suggest that a specific form of desubjectivation may be taking place in the sexual identities of the commenters. As will be argued, this is something that is yet to be fully considered in much of the literature on porn studies, or in the main theoretical approaches to porn studies. Consequently, this thesis constitutes a critical intervention in the field of porn studies. It identifies significant gaps and limitations in current approaches and scholarship in this field.

As with any theoretical engagement with porn, it is important to situate the work within the history of debate and theory that has taken place since the 1970s. The first section of this chapter will examine some of the key texts that emerged from this period. It will also, however, illustrate the reasons why many of these texts are less relevant to the approach of this thesis. One reason for this is because many of these texts tend to be focussed on the question of whether pornography should exist at all, whereas this thesis is more concerned with understanding very specific patterns of desire that are a result of porn viewing. It should also be said that these texts consider the construction of identity, while the topic of this thesis primarily concerns desubjectivation, or the deconstruction of identity.

The second section of this chapter will examine contemporary approaches to understanding pornography. It will assess the work of Linda Williams, who wrote *Hardcore: Power, Pleasure and the Frenzy of the Visible* (1987), as well as a number of articles written in the journals *Porn Studies* and *Sexualities*. The purpose of this section is to provide an overview of those articles that will be important to the central arguments of this thesis, but also to illustrate the gaps that exist in this

discipline, especially with regard to the fact that porn commentary is yet to be examined by any of the theorists who are involved in theoretical engagements with pornography.

The final section of this chapter will provide a summary of a number of theories of desubjectivation. It will outline the connections between desubjectivation, the work of Jacques Lacan, and queer theory. The purpose here is to provide a theoretical model of desubjectivation that is coherent according to the non-normative expressions of desire that, as this thesis will argue, are apparent in some porn comments. These expressions of anti-normativity constitute a significant part of the central argument of this thesis, which is that many viewers of online pornographies appear to be engaging in acts of desubjectivation, regardless of how normative their sexual identities are.

FEMINIST THEORY AND THE 'SEX WARS'

The 'sex wars' of the 1970s and 1980s were a series of theoretical, philosophical, ideological and legal debates within the feminist movement, related to understandings of sexuality, sexual freedom, pornography and sex work. These debates are generally understood as taking place between radical feminists, whose critical, often pro-censorship position is associated with theorists such as Catharine MacKinnon and Andrea Dworkin (see: MacKinnon, 1984; 1985; 1988; 1994; Dworkin, 1981), and anti-censorship, pro-sex feminists such as Gayle Rubin, Susie Bright and Ellen Willis (See: Rubin, 2011; 2011a; Willis, 1992).

In *Pornography, Civil Rights and Speech*, Catharine MacKinnon (1985) opposed pornography on the grounds of civil rights, sex discrimination and hate speech, while Andrea Dworkin argued in *Pornography: Men Possessing Women* (1981), that pornography perpetuates a

form of misogynistic dehumanisation. Both theorists, separately and in collaboration, sought to emphasise a causation between pornography and various forms of direct and symbolic violence towards women. MacKinnon, a radical feminist legal scholar, also critiqued the First Amendment as ‘absolutist’, and argued that because it is interpreted ‘negatively’, as freedom *from* violations by the state, instead of ‘chartering legal intervention for social change’ (1993: 73), it will always exacerbate inequalities of power. Pornography, she argued, involves real women and real bodies, and will always be more than simply free speech; it is closer to a perlocutionary act, an act that makes something happen (in this case discrimination, oppression and civil rights violations), and therefore the First Amendment should not apply to the production and use of pornography.

For many feminists, however, attempts at censorship and the perceived victim status of any woman who performs in porn or uses porn, was more troubling than the content of the materials. Instead, they saw pornography as a potential means to undermine or resist patriarchal oppression. Regarding censorship, theorists such as Gayle Rubin in *Deviations* (2011) and Nadine Strossen in *Defending Pornography: Free Speech, Sex and the Fight for Women’s Rights* (1995), emphasised the dangers of restricting pornographic materials, which, they argued, can lead to sexual shame around female sexuality. For these theorists porn might reflect oppressive gender dynamics, but it is not necessarily the cause of them. Although this group did express concern for much of the content of certain pornographic materials, the approach of the radical feminists, they argued, was focused more on the symptom than the cause of gender oppression.

Rubin also promoted and defended the emancipatory qualities of various transgressive sexual practices such as BDSM and leather cultures. In ‘The Leather Menace’, she devised the notion of the ‘charmed circle’ to illustrate the rarely penetrable boundary across which acceptable sexual practices are positioned (Rubin, 2011a). The categories within the charmed circle include vanilla sex, married sex, monogamous sex, pro-creation and heterosexual sex. In the ‘outer limits’ of the circle she includes masturbation, group sex, BDSM, pornography and non-pro-creative sex.

Rubin is making reference to sexual diversity and to those individuals who, by embracing their sexual differences, become marginalised by the power structures in which they live. These are the minorities who attempted to create safe, secure and non-judgemental spaces for themselves but who were, at the time when Rubin was writing these articles, oppressed and vilified by the ‘deeply held folk theories of sex’ (139) that were used to legislate against these forms of sexuality. During this period, and in line with Rubin’s position, Ellen Willis wrote, ‘the claim that “pornography is violence against women” was code for the neo-Victorian idea that men want sex and women endure it’ (2005: 461). Willis, along with other pro-sex feminists such as Susie Bright, were also connected to the growth of feminist porn, produced as a response to both the anti-porn of the radical feminists and the sexist representations of women often seen in ‘mainstream’ porn (Penney, Shimizu, Miller-Young, & Taormino, 2013).

The differences between Gayle Rubin and Catharine MacKinnon’s work regarding pornography should not be understated. They present very different understandings of pornography, and it seems they are debating about completely different cultural forms, each defined under the umbrella term ‘pornography’. What this strongly suggests is that ‘pornography’ has become a ‘floating signifier’ (see: Mehlman, 1972). When a single word comes to mean so many things, it comes to mean nothing at all. When ‘pornography’ comes to be debated over as a fixed, single entity, it soon becomes clear that each opposing position is arguing over something completely different. MacKinnon argued, for example, that the rape and abuse of Linda Lovelace, who played the titular role in *Deep Throat*, constituted a civil rights violation at the hands of her husband and producer Chuck Traynor (MacKinnon & Dworkin, 1988), while Gayle Rubin (2011) was defending the underground sexual cultures of San Francisco from the hegemonic oppression of the moral majority that continuously attempted to criminalise or regulate them. The two positions are incommensurable. In *Beyond Explicit*, Helen Hester (2013: 3) describes the sex wars as ‘bipartisan’, and suggests that much ink has been spilled over something that might have been more productively

navigated had a more careful, nuanced and less reified definition of pornography been considered. Although many of these early texts are less relevant to the topic of this thesis compared to most contemporary texts, perhaps what can be learned from them is the caution that must be taken when approaching a term with so many different meanings, such as ‘pornography’.

Rubin, as a cultural anthropologist, is primarily focussed on the BDSM leather culture of San Francisco; her connection to the queer theory and the theories of desire that will be used in this thesis is in the anti-identitarian element of the way she approaches desire from the position of ‘benign sexual variation’, which can be understood as anti-normative sexual practices. Rubin argued that one of the things preventing a radical theory of sex is the absence of a concept for ‘benign sexual variation’, but for Rubin, ‘rather than viewing them as lingering effects of oppression or uncanny phenomena to be feared, Rubin views sexual variation as a point of departure for politics’ (Mesli, 2015: 806).

Broadly speaking, the porn and sexuality scholarship that will be used is that which, for the most part, takes a position similar to Jacobs’, when she writes in ‘Undisciplining Pornography Studies’ that it is problematic to ‘ignore the wide diversity of sexually explicit media and emotive experiences that are currently available’ (2014: 211), and that porn users ‘do not react to porn in a uniform manner’ (ibid: 210). It also agrees with McKee et al, in *What Do We Know About the Effects of Pornography After Fifty Years of Academic Research*, that relationship stability and healthy successful development are not co-dependent (2022: 23), and with Daskalopoulou and Zanette, when they write in ‘Women’s Consumption of Pornography: Pleasure, Contestation, and Empowerment’ that pornography can ‘unlock’ aspects of ‘sexuality that were previously unknown or suppressed’ (2020: 980), and that, broadly, porn viewing is not unequivocally bad, unhealthy, pathologically deviant or oppressive.

In *Split Decisions* (2006), Janet Halley makes reference to MacKinnon’s ‘early radicalism’ and her critical approach to regimes of ideological power. Halley makes the point that for

MacKinnon, 'the very consciousness with which women perceive their being, the very wellspring of their desire, is male domination (2006: 43). Here Halley is making clear the difficulty of MacKinnon's aim, which was a 'transformation of consciousness' that must work 'utterly without leverage from any emancipatory "outside"' (ibid: 43). This is because, for MacKinnon, how can women emancipate themselves not only from masculine and misogynist hegemony, but also from their own desire, which has been created *by* this very hegemony? (Cornell, 1995) One way for MacKinnon was to critique pornography, which was to her a clear manifestation of this hegemony.

The underlying structure of MacKinnon's problem is similar to the one that emerges throughout this thesis. For MacKinnon: how can a woman know her true desire if it has been completely constructed by the patriarchy? But for this thesis, what is an individual's true desire if every wilful or intentional acting upon this desire is the result of a power structure that seems determined to impose some identitarian form of sexual normativity? This correspondence between MacKinnon's position and the approach of this thesis serves to explain the reason why this thesis uses Lacanian understandings of desire, and particularly his notion of the Real. This is because, just as for MacKinnon, what was required was an understanding of desire that is detached from any formations of identity; as will be further explained, Lacan's approach is the most convincing theoretical approach to desire that does not depend on any 'emancipatory outside'. What for MacKinnon was a 'hope of release from $m > f$ ' (ibid: 14), becomes for this thesis the hope of a release from social order $>$ desire, or the way that the social order determines desire, and the hope of release from these normative and thus oppressive forms of 'dominant contemporary sexual culture' (Saunders, 2023). By acting on an instance of arousal that was not the result of intentional choice, this thesis will argue that the individual can in fact find a way out of the hegemonic framework of social order $>$ desire.

Where this thesis is in disagreement with MacKinnon is in her activist work, in the way she intended to replace one form of absolutism with an equally problematic universal claim, that porn is

universally harmful, that in one way or another, every engagement with it, whether during the production or the viewing of it, creates harm. When she writes in ‘Not a Moral Issue’, that ‘[p]ornography contributes causally to attitudes and behaviours of violence and discrimination which define the treatment and status of half the population’ (1984: 323), it seems she is making a universal and unequivocal claim that can easily be critiqued from the perspective of queer porn or feminist porn, for example. But as it stands, this part of MacKinnon’s project leaves little room for diverse sexual identities, changing desires, transgressive sexual practices, or sexual experimentation, and instead pulls desire towards the centre of Rubin’s charmed circle.

PORN STUDIES

Despite Ogden and Harrison’s 2018 suggestion that the ‘*anti*-pornography versus *anti*-censorship- of-pornography argument – may now be behind us, at least in academic circles’ (2018: 7), Smith, Maina and Attwood make clear that ‘the persistence of an anti/pro structure in much public discourse has made it difficult to articulate complex responses to pornography, enforcing a structure which encourages argument and opposition – not to mention hostility – and provides no means of moving forwards in any significant way’ (2018: 1). The public debate in news media and political discourse, as Smith et al. make clear, remains in many ways mired in the anti/pro debate (with a number of notable and influential exceptions, as will be detailed below). This thesis, in contrast, does not constitute an attempt to participate in this debate; instead it is a philosophical examination of a very specific pattern of pornographic engagement, that is diverse in the materials it involves, but connected by the possible experiences of ‘desubjectivation’ that may be taking place among the individuals in question.

Because this thesis does not contain any argument with regard to whether or not pornography should exist at all, it is important to examine the ways in which theoretical engagements with porn moved beyond this dichotomy. An early and influential positioning emerged with Linda Williams' 1989 book *Hardcore: Power, Pleasure and the 'Frenzy of the Visible'*, in which she makes the point that the feminist 'rhetoric of abhorrence has impeded discussion of almost everything but the question of whether pornography deserves to exist at all' (Williams, 2004: 6). In *Hardcore* (2004), Williams seeks to move beyond a debate that was focused primarily on public space and representation, and instead positioned porn as a dedicated area of film studies; this allowed for porn to be considered from a more disinterested position. Rather than condemning or defending porn, she argues that it is important to engage with it as a cultural form that both reflects and shapes society's understanding of sex, desire and the power dynamics that operate between and across different sexual identities. Williams asserts that pornography should not be reduced to a simplistic narrative of objectification or oppression, but should be analysed within its broader social and cultural contexts, suggesting that the explicitness of pornography can be seen as a radical form of visibility that challenges dominant sexual ideologies by exploring the complex relationship between pornography and spectatorship, and by highlighting the diverse range of responses it elicits. Although Williams does acknowledge that pornography creates symbolic representations of patriarchal oppression (as I do), she sides with the anti-censorship feminists because she believes (as I also do) that 'censorship of these pleasures offers no real solution to patriarchal violence and abuse' (ibid: 26). For Williams, the central issue with the position of the radical feminist campaigners is that they seem to believe that some kind of universal sexuality exists in opposition to the 'deviations and abnormalities' of the porn industry, and the demands that drive it.

The most significant gap in porn studies and sex research with regard to this thesis is that no work has been carried out on the comments that are written underneath porn clips. Although much work has been carried out on porn viewing in the form of interviews, surveys and questionnaires,

which are in themselves a valuable and fascinating source of information (see Smith, 2012; Healy-Cullen, 2022; Goldstein, 2021), this thesis understands the often chaotic and spontaneous comments underneath porn clips to be equally interesting and significant. This thesis, it is hoped, will uncover a new and under-researched addition to this diverse range of responses that Linda Williams makes reference to in *Hardcore* (1987). Part of the original contribution of this thesis emerges from the fact that these materials are yet to be considered by the theoretical disciplines that engage directly with online pornographies.

Looking at more contemporary work, the journal *Porn Studies* contains a number of articles that will be relevant to the arguments of this thesis. One such article, for example, is ‘Pornography, psychoanalysis and the sinthome: ignorance and ethics’ (2019), by Katie Goss, in which she examines the connection between Lacanian theory and porn viewing. She describes the jouissance of the Real as ‘unnameable and unknowable’ (ibid: 71), and claims that pornography has the potential to ‘undo regimes of phallogocentric knowledge and form new bonds between fantasy and social reality’ (2019: 59). The critical intervention that this thesis makes with regard to Goss’ article, comes from the fact that she does not speculate on which types of pornography might initiate an experience of the ‘unnameable and unknowable’, nor does she consider how these experiences might be articulated or felt by viewers. By focussing on porn comments, this thesis attempts to offer the illustration that is absent from Goss’ article.

In an article titled ‘Audiences and consumer of Porn’, in *Porn Studies*, volume 2, Mowlabocus and Wood (2015) summarise many of the assumptions that have become commonplace in media responses to porn, emphasising the ways in which ‘nuanced and sophisticated’ responses to the porn debate recognise it as a ‘bundle of contradictions’ (ibid: 121). This methodological strategy might be understood as descriptive of the broad approach of much of the work in this journal, and it is also the reason why it will be useful to the research of this thesis.

In 'Troubling Complicity' (2015), Florian Vörös conducts an ethnographic study of porn use in a group of men of differing identities. The research involves interviews and meetings during which the participants would watch porn with the researcher, who would record the comments made by the participants. Although my thesis does not use interviews as a research strategy - rather its intervention lies in those spontaneous responses that are written in the comments sections beneath porn - what is interesting in this article is the way that the heterosexual identifying participants constantly seem to maintain their heteronormative identities, which contribute to 'a masculinised sense of sexual liberation' (ibid: 144). Also important to note is that the reason Vörös made the decision to watch porn at the participants' houses, and the reason why he adopted (at first) a 'resolutely empathic posture' (ibid: 143) was to 'allow interviewees to kick back and talk freely' (ibid: 143). My thesis, in contrast, is searching for the same type of materials - utterances made from a position of freedom and privacy in a non-research setting - but it finds that the comments written beneath the porn might do this in an equally illuminating way, that differs in the way it examines spontaneous rather than considered responses. Although I was unable to ask direct questions, the spontaneity and sense of privacy and anonymity that comes from this form of viewer-engagement provides a different, and possibly more honest, type of data that can provide access to the unintentionality of 'desubjectivation' in a way that other research environments cannot. That said, when Vörös contradicts his participants from a feminist perspective, their heteronormative and hypermasculine positioning makes this article one that effectively exposes 'embodiments of masculinity' (ibid: 146) as a power structure that will always be maintained regardless of the radical ethnographic strategies the researcher utilises.

In *Porn Studies* article 'Carnal Fantasising' (2015), Ingrid Ryberg seeks to better understand viewer engagement with queer, feminist and lesbian pornography. Again, this article relies on interviews, which are then triangulated with theorists such as Michel Foucault and Linda Williams. One of the most interesting things about this article is when the researcher interviews a 'mostly

straight' organiser of the Pornfilmfestival Berlin, who describes the arousal she felt on seeing a film featuring a trans performer, because of the 'raw energy' that made her feel 'new desires' (ibid: 164). This is an instance of a response that is in partial opposition to the sexual identity of the participant, and as such can be used within the iterative approach of this thesis because it reveals an instance of the queer fluidity of desire. As detailed in the methodology, 'if the use of different theories describes the phenomenon in similar ways or agrees on its meaning, the data is triangulated' (Morris, 2017: 1781), so when this thesis is analysing a particular comment, a response such as this participant's can be used to strengthen any claim that a viewer might be displaying a form of desire in contradiction to their sexual identity.

Gareth Longstaff's article 'Bodies that Sputter - theorising jouissance in bareback and chemsex porn' (2019), which approaches bareback and chemsex from the perspective of Lacan's notion of jouissance, will also help to illustrate, firstly, how Lacanian theory can be used to examine a specific element of porn viewing; but secondly, and more specifically, Longstaff makes the important point that regardless of how much representations of such practices claim to allow 'unlimited access' to jouissance, as soon as something becomes re-signified, or re-attached to language, this 'instils a limit to the subject's jouissance as an unconscious pleasure' (ibid: 84), because it has moved from the de-signified realm of the Real to the signifying regimes of the symbolic order. As Lacan writes of the symbolic order:

In the symbolic order, the subject finds himself in a world of signifiers, a world of language and culture that precedes him and determines him without his knowledge or consent. It is through this network of signifiers that the subject comes to know himself and his world, but it is also through this network that he is alienated from himself and his world. (Lacan, 1977: 88)

Another important article with regard to the model of desubjectivation central to this thesis is Chris Heywood's "Leaving masculinity at the car door": Dogging, de-subjectification and the pursuit of pleasure', which explores desubjectivation from the perspective of the practice of dogging (2018). This article emphasises how desubjectivation can be used as an analytical tool, but also how difficult it can often be to use in this way, especially when applied alongside research strategies such as interviews and questionnaires. When Heywood writes that 'men in dogging encounters actively participate in their own de-subjectification' (589), and that their 'masculine subjectivities' (588) become fractured, what Heywood's interviews seem to do is allow for the participants to 'resubjectivise' themselves according to their 'masculine subjectivities' by giving them the space and time to carefully consider their actions. Although it is clearly carefully planned by the participants, thus reducing the force of the desubjectivising experience by connecting it to a wilful erotic act, it is clear that some level of desubjectivation seems to take place prior to and during the dogging act. The intervention of my thesis, however, is in its more radical approach to desubjectivation; I search instead for evidence of spontaneity, unintentionality, de-signification, and momentary losses of control, and attempt to examine them, through the comments, immediately after the desubjectivising experience has taken place, rather than in an arranged and formal research setting. In this way, the limitations of Heywood's article will serve to make clearer the approach this thesis takes to the theory of desubjectivation.

What is revealed here in this discussion of the relevant literature from porn studies is that an analysis of porn comments is an under-researched and largely neglected area of research. My claim is that porn comments reveal what has previously been hidden in this field – the experience of desubjectivation that takes place according to 'radical exposure'. Exploring this experience through an analysis of porn comments will therefore constitute an important supplement to the scholarship on porn studies. Unintentional moments of desire appear to take place across many different genres

of pornography, and very little, if any, research has been carried out with regard to this form of porn viewing. This thesis is an attempt to address this significant gap, and hopefully open up avenues into future research.

DESUBJECTIVATION, QUEER THEORY AND LACAN

One of the central limitations with current approaches in the literature on desubjectivation, is that it tends to be understood from two very different and conflicting theoretical perspectives. The first is that desubjectivation is something that can be enacted with an intentionality, as a purposeful strategy; desubjectivation contains within it the potential for empowerment, or the possibility of shaking oneself free from the more oppressive confines of the subjectivised self. However, as will be argued throughout this thesis, to strategically engage with possibilities of desubjectivation is always an act that can be traced back to the self, which is the very thing that the individual is attempting to free themselves *from*. That is, an intentional choice to desubjectivise cannot in itself lead to true desubjectivation. This appears to negate the most valued asset that desubjectivation can offer, which is a breaking down of subjectivation. As will be described in the following section, this intentional approach to desubjectivation is central to the work of Mari Ruti (2017) and Judith Butler (2011).

In contrast to this, other theorists take a more radical approach to desubjectivation, arguing that desubjectivation must fracture the self rather than be a product of it, and therefore must come from somewhere that is fully out of reach of the identitarian frameworks of the individual. This

place, for anti-social queer theorists such as Lee Edelman (2005) and Leo Bersani (2018), can be understood as bearing a close resemblance to the Lacanian ‘Real’, the void of designified potentiality that operates always out of reach of the subjectivised self. But this approach, which asserts that desubjectivation must initiate a form of self-annihilation or undoing, carries the traumatic risks of a total collapse of the self.

My claim here is that a synthesis of these two positions is possible. I agree that any conscious and strategic decision to desubjectivise is problematic in the way that such a process remains attached to, and is therefore determined by, the social order, but I also argue that the anti-social queer theorists appear to be encouraging individuals to desubjectivise themselves not from the self, but from the social order. In this way, before the individual can disrupt the public self, first they must disrupt the private self. Edelman, it seems, only appears to be making reference to the public self. I argue that instances of ‘radical exposure’ to online pornography, experienced alone and in private, can provide the environment necessary to undertake this process.

Much of the work on desubjectivation in this thesis finds its foundation in the philosophy of Michel Foucault, whose call for the end of ‘the identitarian apparatus within which desire has been trapped’ (Menon, 2015: 17), illustrates the reason why desubjectivation is so central to much of his work. Considered together Foucault’s work provides a multifaceted framework of the theory of desubjectivation. Much of his earlier work, such as *The Order of Things* (2001), *Discipline and Punish* (2020) and *Birth of the Clinic* (2003) offer critical engagements with the process of subjectivation. His series of lectures titled *Abnormal* (1991), illustrate the ways in which subject formation takes place. Speaking of *History of Sexuality volume two*, Foucault stated that his aim was to more fully understand how ‘an experience that caused individuals to recognize themselves as subjects of a sexuality’ unfolded across centuries (1998: 10); regarding this thesis, desubjectivation might be understood as a way to break down this form of recognition.

One example Foucault provides is in *The Gay Science* (2011), in which he discusses San Francisco bathhouses, and the way that during the sexual practices that take place there, the subject becomes the object. To be objectivised in this way, he says, is a form of freedom, because for that brief time you are not being engaged with as your subjectivised self. This is, of course, a reference to desubjectivation, and it is clear that in making this claim Foucault is offering an alternative to identitarian forms of sexuality. It is in Foucault's later lectures at the Collège de France and in numerous interviews that a more complete model of desubjectivation emerges. In *Power, Knowledge* (1977), a collection of essays and interviews, Foucault makes clear that his theoretical project had become 'a project of desubjectivation', of 'wrenching the subject from itself, of seeing to it that the subject is no longer itself... in such a way that we might come out of it transformed' (ibid: 241). In Chapter Six, I ask this very question regarding the transformation of the subject following an experience of desubjectivation caused by 'radical exposure'.

In her attempts to formulate Foucault's theory as a workable model of being, Lynne Huffer critically assesses desubjectivation, concluding that complete 'dissolution of the self' would be a 'horrifying proposition' (2010: 115) ending possibly in madness or death. Instead, in *Mad for Foucault*, Huffer discusses desubjectivation as an 'unraveling [that] opens a space for the invention of new desubjectivations we cannot now imagine' (ibid: 108). Huffer also makes reference to the problems of morality with regard to desubjectivation. If morality is attached to the identity via the social structure, whether through a religious morality, for example, or through a state-sanctioned understanding of morality that shapes laws and behaviours, then, for Huffer, desubjectivation signals an 'assassination of morality'. But, she adds, 'every assassination of morality is still a morality' (ibid), and it is from here that she begins her theoretical reconfiguration of desubjectivation by emphasising both the 'unsettling' nature of the concept, and its promise. The intervention that my thesis makes is in offering an illustration of one of the 'promises' of desubjectivation that Huffer is making reference to.

In her most recent book, *Foucault's Strange Eros* (2020), Huffer further explores the promise of desubjectivation, moderating it away from the limit-experience of de Sade, Georges Bataille, and some of Foucault's writings. While in *Mad for Foucault* she made the point that the 'the back rooms of sex clubs [do not] necessarily constitute the site of our erotic desubjectivation' (ibid: 232), in *Foucault's Strange Eros* and in reference to masturbation, or 'one-handed-reading', she engages with the idea of 'those quiet practices of ethical desubjectivation, less explosive than they are erosive' (2020: 30). Desubjectivation evolves in this way across Huffer's Foucauldian trilogy, and when she argues that it is similar to a 'surrender to something larger than the self [that] loosens the grip of self on self, the clinging of mud to earth' (2020: 14), it becomes clear that the results of her work on Foucault allow for a more useable, less treacherous model of desubjectivation to emerge.

Another queer feminist theorist whose work attempts to engage with desubjectivation as a more politically empowering tool is Mari Ruti, who also includes Lacanian ethics within her theoretical framework. In *The Ethics of Opting Out* (2017: 19), Ruti interrogates desubjectivation from a critical perspective, while maintaining an interest in how it might be used as a form of anti-normative ethics. Her critique might be understood as beginning with the admission that she has 'never quite understood what critics are talking about when they are talking about [the demise of the subject]: What exactly is supposed to take the place of the subject?' (ibid: 119) This is an interesting and important question, because as Ruti makes clear, it seems difficult to imagine any form of ethics emerging from an individual who has experienced the complete subjective destitution that more extreme understandings of desubjectivation seem to be encouraging. Ruti's alternative take in *The Singularity of Being* (2012), which seeks to turn desubjectivation into a more politically functional tool of resistance, is to argue that the 'kernel of being' that remains following desubjectivation can be referred to as a 'singularity', a 'oneness', that represents the self following the breaking down of all normatively constructed identity-markers. This singularity, for Ruti, should

be prioritised as the outcome of a more moderate form of desubjectivation, rather than the complete collapse of the subjectivity that other theorists of desubjectivation, such as Lee Edelman, seem to be aiming for. The limitation to Ruti's work, however, is that she struggles to find a coherent example of this more moderate form of desubjectivation, such as her argument that Rosa Parks' refusal to give her seat up is an example of the emergence of this form of singularity, which does not seem to correspond at all to the base requirement that any form of desubjectivation must come from a place that is completely oppositional to identity and signification. Singularity comes from a place where, according to Ruti, 'social identity and intelligibility disintegrate' (ibid: 61), but Parks' refusal seems like a bold, and radically intelligible affirmation of social identity. In contrast to Ruti's example, the examples discussed in this thesis of the desubjectivation noticeable in some porn comments, refers to a dissolution of the self in relation to the self, rather than in relation to the social order.

The next theorist whose work plays a central role in this thesis is anti-social queer theorist Lee Edelman, and the tension between his work and Ruti's helps to emphasise a significant issue when using desubjectivation as a methodology - it tends to negate itself whenever it comes within the vicinity of any form of signification or subject-formation. If Ruti's work on singularities can be situated at the more moderate end of theories of desubjectivation, and Huffer's 'one-handed-reading' can be seen to be residing in the more centrist position, whereby Foucault's desubjectivation is maintained alongside an acknowledgement that continuous subjective destitution is an unrealistic ambition to aim for, Lee Edelman's position on desubjectivation is more radical and more insistent on the necessity of the complete collapse of the self. This insistence can be understood from his book *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (2005), in which he argues that it is our preoccupation with the future, and particularly with the idea of the child as emblematic of this future, that is preventing us from attaining any level of freedom from the normative regimes of the social world. He formulates this argument by making use of a number of

Lacanian concepts, and it is important to understand these concepts in order to understand Edelman's place in this thesis.

Constituting one point of the Borromean Knot, as described in Lacan's 1976 seminar 'Le Sinthome' (2005), the 'Real' is that element of the self that exists outside of the individual's conscious understanding of the social world. This is crucial to the argument of this thesis. While the symbolic order represents the individual's interpretation of the symbolic configuration of the world around them as it 'interpellates [them] into the normative regulations of the social order' (Ruti, 2012: 1), and the imaginary 'founds our conception of ourselves' through an idealisation of the self according to the subject's understanding of their social and cultural surroundings (Lacan, 1973), the Real, in Lacan's words, 'permits the effective unknotting of what makes the symptom hold together, namely a knot of signifiers' (ibid: 10). This suggests it is a de-signified space, meaning that it lacks the language necessary in order to determine these frameworks of control and order; it also lacks any basis in morality because it does not have the linguistic means to do so (Nobus, 1999: xii). If the 'Real' is that place within the unconscious from where an experience of desubjectivation begins, 'jouissance' is the word that Lacan uses to describe the type of pleasure that is experienced there. This is pleasure detached from any notion of the self, any notion of identity, and can be treacherous and traumatic in the way it often works in opposition to the individual's understandings of their own more normative frameworks of desire. Thirdly, Edelman makes much use of the concept of the 'sinthome', which is the term Lacan uses for a type of symptom that reveals itself during psychoanalysis. While a 'symptom' might signal an issue that the analysand has with their conscious or identitarian relationship with the social world, the 'sinthome' represents the type of symptom that cannot be traced to the individual's relationship with the social world. This is because the 'sinthome' is a symptom that emerges due to an issue regarding the 'Real'. Just as an analysand might overcome their 'symptom' through language or signification, they can only overcome their 'sinthome' by engaging with 'jouissance' (Nobus, 1999). Finally, for Lacan, to engage with

'jouissance' is to engage with one's true, unmediated desire, and this is what Lacan refers to as the 'ethical act'. For Edelman, then, the only way to find any empowerment with regard to the normative confines of identity and the social order is to search out the 'limit-experiences' associated with a search for true 'jouissance'. This is the argument that he offers in *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (2005), which is then defended in *Sex, or the Unbearable* (2014), a series of essays written in conversation with Lauren Berlant, whereby each theorist writes an essay for the other to respond to. For this thesis, Edelman's position on desubjectivation is useful in the way that it offers a radical approach that requires the 'limit-experience' that Foucault refers to. The way my thesis departs from Edelman's position, however, is that he appears to be only making reference to acts that are carried out in relation to one's own social order, in public spaces and with other bodies; acts that initiate a reconstitution of the individual's relationship with others, rather than with oneself. In contrast to this, the desubjectivising experiences that are central to my thesis illustrate that it is the relationship with oneself that must be reconstituted prior to any shifts that might take place with regard to the individual's relationship with the social order. In this way, the approach to desubjectivation that this thesis takes allows for both the less treacherous desubjectivising experience of Ruti and Huffer, while also maintaining the 'limit-experience' that Edelman argues is required for the value of desubjectivation to be realised.

The connection between Deleuze and Lacan, who are often assumed to be in an irreconcilable theoretical opposition (Nedoh & Zevnik, 2017), is in the way that both the Lacanian Real and Deleuze's 'smooth spaces' (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987: 402) and 'lines of flight' (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987: 161) are sites of potentiality, waiting to be determined not by the identitarian apparatus of the individual's understanding of their own desire, but by a non-identitarian, pre-cognitive desire which, in the case of this thesis, can sometimes emerge when an individual's sexual identity is troubled by an experience of desubjectivation. This is because what is in operation here is not only the individual's understanding of their own sexual tastes, but another form of desire, that

operates beyond intention and beyond signification. As Paasonen writes, people watch porn out of ‘interest, sexual arousal, curiosity, and fun’ (2018: 145). They watch things ‘they like or would want to do, those that they do not want or cannot do, as well as coming across things without much planning or premeditation involved, possibly in search of serendipitous thrills’ (ibid). More specifically, ‘women identifying as straight and queer alike broadly consume gay porn, as do men self-identifying as “totally straight”’ (ibid). This willingness to act in a way that does not correspond with an individual’s sexual identity is the central interest of this thesis, and these surprising and unexpected manifestations of desire, that I have defined as ‘radical exposure’, are the central analytic topic of this thesis.

Queer feminist Judith Butler is critical of both the Lacanian Real, and antisocial queer theory. They argue that desubjectivation is unreachable, because “liberation” from external authorities does not suffice to initiate a subject into freedom...’ (1997: 33). Subjectivation, she explains, is a ‘precondition of the subject’s very formation,’ (ibid: 14) and regardless of our attempts at complete desubjectivation, this will always result in ‘an ethical world, subjected to various norms and ideals’ (ibid: 32). There is much at stake in this theoretical disagreement between Lacan and Butler; if Lacan is correct, then access to the Lacanian ethical self is possible through the process of desubjectivation, but if Butler is correct then this must be done from within the confines of the symbolic order. While this thesis does recognise the value of Butler’s position, my central argument is more closely aligned with the Lacanian ‘Real’, as the patterns of porn viewing that it discusses do appear to come from a place entirely detached from the identitarian and normative regimes of desire. For Butler, these regimes determine all of our engagements with desire.

If queer theory is to be used as a methodological tool in this thesis, it is also important to respond to some of its criticisms. In James Penney’s book *After Queer Theory* (2013), he makes the claim that queer theory is simply covering ground that has already been covered by psychoanalysis and Marxism. Regarding psychoanalysis, it is clear that many queer theorists such as Lee Edelman

and Leo Bersani use Lacan and Freud respectively in order to build their theoretical foundations, but they also use many other theorists in conversation with the psychoanalysts in order to make their arguments. Bersani, for example, uses Peter Sloterdijk, Samuel Beckett and Michel Foucault in order to position the Lacanian 'Real' as a safer, less traumatic place to be (2018). It is with Edelman's work, however, that it is possible to understand why queer theory is not simply a repackaged configuration of Freud and Marx. The argument for this is in their different understandings of what is being referred to with regard to the 'death drive'. It is one thing to suggest it is complete biological annihilation, but something else entirely to suggest, as Jean LaPlanche does, that it is the death of the ego or a 'temporary undoing of the self's unity' (1999: 14). It 'is not the death of the organism, but the death of this "organism" which, in human existence, represents the interests of the biological organism, that is to say, *the ego*' (ibid). This death of the ego is the death of the results of socialisation; the death of procreation, the end of the delayed gratification of putting on hold present (pleasurable) gains for future security - and is, according to Freud, 'the greatest impediment' to civilisation, a position that again distances Freud from the underlying point of the queer theoretical project, which understands this form of death as containing the potential for empowerment and resistance (1987: 313). For Edelman this is where a form of anti-identitarian liberation resides, and whose anti-social stance embraces and celebrates the death drive and its ensuing jouissance, for it gives perversion its 'most precious worth - the negative worth of unproductivity, of abjection and asociality' (Bernini, 2017: 11). The reason queer theory is used, then, is because it uses Freudian and Lacanian thought as a tool for resistance and empowerment rather than as a means to live with and tolerate our neuroses; it does not pathologise such practices and forms of behaviour.

Penney might be correct to say that queer theory, and queerness in general, is always vulnerable to being co-opted by capitalism, which often replicates lifestyle trends as commodities, as illustrated in Chapter Five. This thesis departs from this position, however, by making use of

Brian Massumi's theory of capitalism's 'immanent outside' in *99 Theses on the Re-evaluation of Value* (2019: 9), and part of the argument of the later parts of this thesis will illustrate the ways in which this is something that queerness can also respond more critically and productively to.

In a way this thesis is a response to Penney's broad critique of queer theory when he writes that 'it's not at all clear that the decision merely not to follow certain conventional lifestyle paths amounts to a politics that will in any way threaten the social and economic status quo' (2013: 25). I argue that in the act of resisting normativity, the individual's desubjectivised self is in fact, to an extent, threatening to the social and economic status quo. Because the model of desubjectivation at the centre of this thesis is anti-social in the way it acts in opposition to the quantifiable and predictable social forces of normative subjectivation, this does draw such acts into the political realm.

When a comment seems like it may be signalling a desubjectivising experience, these theories can be used to ask a number of questions of the comment: Does this comment display the trauma or anxiety often associated with desubjectivation? Are there traces of anti-normativity in opposition to the commentator's usual identity formation? What are the political implications of such an act?

CONCLUDING REMARKS

This chapter has shown that there is an important gap in current approaches to both porn studies and theories of desubjectivation. The first half of the chapter illustrated the absence of research and theory on porn commentary and provided an overview of those journal articles and books from the disciplines of porn studies and sexuality studies that correspond with the arguments contained within this thesis. The second half of this chapter analysed the ways in which

desubjectivation, queer theory and Lacanian theory can be used to better understand the porn comments that are central to this thesis. It showed that some theories of desubjectivation are too firmly situated within the social order for them to be consistent with porn comments that appear to express moments of desubjectivation, and it also argued that those theories of desubjectivation that insist on complete undoing of the self are in relation to the social world, rather than in relation to the individual's relationship with the self. By illustrating the ways that desubjectivation is taking place within the self, in the private spaces of one's own online engagement, rather than between the self and the social world, this thesis can argue that the self can be unraveled according to the designified and non-identitarian place of the Lacanian Real, without the individual having to completely alienate themselves from their own social surroundings. This allows for a purer form of anti-social and non-identitarian desubjectivation to be maintained, whereby the individual in question can remake themselves according to their new understanding of themselves, rather than according to their relationship with their now-fractured social world. A radical reconfiguration of the individual's relationship with the social world, then, can take place *following* the desubjectivising experience, rather than being the very *cause* of the experience.

CHAPTER TWO: THE TRANSGRESSIVE BOUNDARIES OF CONTEMPORARY PORN VIEWING.

This chapter will examine the position of pornography in a number of social and cultural institutions. It will argue that although these institutions - the state, education, the family and popular culture - do influence the ways in which people engage with pornography, their approaches to this topic can also often be contradictory, unstable, normative and often very difficult to adhere to. As this chapter will argue, one potential effect that these attempts at restriction and subjectivation have on individuals is that by defining the transgressive boundaries of acceptability with regard to sexual pleasure, these social institutions may have a significant influence on opening the space within which desubjectivation can operate. These spaces have the potential to create in the individual the capacity and desire to explore what lies beyond these limits, which may explain why, as will be argued throughout this thesis, a significant number of experiences of desubjectivation appear to be taking place within contemporary porn viewing.

PORNOGRAPHY AND POLITICS

When politicians talk about online pornographies, they often have to simultaneously support both freedom of speech and censorship, or ‘freedom and responsibility’ as David Cameron (2013) defines it in his 2013 speech that outlines many of these positions. The cultural effect of pornography can be ‘devastating’, he says. Children are developing ‘distorted ideas about sex’, and ‘parents have been left on their own’ (2013). He continues to outline the strategies that will be put in place to limit the accessibility of online pornographies, citing the default positions of parental

locks when a family switches to a new broadband provider. ‘This has never been a debate about companies or government censoring the internet but about filters to protect children at the home network level’ (Cameron, 2023). Although the current legal status of online porn viewing in the UK seems to be determined by a form of negative liberty, or the freedom from state and social infringement, which designates only harmful and non-consensual pornographies as illegal, clearly all pornography is considered harmful to children. This seems reasonable enough, of course, though it should be said that child protection filters also ‘tend to conflate content ranging from sex education to erotic poetry to information resources for sexual minorities with pornography, filtering all of it’ (Paasonen, 2014). It should also be said that these parental control locks are no longer default when switching to a new internet provider.¹

Boris Johnson’s approach to online pornographies was a little more confusing. In 2015 he claimed that ‘jihadis’ are ‘porn-obsessed wankers’, and as Prime Minister, in 2019 he scrapped part three of the Digital Economy Act 2017 (Malik, 2015), which would have meant that all porn viewing in the UK would need to first go through a process of formalised age verification. Meanwhile, in 2015 there were 214,000 instances of porn viewing that took place on the Houses of Parliament’s wifi network (Press Association, 2015). There have also been a number of instances of sackings for porn use in the government, the highest profile being Damien Green (Stewart, 2017). Theresa May’s First Secretary of State, who, according to one of the police officers involved in the raid of his office in 2008, accessed thousands of porn sites during his time in office. More recently Conservative MP Neil Parish was sacked for watching ‘tractor porn’ in the Commons (Long, 2022).

Government regulations often appeal to ‘moral panic-driven and populist articulations that conflate problems and list infractions using vague language’, as Katrin Tiidenberg writes in ‘Sex,

¹ See for example: Donelan, M. (2023). *Britain makes internet safer, as Online Safety Bill finished and ready to become law*. [Online]. <https://www.gov.uk/>. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/britain-makes-internet-safer-as-online-safety-bill-finished-and-r> [Accessed 15 February 2024].

Power and Platform Governance’, which will result in, she argues, a dangerously risk averse, hasty and ill-advised practice of ‘business risk avoidance and overregulation of already culturally undervalued and marginalized practices and topics’ (Tiidenberg, 2021: 390). The power relations that determine the transgressive boundaries of pornography are primarily horizontal ones, and as the following example will illustrate, it is non-state actors, such as multinational corporations and various influential ideologues, and their relationship to the consumer via various media narratives, that have a far more significant effect on the regulation of pornography.

On 9th December, 2020, Pulitzer Prize winning journalist Nicholas Kristof published the article ‘The Children of Pornhub’ in the *New York Times*, describing the ways in which Pornhub monetises ‘child rapes, revenge pornography, spy cam videos of women showering, racist and misogynist content, and footage of women being asphyxiated in plastic bags’ (Kristoff, 2020). This article had an immediate and significant impact. Both Visa and Mastercard banned payments to sites owned by MindGeek, the parent company that owns Pornhub. Soon after, Pornhub removed any content that was not uploaded by either a ‘Pornhub Partner’ or a member of the Verified Model Programme. This amounted to the removal of over ten million clips, almost 80% of their entire content, most of which have been replaced by a black screen and the words ‘video is unavailable pending review’. Pornhub then released a statement announcing that they have now partnered with over 40 non-profit organisations that have a ‘direct line of access to our moderation team’ (Pornhub, 2020). Sarah T Roberts, an academic who specialises in the content moderation of online materials and writer of *Behind the Screen: Content Moderation in the Shadows of Social Media* (Roberts, 2019), described the campaign targeting Pornhub as ‘strangely punitive and uniquely puritanical in an American way’ (Roberts, 2020). She points to the number of years Visa and Mastercard have been collecting fractional surcharges from this industry, which is something that she describes as ‘window-dressing’ (in Solon, 2020). In their statement Pornhub also make the following point:

Leading non-profit organizations and advocacy groups acknowledge our efforts to date at combating illegal content have been effective. Over the last three years, Facebook self-reported 84 million instances of child sexual abuse material. During that same period, the independent, third-party Internet Watch Foundation reported 118 incidents on Pornhub (Pornhub, 2020).

In their article, ‘Pornhub, child sexual abuse materials and anti-pornography campaigners’, McKee and Lumby argue that although many of Kristoff’s concerns are legitimate, his rhetorical approach and the unequivocal nature of his anti-porn position suggest a ‘bad faith’ argument, that obfuscates ‘real structural, industrial and cultural issues...about sexual representation’ (McKee & Lumby, 2020: 466). This piece also emphasises the fact that a number of Kristoff’s allies, such as Laila Mickelwait, work from a Christian conservative position, who have, as in the case of Mickelwait, also campaigned against reproductive rights, LGBTQ+ rights, as well as expressing anti-Semitic views.

Beneath the statement posted by Pornhub are over 1800 comments written by viewers, most of which express unhappiness at the disappearance of their favourite clips. One user writes, ‘Someone please get verified and reupload the sexy popper training videos’ (Pornhub, 2020). As a part of this mass removal, thousands of educational videos have also been removed. New Zealand charity endinghiv.org.nz (2020) is an organisation that, among other things, aims to teach men how to have safe and pleasurable anal sex. They provide fully explicit tutorial videos that are accessed via a link to Pornhub, which hosts the content. This has also been removed.

When the adjustment of what is considered acceptable becomes an infringement on the individual’s negative liberty to desire in any way they choose, and when politically, economically and ideologically motivated gate-keepers and influencers impose themselves on the free market, as

happened with Kristoff and Visa/Mastercard, it simply increases the visibility of mainstream varieties of porn, because this was the type of porn that did not get removed by Pornhub following the Kristoff article. The disconnect between many of these different actors is noticeable. When anti-porn campaigners refer to 'pornography', they are almost always referring to mainstream porn, yet these are overwhelmingly the pornographies that have survived this cull. If the increasing popularity of transgressive pornographies suggests that perhaps porn viewing is moving in a more positive direction, then this recent change to the industry should be understood as a significant hurdle.

In 'Feminism and the Mainstream', Stoya describes 'mainstream' as the 'heterosexual-targeted, and capitalism-driven end of the adult industry' (2014: 201). Paasonen and Cardoso describe it as a 'vague and contentious' term, used as 'popular shorthand for certain kinds of body aesthetics, politics, ethics, and economics' (Paasonen & Cardoso, 2019: 19). They describe the distinction between 'mainstream' and 'alternative' types of porn as often amounting to a distinction between 'the authenticity, creativity, smartness, and radicalness of the alternative' and the 'assumed predictability, triteness, superficiality, and tastelessness connoted by the mainstream' (ibid). This thesis agrees with Paasonen and Cardoso that this is a 'simplistic, binary vein' (ibid). The use of the term 'mainstream' in this thesis, however, finds its specificity according to queer theory's notions of sexual normativity. This term will be used to designate pornography that is made according to assumptions of normative aesthetics and practices, which includes using high-end, technically proficient production strategies; the actors have slim or muscular, shaved or mostly shaved, often tanned bodies that are always gendered in a normative way. Mainstream sexual practices, as this section will illustrate, have now expanded beyond vaginal penetration, facials, oral sex and anal sex, and now contain elements of BDSM, domination, fisting, choking and rimming. That said, attempting to pin down a term such as this remains problematic, and draws attention 'away from the fundamental instability of the very categories deployed' (Paasonen & Cardoso, 2019: 24), as there

will always be important exceptions. For this reason, this thesis will attempt to further develop this definition according to the examples it uses.

PORNOGRAPHY AND EDUCATION: INCORRIGIBILITY, RECTIFIABILITY AND PORN LITERACY

PSHE, or Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education, is the area of the UK's secondary school curriculum that concerns itself with, among many other things, teaching teenagers about online pornographies. Determined by a series of statutory guidance papers provided by the Department for Education, it is supported by the PSHE Association, a charity that provides teachers and practitioners with resources, research briefings, advice and training, and helps them navigate the DfE's guidance (PSHE, 2021). Although it is compulsory, the contents of PSHE is decided by the headteachers and governors, in consultation with parents.

The PSHE Association provides the following list of research findings regarding the harms of pornography:

- Watching pornography can make real-world sex less enjoyable.
- Pornography can make people feel less happy in their relationships.
- Pornography can lead people to think about sex a lot more. This can make it harder for them to enjoy their friendships and other interests.
- Pornography can lead to people viewing others, especially women, as 'sex objects' and not as people with intelligence and feelings, meaning they are respected less.
- Over time, pornography can shape the types of things people are aroused by, and this may lead to an increased interest in extreme or violent pornography (PSHE, 2020).

For PSHE, then, pornography is an ‘inherently problematic genre that young people should be inoculated against through comprehensive media literacy education’ (Goldstein, 2020: 59). This strategy positions all of pornography as transgressive in the sense that, according to the PSHE, it is rendered unacceptable and risky to consume. For the porn industry itself, Annette Kuhn suggests that this is good news: ‘in order to maintain its attraction, porn demands strictures, controls, censorship. Exposed to the light of day, it risks loss of power. Pornography invites policing’ (Kuhn, 1994). This is not to say that discouraging teenagers from consuming porn, or using research findings to advise them that too much porn consumption may harm their relationships, is necessarily a bad thing, but it does make very clear that there is a limit, and that to cross this limit is to enter into a world in opposition to contemporary understandings of decency, morality, responsibility, and acceptability. That said, there are numerous other research findings that offer a more balanced approach, such as Anne-Frances Watson’s ‘Young People, Sexuality Education and the Media’ (2018), in *The Routledge Companion to Media, Sex and Sexuality*, which argues that much of the information about sex that comes from parents and schools is negative. Using interviews with high school students, she provides responses that suggest that many parents conflate relationships with promiscuity, how ‘no one likes’ sexually active teenagers, and how the advice from parents regarding sex often seems to amount to ‘touching makes babies’ (ibid: 231). This ‘negative or missing’ information means that young people have to use the internet to more fully understand ‘key areas about their sexual development’ (ibid), as they do not seem to be receiving this from their parents or the Department for Education.

The paper entitled ‘What is the Impact of Pornography on Young People?: A Research Briefing’ (Hanson, 2020), really does emphasise the inapplicability of much of the approach of the DofE to contemporary porn viewing. The paper asserts that pornography ‘promotes a narrow conception of attractiveness’, it focusses on an unrealistic representation of ‘sexual proficiency’, ‘values, ethics, and other parts of one’s selfhood are sidelined, as are other versions of sex, namely

those that involve relational connection (such as 'sexual chemistry') or intimacy as central'. But Hentai, anime and computer game porn are three of the top five most searched genres of 2022, while queer porn and porn that involves people with non-normative bodies is becoming more popular each year (Horbeit, 2022). These genres do not correspond with a 'narrow conception of attractiveness', and although notions of normative selfhood are often disrupted, in queer porn the self should be considered one of its central elements, as will be examined more closely in Chapter Five. Hentai, which is a genre of animated Japanese pornography, often depicts impossible sexual practices with fantastical monsters who demonstrate a sexual proficiency that no one would consider attainable (Yasosu Bibu, 2019). Also, as will be detailed in Chapter Five, much queer porn gives a convincing impression of what will be described as a 'caring community', and often foregrounds the 'relational connection', sexual chemistry and intimacy that PSHE provision encourages with regard to their underlying critique of pornography. Given that Hanson's previously discussed paper suggests that pornography defines a young person's 'sexual scripts', it is certainly a question of some relevance to ask what effect these genres might have in this way, especially when it is clear that so much of the audience share is of this age group. 'Sexual scripts' are in reference to the ways in which people develop 'culturally familiar, established ways of speaking about sex within a particular context', and, with regard to this thesis, part of the central argumentative thread is an attempt to engage with the question of how 'radical exposure', or the arousal an individual feels when a moment of prurient opportunism develops into a situation of unintentional arousal, affects a person's 'sexual scripts' (Healy-Cullen, 2022).

As will be argued in Chapter Five, much queer porn seems to contain many of the elements regarding sex and relationships that PSHE advisors such as Hanson argue is missing from porn. It suggests that PSHE advisors might be missing an opportunity in this way to help young people develop a more positive and healthy form of 'media literacy', and a more helpful set of 'sexual scripts' that are not at risk of being determined by the tension between 'rectifiability and

incorrigibility’, as the next section will illustrate. Attempts at developing media literacy in schools currently approaches the topic of pornography with a ‘top-down, teacher-centred emphasis’ (Goldstein, 2019: 71), and although Goldstein illustrates the different ways that young people have ‘complex and idiosyncratic’ engagements with porn, that shift from ‘disturbing, to mundane, to educative, to downright ecstatic’ (ibid), this has ‘almost exclusively been framed through a one-sided lens of inherent and inevitable harm’ (ibid). Goldstein argues that instead of starting from this ‘infantilising position that constructs young people as necessarily out-of-control and at risk in their sexualities’ (ibid), young people should be understood as ‘always already deeply embroiled in the power relations of our society’ (ibid), and as people who can recognise the ways in which ‘their discussions around concepts like harm, deviance and exploitation in relation to pornography extend outwards to touch on the social, political, economic, relational, personal, erotic and the intersections between’ (ibid).

Regarding anti-normative and non-normative pornography, it is not PSHE’s approach to pornography that is important; regardless of the content, these genres become grouped with every other of the thousands of genres and subgenres of porn. In this way no single genre is positioned as more or less transgressive than other forms of porn, but rather it is the PSHE’s approach to interpersonal relationships, both sexual and non-sexual, that positions porn as a whole as transgressive. PSHE provision, then, appears to position anything that is situated outside of traditional monogamous relationships as transgressive, and therefore potentially desirable *because* of its position beyond the limits of acceptability as set by the PSHE. In an advisory booklet on sexual relationships, the DfE states that pupils should know ‘how to recognise the characteristics and positive aspects of healthy one-to-one intimate relationships, which include mutual respect, consent, loyalty, trust, shared interests and outlook, sex and friendship’ (DfE, 2019). What this amounts to, it seems, is that any activity that is non-monogamous, promiscuous, features more than

two people, contains anything other than fingers, mouths or penetrative intercourse, is inadvertently positioned by the PSHE as transgressive.

‘This culture,’ writes cultural anthropologist Gayle Rubin,

always treats sex with suspicion. It construes and judges almost any sexual practice in terms of its worst possible expression. Sex is presumed guilty until proven innocent. Virtually all erotic behavior is considered bad unless a specific reason to exempt it has been established (Rubin, 2011: 162).

She continues to assert that this ‘system of erotic stigma’ is the final socially respectable form of prejudice, and uses this to define what is acceptable and what is not, as can be seen in Figure 1, ‘The Charmed Circle vs The Outer Limits’ (Rubin, 2011: 166), and much of the pornography that has been viewed for the purposes of this study can be neatly categorised as existing in the outer limits of Rubin’s Sex Hierarchy.

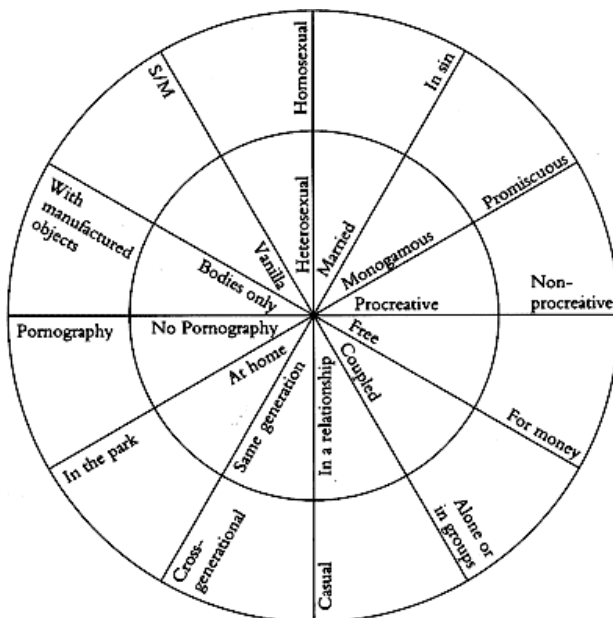


Fig.1. The Charmed Circle, Gayle Rubin.

The following quote might be read as a response to those who take a similar position of the PSHE:

Progressives who would be ashamed to display cultural chauvinism in other areas routinely exhibit it toward sexual differences. We have learned to cherish different cultures as unique expressions of human inventiveness rather than as the inferior or disgusting habits of savages. We need a similarly anthropological understanding of different sexual cultures (ibid: 168).

Rubin suggests that a line exists between order and sexual chaos, and that ‘if anything is permitted to cross this erotic demilitarised zone, the barrier against scary sex will crumble and something unspeakable will skitter across’ (ibid). This line, she writes, and this demilitarised erotic zone, ‘grants virtue to the dominant groups, and relegates vice to the underprivileged’ (ibid).

What seems to be taking place in the PSHE’s approach to teaching about pornography is that one form of normative sexual pleasure is situated on one side of a binary opposition, while on the other side is all of pornography. But trust and respect are benign concepts until an individual or institution - in this case the DfE, which provides the scheme of work for teachers to adhere to - imposes an ideological or normative value on the concept. There seems little doubt that the approach of PSHE is determined by a form of conservative values, with much emphasis on the family, the importance of stable relationships in bringing up children, the value of secure, long-term relationships, and often with a particular emphasis on marriage.

One issue is that education tends to understand young people as sexualised objects rather than sexual subjects; as ‘foolish, rash, hormone-driven and psychologically and emotionally immature...’ (Angelides, 2013: 682). According to Hasinoff, any engagement with porn is, by default, a result of ‘low self-esteem, hormones, still-developing brain structures, sexualisation in mass media and pressure from peers’ (Hasinoff, 2015: 682). All of these determinants may be true up to a point, but in the way porn is dealt with by the primary providers of PSHE, the idea of sexual agency, pleasure and desire is given less importance than sexual risk, monogamous sexual relations, and traditional values. Looking beyond this overdetermination and to the proliferation and massive popularity of many types of animated porn, for example, which displays a disconnect from any of the usual causal understandings of sexualisation and mass media, it seems there might also be an exploration of desire taking place (Allen, 2008). As Watson suggests, sex education is ‘relentlessly scientific - and therefore irrelevant...[and] when sexuality education fails to address pleasure and the aspects of sexuality that young people want to hear about, they disengage from everything else’ (Watson, 2018: 231).

The outcome of the DfE’s approach to PSHE is a classroom situation in which around 75% of the students watch porn, but also in which porn viewing is one that is defined solely by pathological harm and shame, is that it turns the classroom environment into what Goffman (1986) refers to as a ‘stigmaphile space’, where conformity is imposed, and one of the few ways to avoid it, overcome it, or, as the next chapter will detail, use it as a means of self-expression, is through transgression. In this sense the PSHE classroom might regulate desire, pleasure and sexuality, as detailed in this chapter, but it also provides an opportunity for transgression through these regulatory mechanisms; in this way classrooms inadvertently and counter-intuitively teach transgression as a part of its hidden curriculum.

As Watson makes clear, ‘policy-makers and researchers tend to view adolescents and young people as “problems” for adults... irrational people who need to be controlled and told what to do

for their own good,' with much focus on 'resisting sexual pressure instead of succumbing to it' (Watson, 2018: 225). Wholly absent from this research is any suggestion that young people might be sexual beings 'who are forming their own, differing ideas about their sexuality that are not tied to traditional ideals about sex before marriage' (ibid). Instead, according to Watson, young people are offered a 'non-sexual identity' in school, and what this results in is a lack of 'effectiveness in empowering young people to view their sexuality positively and make positive sexual decisions' (ibid). During interviews with young people that are detailed in Allen's 2008 article 'They think you shouldn't be having sex anyway', many discussions recount frustrations that pleasure, desire and 'orgasms' are not mentioned a single time in their sex education. Instead, they find this information from the internet, one student saying, 'the internet, what would we do without it' (ibid: 578). Another student who was 16-17 says that much of her sex education amounted to: 'don't have sex so you don't have to have an abortion and kill your baby and all the rest of it' (ibid: 582). As Allen also argues in 'Beyond the Birds and the Bees' (2004), an 'ethics of pleasure' may be exactly what is needed, which 'may benefit young people beyond equipping them to successfully negotiate intimate relationships and help transcend normative sexual identities and practices' (Allen, 2004: 152). Clarissa Smith, in her article 'Putting Porn Studies (Back) Into Porn Literacy' (2021), provides a critique of 'pedagogy about pornography' (ibid: 170) which relates to the approach of PSHE with regard to pleasure. What is problematic in this form of education is that it 'does nothing to address why pornography might be exciting or thrilling' (ibid). By approaching pornography in this way, these forms of education provide young people with a reason to look to pornography in order to develop an understanding of desire and pleasure. Citing Dawson et al. (2019), Smith illustrates the ways in which young people were 'dissatisfied with the sexual education they were offered' ibid. Discussing sex education programmes, she notes that often, 'literacy is offered through a combat approach—the need to fight the new drug or to rewire the brain' (ibid: 172). With regard to this thesis, it should be clear that this chapter is not intended as

necessarily a critique of PSHE provision in schools. It is an attempt to illustrate those transgressive boundaries of acceptability that act as a form of subjectivation, which, according to theories of transgression and desubjectivation, result in the unintended consequence of embedding in the individual the knowledge of where the pleasures of desubjectivation might be found. The regimes of normativity and the attempts by various social institutions to impose a form of acceptability, with regard to pleasure and desire, often leave spaces in which more unstable, queer or non-normative forms of desire can become manifest.

As McKee argues, the psychological studies that provide the approach of the PSHE classroom almost always contain significant elements of conservative heteronormativity. Desirable sexual development is often connected to lifelong monogamy. Risk is often used to condemn deviance, and deviance itself seems to cover a wide range of sexual practices, even in one case relating it to the act of having two sexual partners in a twelve month period. As McKee adds, 'We can't stop them doing it - but at least we can make them hate themselves' (McKee, 2018: 389). Articles such as those by Watson, Allen and Goffman align with Foucault's concepts of 'rectifiability and incorrigibility'. By making clear the tension between what young people require from sex education with regard to their 'sexual scripts' and 'media literacy', and the approach of the DfE, which focusses primarily, and sometimes solely, on 'reducing sexually transmissible infections and unplanned pregnancy' and 'often harbour[ing] a preference that students do not engage in sexual activity, thereby constituting them as ideally non-sexual' (Allen, 2018), these theorists emphasise the difficulty of the position into which these young people find themselves. Turning to the internet to find the information that is absent in PSHE provision, they will often look to internet pornography not just as a means of pleasure and arousal, but also for information. In 'Why Do People Watch Porn: Results from PornResearch.org', Smith, Barker and Attwood's (2015) research project reveals a number of reasons why people watch porn, many of them not necessarily concerning sexual arousal. Some, for example, see porn as 'an important means of understanding

the rich varieties of sexual attraction, interests, and practices as they exist for others'. It is 'not just about sexual arousal and pleasure, it is simultaneously thinking about the meanings and significance of being aroused or feeling pleasure.' These results align with the work of Watson and Allen, and make clear that internet pornography is often used as an educational or informational resource.

The 'emergent sexual sensibilities' that follow 'radical exposure', as will be argued, are most commonly the result of the prurient opportunism that causes an individual to view one of the oddities that porn sites' algorithms tend to use to draw viewers to other genres. However, that young people often approach pornography for the purposes of filling in the significant gaps left by PSHE provision, suggests that they are already in a position to experience 'radical exposure'. Many of the individuals at the centre of this thesis might interrupt their search for pleasure to view a less mainstream or non-normative porn clip from a prurient perspective. Young people, however, often access porn for educational purposes, particularly for the information about sexual pleasure that is absent from their sex education, so it is clear that both groups are in a position to experience the 'radical exposure' at the centre of this thesis. The former group views these oddities for the purpose of prurient interest, while the latter views them for the purpose of information; unintentional arousal can occur in either case.

As Michel Foucault writes in *Ethics, Subjectivity and Truth*,

Sexual behavior is not, as is too often assumed, a superimposition of, on the one hand, desires that derive from natural instincts, and, on the other hand, of permissive or restrictive laws that tell us what we should or shouldn't do. Sexual behavior is more than that. It is also the consciousness one has of what one is doing, what one makes of the experience, and the value one attaches to it (Foucault, 1994: 141).

This consciousness is the form of resistance that contains within it the potential for 'radical exposure', and it is emblematic of the disconnect between the materials provided by the DfE, and the actual behaviour of this generation of porn viewers. The DfE's emphasis on these aforementioned educational values are all transmissions of power, or 'micropower', to invoke Foucault's terminology, and it is these values that are being transgressed in many contemporary patterns of viewing. This chapter is not intended to be a critique of these types of values, but an argument suggesting that regarding education and young people a space has opened up that contains significant transgressive or desubjectivising potential. According to the statistics that Pornhub release every year, of the top most popular categories in 2023, for the youngest generation (18-24), Hentai was 94% more popular than it is for all other ages, while cartoon is 74% more popular and Cosplay is 146% more popular (Pornhub Insights, 2023). Having identified that they are stuck between 'rectifiability and incorrigibility', as will be further developed in the next section, young people are seeking a third way, that aligns not with the position of the DfE, but with their determined explorations of their desires and pleasures.

As Margaret Grebowicz asks in her book *Why Internet Porn Matters*,

What is learning, anyway, and what is the political belonging of pedagogy?
Is it simply an instrument of the state, what Foucault might call indoctrination into the episteme, a means of access to social power? Or is it instead the possibility of freedom, of thinking the unthought, resistance to norms? (2013: 118)

In reference to Jean-Francois Lyotard, she writes that,

[t]he role of education is...to close the gap between humanity and inhumanity, to socialize and normalize the asocial, abnormal, mute, abject part [of the individual]...If pornography in fact functions didactically, perhaps the more immediately worrisome issue is that education in the democratic state is in the service of oppressive, heterosexist norms rather than transgression and intervention. In other words, the problem might not be that pornography teaches violence or particular norms of grooming and gender presentation, but that it teaches conformity and subjection to social success rather than risk and invention (ibid: 119).

If pornography could function in a didactical way that encourages alterity, this might weaken the pedagogic value of pornography, but Grebowicz, writing in 2013, adds the caveat that because the communities that emerge around pornography are so embedded in postmodern forms of capitalism, this alterity is improbable at best. But Grebowicz was discussing a particular form of pornography, in which communities of consumers concern themselves primarily with the commodity itself, through swapping and discussing the qualities of various pornographic materials. There now seems to have emerged, however, new types of viewers who are less focussed on discussing the serious business of acquisition and accumulation, and more focussed on using what they learn from viewing pornography in order to understand their own frameworks of desire, as will be argued in the following chapters. If this search for understanding, whether regarding general viewers or young people searching for information, brings about ‘radical exposure’, then this raises the question of how this takes place, and just what form the resulting ‘emergent sexual sensibility’ might take. This, at least according to Grebowicz’s interesting analytic derived from Lyotard and Baudrillard, might consequently allow for some form of didactic alterity to become more realistically attainable. As Taine Duncan writes in ‘Utopic Futures of the “Other”’, ‘[i]f desire is

more than an owned property of an autonomous subject, and is instead integral to the fluidity of self-creation, then a business that explores desire may support the growth, innovation, and expansion of subjectivity' (2014: 269).

TEENAGERS, PARENTS AND THE FAMILY

Regarding the approach of the family to young people and online pornographies, there are different configurations of cultural, social and economic capital to consider; different classes, different approaches to religion, different habits of viewing. It would be worthwhile, however, to examine the point of contact that takes place within families between the porn industry and those groups and institutions who influence or offer advice and education to parents about porn. For the most part this section will be a continuation of the previous section, and it is the relationship between parents and teenagers that will provide some level of focus. It will argue that just as the DfE views pornography as unequivocally problematic, this is also the position that is argued for and encouraged by those who seek to inform parents about the risks of pornography to their children. By firstly demonstrating an unwillingness to properly inform young people about the pleasures of desire, thus causing them to turn to online materials for information, and secondly by positioning porn as a transgressive activity, and thus as a desirable one, as will be explained more fully in Chapter Three, this section will also argue that this hastens young people's willingness to engage with online pornographies, making the chances of experiencing 'radical exposure' more likely.

If a parent in the UK who is worried about their teenage children's relationship with porn searches for a professional who influences the content of PSHE provision, it is likely they will find clinical psychologist Elly Hanson, who is the most prevalent when any Google search is done for one of these practitioners. Hanson, who also plays a central role in the publication of various PSHE

schemes of work, is one of a number of actors who offer evidence-based advice via parenting and educational websites (Hanson, 2021). Another person whose website may be found in a search such as this is Gail Dines, anti-pornography campaigner and founder of ‘Culture Reframed’, an anti-porn advisory website.

But these websites offer many links to other websites, and following these links often leads to websites whose approaches can sensationalise the harms of pornography. The following part of this section will provide details of websites that are either one or two links from Hanson’s website. Hanson (2018), writing for parentinfo.org, offers advice on how to converse with teenagers about porn. She provides a number of questions that parents might use to open a discussion with their teens about pornography, such as, ‘can they think of examples of industries that try to sell people things that don’t do them any good?’; while also positioning contested claims regarding the effects of pornography as uncontested facts, such as, ‘think together about the mismatch between the impact of porn and what most people want in life – porn makes it harder to have good sex and relationships, to do well at school and to make the most out of life.’ She provides a link to yourbrainonporn.com (2018), which uses numerous forms of empirical and anecdotal evidence to support its claims, and which Hanson advises will provide more information on the effects of porn on adolescents’ brains. This website seems to be dominated by testimonials of those in recovery, such as George, 19, who, one year on from giving up porn boasts ‘24 more books read. Got girlfriend. More lucid than ever.’ He gets more sleep, has more energy, more confidence, better erections, has more free time, a clearer and more melodic voice, and now ‘sees beauty in almost all ordinary women’. Another testimonial is by a 14 year old boy who, after giving up porn, ‘discovered a passion for philosophy and mathematics’, and another who, by day 30, was playing the guitar better than ever. Porn Induced Erectile Dysfunction plays a central part, and the following testimonial suggests that complete abstinence from porn can provide a cure for this issue:

Around the end of the second [month] I met this black escort, she was young, around 24. We had a car date...She started sucking me off good... She took her mouth off my dick and started putting on a condom. I was kind of anxious that I was going to lose my boner. Luckily I was around 80% hard. I kept stroking my dick constantly. I stood up, went close to her, entered her smoothly. My dick instantly became 100% hard after entering her. The feeling was out of this world. I was having sex finally after so many years. I was a million dollar man that night. That experience gave me so much confidence. I was able to have sex with any woman then onwards.

In the way that the author of this comments uses a form of language that might be found in pornography rather than as a part of an anti-porn initiative, this example seems to be using pornography against itself - using pornographic signifiers to emphasise the type of sex that might be found if the reader abstains from porn use - and these websites can be accessed via links on the homepages of both Dines and Hanson. As Janice Irvine argues, 'Conservative critics choose highly evocative sexual language in order to discredit sex education as little more than pornography. In an interesting twist, however, I discovered that they themselves often used sexual words and images in these debates, proliferating the very seemingly 'pornographic' speech they condemned' (Irvine, 2018: 15). Yourbrainonporn.com also makes use of various forms of research more firmly situated in the natural sciences: 'Compulsive Conditioned Sexual Responding of Male Japanese Quail in Extinction' (Koksal, 2021). This journal article argues that the propensity of quails to choose to copulate with a cloth when given the choice between the cloth and a female quail offers a possible reason why various other species of bird may be at risk of extinction, and this article seems to be used as a way to argue that people will often choose pornography over real relationships.

Fight the New Drug, an anti-pornography website, offers one testimonial of a woman whose addiction to Hentai (Japanese animated porn) caused her 'natural sexual desires' to be 'twisted beyond recognition'. But she recovered, and at twenty she met 'the man of her life' who treats her 'like a princess and not a sex slave'. 'And as much as I... love his gentle and quiet care for me and my body, it isn't the same. I can't receive pleasure without pain. I can't give sexual love without demand. I can't please him without force, because my body is a slave...It hurts my husband to see me struggle. But he refuses to rape me, to degrade his wife like an animal. No matter how much I crave it' (fightthenewdrug.com, 2021). Rather than evidence of the harms of Hentai, this testimonial instead seems to outline the trauma of transgression, or even the dangers of the desubjectivising process of self-annihilation, whereby the individual's desire disconnects from the body and the identity and reaches out beyond those forms of desire that might be defined as the erotic expectations of the individual's sexual identity (for further discussion see chapters two and three, also see Huffer, 2010; Menon, 2015; Ruti, 2017).

John D Foubert, an Endowed Professor of Oklahoma State University, who presents himself as an expert witness for trials concerning pornography and whose work features on Yourbrainonporn.com, wrote a paper, also included on Yourbrainonporn.com, for the National Centre for Sexual Exploitation titled 'The Public Health Harms of Pornography: The Brain, Erectile Dysfunction, and Sexual Violence', in which he calculates the odds that pornography use is not connected to sexual violence:

Those odds are 1 in 88 dectrillion, 817 nonillion, 841 octillion, 970 septillion, 12 sextillion, 523 pentrillion, 233 quadrillion, 890 trillion, 533 billion, 447 million, 265 thousand, six hundred and twenty-five. How big is that number? Enough to fill one billion Empire State buildings floor to ceiling with pennies. So you can go with the odds equal to finding that one penny in a billion Empire State buildings

and pretend that pornography and sexual violence are unrelated, or you can go with the weight of the evidence (2017: 6).

So, if a parent looks to Elly Hanson for advice on teenagers and pornography, they will be one link away from Foubert's work and website. Gail Dines' (2017) anti-porn website 'Culture Reframed' makes a claim for such credibility by offering links to respected psychology journal articles (see: Ybarra, et, al, 2011). However, a closer look at these studies betrays something of a contradiction on the part of 'Culture Reframed'. One article, 'X-Rated material and perpetration of sexually aggressive behavior among children and adolescents' (2007da), written for *The Journal of Aggressive Behavior*, suggests that '...those expose[d] to nonviolent x-rated material [were] statistically similarly likely to [commit acts of sexually aggressive behaviour] as youths reporting no exposure to xrated material' (2011: 17). Although every practitioner and every website boasts an abundance of scientific evidence, this generally relies on some variation of the above representation of data and the above qualitative anecdotes. Regardless how much science, evidence, research and data is mentioned, all of these responses come from an ideological position that has some close connection to a Christian, conservative morality, such as those of John D Foubert, mentioned above, whose websites promotes academic papers that offer evidence of how 'pornography may threaten the transmission of religious heritage from parents to children' and 'the more frequently men view pornography, the less likely they are to hold a leadership position in their congregation' (Foubert, 2023).

The same can be said for Nicholas Kristoff's article, which makes direct reference to Laila Mickelwait, Director of Abolition at an organisation called Exodus Cry, that believes Pornhub is emblematic of the approaching end times, which will begin with the birth of a new empire that she refers to as Harlot Babylon. Anti-abortion and anti-LGBTQ, they charge \$2,295 dollars per person

for a course that teaches people to ‘become a powerful force to help abolish commercial sexual exploitation’ (Grant, 2020).

A search on Youtube for ‘porn addiction’ will invariably lead to Andrew Wilson’s TedTalk, ‘The Great Porn Experiment’ (Wilson, 2012), which has over 16 million views and outlines the damaging psychological effects of porn viewing. Beneath the clip is a ‘Note from Ted’ that informs the viewer that the talk contains ‘several assertions that are not supported by academically respected studies in medicine and psychology’, though the content itself appears to make many empirical scientific claims regarding the effects of porn. One affiliate of Andrew Wilson is Andrew Doan, founder of ‘Real Battle Ministries’, whose work includes much anti-porn activism and scientific ‘research’. Evidence of Doan’s own Christian ideology can be found on the page entitled ‘Statement of Faith’. Between them they were involved in a complex and messy online skirmish with sex researcher and neuroscientist Nicole Prause, who made accusations of trolling and online threats to her safety following the publication of a paper entitled, ‘Sexual Desire, not Hypersexuality, is related to Neurophysiological Responses Elicited by Sexual Images’ (Prause, et, al, 2013). That the psychology community rejects any causal claims of porn addiction, such as Ley's article, 'Science Stopped Believing in Porn Addiction and so should You' (2020), but this seems to go ignored by many of the most influential online actors who attempt to reach out to parents regarding their teenager’s porn use. It seems, in fact, that either these campaigners are intentionally avoiding any respectable academic research on the matter, or that it simply does not exist. The issue, perhaps, is that they all seem determined to condemn pornography as a fixed, reified entity, and in doing so, they leave themselves open to relatively straightforward critique. It seems their intention is to apply to porn the black and white morality that is more closely connected to the Christian morality that resides under the surface of their position in this discourse.

What this suggests is that any worried parent who searches for advice regarding teenagers and porn cannot avoid these sorts of ideological materials. Elly Hanson is possibly the most visible

professional name associated with PSHE provision, and her work provides a link to Yourbrainonporn.com, which provides a link to Foubert and many others like him. As Healy-Cullen writes, parents are already ‘hesitant, fearful, nervous, and/or embarrassed to discuss the subject of [internet porn] with their child...research in several contexts indicates that parent–child discussion of IP is uncommon and/or inadequate’ (2022: 448). Looking more closely at Healy-Cullen’s article, ‘How do youth, parents, and educators use discursive sexual scripts to make sense of youth engagement with internet pornography?’, which interviews a number of parents regarding young people’s pornography viewing, there are a number of similarities between parents and people such as Elly Hanson and Gail Dines. In this article, one mother says that ‘[internet porn] is taking their innocence away. [...] they could put a word in to the internet and it all pops up anyway. So, either way, their innocence is taken’ (ibid: 452). Another participant argues that ‘there is probably another whole level of people with [...] issues because of their exposure to porn...because they’ve got their ideas, their education, from pornography’ (ibid). Healy-Cullen makes reference to the way that these parents, ‘draw on the harm script in these extracts to construct [internet porn] as a cause of psychological issues, attributed to “early” and/or “unhealthy” sexualization’ (ibid), drawing our attention to the ‘dominant Western association of youth with innocence – and thus with sexual purity, naïvety, and ignorance’ (ibid). Such understandings correspond with Michel Foucault’s discussions of the ‘knowledge-power apparatus’ of the family when writing about the ‘crusade against masturbation’, and, although he was referring to the 18th century, the comparison is clear.

One might argue that the purpose of these discourses was precisely to prevent children from having a sexuality. But their *effect* was to din it into parents’ heads that their children’s sex constituted a fundamental problem in terms of their parental educational responsibilities, and to din it into children’s heads that their relationship with their own body and their own

sex was to be a fundamental problem as far as *they* were concerned; and this had the consequence of sexually exciting the bodies of children while at the same time fixing the parental gaze and vigilance on the peril of infantile sexuality (1977: 120).

This results, for Foucault, in the intervention and transformation of these individuals, through the process of ‘the power of normalisation’. But as is central to much of Foucault’s work on repression and normalisation, the exchange and transmission of micro power often takes the form of resistance in the subject, which in this case can be understood as transgression:

The fact that masturbation was so strictly forbidden for children was naturally the cause of anxiety. It was also a reason for the intensification of this activity, for mutual masturbation and for the pleasure of secret communication between children about this theme. All this has given a certain shape to family life, to the relationship between children and parents, and to the relations between children. All that has, as a result, [brought about] not only repression but an intensification both of anxieties and of pleasures (1988: 9).

In his 1974-75 lecture series *Abnormal*, Foucault (1991) writes of the 19th century emergence of the ‘individual to be corrected’, whose frame of reference is ‘the family exercising its internal power...in the play of conflict and support that exists between the family and the school...’ (ibid: 57-59). This individual is ‘typically regular in his irregularity...’ and surrounded by ‘apparatuses of rectification’ (ibid). These individuals Foucault refers to as the incorrigibles; deviant, pathological, and considered by the authorities to be unrectifiable, but for this reason

regulated to a very high degree: '[A] kind of game between incorrigibility and rectifiability emerges around the individual to be corrected' (1991: 58). Although for Christian conservative anti-porn campaigners this rectification is possible through the teachings of the Bible, for those actors such as Elly Hanson and Gail Dines, who maintain that there is empirical evidence to support their claims, the young person becomes stuck in the middle of this paradoxical situation. Their desires render them deviant, and they are told that the only way to avoid this is to embrace the form of normativity that is considered acceptable to these gate-keepers. Furthermore, Healy-Cullen's article also noted points of resistance in her participants' responses, many of which were resistant not only to the pornographic materials themselves, but also to the assumptions that are made by parents, educators, gate-keepers and advisors. One common assumption is that pornography constitutes a direct and uncontested determination of an individual's framework of desire, but in many of the interviews the participants resist the labelling of 'innocent' and 'ignorant', positioning themselves as 'active and savvy social actors in the online space'. Instead, they reverse this claim, and label their parents as innocent, ignorant, and 'out of touch with and unable to grasp their realities', detailing the ways in which their parents assume them to be simply 'curious', rather than sexual and desiring beings. This is what Jearey-Graham and MacLeod define as a 'discourse of disconnect' (2015).

Central to any contemporary understanding of this rectifiability is the surveillance that takes place within many families, in which the family's computer's browser history plays a central role. Now, however, there are Virtual Personal Networks (VPNs) and anonymous browsers, which make it impossible to find a user's search history. But linked to the PSHE Association is the website covenanteyes.com, sponsor of the End Sexual Exploitation Conference 2020, which provides, for around £20 per month, a software programme that logs any explicit materials that a person's family might be using, blurs the explicit content for the parent's/partner's convenience, and emails them with the censored evidence (covenanteyes.com: 2019).

The term Foucault uses is ‘supercorrection’, and it may be applied to the treatment of the contemporary teenage porn viewer in this type of family environment. Although it is not inevitable that a parent will conduct their search for information about the dangers of porn in this way, there does seem to be the emergence of a proliferation of websites and informational materials, such as Andrew Doan’s work and covenanteyes.com. These websites seem to correspond with Foucault’s notion of ‘supercorrection’. For those who do undertake such searches, and who are convinced by them, there are important similarities to Foucault’s description of the 19th century family:

...the supposed dangers of masturbation, the importance attached to puberty, the methods of surveillance suggested to parents, the exhortation...all this made the family, even when brought down to its smallest dimensions, a complicated network, saturated with multiple, fragmentary, and mobile sexualities (1984: 325).

At school, it seems that students listen to PSHE lessons that position the porn viewer as pathologically deviant, yet they remain unwilling to stop watching it, because they are unconvinced by what they are being told by those whose position on pornography has been influenced by the various anti-pornography concerns, that porn is damaging to relationships, to school work, and to family life. At home, when looking for information about the effects of pornography, worried parents turn to the curriculum and may then research those who wrote the PSHE provision, the most prominent of whom is Elly Hanson. If they follow the links attached to her work, they may then find the sensationalist and unfounded claims about pornography viewing forwarded by people like Foubert, which will make it difficult for them to properly navigate the veracity of the deluge of information that they find, exacerbating this ‘discourse of disconnect’ (Jeary-Graham & MacLeod, 2015: 17). All this makes it clear that the ‘monstrous’ behaviour that was understood as an effect of

masturbation in the 18th and 19th century bears some resemblance to the way pornography viewing is understood by the various gate-keepers in contemporary society. Citing Edward Said, who writes this in relation to his concept of ‘orientalism’, McKee suggests that this Othering of porn viewers is ‘neither science, nor knowledge, nor understanding: it is a statement of power and a claim for absolute authority’ (Said, 1978: 97).

In the 18th and 19th century, however, there was no internet, no moving images, no top shelf glossy magazines; there was no Freud, no sex positivity, and no ‘pornification’. If contemporary parents enclosed themselves in a bubble with these sorts of materials, Foucault’s analysis of 18th century incorrigibility would be more applicable. But although the anti-porn materials in this chapter may find their way into a family via a parent’s anxiety about their teenager’s porn viewing, these are not the only materials that might influence a family’s understanding of porn viewing. If they were, the transgressive impetus of viewing any porn would be more unequivocal. The following section will forward a brief examination of the other forms of media that may influence the way porn is understood and, in many ways, normalised. It will suggest that there is a transgressive limit emerging from *within* porn.

POPULAR CULTURE, PORNOGRAPHY AND PORNIFICATION

In contrast to the approach of PSHE and the various anti-porn websites and organisations, which serve to normalise a specific understanding of sex, sexuality and relationships, are the various elements of mainstream culture - movies, music, books - that approach pornography not as an issue of ‘incorrigibility and rectifiability’, but as a cultural phenomenon that operates in a similar way to any other cultural phenomenon in the entertainment marketplace. The following section of this chapter will provide a few influential examples of this phenomenon to illustrate the ways in

which many of these elements of contemporary culture normalise *mainstream* pornography, which consequently gives less mainstream forms of pornography a form of transgressive power beyond the waning transgressive power of more mainstream genres of pornography.

There has been much work done regarding media affect and pornography, and although it should be said that the results offer a wide range of outcomes, some which argue that there is no ‘hastening of sexual activity in relation to viewing habits’ (Watson, 2018: 227), very little of this research, if any, moves beyond mainstream genres of pornography. Although ‘pornification’ has become something of a contested term (Paasonen, 2014), for this study it describes a broad increase in the visibility of pornographic signifiers throughout society. But just as when a theorist mentions the word ‘porn’ it is always worth asking just what sort of porn they are referring to, so too is it worth asking what sort of porn is being referred to regarding any mention of ‘pornification’. The answer is almost always mainstream porn. Pornification may seem to reduce the transgressive power of pornography by borrowing ‘some of its dirty glamour [and]...making [it] a topic of interest and discussion like any other’ (Poynor, 2007: 132) but this process normalises only mainstream porn, which leaves various other forms of porn, such as queer porn, animated or computer game porn, or BDSM porn, free to maintain and intensify their own potentialities of transgressive value. Paasonen does make reference to this when she writes that ‘[o]ne of the problems inherent in the term [pornification] is the insufficient distinction that it affords between soft-core and hard-core pornographies...’ (2014: 6), but even the distinction that she is referring to is insufficient, as though the entire industry can be understood as residing between such a stable binary. But Paasonen does make a very important point that should always be considered when examining pornification, or any pornography for that matter. The concept of pornification seems to encourage the assumption that this is all one way traffic, that ‘pornography seeps into culture, as if from the outside in’ (ibid), rather than in a reciprocal exchange that situates porn as a product *of* culture, rather than other to it.

Looking at a variety of cultural modes - fashion, film, music - there are very few elements of society that are yet to be 'pornified' in one way or another. The pornification of fashion might be exemplified by the brand Pornstar, though this seems to operate according to the basic linguistic signifier 'porn'; the clothing itself has little else to identify it as pornographic. Regarding a more visual framework of signifiers, it barely needs mentioning that the beauty and fashion industry is saturated with revealing lines, thongs, see-through dresses, short skirts and high heeled boots (Kim Kardashian's most recent piece of fashion is the visible-nipple bra (Jordan, 2023)), and although the reciprocal relationship between pornography and fashion is an interesting debate, for the purposes of this study it only needs to be said that those elements of fashion that are comparatively similar to pornographic aesthetics are similar to mainstream pornographic aesthetics. Brazilian and Hollywood bikini lines, liposuction, breast enhancement and collagen also follow a similar pattern. Together these examples illustrate the reciprocal relationship between fashion and pornography.

Cardi B's recent song 'WAP' contains many of these mainstream pornographic signifiers, both visual and linguistic, constructed around a three minute video of breasts, behinds, lips, clothes and make-up that correspond very closely to those of much mainstream porn. The lyrics too contain a number of unmistakably mainstream pornographic signifiers: gagging, choking, swallowing, squirting, anal, cream pies, anal-oral. Whether or not this is a radical and emancipatory piece of contemporary culture (Martina, 2020), either way it is clear that it must serve as a normalisation of much hardcore mainstream porn, especially given the fact that it has already attracted over a billion views on Youtube. Although Paasonen may be correct when she writes that a '[f]lirtation with the aesthetics of porn is not a novel trend in media culture as such' (Paasonen, 2015: 6), the content of 'WAP' does seem to move beyond flirtation; it seems like the pornification of culture at its most affective and very much taken to its extreme.

Central to this chapter is the following question: When a teenager accesses internet porn for the first time, just where might the boundaries of acceptability be situated? By normalising

mainstream forms of porn, these elements of culture have drawn a boundary *within* porn. The point here is that popular culture has begun to initiate a normalisation of mainstream porn, whereby the whole concept of pornography becomes split. Those elements of porn that appear in other forms of non-pornographic culture - fashion, music, film - signify this normalising process, making it more acceptable to talk about, make reference to and consume, while other forms of non-normative porn such as queer porn or animated porn retain their transgressive power through their absence in this process of normalisation via pornification.

Education, various elements of family life, and mainstream porn, are each attempting to impose the cultural logic of subjectivation. But for Foucault, the subject is fragmented and in a constant state of change; it is a plurality, often in contradiction with itself. In arguing for desubjectivation, he was arguing for the possibility of transformation, of ‘trying out new forms of the self through new modes of thinking, talking, acting, experiencing’ (Hancock & Gamer, 2009: 221). Mainstream porn asserts its own forms of normative subjectivation, and this suggests that there is something of a binaried struggle for influence taking place between the gate keepers of education and the family, and mainstream pornography. By engaging with pornographies that do not correspond with this subjectivation, are people finding new ways to ‘fashion a self that does not conform to the mandates of [heteronormative] cultural logics?’ (Assumpcao, 2009)

Linda Williams characterises contemporary approaches to porn as ‘onscene’, in ambiguous opposition to the term ‘obscene’. Though Williams defines ‘onscenity’ as ‘increasingly public representations of diverse sexuality...’ (Williams, 2004: 3), it seems questionable just how diverse these representations really are. In 2010 David Cameron claimed the following:

More and more today, sexually-provocative images are invading public space – space shared by children. In the Tube station, at the bus stop, on the

billboard – there’s the creeping sense that we’re sleepwalking to a place where ‘porn is the norm’ (Cameron, 2010).

But Cameron, referring here mainly to the pornification that is utilised by advertising, in the tube-station, the bus stop and on the billboard, might have been more precise if he had said ‘*mainstream* porn is the norm’. Regarding Hentai, animated porn or computer game porn, for example, the only thing about them that appear mainstream is their viewing figures, which regularly attract tens of millions of views, and although this in itself might define these genres as mainstream, the fact that they are yet to find their way into wider mainstream culture, regardless of how many people consume them, renders them, and other massively popular non-normative genres, interestingly transgressive. Yet, if Cortese is correct when he argues that ‘successful advertising is able to manifest rich, intimate, and astute cultural and sub-cultural messages...’ (2009: 29), then perhaps these types of pornography will soon find their way into the pornification of culture. But for now they maintain through their absence their status as transgressive forms of pornography.

Although Cardi-B’s song and music video is a clear example of pornification, and it seems unlikely that many parents would approve of the content, so it is the more gradual and less immediately impactful elements of pornification that are equally as important regarding the family. These are those elements of sex and porn that gradually encroach on people’s understanding of what is normal and what is extreme, embedding themselves through de-pathologisation and normalisation, as acceptable levels of sex-in-culture. The massive popularity of ‘Fifty Shades of Grey’ would be an example of how this takes place, when over a year, tens of millions of people, mostly women over 30 (Levine, 2017), were reading a novel about a subdom relationship, in public, often on the bus or train. This led to the de-pathologisation of a particular type of BDSM, which ‘aids the process of normalisation’ (Dymock, 2011: 55). Another example would be Robin Thicke and Miley Cyrus’ performance of the song Blurred Lines (Cruz, 2017), which is where the globally

famous phenomenon of ‘twerking’ initially appeared. Although it caused something of a controversy at the time, many of the comments beneath the Youtube video for ‘WAP’ display incredulity that *Blurred Lines* caused such an uproar. In a similar way, following *Fifty Shades of Grey*, other forms of BDSM soon made their way into mainstream culture, such as ‘Bonding’, a highly popular Netflix made comedy drama series about a BDSM mistress. So perhaps in the near future ‘WAP’ will also be considered tame.

Although a number of non-pornographic, but relatively arthouse, films do contain scenes of full penetration, for example Lars Von Trier’s *The Idiots*, Gaspar Noe’s *Enter the Void* and Michael Winterbottom’s *9 Songs*, often a mainstream film is released that causes a minor controversy. Recent examples would be *Blue is the Warmest Colour* (lesbian sex), *The Handmaiden* (lesbian sex), *Shape of Water* (female masturbation, monster sex) and *Lust, Caution* (deceptively realistic penetration), all Oscar, Bafta or Golden Globe winners. Due to their popularity, some programmes, such as *Sex Education*, *Game of Thrones*, *Fleabag* and *Girls*, appear to represent something of an acceptable threshold when it comes to representations of sex for home viewing, and each contain a number of elements that might be connected to pornification. It should also be said, though, that in many ways this is more about quantity and ubiquity than levels of explicitness, one much older example being the now-famous sex scene between Donald Sutherland and Julie Christie in the 1973 film *Don’t Look Now*.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

This chapter has examined the relationship between the state, the family, education and popular culture, and the viewing of transgressive and mainstream pornographies. Political actors such as David Cameron, as he made clear in 2010, took the position that pornography is harmful to

children. In government, porn is weaponised, as was apparent in the sacking of Damien Green in 2015. In schools, also, all porn is given a transgressive status, but it is through the school's position on normative relationships and sexualities that transgressive pornographies such as animated and computer game porn begin to gather transgressive momentum. Various mainstream pornographic signifiers have become more commonplace and acceptable in mainstream culture, usually through entertainment, though more non-normative pornographies continue to offer transgressive enjoyments, primarily because the non-normative practices that they contain are absent from the more mainstream varieties of porn that intersect with the forms of popular culture that are detailed in this chapter. The purpose of this chapter was to examine the ways in which various pornographies continue to offer opportunities for transgressive behaviour. Although mainstream porn is becoming less transgressive due to its increasing appearance in popular culture, those forms of porn that remain absent from popular culture continue to provide transgressive potential.

CHAPTER THREE: DESUBJECTIVATION AND PORN COMMENTARY

The last chapter illustrated the ways in which contemporary western society attempts to regulate people's approach to pornography, but it also made clear the ways in which these various approaches also create a transgressive opportunity for individuals to explore non-normative pornographies. The hypocrisy of the state, the impossibility of navigating the 'incurribility and rectifiability' that occurs in education, the lack of stable information for parents, and the normalisation of pornographic signifiers in popular culture, each hold within them the possibility of drawing the individual away from normative forms of desire and towards more desubjectivising engagements with desire. By illustrating the ways in which the social order leaves space for such engagements, it laid the groundwork for this chapter, which will examine the ways in which people explore this space in online pornography.

The first section of this chapter will examine the ethics of desubjectivation. For Jacques Lacan the 'ethical act' is one and the same as engaging with 'the truth of our desire', which is the 'primary desire' that lies beyond any form of social subjectivation. In this way, this element of Lacan's work - the 'ethical act' - is interchangeable with the concept of desubjectivation that is being used in this thesis.

The opening part of this chapter will detail Lacan's lecture titled 'The Ethics of Psychoanalysis' (2007), which positions the course of action of Antigone, the hero of Sophocles' eponymous play, as an example of the 'ethical act'. Following this, Foucault's work on the Marquis de Sade will be used as a way of further understanding the meaning of desubjectivation. By

breaking every rule of acceptability and normativity, Sade can be understood as residing in a place of desubjectivation. The final part of this opening section will examine Lacan's essay 'Kant avec Sade' (1989) from the perspective of modern theories of morality. By illustrating the ways in which Immanuel Kant's highly influential moral law shares distinct similarities to Sade's overall project, Lacan adds further depth to the idea that reaching the 'primary desire' that lies on the other side of subjectivation has an important moral element.

Having described in detail the model of desire that is in operation with regard to this thesis and the materials in question, this chapter will then iteratively examine desubjectivation and Lacanian ethics from the perspective of porn and sexuality studies. Alison Horbury's *Porn Studies* article, 'A psychoanalytic ethics of the pornographic aesthetic' (2019) details the way an individual must go through a form of shock if they are to engage in any experiences that are not connected to their identities. Katie Goss' article, 'Pornography, psychoanalysis and the sinthome: ignorance and ethics' (2019), also from *Porn Studies*, will then be used to further iteratively strengthen this understanding of desubjectivation. This article is interesting in the way it allows for an understanding of desire as either ambiguous or unambiguous, as complex, changeable and unpredictable, or as consistent, socially determined and normative, which is a binary that can be applied to the way people engage with mainstream porn and non-normative porn. The final article that will be used to deepen an understanding of desubjectivation is Chris Heywood's piece, 'Leaving masculinity at the car door: Dogging, de-subjectification and the pursuit of pleasure' (2018), in which the writer suggests that dogging, the practice of meeting strangers for sex in arranged outdoor spaces, might be considered a form of desubjectivation for the men who participate. Because Heywood's understanding of this concept is different to how it is used in this thesis, this article will be used to make an important distinction between these two interpretations of the term. By emphasising that the difference between these two definitions is determined by intentionality, this will allow for a refining of the term with regard to this thesis. The reason this is

an important part of the intervention that this thesis is making, is because it is attempting to illustrate what appears to be an often sudden shift from normativity to what will later be described as a form of queerness, which comes from the de-signified space of the Lacanian ‘Real’, and which can only really occur in opposition to the normative, intentional decision making capacities of the individual.

The final part of this chapter will provide an analytical engagement with a number of the comments that are written beneath porn clips. It will demonstrate the ways in which more mainstream clips most commonly attract distinctly normative comments. Then, in a way that corresponds with one of the arguments of Chapter Two, that the ‘pornification’ of mainstream culture has created a normative/non-normative split within porn, the next section will provide examples of viewers who express anxiety and guilt after having listened to a non-visually explicit, audio-only, edging clip. The final section of this chapter will provide examples of the shock, surprise, anxiety and disgust that might signal experiences of ‘desubjectivation’. Looking at animated porn, horror-porn, and JOI porn, each an example of non-normative pornography, this section will also look at instances in which ‘radical exposure’ might have taken place.

FOUCAULT, THE MARQUIS DE SADE AND WRENCHING THE SUBJECT FROM ITSELF

In the lecture, ‘The Ethics of Psychoanalysis’ (2007), Jacques Lacan suggests that Sophocles’ eponymous character Antigone represents an example of someone who is willing to act beyond the symbolic order and according to desubjectivation, and who by doing this gains access to the Lacanian ‘ethical act’. The reason Lacan considers this to be an ‘ethical act’ is because it is an engagement with a desire that remains undetermined by the ‘symbolic order’, and is therefore closer to what he refers to as ‘primary desire’ or ‘the truth of our desire’. By resisting the symbolic order,

embodied here by King Creon, in her attempts to give her brother a proper burial, ‘Antigone all but fulfils what can be called pure desire, the pure and simple desire of death as such [i.e., of that which is beyond the pleasure principle]’ (Miller, 2007). Creon buries Antigone alive in a tomb, which represents for Lacan the space that exists beyond the death of the ego, a desubjectivised non-place. By withdrawing from the symbolic order, and from ‘an exclusively instrumentalized and utilitarian relation to the world’, Antigone finds ‘a pure desire that can transform us...into something fundamentally awe-full and new’ (ibid). It is the ‘obscene kernel of her enjoyment...’, her jouissance, ethical in the sense that it is ‘an absolute dedication to the transformation of self, which the realization of a desire beyond the pleasure and reality principles requires’ (ibid). It is a rupture of the symbolic order, ‘an ethics that demands the transgression of the law as its universal maxim... that promises not the reign of the good, but a world of beautiful and yet monstrous enjoyment - the world of the death drive’ (Žižek, 1991: 134). The play ends when Antigone commits suicide in the tomb before she can be released by a hesitant Creon, but in her final days she experienced the jouissance of the death drive and the desubjectivation that comes with it. This freedom through disobedience is the ultimate ethical act for Lacan - all else is simply following the arbitrary rules determined by the social order, which for Lacan, just as for Freud, is the source of our neurosis. These are the very rules that Immanuel Kant argues are in direct opposition to the moral law, and that people must suppress their ‘primary desires’ in order to adhere to.

For post-structuralist philosopher Michel Foucault, it is not the body that is the prison of the soul, but rather the soul that is the prison of the body (1991: 30). The soul in this sense does not necessarily follow the Christian definition, but can be found within the various discursive formulations that constitute the super ego; those parts of society as outlined in Chapter Two - family, education, culture - that work to determine an individual’s identity through guilt, sanction and prohibition. These are the things that prevent the individual from accessing what for Jacques Lacan is the ‘truth of their desire’, that set the limits on desire, but as was argued in Chapter Three,

that also make clear that the ‘truth of their desire’ might be found in those spaces that are exposed by the inconsistencies of various attempts at regulation and subjectivation; a space where desubjectivising pornographies can often be found. But one way in which the individual can engage with this ‘truth’ is through pornography. The sanctions imposed by the social order are sanctions against our ‘symbolic identity’, but this identity, as will be explained, is also disconnected from the ‘truth of our desire’. This is closely connected to the intervention this thesis is making, because it is an attempt to illustrate that this ‘truth’ will often find a way to actualise itself, and that particular engagements with online pornographies appear to suggest that this is what is taking place. As Mari Ruti writes:

Lacan invites us to consider ethics as a matter of staying faithful to the “truth” of our desire. This “truth” operates on a plane below our symbolic identity, reaching all the way to the fundamental fantasies that operate on the level of jouissance (the real, the drives) and that, therefore, determine our being in the most basic sense. (2017: 66)

The Marquis de Sade, as will be illustrated, spent much effort in attempting to find and obtain this desubjectivising truth. Sade spent thirty-two years of his life incarcerated, including ten years in the Bastille and fifteen in a variety of asylums, and it was during these years that he completed most of his work. Foucault makes clear that much of this writing was fantasy, that it was written in a solitary frenzy. Often instructional in tone, he suggested murdering 10,000 children, burning hundreds of hospitals to the ground, causing a volcano to explode, and followed this, very simply, with ‘After [writing it], execute it’ (Sade, 1994: 66). What this created for the incarcerated Sade, according to Foucault, was ‘a world entirely governed by the pleasure principle that will never have to encounter the reality principle’ (2015: 108). That is, by writing materials that were so

violently subversive, Sade knew that this would unequivocally exclude him from the ‘reality principle’, which can be defined as the society that was attempting to determine his behaviour. What remained following this process was the pleasure principle; a world unconstrained by rules of acceptability and determinations of character. For Foucault this behaviour ‘pushes the real to the limits of nonexistence’ (ibid: 107), but this is *his* real, *his* reality principle, his own way of ‘combining an erotic reverie with sexual practice’ (ibid:104). As Georges Bataille writes, ‘[t]he Bastille was a desert; his writing was the only outlet for his passions and in it he pushed back the limits of what was possible beyond the craziest dreams ever framed by man’ (1962: 167). Although this was Sade’s own desire, desubjectivation is ‘purely an individual recipe,’ an individualised form, and the subject must find what is ‘most suitable for [them] personally’ (Foucault, 2015: 105). What was personally suitable for Sade, who devoted so much of his work to exploring what lay beyond the reality principle and beyond the superego, was a form of libertinage pursued to its logical extreme. This provided for Sade a form of transgressive emancipation that was specific to him; emancipation from his imprisonment, from the authorities and family members that wished him dead or incarcerated, from his own superego and from the various impositions of the state that constitute what Lacan would call the big Other or the symbolic order. His entire life, it seems, was a project of desubjectivation, of searching out through his writing the limit experiences that would ‘wrench the subject from itself’, and of assuring that it is ‘brought to its annihilation or its dissolution’ (Nigro, 2005: 655). But as Foucault makes clear - and this resonates with the life and eventual fate of Sade - such an experience ‘borders on the unlivable’ (2015: 105) and may lead to complete madness, and which Lynne Huffer refers to as a ‘horrificing proposition’ (2016: 125). Although complete desubjectivation is impossible, and would lead to the individual no longer thinking it was thinking, as Huffer explains (ibid), perhaps Sade went as close to this as it is possible for any subject to go.

Although the act of creation and the act of viewing are in many ways very different, one interesting similarity between Sade's act of writing and the viewing of certain online pornographies is that they both exist within a space of illimitability. Contemporary pornographies are defined in many ways by the sheer variety of genres and subgenres that are available for viewing. This similarity can be described by the popular meme, known as Rule # 34, 'If it exists, there's porn of it', one permutation being, 'If you can imagine it, it exists as internet porn', and which has also become a verb, as in 'I Rule 34'd person X with person Y in situation Z' (Unknown, 2006). 'Because of all this illimitability,' writes Foucault,

... desire will itself become its own law; it will become an absolute sovereign embodying its own truth, its own repetition, its own infinity, its own means of verification. Nothing can any longer say to desire, "You are false." Nothing can any longer say to desire, "You are not the totality." Nothing can any longer say to desire, "Your dreams exist but you do not go unopposed." Nothing can any longer say to desire, "You experience this but reality presents you with something else" (2015: 113).

In relation to internet pornography, there is an important difference, because the non-normative or anti-normative porn central to this thesis is not 'opposing' desire' or presenting the individual with 'something else', it is, as this thesis is arguing, presenting the individual with the means to explore their 'primary desire'. This is in the way that both Sade and Antigone resisted the value-laden impositions of the state and of the social order, but for those individuals who are being examined in this thesis, this attempt to explore this illimitability in pornography and to find traces of desubjectivation signals a resistance to the subjectivised self, rather than a resistance to those structures that impose this subjectivation.

KANT AVEC SADE AND THE ETHICS OF DESIRE

The following section will illustrate the way in which Jacques Lacan, in his 1958 lecture 'Kant avec Sade', made the argument that by attempting to transgress every social norm and limit of acceptability, The Marquis de Sade actually bears a resemblance to the Kantian moral subject. This allows Lacan to suggest that by accessing the 'primary desire' that resides within the 'Real', the individual can be understood as taking an ethical stance against the symbolic order. The reason this is an important argument with regard to the argument of this thesis is because by acting in opposition to the symbolic order and therefore in opposition to the normativity that the symbolic order imposes, the individual may also gain access to the ethical potentialities of anti-normativity. That is, while Sade was attempting to disrupt the social order in an attempt to free himself from its often arbitrary confines, the desubjectivising porn viewer is more directly attempting to disrupt the self in order to free themselves from its normative confines.

Pure, practical reason is for Immanuel Kant the reason that remains when judgements are stripped of their pathological, emotional, socialised dimension, so that they become a 'formal, rigorous, "apathetic" faculty' (Nobus, 2017: 113). When the will frees itself from 'the lures of all empirical sensibilities...it will hear the 'voice of reason'' (ibid). The problem for Jacques Lacan, however, which he explains in his 1958 lecture 'Kant avec Sade', is that if a subject was ever truly capable of hearing the voice of reason, of becoming so completely disinterested and desubjectivised from the 'pathological, emotional, socialised dimension', this would not necessarily mean they would act according to the Kantian moral law, or 'categorical imperative', which states that people should, 'Act only according to that maxim whereby they can, at the same time, will that it should become a universal law' (Kant, 1991: 15). In 'Kant avec Sade', Lacan illustrates the way in which

the Marquis de Sade put much effort into disrupting and removing the socialised dimension from his life; by engaging, through writing, in an exhaustive amount of amoral and immoral acts, for Lacan this meant that Sade removed the various social and cultural laws of acceptability from his life, which is another way of defining the concept of normativity. By doing so, this meant for Lacan that Sade came very close to reaching the Kantian 'categorical imperative' through the act of desubjectivation.

For Kant then, the categorical imperative is a form of universal morality; following one's reason is one and the same as doing one's duty and acting with 'maturity'. For Sade, the categorical imperative is 'the truth of our desire'; in this way following one's reason is one and the same as following one's desire. Slavoj Žižek calls this the 'infinite judgement' of modern ethics. Everything, he suggests, is at stake in the outcome of this dichotomy. '[I]s the Kantian moral law translatable into the Freudian notion of the superego or not?' (1997) he asks. If the answer is yes, then Lacan is right to suggest that Sadeian desire is grounded in Kantian ethics, that it is the truth of the categorical imperative. If Sade's project was one of desubjectivation, as Michel Foucault argues, then this is how desubjectivation finds its ethical justification.

This section has explained the ethical foundation for Lacan's understanding of 'primary desire', which is a form of desire that resides beyond signification and beyond the symbolic order, in a place that Lacan defines as the 'Real' and fully out of reach of regimes of subjectivation. By demonstrating how the 'categorical imperative', one of Western philosophy's most influential models of universal morality, is similar in purpose to Sade's project, Lacan illustrates the ethical basis of acting on the desire that resides in a place disconnected from the social world. This is what he refers to as the 'ethical act'.

The similarity between desubjectivation and the 'ethical act' is in the way they both signal a resistance to social norms, or to normativity. The difference, however, is an important one. Unlike the 'ethical act', which is an intentional act against the social order, as can be understood with

regard to the acts of both Sade and Antigone, desubjectivation must emerge from a place of unintentionality. Desubjectivation and intentional choice, at least with regard to the definition that is being used in this thesis, are incommensurable, they negate each other without exception. While Antigone's and Sade's actions were both forms of intentional and conscious resistance to the normative regimes of society, desubjectivation is the unintentional resistance that is enacted by the unconscious and towards the self. This is how 'radical exposure', or the sudden unexpected arousal caused by a pornography that is being 'consumed' as a prurient interest, is being operationalised in this thesis.

PORN STUDIES AND THE DESUBJECTIVISING EXPERIENCE

There are a number of articles in journals such as *Porn Studies* and *Sexualities* that can be used to iteratively examine 'radical exposure' and the ethics of desubjectivation. Reading Alison Horbury's (2019) article 'A psychoanalytic ethics of the pornographic aesthetic' through the lens of desubjectivation and 'radical exposure' makes clear two important elements of this debate. The first is that some instances of porn viewing can contain the necessary elements that result in the Lacanian 'ethical act'. Horbury lists the qualities that emphasise this potential within pornography: 'its recognition of desire, the taboos that inhibit it, and confrontation with libidinally honest satisfactions so often obscured by the service of goods' (2019: 97). What Horbury refers to as 'libidinally honest satisfactions' this thesis refers to as the desubjectivising experience. But more significantly, Horbury also makes reference to the importance of unintentionality with regard to the ethics of this form of experience. Horbury uses Roland Barthes' statement about photography to explore this idea, when he wrote that 'the detail that interests me is not [...] intentional' (ibid: 94)

but a supplement to what was expected. Using the concept of something that ‘pierces’, that bursts one’s expectations and preconceptions, she explains that the porn that is the cause of this piercing ‘may not be the porn one thought one was looking for’. This she describes as a ‘traumatic encounter, felt as anxiety, what Lacan calls a ‘signal of the Real’ that can happen through chance or an unconscious attempt at repetition. Horbury’s paper, however, does not further explore the idea of what it means that the porn that ‘pierces’ may have been viewed unintentionally. This is where the intervention of this thesis becomes clear, because this thesis defines this unintentional experience as ‘radical exposure’, and it is with Horbury’s article that it is possible to position this concept as an ‘ingredient’ to how Lacan suggests we access the ‘ethical act’ and the ‘truth of our desire’. This is in opposition to traditional ethics, which for Lacan tends to focus on ‘the cleaning up of desire’, through ‘modesty’, and ‘temperateness’ (ibid).

Katie Goss’ article ‘Pornography, psychoanalysis and the sinthome: ignorance and ethics’ is another piece of work that emphasises the connection between specific instances of porn viewing and Lacanian ethics. She writes that pornography has the ‘potential to undo regimes of phallogocentric knowledge and form new bonds between fantasy and social reality’ (2019: 59), and that it ‘holds unique possibilities for creative appropriation of the Real’ (ibid). She also explains, however, that we often conflate pornography with ‘the modality of commodity capitalism, as a lure of proximity to, and certainty of, the object of desire, that removes us from the ambiguities of how desire is generated by conflicting and unstable forces’ (ibid: 61). What is important here is the notion of being ‘removed’ from the ambiguities of desire. An unambiguous desire is a desire that is understood by the individual in question, and that is consistent with the individual’s understanding of their sexual identity. But Goss is making reference to the potentialities that may be found in pornography if it is engaged with in a way that renders the resulting desire as ambiguous, as unknown until the moment of actualisation. Goss suggests that ‘pornography offers possibilities for close encounters with a Real ignorance’ (ibid: 60), that it can allow an experience of the ‘jouissance

that lies beyond the apparent consistency of our sexual proclivities' (ibid: 61). The ignorance that Goss writes about here is the ignorance of the individual with regard to the 'truth of their desire', and that are experienced as a result of 'radical exposure'. She also writes that what is at stake is 'a change in (sexual) culture, from obsessive pathologization, instrumentalization, exclusion or disavowal of relative knowledges' (ibid) to a new understanding of the self that is more open and susceptible to Lacan's 'primary desire'. Finally, Goss makes clear that the 'Real of pornography remains unnameable and unknowable' (ibid: 71). Although this article is illuminating in the ways that it uncovers the connection between the Real and porn viewing, the author does not speculate on how an experience of something 'unnameable and unknowable' might take place. Because the act of viewing pornography is most often an act of consumption, of wilfully choosing to take something into the body, this makes it very difficult to uncover a situation in which Goss' 'close encounters' with the Real might come about. This is because, by making an intentional choice to view or consume a specific clip or genre of pornography, the individual is enacting a form of desire that has been determined not by the Real, but by the symbolic order and the various normative regimes of identity-formation.

In Chris Heywood's (2018) piece, 'Leaving masculinity at the car door: Dogging, de-subjectification and the pursuit of pleasure', the writer argues that dogging, or clandestine sexual activities that take place between strangers in outdoor spaces, should be understood as sites of potential desubjectivation. By interviewing men who have participated in dogging practices, Heywood argues that because some of the activities that take place involve bisexual practices, this seems to rupture the gendered identities of these men, which can therefore be defined as desubjectivation. Although this is certainly an example of a type of desubjectivation, it should also be clear that Heywood's understanding of desubjectivation and the radical desubjectivation that will be used to understand porn comments are two subtly different types of experiences. Neither understanding disproves or negates the other, but instead reconfigures desubjectivation as aligning

itself with either intentionality or unintentionality. The men who are a part of Heywood's study search out the desubjectivising dogging experience with intent, while one of the groups of porn viewers at the centre of this study experience their desubjectivation *because* of an unintentional exposure to (rather than an act of using or consuming) an unexpectedly arousing porn clip. While the participants in Heywood's study have detailed knowledge of where to find dogging sites, how to operate within them, and what to expect from them, the form of desubjectivation in this thesis is not anchored to networks of knowledge in the same way. In fact, it is by being displaced and dislodged from networks of knowledge, in this case with regard to one's own identity, that the force of desubjectivation is realised.

In *Screening Sex*, Linda Williams writes that prurience - a curiosity and interest in the details of another person's sexual activities - 'is a key term in any discussion of moving-image sex' (2008: 122), and prurient interest is in operation in many of the comments that will be written about in the second half of this chapter. Prurience is also something to consider alongside Susanna Paasonen's description of contemporary porn as an 'attention economy of perpetual novelty and curiosity' which results in 'intensities of interest, shock, titillation, disgust, and curiosity' (2013: 261). Viewers of porn, according to Paasonen, 'remain suspended between the anticipation of the familiar and the titillation of novelty' (ibid). With regard to the desubjectivation and the 'radical exposure' that is being examined as a part of this thesis, Paasonen's description of the porn viewer positions them as always willing to opportunistically choose an unfamiliar pornography in the hope that they will find a prurient novelty. As Paasonen suggests, this is a commonality of practice that is known and provided for by the porn industry, which, she writes, 'necessitates the perpetual flow of specificities and novelties for users to discover' (2018: 11). The intention of the porn industry in this way is to develop 'new micromarkets and increase the visibility of sexual fetishes and kinks that have previously been deemed marginal' (ibid: 12), which constitutes an attempt to reach into its 'immanent outside' (Massumi, 2019: 9), in order to broaden its markets. But in doing so, this means

the viewer is often faced with unfamiliar or non-normative pornographies that might then become a source of ‘radical exposure’ and ‘desubjectivation’.

This is in contrast to Tembo’s article, ‘Two parallaxes of porn and its uses in contemporary late capital global society’ (2021: 439). Tracing the various currents running through porn viewing by considering porn alongside the COVID pandemic, Foucault’s ‘panopticon’, and Pornhub Insights, their yearly publication of the annual trends and patterns that have taken place in the previous year, Tembo writes that by ‘giving users unrestricted access to a porn search engine and the databases it serves is like giving a panoptic inmate the key to the central tower’ (ibid: 459). But this inmate, he argues, remains at the same time within the prison building that surrounds the central ‘panopticon’, which raises the question: ‘What value, in terms of the freedom, power, and illusion of openness being loaned users, is there in being Queen of the Panopticon, in which everything you do, how you use your illusion of power, becomes confession and subsequently data?’ (ibid). Data analysis becomes a form of Foucauldian sexual confession, a tool that when used in this way can ensure ‘the reproduction of the capitalization of sex and sexuality, its efficient and accurate refinement, from region to region, season to season, country to country, race, nationality, orientation, praxes – right through seemingly every sociopolitical practice, occasion, space, and identity’ (ibid: 460). Although there is little doubt, as argued by Tembo in this article, that much of the pornography industry implicitly constitutes a complex attempt to subjectivise the individual’s sexual identity and frameworks of desire, the intervention that this thesis is making is located in those instances whereby this process becomes a lot more complex, difficult and disorderly than Tembo allows into his discussion. As Manen argues, ‘desire moves - that is its only strategy...’ (2015: 19); it ‘moves across rather than being confined to sexual acts and identities’ (ibid: 129), and this ‘universal failure of desire to correspond to identity is what makes it queer’ (ibid: 119). With no ‘logical relation between a body and the desires that emanate from or attach to it’ (ibid: 113), then desires, which ‘are mobile and travel at will without needing an

identitarian explanatory apparatus to contain them' (ibid: 118), will always have the potential to evade the logics of capitalism that Tembo is making reference to.

PORN COMMENTARY AND NORMATIVE ENGAGEMENTS WITH DESIRE

One influential philosopher who is critical of Lacan's position with regard to 'desubjectivation' is Judith Butler, who argues that desubjectivation can never really be reached because "“liberation” from external authorities does not suffice to initiate a subject into freedom..." (1997: 33). Our self-incarceration, she explains, is a 'precondition of the subject's very formation,' (ibid: 14) and no matter how many layers of subjection we remove, we will always emerge as an unhappy consciousness in 'an ethical world, subjected to various norms and ideals' (ibid: 32). The reason there is a lot at stake in the theoretical disagreement between Lacan and Butler is because if Lacan is correct, then it is possible to access the Lacanian ethical self through the process of desubjectivation, but if Butler is correct then this must be done from within the confines of the symbolic order. For Lacan, true autonomy can be found through an engagement with the Real, accessible through desubjectivation, but for Butler, this level of autonomy is unobtainable as everything is socially determined.

Although we can never fully overcome the context within which we operate on a social level, and although we can never fully comprehend the individual history of our own formation, Žižek still asserts that we have at our disposal an emphatic *No!* (Ruti, 2017: 42). In Lacanian terms this negativity of freedom is known simply as the 'act', and it is through this act that the subject can free themselves from the demands of the big Other and the symbolic order by, often for only a moment, throwing themselves into the jouissance of the real. As long as the individual is willing to 'not give a damn' (ibid: 45) about what is expected of them, and as long as they are willing and

capable of following this inner directive, regardless of the ‘risk of losing social viability’, then they will have ‘acted in conformity with the desire that is in [them]’ (ibid). As Žižek writes:

The act involves a kind of temporary eclipse, aphanisis, of the subject [...] by means of it, I put at stake everything, including myself, my symbolic identity; the act is therefore always a ‘crime’, a ‘transgression’, namely of the limit of the symbolic community to which I belong (2007: 44).

For Judith Butler, however, finding a way into this desire is a lot more complicated than simply not giving a damn. In *Giving an Account of Oneself* (2005) she makes the claim that the ‘socially determined, partially opaque nature of our subjectivity robs us of autonomy’ (cited in: Ruti, 2017: 44). With no control over the symbolic field, and with very limited knowledge of our histories, we have little opportunity to give a full ‘account of ourselves’. She rejects any freedom that Lacan claims might be found lurking in the Real, and rejects the possibility of any fully subordinate acts that may disrupt the dictates of the symbolic order. These are, according to Butler, nothing more than further layers of symbolic constructs that simply serve to form the ideological fantasy of an impossible autonomy. Lacan is insistent, though, that there exists within the subject a kernel of disobedience towards the normalising powers of the symbolic order, a shifting disobedience that the symbolic order will never be able to fully colonise.

At the core of Lacanian ethics, then, is the subject who ‘is no longer embarrassed by its inability to adhere to the rules of social behaviour but instead embraces - feels compelled to embrace - the destructive energies of the real,’ (ibid: 50) writes Ruti. This act ‘opens a gateway to what might, from the perspective of the established order, seem completely inconceivable (or even utterly insane)’ (ibid: 51). It revolves around a search for the ‘Thing’, a ‘primordial non-object’,

long misplaced, maybe forgotten, but the reaching out for which drives this continuous searching, this constant movement.

Examining the comments beneath more mainstream and normative porn clips suggests that Judith Butler may be correct, as it is difficult to see beyond subjectivation by the symbolic order. To read the comments beneath the most viewed clip of the month would suggest that Judith Butler may be correct. 'My best friend's mom turned out to be a very hospitable MILF' is the most viewed clip on Pornhub in November, 2023. In this mainstream and normative clip, actress Alina Rai (2023) looks into the camera and shows her son's friend around the spare room he will be renting. It is filmed almost completely from the perspective of the male performer, although a few static cameras have been placed on the bedside table and in the hallway. The foreplay and sex take place in the middle of the night after Rai enters the son's friend's room and surprises him. Beneath this clip there are currently 183 comments, and there is no evidence whatsoever of those emotional responses - shock, surprise, anxiety - that this thesis is suggesting may signal 'desubjectivation', although it should be said that mainstream porn does attract much of the humour that will be discussed in Chapter Six. Instead, the comments express little other than appreciation of the various practices that take place, and the bodies of the performers. One viewer writes: 'Delicious homemade video!! Alina I love how vicious you are when you suck that cock' (Rai, 2023). Another writes 'PERFECTION ARTISTIC VIDEO !!! LOVE THIS CONTENT !!!!' (ibid). Others include: 'You're The Best! Always makes me cum so Hard!' and 'I would slide my dick between those tits any day' (ibid). In another mainstream clip titled 'Milf Armani Black teases Stepson, Are You Looking at My Pussy?' (Bratty Milf, 2023), one viewer writes 'Oooohhh that missionary was heavenly... She is so pretty and fit and that big thick cock...mmmmmm' (ibid), while another writes 'Gawd she's amazing, everything. Perfect body, her energy, role play, even a cute little toot hole' (ibid).

What these comments illustrate is the commonality of the normative forms of engagement that can often be found in the discussions that take place beneath mainstream pornographies. As Gutting writes, '[pornography] is typically a very conservative medium, of course, a series of clichés, clogged with erotic associations that stimulate desire, but not offering new modes of experience or thought' (2005: 16). In these types of porn, there seems little evidence of desubjectivation and although the clips from which the above comments were found would be categorised as 'hardcore', their desubjectivising potential remains very low.

THE POSSIBILITY OF DESUBJECTIVATION IN PORN COMMENTARY

Some pornographies, however, and I would argue an increasing amount, do offer the 'new modes of experience and thought' that Gutting makes reference to above, often to such an extent that it brings with it the various traumas associated with diverging from more mainstream porn. In 'Thot Flirts With You and Sucks Your Cock (PART 1)' (Sugar Waifu, 2020), an audio-only clip that unfolds over twenty four minutes, the voice of an actor encourages the listener to delay ejaculation while she gradually shifts from a more conversational tone to a description of what she is doing to the listener. But many of the comments beneath this clip betray a type of self-critical anxiety. One viewer writes, 'I need to be placed in a fucking mental asylum' (ibid), while another writes 'I'm a start seeing a therapist' (ibid). Others seem to consider the paradoxical feeling of both pleasure and guilt, such as when a viewer writes: 'i feel bad for feeling good and bad at the same time, just what the fuck I listened?' (ibid). What this suggests is that by viewing non-normative porn, regardless of the fact that it is non-visually explicit, these viewers are expressing anxiety, and questioning their own sanity with regard to this sudden emergence of non-normative tastes. The broader point is that

many of the viewers of this non-visually explicit audio clip find it necessary to represent themselves as in need of psychiatric help, while those comments beneath more explicit but normative clips do not. This emphasises that it is within the dichotomy of normativity and anti-normativity that the anxiety of desubjectivation lies, rather than as something determined by the explicit content of the clip.

In more explicit non-normative types of pornography the emotional responses that suggest a form of desubjectivation might be taking place are more common. In ‘3D ANIMATED HENTAI monster with big cock // hard fuck’ (HotGamePorn, 2020), a tall and muscular monster has aggressive intercourse with a young woman. It takes place in what seems like a derelict office overlooking a city, and although the monster’s penis is inhumanly large, the woman appears to be feeling pleasure. A number of comments seem to contain traces of ‘desubjectivation’, such as one viewer who asked the question: ‘Why did this turn me on wh—’ (ibid). That the viewer asked this question also suggests that this might also be an instance of ‘radical exposure’, of finding themselves exposed to an unfamiliar type of porn that they then became unexpectedly aroused by. Many other viewers express similar positions, such as another who writes ‘Ok this is against my principles but...this turn me on’ (ibid), while another writes, ‘Was about to nut then took a second to think "damn, wtf am I watching”’ (ibid). In ‘Nier: First [Ass]embly [Studio FOW]’ (Naughty Gaming, 2018), a clip similar in theme and content to ‘3D ANIMATED HENTAI monster with big cock // hard fuck’, one viewers asks: ‘What just happened???’ (ibid).

In ‘Fucking a Sex Doll in Public’ (Freckledred, 2018), a woman sits in a car in the early hours of the morning and penetrates a miniature transgender sex doll with a dildo, while having an orgasm herself. This clip has over 10 million views, and serves as an example of the way these massive online porn sites throw out ‘novelties for users to discover’ (Paasonen, 2018: 11) in an attempt to exploit the ‘imminent outside’ (Massumi, 2019) of their customer’s tastes and search habits. Many of the comments beneath this clip also suggest that some level of desubjectivation is

taking place. One viewer writes, 'I'm obviously much sicker than I realised - because this turned me on so much more than it should!' (Freckledred, 2018); what they seem to be referring to in their use of the word 'realised' is their subjectivised self. Another comments that, 'This video look so stupid but it turn me on so much, I think i go crazy' (ibid). A third details their experience both before and after watching the clip: 'Me before video: man these comments are overreacting, this can't be that bad...Me after video: I should've fucking listened to them WHAT THE FUCK did i just watch' (ibid). There are also traces of 'radical exposure', such as the viewer who writes: 'This was hot; I came in 0.5 seconds. I cannot believe I've never thought of this before' (ibid). The reason this might be an example of 'radical exposure' is because the viewer expresses the fact that they had never 'thought of this before', which suggests that the arousal that the viewer experienced was unexpected. In another clip by the same performer, 'Squirting on a Cucumber in a Parking Lot' (Frecklered, 2021), a viewer writes, 'I've seen a lot of porn these past 30 years, and that was fucking hot!', which also seems to suggest an experience of 'radical exposure' has taken place in the way they place this clip in opposition to their previous experiences of porn. Despite the fact that the porn genres the comments respond to seem disparate, what these comments appear to suggest, and which constitutes that primary intervention of this thesis, is that these viewers are expressing a response that does not correspond with the types of pornography that they view in adherence to their understandings of their frameworks of desire. Although many of these viewers might usually view more normative types of pornography, what is important is that these commenters suggest that they are viewing and becoming aroused by pornographies that are different to the pornographies they would intentionally choose, regardless of what those pornographies are. To provide an example of the normative tastes of these potentially desubjectivising viewers, the profile of the viewer who wrote 'I'm obviously much sicker than I realised - because this turned me on so much more than it should!' underneath 'Fucking a Sex Doll in Public', suggests a consistent taste in normative and mainstream pornographies. Included in his playlist are mainstream clips such as 'My step

Daughters Hot Friend Calls Me step Daddy’, ‘College Teen First Time Anal from naughty Professor’, and ‘Anal Creampie for Redhead’. Among his favourite pornstars are Ashley Mason, Eva Elfie and Ellie Idol, who all work for mainstream production companies.

Other genres of non-normative porn seem to also invite similar expressions of potential desubjectivation. The channel ‘Perverse Family’ provides many examples of what is known loosely as ‘horror porn’, and the comments beneath many of these clips also suggest the possibility of ‘radical exposure’ and a shift from the wilful choice of ‘consumption’, to the unintentional arousal that can result in desubjectivation. In ‘PERVERSE FAMILY - Anal Compilation’ (Perverse Family, 2019), one viewer writes, ‘I knew I was gonna dislike this and I still fuckin’ fapped’ (ibid). Another writes, ‘This is legit scary! I’m out! After I watch just a little more, I’m out!’ (ibid). In their most popular clip, titled ‘Shared Wife With Daddys Friends’ (2020), which has 168 million views, one viewer writes ‘Now that I have finished masturbating to this. I can honestly say that it was fucking disturbing. Simply awful’ (ibid). Considering these comments, the presence of both shock and arousal is noticeable. But it is not just the novelty value and the transgressive content that appears to have these effects. Other non-normative genres that are far less explicit, sometimes not visibly explicit at all, also invite comments that express surprise. One genre of porn that corresponds with this is JOI, an acronym of ‘jerk-off instructions’, and in ‘Listen. JOI english ASMR relax soft voice edging’ (Ohshititsisele, 2018), a female performer whose eyes remain unseen speaks directly to the viewer, and in this 22 minute clip describes for them what she would like the viewer to do. Although there is a momentary reveal of her genitalia, for most of the clip she reveals only her top half. One viewer claims that their experience of this clip was ‘like my first time’ (ibid), while another writes ‘wtf I came like a virgin’ (ibid). One even writes that ‘it makes you question everything? cause...yeah...that was a good cum’ (ibid). This questioning of desire and these expressions of surprise at the experiences that these viewers are finding in non-normative and non-mainstream porn, as though it was their ‘first time’, suggests the discovery of new experiences of

desire, possibly as a result of the prurient click that suggests ‘radical exposure’, but more broadly as a result of an exploration of pornography that perhaps, because of the expression of surprise, does not correspond with their perception of their specific sexual identities with regard to porn viewing. Multiple comments make reference to the quality of their orgasm, while many others thank the performer, suggesting they have never before experienced porn similar to this. The intensity of pleasure and the fact that these viewers are surprised by their enjoyment together make clear the connection between the Lacanian ‘Real’ and ‘desubjectivation’; the surprise they are feeling seems to be because they have made a choice that is in opposition to their subjectivised identity, and the intensity of their pleasure signals the possibility that they have experienced the ‘jouissance’ that resides within the ‘Real’. Because an experience of ‘jouissance’ can often be a traumatic experience, this may also explain the reason why many of these comments also express anxiety, guilt and some level of trauma.

Together, these types of experiences seem to correspond to Menon’s Lacanian understanding of desire:

What is universal about desire is the failure to rein it in. It would thus be a mistake to assume that desire is simply liberatory and that an indifferent desire will always be radical. If anything, the most characteristic feature of desire is that one cannot know what it will do...we can note its ebbs and flows, its fluctuations, its restlessness—but we can never predict any of its movements. Desire moves—that is its only strategy... (Menon, 2015: 19).

Manon’s description of desire appear to correspond with a number of the above comments. She asserts that one of the fundamental principles of desire is the lack of control the individual has

over it, its unpredictability, its restlessness and its constant movement. These descriptions can be understood as in opposition to the individual's assumption of control over their desire, and it is this disconnect that may be a reason why many of these comments express both shock and anxiety.

When a viewer of 'Kunoichi 2' (StudioFOW, 2016), a highly popular animated monster-porn clip, writes, 'There is always depression and disappointment after busting a nut to this, never proud' (ibid), a conversation opens up in response, 'I just remind myself its a animation and go about my day lol', followed by, 'so true hahahaha' (ibid). Other comments include: 'i didnt even know i liked this until i watched it.. i somewhat feel guilty haha' (ibid), and, 'I'm feeling like her "Why am I enjoying this" lol.....Great Work' (ibid). Self-critical engagements are common, and these viewers appear to feel anxiety for their non-normative tastes, such as: 'I hate myself for liking this kinds of video! I hate liking it and getting off of this. And [I'm] a girl' (ibid), the response to which says: 'Lol why tho? Jzt do what this one song says "Just let yourself go")' (ibid). As the earlier sections of this chapter illustrated, it is very rare that mainstream and normative genres of porn invite comments that are in any way similar to these types of expressions, regardless of how explicit or 'hardcore' they are. Instead, those comments that are not attempts to draw the viewer to other pornographies often appear to express appreciation.

As Menon makes clear, we can never predict the movements of desire. It would be a mistake to speculate too much on where each of the experiences that have been provided in this chapter will take those who wrote the comments. What is important, however, is that a clear distinction has opened up between normative and non-normative experiences of pornography. Regarding mainstream pornography, the most common forms of engagement that are found in the comments express appreciation for the clip, which often takes the form of highly normative expressions of explicit desire. The anxiety, shock and surprise that have been shown to be common beneath non-normative forms of porn are almost completely absent below normative genres of porn. For the most part, the comments beneath mainstream porn are predictable, and correspond with the content

in a coherent and consistent way. Beneath the more non-normative forms of pornography, whether these are animated monster-porn clips, audio only JOI clips, or live-action clips that contain non-normative sexual practices, such as ‘Fucking a sex doll in public’, the comments seem to suggest that some level of ‘desubjectivation’ is taking place. Some express disgust, others anxiety, while others attempt to reassure the former two types of viewers. In each case provided above, however, there appears to be an expression of arousal alongside the expressed emotion, without which these engagements with porn would remain where they began, which was as a moment of prurient interest and not an experience of ‘desubjectivation’.

For many of those viewers of ‘Kunoichi 2’ (StudioFOW, 2016)², the comments seem to suggest that they have been through desubjectivised shock and are now engaging in resubjectivised appreciation: ‘Omg StudioFOW, you have ruined me for vanilla sex forever... I LOVE this! My pussy's soaking wet now, came so many times. Luv luv luv the lizard dicks, the skin texture, the grunts and snorts.. such lovely monsters 😊 Had to sign up just to applaud this masterpiece *bows*’ (ibid); ‘This is a masterpiece’; and if there is ever any doubt that people are using these types of porn in the same way as more mainstream varieties of porn, as a masturbatory aid, ‘Mmm loved her Arc! Loved all the dicks, creative monsters, and I'm wet as hell. Mmmm! Fuck!’ (ibid); ‘Oh my a-gawd’ (ibid); ‘I lost count on how many times I cummed to this video!!’ (ibid). ‘Omg the last part had me creaming so hard! Fucking gave my poor clit burns from masturbating it so hard!!’ (ibid). Although the *resubjectivised* individual, now acting consciously and with intent and a knowledge of this new preference, is more vulnerable to the symbolic order (the market for such products, it seems, is beginning to emerge, and the \$60.00 ‘Sinnovator Cephalopod Tentacle Platinum Silicone Dildo’ suggests that this is so (2020)), the next chapter will examine what might await these reconfigured subjects in this new relationship to their surroundings.

² This clip was removed from Pornhub following Kristoff's 2020 article ‘The Children of Pornhub’. An alternative link can be found here: Studio Fow. (2021). *Konoichi 2*. [Online]. XVideos.com. Available at: https://www.xvideos.com/video/fiochf630b/kunoichi_2_fall_of_the_shrinemaiden [Accessed 18 July 2024].

Laughter and comedy are also a commonality in the comments sections of this type of porn, but almost always with some reference to masturbation: ‘Love your guys’ work, high quality animation, great content, and can make me laugh my ass off while fapping at the same time.’ (ibid); ‘This is amazing For Academic Purposes *cough*.’ ‘Why do I always laugh when I’m watching hentai. I’m tryna bust a nut not a gut’ (ibid).

Other comments on ‘Konuichi 2’ are more critical, such as: ‘Why do these people like videos of girls fucking animals and monsters??? What the fuck is wrong with you all?’ the response to which is: ‘Cause a human man could never give us this kind of pleasure.’ Although this might suggest an individual who represents a subject who is yet to be desubjectivised or resubjectivised, this user’s profile reveals one of their favourite performers to be dawnskye55, a giantess whose most popular video is ‘Giantess attacked by gummy bears but she eats and squishes them all’. Interestingly, being squished, devoured alive, shrinking, all constitute what is known as a ‘vore’ fetish, which is very much its own genre, so maybe this individual is simply establishing their own way of resubjection through other non-normative pornographies.

In more mainstream clips, such as the most popular clip of 2020 on Pornhub, ‘Apology to my Innocent Stepsis during Quarantine’ (Masters, 2020)³, which has 94 million views, this fracturing and remaking seems to be completely absent. While there is a noticeable similarity in the humor of the users (a theme that will be taken up in the final chapter), one significant difference is that in the comments beneath the mainstream clips, many, many users seem to be making endless attempts to garner as many ‘likes’ as possible: ‘im doing a challenge. For every 2 likes i will not fap in 1 day (2likes=1day). coming back in 5 days to check’ (431 likes) (ibid); ‘Like for forgiveness’ (483 likes) (ibid); ‘Like this if you hate me’ (883 likes) (ibid); ‘1 like= 1 day no porn. Light me up boys, I’ll check back in 5 days’ (2260 likes) (ibid). These multiple attempts at

³ NOTE: This clip disappeared following Kristoff’s 2020 article ‘The Children of Pornhub’. For a similar clip see: Scott Stark. (2024). *Step Sister Squirting Cures My Depression*. [Online]. Pornhub.com. Available at: https://www.pornhub.com/view_video.php?viewkey=65077bb758a04 [Accessed 18 July 2024].

garnering likes can be found throughout the comments on more popular mainstream clips, but they are noticeably absent from the more non-normative varieties of porn. This suggests that in the viewing of mainstream porn individuals are feeling significantly more oriented in their enjoyment, less troubled by the place their desire has taken them; they are engaging with porn just as they would engage with any other online platform. These are the individuals who are subjectivised by those elements of social life in a way that leads them relatively directly to this form of porn, by semi-explicit pop music videos, by the beauty industry, by the naturalisation of sexual normativities, by what Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari would call a 'striated space' (1987: 403), a categorised space of coherent, predictable pathways and herded movement. It suggests a consistency of desire that is closely connected to the consistency of contemporary subjectivation. But desubjectivation, or what Lacan calls 'subjective destitution' (in: Žižek, 1996), is more closely related to what Žižek refers to as 'nonsensical inconsistency' (2000: 294). So as desire drifts tumultuously away from subjectivation, from the striated structuring of acceptability, it begins to reflect the chaos that defines it in its desubjectivised becomings; a place where, for Georges Bataille, 'the mind moves in a strange world where anguish and ecstasy coexist' (1954: xxxii). As this section has argued, it appears that this drifting of desire is more prevalent in those viewers who find potentially unexpected and unanticipated feelings of arousal in non-normative pornographies. The examples provided are animated monster porn, 'horror' porn, audio only porn and JOI porn. This section has also illustrated the difference in how these pornographies and feelings of arousal differ to those that are written underneath more normative and mainstream forms of pornography, which most commonly express appreciation and a description of what the viewer would like to do with the performers.

DELEUZE, DESUBJECTIVATION AND 'SMOOTH' AND 'STRIATED' SPACES

This is not an argument that is suggesting there is a coherent and unequivocal split between viewers of normative pornographies and non-normative pornographies, but rather that viewers often seem to be drifting over to forms of non-normative pornography that may be offering them the opportunity to unmake and remake themselves in the process of de/re-subjectivation. The commenters of the previous section appear to be veering 'away from the capturing forces of the apparatuses of production, accumulation, and capitalisation of identity that have come to define neoliberalism as a highly coded economic programme predicated on a double-gesture of decoding and recoding of desire' (Florêncio, 2020: 7). Part of the intervention that this thesis is making is in its illustration of the tension between the expressions of arousal that are written in the comments section between normative porn and non-normative porn, and this tension can be understood as corresponding with the tension between potentialities of becoming and the subjectivising forces of capitalism, which are a theme that runs through much of the work of Deleuze and Guattari:

Such a tension between control and invention, between management and risk, is the same kind of productive tension we find between, on the one hand, the psychoanalytical reduction of desire to lack...and, on the other hand, the schizoanalytical position that views desire as a positive flow fuelling becomings and opening up new pathways to unforeseen futures (ibid).

But as this chapter hopefully illustrates, properly desubjectivising porn 'consumption' cannot so easily be 'captured by a logics of profit' (ibid: 148). For pornography as a capitalist endeavour, there is clearly an ideal consumer: someone who spends a lot, someone who consumes a lot, someone whose tastes are easy to distinguish and provide for, and someone whose tastes are

easy to draw towards new and commercially lucrative new productions - a predictable consumer with a fixed identity. It seems, though, that consumers of the desubjectivising pornographies included in this chapter, especially those who have stumbled upon them through ‘radical exposure’, do not fit into this model of the ideal consumer, nor can they be captured by it, because the instances of desire and arousal that are being discussed in this thesis are unknown and unfamiliar until the moment of their arrival.

In the traumatic, albeit stimulating unfamiliarity of this mode of desubjectivation, in this reaching out for annihilation, in this attempt to wrench the subject from itself, some part of the subject’s sexuality, of the specificities of their desires, are being unmade. But because complete desubjectivation is impossible, something must replace this dissolution of the subject, it must be remade, and I would argue that this can be understood as a process of *resubjectivation*. As Hancock and Garner describe it:

For Foucault, the subject is fragmented and unceasingly changing. The self is a plurality of changing masks or faces, many selves that can change, be in contradiction to each other, and alter their contents over time. Foucault argued for a desubjectification of the self so that there was no longer one type of subject one could be but rather a constantly changing plurality of selves, a concept that both allows for the possibility of transforming oneself and parallels the experience one has of one’s self. This desubjectification makes possible trying out new forms of the self through new modes of thinking, talking, acting, experiencing (Hancock, 2009: 144).

This process of de- and then re-subjectivation is where the emancipatory potential of these pornographies can be situated. This is a process of becoming in the Deleuzian sense, a series of

micro-experiences, in a space in which the subject never becomes static in their desire and never ceases to change. In this way there is no being, only becoming. It also signals a resistance to, rather than an adherence or conformity to, those subjectivising elements of the first chapter, and consequently adds another, more political layer, to this form of emancipation.

Although Lacan and Deleuze are often considered to be in theoretical opposition (Nedoh & Zevnik, 2017), what allows for a Deleuzian and Lacanian analysis to work together, is that in this thesis, Lacan's work has been confined to the Lacanian Real, and to the concepts that come into play as a result of this part of the unconscious. Because the Lacanian Real is empty until it is filled with a desubjectivising articulation of desire, this means it is a place of potentiality, rather than a structuralist, positivist and fixed understanding of how the unconscious operates. As Lacan writes, the Real is 'that which always lies behind the automaton' (Lacan, 1977: 53), which in this way can be understood as the subjectivised self; it is 'an experience of resistance' (ibid: 89).

Much of Deleuze's admiration is reserved for this sort of resubjectivised individual, for the 'wild but perhaps unconscious sovereign [individual]' (Jenks, 2003: 159). From Deleuze's perspective, these desubjectivising viewers of porn appear to be acting with an unintentionality, an 'unconscious sovereignty', that situates them at some distance from more intentional forms of porn viewing and production, whether they are mainstream or, as the next chapter will examine more closely, more self-consciously disruptive. They are reaching beyond their own embedded forms of subjectivised desire and to a place that was not planned, that was not a part of a strategic engagement with any form of sexual liberation movement. In a 1995 interview Guattari asserted that to him, '[s]exual liberation is a mystification ... liberation will occur when sexuality becomes desire, and desire is the freedom to be sexual, that is, to be something else at the same time' (1991: 151). This individual becomes something of a Nietzschean heroic force, 'These men of desire—or do they not yet exist?—are like Zarathustra. They know incredible sufferings, vertigos, and sicknesses. They have their specters. They must reinvent each gesture' (Deleuze & Guattari, 1997:

131). Although there is a ‘vertigo’ to be overcome in acting in opposition to the laws that have governed the individual, the outcome is:

a free man, irresponsible, solitary, and joyous, finally able to say and do something simple in his own name, without asking permission; a desire lacking nothing, a flux that overcomes barriers and codes, a name that no longer designates any ego whatever. He has simply ceased being afraid of becoming mad. (ibid).

Part of what must be overcome or undermined in order to reach this ‘ongoing movement’ of emancipatory becoming, apart from the trauma of breaking one’s own individual laws of acceptability, is what Deleuze and Guattari refer to as the ‘word-order’, an utterance that ‘bears an effect of authority or law’ (Nigianni & Storr, 2009: 26), otherwise what is produced is not a real desire but ‘capitalist pseudodesire’, according to which desire is produced as a marketable longing rather than a new way of ‘feeling, perceiving [or] conceiving’ (ibid). The porn industry is of course very much a frenzied and hyperactive capitalist space, but there is a visible distinction between those forms of consumption that are the result of a longing that is determined by the symbolic order, and those forms of viewing that can be understood as having emanated from ‘radical exposure’, that are driven less by intent and more by an unintentional stumbling. Reading the comments beneath those clips that represent what is considered by many as mainstream varieties of porn, there is little evidence of this stumbling, and the conversations tend to either be in the form of advertisements, comedy, or an explicit appreciation of the clip (‘that cock looks so good in her mouth’, ‘Nice little slut can barely fit the whole thing in her mouth’, ‘mmmm’ (All from: Fakehub Originals, 2020)). This appreciation seems emblematic of this longing, a normative enactment of subjectivised desire rather than an emancipatory reaching out for a desubjectivising non-object.

In the case of non-normative pornographies, there seems to be an important difference. There is a sense of directionlessness, of disorientation. The comments examined earlier in this chapter demonstrate that viewers wonder not only why they are there, but how they got there in the first place. In fact, looking at the longer comments threads of some of the more non-normative clips, it seems almost as though a split invariably opens up between those who are subjectivised, those who are desubjectivised, and those who are resubjectivised, at least when situated within or against the specific clip.

The first half of this chapter provides a conceptual framing for the internal structure of how this process of desubjectivation might take place within non-normative or desubjectivising pornographies. When faced with something perceived as odd, perhaps unpleasant that is placed in front of them by the massively complex and often ineffective algorithmic logic of the online porn industry, the subjectivised individual makes a prurient, opportunistic click of the mouse and to their anguished surprise finds themselves feeling desirous towards whatever this non-normative pornography contains. After enjoying their unexpected arousal, and on returning for a similar experience, the individual might then become a resubjectivised desiring individual who is ‘united with [their] desire rather than alienated from it’ (Ruti, 2017: 44). But this is an individual who is also, it should be made clear, once again vulnerable to the imposition of the symbolic order.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

This chapter has argued that many contemporary forms of porn viewing have more in common with the unintended collision between the two ungovernable entities of the unconscious and the symbolic order than with Butler’s formulations of hegemonic impositions. It is according to this argument that the desubjectivised viewer of porn ‘emerges only as an after-effect of the selections made by desire...not as the agent of selection’ (Holland, 2015: 325). The desubjectivising

experience is not achieved by consciously accessing non-normative or 'primary' desires, but by being free enough so that these forms of desire can access the individual. It is here that the emancipatory potential of desubjectivation can be found.

This chapter has provided a number of the comments that appear to illustrate expressions of a desubjectivising experience. It has examined them according to the philosophies of Judith Butler, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, and Slavov Žižek. It has shown that these types of experiences are not confined to a single genre of porn, but rather that they seem to take place when a viewer finds arousal in a pornography that is not the pornography that corresponds with their understandings of their own desire. It has contrasted this with a number of the comments that are written beneath more normative forms of pornography, in which desubjectivation appears to be absent, and in which viewers tend to express appreciation, normative expressions of the viewer's identity, or the standard practice of searching for 'likes'.

CHAPTER FOUR: QUEER THEORY, QUEER PORN, AND THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF THE DESUBJECTIVISED SELF

This chapter will examine internet pornographies from the perspective of a number of branches of queer theory. It will illustrate the connections between different types of pornography and different approaches to queerness, and will do this from the perspective of porn commentary. The central argument of this chapter is that although each type of queer theory can be understood as corresponding with the ways viewers express themselves with regard to specific genres of porn, it is only a particular configuration of anti-social queer theory that corresponds with the desubjectivation and ‘radical exposure’ that this thesis is examining. The reason this is relevant is because the comments at the centre of this thesis appear to be bound up with a form of ‘primary queerness’, which is an expression of non-normative desire that emerges from a place that remains undetermined by regimes of subjectivation, so it is important to properly understand which form of queer theory this ‘primary queerness’ might correspond with.

The previous chapter illustrated the ways in which only comments that express shock, surprise, disgust or anxiety can be categorised as desubjectivising, as these types of expressions signal a sudden, disruptive opposition to the identity of the viewer, and it is with this theoretical model that different forms of queer pornographic engagements can be positioned as either desubjectivising, or as corresponding with the viewer’s identity. In this way, this chapter, and more generally the thesis itself, aims to queer our understanding of porn comments. Because queer theory is understood as the ‘axiomatic foe’ (Wilson & Weigman, 2015: 2) of normativity, and because the comments that have been postulated as desubjectivising have been positioned as in opposition to the normative understandings that the viewers in question have of their own frameworks of desire, this chapter argues that this possible ‘emergent sexual sensibility’ in response to non-normative porn is a type of queer sensibility.

FOUCAULT'S QUEER FOUNDATIONS AND 'MOVING ONTO SOMETHING ELSE'

The history of queer theory is long, complex and contradictory. Its foundational theorists might be considered to be Therese de Laurentis (Halperin, 2003), who first coined the term, Mario Mieli, whose Marcusean Freudo-Marxism emerged as an early influential form of proto-queer theory (Bernini, 2021), Leo Bersani, whose article 'Is the Rectum a Grave' (Bersani, 1987) signalled the first appearance of anti-social queer theory, and Judith Butler (1990), whose theories of performativity and parodic repetition serve as a foundational theory to much queer porn. The aim of Freudo-Marxism was to draw out the truth of human sexuality, whereas for Butler this truth only exists as an outcome of power itself. Leo Bersani, and later Lee Edelman (2005), both frequently characterized as anti-social queer theorists, believe that sexuality should be understood as 'a sexual drive that dissolves the subject through jouissance.'

Prior to these theorists, Michel Foucault (1998) built a highly influential theoretical foundation, and each of these different branches of queer theory might be said to correspond with one side the split *within* Foucault. This is the split between his understanding of apparatuses of knowledge and power (Foucault, 1991; 2003), and his later theory of desubjectivation and his call for new forms of pleasure with new parts of our bodies (Foucault, 2003a: 446; 1977: 120). It might even be said that Foucault's work can be split between subjectivation and desubjectivation, though as Lynne Huffer makes clear, they both correspond to the broad scope of his project, in which he is trying to 'find a way out from under those modes of subjectivation that keep us, and others, unfree' (Huffer, 2010: 212). These theories do have in common the broadest of objectives, which is to disrupt the power that governs and regulates normative desire, sexuality and pleasure.

Although all branches of queer theory do constitute a form of empowerment in the way they encourage an individual's desire away from the normative regimes of desire and sexuality that are legitimised and sanctioned by the symbolic order, as will be explained in the following sections, this thesis is attempting to assess 'desubjectivation' with regard to contemporary porn viewing, so it is not assessing other branches of queer theory according to their empowering qualities, but according to their desubjectivising potential. What tends to often happen, however, is that the desubjectivising practice in question becomes popularised and reabsorbed by the symbolic order, which thus reduces or removes its desubjectivising potential. That is, as soon as the sexual practice is reabsorbed by the symbolic order, it becomes re-signified - understood and determined according to language - rather than according to the 'primary desire' that resides in the 'Lacanian Real', which is only operable in opposition to language.

Michel Foucault was very much aware of the effects of desubjectivation, and in a 1981 interview he describes it in relation to the bathhouses of San Francisco:

[I]t's important for there to be places like baths where, without being imprisoned or pinned in your own identity, in your legal status, your past, your name, your face, and so on, you can meet the people who are there, and who are for you—as you are for them—nothing more than bodies, with whom the most unexpected combinations and fabrications of pleasure are possible. This is absolutely an important part of erotic experiences, and it is, I would say, politically important that sexuality can function in this way. (Foucault, 2011: 399)

Foucault was then asked if he thought 'these new pleasures won't be exploited in the way advertising uses the stimulation of pleasure as a means of social control':

we can always be sure it will happen, and that everything that has been created or acquired, any ground that has been gained will, at a certain moment be used in such a way. That's the way we live, that's the way we struggle, that's the way of human history. And I don't think that is an objection to all those movements or all those situations. But you are quite right in underlining that we always have to be quite careful and to be aware of the fact that we have to move on to something else... (1994: 167)

In this way, using this community as a way to build a future of radical ethics will only elevate the subject's vulnerability to a new type of subjectivation. So, as Foucault makes clear when he mentions 'moving onto something else', it is the never-quite-arriving of true desubjectivation that is the one element that must always be present. 'Moving onto something else' becomes what might be defined as a first principle for desubjectivising empowerment following the initial experience of desubjectivation. Part of the intervention of this study, of course, is to ask this very question of various forms of engagement with online pornographies. These moments of desubjectivation as detailed in the previous chapter bear similarities in affect to these experiences of Foucault's in the bathhouses of San Francisco. This intense and important *moment* of desubjectivation is one of the central themes of this study. It can be found in 'being undone' in the bath houses of San Francisco, the risk of harm that was attached to these experiences, and the experience of desubjectivation through objectification. But the porn viewing central to this thesis differs from these experiences in that it is consumed in private, watched only by oneself and with little risk of detection, where the individual is free to stumble into unfamiliar genres, unfamiliar practices, and who consequently becomes desubjectivised not by the physical undoing enacted with another individual, but by the physical undoing that is enacted with another version of themselves.

This suggests an interiorisation of desubjectivation, a process that takes place according to oneself and nobody else.

When Foucault makes a call for new types of pleasure with new parts of our bodies, one practice that he often made reference to was fisting. For Foucault being fisted constitutes a form of desubjectivation because at the time such practices resided in a place very much in opposition to the symbolic order. To be fisted, in this way, was a limit-experience, but it would be a mistake to attempt to connect this practice with regard to Foucault's work with the fisting that can now be found across much mainstream pornography. For Foucault fisting is 'less an end-driven, teleological action aimed at achieving release of sexual tension through orgasm' (Halperin, 1996: 91), that involves 'seducing one of the jumpiest and tightest muscles in the body' (ibid). As a sexual practice, for theorists such as Foucault and Gayle Rubin, fisting was the only newly discovered sexual practice of the 20th century, but taking part in the fisting communities of the 70s and 80s is very different to the ways in which individuals engage with fisting in contemporary online pornographies.

Regarding heterosexual engagement, fisting clips seem to be enjoyed by people who appear to derive their arousal from imagining themselves not as the person receiving the fisting, but as the person carrying out the act. In 'DOUBLE FISTING with Cathy Heaven' (21Sextreme, 2019), which has so far attracted 40 million views, one viewer writes, 'I'm down to fist her and catch her squirts in my mouth' (ibid), while another writes, 'I want try that so bad just need a girl that's kinky and willing' (ibid). Whenever a female viewer writes that they would like to experience this, such as when one viewer writes, 'I want this done to me soo fucking bad ughh' (ibid), each time a male user will reply with an attempt to meet with the viewer. Of the 17 replies to this one comment, one responds with, 'Let's make it a regular thing then' (ibid), while three men provide phone numbers. What is clear here is that, for these men, these mainstream representations of fisting do not induce the process of desubjectivation being examined in this thesis. There is no 'dissolution of the self',

nor are there any traces of a viewer expressing the shock, surprise or disgust that are often a result of an individual's arousal acting in opposition to their identitarian frameworks of desire.

Perhaps Foucault's perspective on fisting and desubjectivation now has a closer connection to the practice of 'pegging'. Pegging is the practice of anal penetration, often with a strap-on dildo, and usually involves the anal penetration of a man by a woman. Because this practice constitutes a form of pleasure that is in opposition to the normative frameworks of desire as determined by the symbolic order, and because it constitutes a form of pleasure that prioritises a part of the body that is not the penis, 'pegging' seems much closer to the type of desubjectivising limit-experience that Foucault was advocating. In this way, this thesis intervenes on Foucault's position by repositioning what for Foucault was the desubjectivising limit-experience of fisting, into the desubjectivising limit-experience of pegging. Also, although the sexual identity of the male performer is often unclear, the comments underneath these clips often constitute a discussion about the heterosexuality of the act of masturbation when viewing these clips. When discussing desubjectivation and bath houses in a 1981 interview, Foucault says that,

It is simply regrettable that there are not places like this for heterosexuality...To encounter bodies that are both present and fleeting? Places where you desubjectivize yourself, that is, you [desubjectivize] yourself in a way that is, I'm not saying the most radical, but in any case in a way that is intense enough so that this moment is, in the end, important. (Foucault, 2011: 399)

It is also important to note just what it is that makes an act or experience desubjectivising. Firstly, it is not the act itself. Pegging has become very popular and clips often attract over 10 million viewers. What makes the act desubjectivising is that it is a limit-experience to that particular individual, and that for these individuals the initial experience is 'intense enough so that the

moment is...important' (ibid). On July 28th 2022 the hashtag #Princeofpegging began to trend in the UK, and within 24 hours searches on Pornhub for pegging increased by 318% (Pornhub Insights, 2022). For those people whose searches caused this increase and who had never tried pegging before, this is the type of sudden change that signals what would be a surge in desubjectivising experiences.

In, 'She just keeps to fuck his ass even though he came three times' (MrsVictoria, 2021), which has so far attracted more than 14 million views, the 373 comments appear to constitute a debate regarding the sexuality of the male performer, such as when one viewer writes 'men not understanding that this is clearly straight sex is the reason yall will never understand the bliss of a prostate orgasm and i feel bad for you' (ibid). While the following comment represents the opposing argument: 'This is gay for us watching. All we straight men see is a guy getting fucked by a penis, the only difference being that its a fake penis worn by a woman. Since we barely see the woman, there's nothing for us to fap to except the man and the two penises, ultimately making it gay' (ibid). These comments appear to constitute a resistance not to the self, but to the heteronormative regimes of society, and the lack of desubjectivation suggests that pegging has become relatively acceptable. In pegging clip 'Best Shemale Sissy Cum Compilation' (Sissy Milana, 2021), which is a series of clips of the same male performer being 'pegged', one of the 257 comments, which has attracted 153 'likes', says 'I get gayer everyday. I'm gonna fuck a guy soon. I nut harder and harder to these videos. I don't even watch straight porn any more' (ibid). Another writes, 'I'm the same. When I first open PH before logging in. Get the regular stuff. I have a quick scroll. So boring. Then I log in and see my feed...then my cock starts growing' (ibid), a response to which is, 'I absolutely agree with you, like I love fuckin my wife, but when it come to porn, this is my go to' (ibid). Regarding what Foucault refers to as 'new forms of pleasure', some elements of pegging do seem to correspond with this concept, such as the practice of 'hands-free' ejaculation, whereby a man ejaculates while only his prostate is being stimulated. While these clips and practices rarely draw expressions of

desubjectivation in the form of shock, surprise, anxiety or disgust, their popularity and the content of the comments does suggest that there is a shifting of heterosexual normativities. While the politicised arguments in the comments suggest there is a tension in the relationships between the viewer and their social world, in the way the viewer often finds themselves having to assert their heterosexuality, it is also clear that the enjoyment of this type of porn does not initiate any tension between the identity of the viewer and their Lacanian 'primary desire', suggesting that pegging is no longer a means whereby the viewer will experience desubjectivation. The element of Foucault's position that does correspond more convincingly with desubjectivation in porn viewing, however, is his assertion that people must 'move onto new things' in order to avoid any new practice from becoming reabsorbed by the social order. The above comments suggest that pegging for these viewers is not a 'new thing', while the forms of pornography that signal desubjectivation express shock, anxiety or disgust because they are a 'new thing', and it is this unfamiliarity that is a requisite ingredient to desubjectivation.

JUDITH BUTLER AND 'PARODIC REPETITION' IN QUEER PORN

As the previous chapter detailed, for Judith Butler there is no way to fully empower oneself from regimes of subjectivation. Instead, Butler argues that the only way to empower oneself in this way is through the 'subversive reiteration of norms' (Butler, 2011: 125), which will serve to 'reveal the highly stylized gender construction of all pornography' (Schaschak, 2014: 146). In reference to Butler, Lynne Huffer writes that: '[w]ith performativity, the subject is not undone but rebelliously remade: she is a joker, a trickster, a sassy artist who operates in the camp mode of ironic subversion' (2010: 119). As Schaschak argues, this subversive repetition draws attention to these norms and consequently 'permits [their] productive act of deconstruction. Thus, queer pornography can

disassemble the pornographic norm by mimicking it' (2014: 49). This section will illustrate the ways in which Butler's theories of 'subversive repetition' can be aligned with much contemporary queer pornography. By offering an analysis of a number of the comments beneath these types of pornography it will also argue that there are very few traces, if any, that suggest any type of desubjectivation is taking place in the viewing of queer porn.

Vex Ashley, in 'Porn - Artifice - Performance - and the problem of authenticity' (2015), defines queer porn as a 'new wave' of porn. It is often created by 'non-male, activist directors with a mission to subvert what they see as the gender exclusionary, caricatured depictions of sex and bodies that dominate the canon of pornography' (ibid: 187) This genre showcases 'marginalized sexualities as a political act' (ibid). The following section of this chapter will examine queer porn from the perspective of the desubjectivation at the centre of this thesis. Four prominent production companies in the queer porn industry are: Pink and White Productions, Queer Porn TV, Crashpad Series and Lust Cinema. They contain bodies that are old, plus-size, that reveal stretch marks and surgery scars. In fact, every configuration of body and gender can be found within these sites. Different identities are also emphasised, such as the scene in which 'a mixed race middle eastern cisgender woman and a transman engage in a role play of French language education which ends in both of them having very visible orgasms' (Cardenas, 2014: 113). There are many reasons why this should be understood as anti-normative, but the type of viewer experience that is central to this thesis, and that can be found in the comments responding to desubjectivising pornographies, seems noticeably absent.

Looking at a number of these queer porn sites and aside from the more political content, it is clear that one of the most prominent and commonplace approaches to content is from a perspective of ironic mimicking, which aligns closely with Butler's approach to empowerment. This type of content is something that can be seen across both Pink and White Productions' (PinkWhite, 2020) website, and that of Queer Porn TV (TroubleFilms, 2020). Examples of the ironic mimicking that

takes place in this type of genre include: ‘Eastbay Brats’, ‘Hotel Hangout’ and ‘2 Girls 2 Strap-ons’, all available on Queer Porn TV, and ‘Auntie’s Love’, ‘College Daydream’ and ‘Hungarian Tango (Eat Pussy Not Goulash)’ in the case of Pink and White Productions. Each appear to correspond with Butler’s positions with regard to ‘ironic mimicking’ in the way they each use a form of wordplay in their titles that bears close resemblance to many very mainstream titles. The content often also follows this pattern, with many of the commonalities of mainstream porn also noticeable, such as the scripting, the acting, and the story. Lust Cinema (2021), another paid website with a largely queer content, is the only one of these queer porn websites that provides a space for viewers to write comments. In ‘The Wedding’ (Lust, 2023), one viewer writes ‘The interaction between the characters was delightful. I was very turned on by the mother of the groom in her coupling with the guitar player. It had a natural flow’ (ibid), while another writes ‘Great film! I love that there were different types of bodies, different shapes and sizes, different ages, and boy! Was that hot! Now, we just need people differently-abled and you’re all set! Honestly, I’m just happy to see people enjoying each other’s bodies. Great job!’ (ibid). What this illustrates is the important distinction between non-normative and non-mainstream pornographies, and those pornographies that initiate an experience of desubjectivation. While many of the more Butlerian forms of pornography do offer a form of resistance to social and political normativity, they do not appear to encourage any new experiences with regard to desubjectivation, or a resistance to the self.

For Butler the only resistance to the subjectivising power of the symbolic order is through the subversion of hegemonic norms, and our only hope of allowing new social possibilities to emerge is through a collaboration *with* power. Her strategies are strategies of repetition, replication and subversion, of the parody of drag and of the considered irony of much queer porn:

Queer pornography employs Judith Butler’s model of *subversive* or *parodic repetition*. If, as she argues, “Gender is the repeated stylization of the body,

a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being” (J. Butler 1990, 45), then the “repeated stylization” can also be disrupted... the potential for changing these significations is also located within the realm of repetition—that is, “within the possibility of a variation on that repetition” (Schaschak, 2014: 154).

But there is a learned intentionality in these approaches, a self-conscious strategising. As the second chapter illustrated, however, it is the *unintentionality* of the Lacanian act that is at work, the unconscious stumbling, rather than the self-conscious choice to view the non-normative porn, that can lead to desubjectivation. To watch the queer porn that aligns with Butler's work requires a wilful choice by the viewer, which is unlikely to take place with regard to the more normative viewers who experience desubjectivation through unintentional arousal and ‘radical exposure’.

In ‘Queering Porn Audiences’, Smith, Attwood and Barker write of the ways in which ‘queer porn is often in the “eye of the beholder”’, and that ““mainstream” pornography can also provide “queer imaginaries” for some’ (2015: 184). But the viewers who are experiencing desubjectivation, however, and who do not identify as queer, are absent from Smith et al’s research project because it is neither queer porn nor mainstream porn that is engaging the viewer’s unconscious queerness, but rather any sort of porn that is non-normative with regard to the individual’s sexual identity, and which results in desubjectivation because it challenges the way these individuals understand themselves.

As Jiz Lee, one of the most prominent queer performers, states in an interview for QueerPornTV,

I think that being able to work in a porn industry in a way that feels very safe and comfortable...and feels very much a part of a community has been really helpful for me...for my health and just for my social wellbeing...I put a lot of academic and political thought [into my work], particularly when you think of the personal as the political, everything that I stand behind, every choice that I make, is governed by [my thought and my community]. (Queer Porn TV, 2010)

Although of course there are many forms of empowering and subversive behaviour operating within both the production and content of this industry, this has to be understood as distinct from the desubjectivation that is accessible through engaging with the Lacanian 'act'. Queers, according to Tim Dean (2005: 826), must 'fail to reproduce the social', but queer porn often seems to be striving to reproduce a few very specific forms of 'the social', as with Jiz Lee's caring community, or the various ironic engagements of films such as 'Sapphic Desires 2' (Trouble Films, 2020), 'Bathroom Bullies' (ibid), 'With Love from London' (ibid) or '2 Girls, 2 Strap-Ons' (ibid). As Chrysanthi Nigianni and Merl Storr write in *Deleuze and Queer Theory*,

what strikes and troubles one in the field known as 'Queer Theory' is primarily an insistence on performativity as the only adequate way to perceive the social world and the real and the consequent refusal to 'see' a positive...outside, a 'beyond' of the signifier, discourse, language: a short-sightedness in relation to body and materiality. I wonder if this is due to a passion for realism and pragmatism, or rather to a fear of accepting anything that goes beyond us, the subject, the world as the lived cultural horizon. Is after all the heterosexual matrix of imposed naturalised performances the only reality we can imagine? (2009: 3)

Courtney Trouble, another highly popular queer porn director, states that, ‘I am a capitalist, I think. But also feel super ethical’ (Cardenas, 2014: 112) and it should not be forgotten that the fundamental value of the Lacanian ‘act’ is that its source is as far away from the imposition of the symbolic order as it is possible to be. Part of the symbolic order, of course, is capitalism, and part of capitalism is the responsibility of the capitalist to optimise their product based on their perceived consumer base. It is clear, in this way, that this genre of queer porn is situated within a competitive market, whereby market failure will lead to bankruptcy. Demand is assessed, predicted, and provided for. Those desubjectivising pornographies the viewing of which constitutes a Lacanian ‘act’, however, bypass this process because these consumers are driven by a demand, a desire, that is by its very nature invisible, or minimally visible, to the symbolic order. This form of Lacanian desire constitutes a void of potentiality that is always yet to occur, and therefore undetectable to this mechanism of the capitalist market.

One of the most visible queer porn producers is Shine Louise Houston, founding director of Pink and White productions, and a regular contributor to CrashPadSeries. In an interview with ‘Bend Over’ magazine she makes the claim that she is ‘queering capitalism’ (Lune, 2011: 14). But, according to the above connection between the Lacanian ethical ‘act’ and capitalism, a genuinely queer capitalism would barely resemble capitalism at all, because even the individual does not know what they will next desire as the void of the Real is not a stable, quantifiable object, but a space of potentiality. In this sense, capitalism’s only strategy would be to throw out random curiosities in the hope that something sticks, which explains Pornhub’s propensity to do exactly this.

TOWARDS A THEORY OF PRIMARY QUEERNESS

There are a number of internal divisions within queer theory, and many of these rose to the surface in the 2005 conference panel, 'The Anti-Social Thesis in Queer Theory' (Munoz, E. Dean, T. Edelman, L & Halberstam, J, 2005), during which a number of prominent queer scholars discussed Leo Bersani's book *Homos* (1996). Lee Edelman and Jack Halberstam represented the position known as anti-social queer theory, while Tim Dean and Jose Munoz represented the more utopian, futurist approach to queerness. It was a discussion, according to Edelman, '[that] cut to the very core of our profession's relation to politics, history, and the humanistic subject' (2005: 821). He then goes on to attack the more utopian positions of various queer theorists, making reference to 'prostrat[ing] ourselves at the altar of what I propose to call the Futurch [...]', and how he will 'dispense with the queer utopians at once...' (ibid: 821). 'Neither liberal inclusionism, with its ultimate faith in rational comprehension, nor the redemptive hope of producing brave new social collectivities can escape the insistence of the antisocial in social organization' (ibid: 822), so it is through antagonism, rather than despite it, that it is possible to maintain a healthy relationship with desire; when a viewer signals an absence of this antagonism, as with the queer porn that corresponds with Butler's work, it is missing one of the key ingredients of desubjectivation. By putting 'the puppet of humanism through its passion play once again', 'queer theorists who operate from a more utopian position lead us,

in a hymn to the Futurch even while dressed in heretical drag. Delightfully drugged by the harmony, the freedom from harm...they induce us all to nod along, persuaded that we, like their puppet, on which most humanities teaching depends, shall also eventually overcome, for knowledge, understanding, and progress must, in the fullness of time, set us free. (ibid: 822)

This subset of queer theorists are focussed on a rejection of the social, of normativity, of conformity, of the safe spaces of collectivity, of institutions such as gay marriage and the acceptance that comes with an array of heteronormative caveats that must first be adhered to - 'matrimony, adoption, the right to serve in the military, and all the juridical support that would guarantee the comforts of a bourgeois homosexual life' (Bernini, 2017: 4). The whole point of anti-social queer theory, for Edelman, Jack Halberstam, and Leo Bersani, is to resist being drawn into this very antithesis of queer thought. 'Approaching the humanities without any need to preserve the subject of humanism...Dare we trace, then, the untraversable path that leads to no good and has no other end than an end to the good as such?' (Munoz, E. Dean, T. Edelman, L & Halberstam, J, 2005: 822). An end, that is, to the arbitrary values that Nietzsche so abhorred. In the following passage Edelman neatly sums up his position:

Queers must respond to the violent force of such constant provocations not only by insisting on our equal right to the social order's prerogatives, not only by avowing our capacity to promote that order's coherence and integrity, but also by saying explicitly what Law and the Pope and the whole of the Symbolic order for which they stand hear anyway in each and every expression or manifestation of queer sexuality: Fuck the social order and the Child in whose name we're collectively terrorized; fuck Annie; fuck the waif from Les Mis; fuck the poor, innocent kid on the Net; fuck Laws with both capital Is and with small; fuck the whole network of Symbolic relations and the future that serves as its prop. (ibid: 823)

The unifying element in Edelman's work is the death drive, though where this leads is wholly dependent on a very specific understanding of what form this 'death' takes. It is one thing to

suggest it is complete biological annihilation in the Freudian sense, but something else entirely to suggest, as LaPlanche does, that it is the death of the ego or a ‘temporary undoing of the self’s unity’. It ‘is not the death of the organism, but the death of this “organism” which, in human existence, represents the interests of the biological organism, that is to say, *the ego*’ (LaPlanche, 1999: 14). This death of the ego is the death of the results of socialisation; the death of procreation, the end of the delayed gratification of putting on hold present (pleasurable) gains for future security - and is, according to Freud, ‘the greatest impediment’ to civilisation (Freud, 1987: 313). Not for Edelman, however, whose anti-social stance embraces and celebrates the death drive and its ensuing *jouissance*, for it gives perversion its ‘most precious worth - the negative worth of unproductivity, of abjection and asociality’ (Bernini, 2017: 11). For Lacan, at least according to Slavoj Žižek, ‘[t]o desire means to give way on the drive’ (Žižek, 2008: 21), so if the death drive is in reference to the death of the ego, to desubjectivation, then it is exactly here that this purest form of desire can be situated. Reaching beyond this in an attempt to grasp the dissolution of the self - in object-form this is Lacan’s unreachable ‘Thing’ - is to shake oneself free from accustomed ways of being, and it is here, before this act becomes just another accustomed way of being, that seems to be where a genuine form of desubjectivising empowerment can be found. As Mari Ruti writes:

When we, to borrow Lacan’s well-known phrase, raise a mundane object to “the dignity of the Thing”, we...deem the object in question irreplaceable. To the extent that we are able to do this, that we are able to insist on the truth of our desire, we might be said to have inherited some of Antigone’s insubordination. And to the extent that we are able to hold our ground in the face of the culture industry—to the extent that we are able to resist being seduced by sparkly decoys—we are kept from becoming a mere cog in the commercial machine. (Ruti, 2017: 90)

For Edelman, false sovereignty, or ‘non sovereignty’, ‘keeps us, as subjects, from fully knowing or being in control of ourselves and that prompts our misrecognition of our own motives and desires’ (Edelman & Berlant, 2014: viii). It is this non sovereignty that must be disturbed, by way of an ‘intensified encounter with what disorganizes accustomed ways of being’ (ibid).

Becoming ‘undone’, then, is one of Edelman’s priorities, and it is often surprising just how many of these theorists - Edelman, Bataille, Foucault, Sade, Lacan - are each working, regardless of the term they use, towards some form of desubjectivation. But it is also surprising, as was argued in the previous section, just how far away from this form of queer theory a lot of queer porn is situated.

When those cultural impositions that determine formations of identity, and that makes subjectivised desire feel as though it is natural, are stripped away, what is left is the universality of the Real, the void of potentiality that must always act against subjectivised frameworks of desire, regardless of how ethically sound they are, or appear to be. As Lynne Huffer writes in *Mad for Foucault*: ‘Thus the promise lies in forms of self-transformation we might imagine not as expansions of the self but as self-unravelings. That unraveling opens a space for the invention of new desubjectivations we cannot now imagine’ (Huffer, 2010: 119).

‘Sex, and the Unbearable’, written by Edelman and Lauren Berlant (2014) in the form of a six- essay dialogue, might be understood as an update on Edelman’s position, but in some ways it is little more than a rearticulation. Berlant states that they both see sex as based on a recognition of ‘the subject’s constitution by and attachment to varieties of being undone’ (ibid: 6). But whereas Berlant wants to encourage a subject who is not uncomfortable with this undoing, by ‘making possible a relation to the world not shadowed by threat or the defensive dramatization of differences as existential dangers’ (ibid: 64), Edelman cannot envision a world in which the ‘dedramatized’ (or undone, or desubjectivised, or empowered) individual is not ‘separated from threat or from the dramatics of undoing’ (ibid: 65). When the drama becomes ordinary, that is, when it loses its

desubjectivising force and becomes a site of knowledge and normativity, it also loses its potential to empower or emancipate the subject. It presupposes a knowledge of our ‘unknowable primal attachments’ (ibid), which is another way of defining that purer form of desire that is, for Lacan, fundamental for the ethical ‘act’ to take place. This is because a knowledge of this attachment would also mean ‘a capacity to include it in our calculations’ (Ruti, 2017: 136), ie, to engage with it and construct it from within the very thing, the superego, that we are trying to liberate ourselves from.

Unlike Butler’s more strategic attempts at queering subjectivation, those viewers who wander around Pornhub and realise they have found exactly what they did not realise they were reaching out for, this Lacanian ‘Thing’ or non-object, are expressing a form of queerness regardless of their intentions. This is the reason why desubjectivation is an example of the queerness that emerges from the unconscious, and it is also the reason why this form of desubjectivation is closer to the ‘primary queerness’ than the queerness that constitutes a political project for both Edelman and Berlant, regardless of their different intentions; if the intervention of this thesis partly constitutes an attempt at queering these comments, it is according to this approach to queerness that it must do so. This is because the form of desubjectivation that appears to be occurring in the engagements with porn at the centre of this thesis draws them away from their subjectivised self, regardless of their willingness to do this, while Edelman and Berlant’s point is that people can be wilfully encouraged to embrace this shift by a queer subjectivation. The queerness that is connected to desubjectivation might be referred to as ‘primary queerness’, in reference to Lacan’s ‘primary desire’. Queerness in this way becomes an unconscious resistance to normativity, and this manifestation of queer desire does not care about the identity of the viewer and how the viewer has been educated to desire - but the moment this form of desubjectivation becomes tangible, the moment it becomes a definable, intentional, signifiable act, it immediately stops being a source of desubjectivation, and is no longer a ‘primary’ queerness, but an intentional queerness. When

Edelman asserts that ‘queerness makes nothing happen’ (Edelman, 2017: 125), he is saying that it is the symbolic order that imposes itself and constructs the self. This ‘nothing’ that he writes of is the nothing that is at the centre of the Lacanian Real, in opposition to the everything else of the symbolic order.

Regarding the difference between queer porn and the porn that initiates ‘primary queerness’, one example of porn that initiates ‘primary queerness’ might be ‘HORRORPORN - Wild Beast’ (Horrorporncom, 2019), which has received over 37 million views. In this clip a woman covered in mud and with the appearance of a zombie, gnashes and growls from inside a rudimentary cage. The person holding the camera takes her a bag of raw meat and they proceed to have sex. The comments beneath this clip express many of the traces that signal that some level of desubjectivation has taken place. One viewer writes ‘I think I must be crazy considering this shit turns me on and makes me want me to fuck a zombie cunt’ (ibid), while another, in what appears to be a reference to a ‘dissolution of the self’, writes, ‘Who have I become?’ (ibid). A third viewer writes ‘I’m literally popping my weirdest boner right now and I’m not sure how to feel bout it...’ (ibid) and of the 566 comments below this clip, over half seem to bear similarities to these comments and seven viewers write the common meme ‘Not my proudest fap’ (ibid). Yet these types of comments, as argued in the previous chapter, are not confined to the subversions of ‘horror porn’, but across many genres that are not attached to an identitarian community.

Another genre of pornography that corresponds with this position is that of ‘gooning’. This is a form of extreme JOI pornography that is mostly non-explicit, and usually includes a voice over in which a performer insults the viewer, slowly repeats single phrases such as ‘pump...pump...pump’ for many minutes at a time, or ‘follow me you dumb little gooner bitch...forget about time, just pump’. In ‘Shred Your Gooner Brain’ (Angel Au Lait, 2021), a clothed woman gyrates in front of the camera while slow industrial noise music plays. The clip has been manipulated with many effects which colour the screen in flat pinks and greens, while shapes move backwards and

forwards and phrases such as 'stop thinking' and 'pump, pump, pump' appear momentarily and repetitively across the screen. The comments underneath this particular clip are consistent in the way they each express surprise at the pleasure that is being experienced. One viewer writes, 'This video is absolutely fucking amazing! I have never felt so numb yet so horny ever before!' (ibid). Another writes, 'Everything else up to this point has been a game' (ibid). One viewer offers more detail of their experience: 'I never thought I would join a cult, but you have made me melt my mind and it leaked right out of my cock, just like you said. Now i feel the urge to always go back to this video and loop it over and over again, edging myself brainless. Now I feel at home my Goddess. Thank You' (ibid). In another clip by the same performer, titled 'Goongasm' (2021), one viewer compares how they feel to a number of other types of non-pornographic, and potentially desubjectivising experiences,

honestly it's probably the closest thing I've had to a spiritual type of otherworldly experience. I've never had this same exact feeling during sexual encounters, religious experiences, or indulging in mind altering substances. I've felt surreal or a little trippy in other times in life, but not like this. (ibid)

The viewers who make these comments, whether it is with regard to 'horror porn', audio-only 'joi' (jerk-off instructions), or 'gooning', often seem to be surprised at their own arousal and the resulting pleasures, which signals an instance of the unintentionality and the possibility of the 'radical exposure' that are important elements of desubjectivation in its most radical and meaningful form.

JOAO FLORENCIO'S 'PIGSEX' AS AN EMANCIPATORY PRACTICE

One contemporary theoretical manifestation of queer theory that appears closer to the concept of Edelman's form of desubjectivation, however, is João Florêncio's *Bareback Porn, Porous Masculinities, Queer Futures: The Ethics of Becoming Pig* (Florêncio, 2020). The concept of 'Pigsex' that Florêncio examines is an extreme disposition that the subject embodies in the way they engage with the world of gay sex,

"Pigs" do not so much come together based on their appearance but, rather, on their sexual preferences and the intensity with which they live their sexual lives and pursuit of sexual pleasures. Whether defining themselves through the more general "pig" or the more specific "piss pig", "fist pig", "cum pig", "scat pig", etc., "pigginess" to them always involves sexual excess and a relentless violation or transgression of the boundaries of the body proper and of its integrity... (ibid: 9)

One performer interviewed in Florêncio's book describes enjoying 'pigsex' as being a 'hungry bottom, cum-loving, pig-ass, hole-dripping ... fucking cum-loving bottom. Love it in the ass, love it knowing that I'm getting my fucking ass fucking bred by a fucking macho fucking guy that wants it teared up' (ibid: 2). If anti-social queer theory is encouraging an 'undoing' or a 'self-annihilation' that comes about through a rejection of normativity, acceptability, reproduction and the subjectivised self, then there seems to be a close connection between these two things. One element of reconfiguration that does take place in Florêncio's work is the way in which he illustrates the affirmation of 'pigsex' as beautiful, life-affirming, and evidence of an emancipatory alterity. The following passage is one of a number of quotes to be found in Florêncio's detailing the sudden appreciation of these practices: 'Instead of seeing the decline of humanity... what I unearthed was

the notion of sharing, of letting go, of indulging into the most beautiful enjoyment with, and of, another' (ibid: 66). This sudden appreciation, the immediacy of the realisation, have elements that connect it to desubjectivation as detailed in the previous chapter. That is, desubjectivation is fleeting and exists very much in the moment, for soon after it has happened two things follow closely behind that reduce its desubjectivising potential: the more practices such as 'pigsex' are experienced by the subject, the more normative they become; and the longer they exist in their fixed state, the sooner they will become reabsorbed by the various subjectivising elements - those laws, rules and normativities - that serve to homogenise the subject in the process of subjectivation. But Florêncio's project is also particularly normative; he is positioning the static, coherent object of pigsex as a fixed expression of ideological emancipation. In this way it seems worth reiterating that it is impossible to imagine desubjectivation without first applying Nietzsche's assertion that change is a good in and of itself - change for the sake of change, or Foucault's assertion that the desubjectivised individual must 'move onto something else'. Change is always a necessary component for the freedoms that come with desubjectivation to unfold, for if anything remains still it is always vulnerable to resubjectivation by the very normative forces that are being opposed. It should also be added that perhaps Florêncio is seeing such practices through rose tinted spectacles. In Leo Bersani's influential 1987 essay 'Is the Rectum a Grave', he warns against a lack of realism when considering such practices:

I do not, for example, find it helpful to suggest, as Dennis Altman has suggested, that gay baths created "a sort of Whitmanesque democracy, a desire to know and trust other men in a type of brotherhood far removed from the male bondage of rank, hierarchy, and competition that characterise much of the outside world." Anyone who has ever spent one night in a gay bathhouse knows that it is (or was) one of the most ruthlessly ranked,

hierarchized, and competitive environments imaginable. (Bersani, 1987: 206)

Further to this, although Florêncio's book appears to take an anti-social approach, it is a lot more utopian than Edelman's antisocial position, and this book seems like further evidence of the present state of queer theory, which is a consolidation of the most influential positions that defined and divided queer theory in the mid 2000s. But even Florêncio's 'pigsex' contains traces of the ways in which the symbolic order reabsorbs even the most subversive forms of desire into a quantifiable and marketable community. As Florêncio makes clear, 'discourses of community have been central to the survival of capitalism' (2020: 138). Whether it's a £685.99 Tremblr Fuck Machine, a £24.49 tub of Fisting Butter, or a £127.37 app controlled Bluetooth Edge Prostrate Massager (No Author, 2020), as soon as the central object of the activity becomes fixed and the community finds its collective identity, as it has done with pigsex, the desirable commodities soon pour forth. As can be seen in many of the comments beneath pornographies that embody 'pigsex', this is a stable, online pornographic community that contains little reference to the instances of desubjectivation that are more apparent in the pornographies of the previous chapter. In the clip 'PIGBOYRUBEN: BEST OF 2020' (Pigboy, 2022), which has over six million views, and in which an orgy takes place between men that results in an anal prolapse, the comments express little more than arousal and appreciation. One viewer writes that 'Pigboyruben is a dirty slutty fuck cum piss whore and I love it. Fuck the cum out of me Pigboy. Fuck your cum deep in my hole' (ibid). Another writes, 'Love the teen with the great prolapse,' while another emphasises the correspondence to Florêncio's work: 'I love you and your inclusivity pigboyyy, so nasty and perfect' (ibid). Another 'pigsex' clip, titled 'Breaking into Extreme' (Barebear34, 2019), contains many other comments that express similar forms of engagement: 'That stretch must feel beyond all pleasures. For us who love to be stretched wide, we know how good this guy must feel' (ibid). The shock, surprise and

anxiety that is associated with the ‘dissolution of the self’ and that signals desubjectivation, is absent in how people express themselves with regard to this form of porn, but what is noticeable is that there does seem to be a number of attempts to reach out for ‘desubjectivation’, such as when one viewer writes that,

your first reaction is to tell them to do as they please and that disrespect, no, and stop, are all words you don’t understand or like using. If they want to stretch your slut hole and cause you to prolapse by forcing two arms inside you, then you doing anything besides asking for three arms inside you is not only rude, it spits in the face of nature. (ibid)

But what prevents this form of desubjectivation from taking place is an identitarian familiarity and intentionality with regard to the materials, while those who appear to be experiencing desubjectivation cannot be described in this way. By detailing those forms of often explicit pornographic engagement, this chapter brings further complexity and nuance to the concept of ‘desubjectivation’ at the centre of this thesis. This acts as a critical response to the assumption that desubjectivation is determined by differing levels of intensities of content; as the previous chapter illustrated, some listeners of ‘Thot Flirts With You and Sucks Your Cock (PART 1)’ (SugarWaifu, 2020), a clip that is non-visually explicit because it is an audio-only clip, appear to be experiencing a form of desubjectivation that is absent in the highly explicit materials that constitute ‘pigsex’, and which are possibly unreachable regardless of the explicit nature of the materials connected to Florêncio’s position.

THE UNEXPECTED ANTI-SOCIALITY OF MUNOZ'S QUEER UTOPIANISM

Queer futurist Jose Esteban Munoz argues in favour of the world-making capacities of various cultural phenomena, which are laying the groundwork for a 'vision of queerness as the futurity of the "not yet here"' (Twomey, 2020: 3). His book *Cruising Utopia* (Munoz, 2009) attempts to steer queer theory away from anti-social and anti-relational positions by emphasising the queer potentialities of the 'cross-pollination' that takes place between particular artworks, events, cultural forms, and collective political action, and finds much evidence of 'the impulse towards collective futurity crystallized in an isolated aesthetic gesture' (Daniel, 2010: 326), however irreverent the connections may often seem.

It is the grasping for the now absent Lacanian 'Thing', the non-object that serves as the engine for this continuous reaching out, that for Munoz also serves as a justification for his position as a utopian futurist. This is a disruption of temporal progression resituating something from the past into something of the future. As Terry Eagleton writes of the unconscious, it is 'a place and a non-place, which is completely indifferent to reality, which knows no logic or negation or causality or contradiction, wholly given over as it is to the instinctual play of the drives and the search for pleasure' (Eagleton, 1983: 136). In this way, the unconscious is more than willing to accept this atemporal convenience. As an example, when we look at our reflections in Andy Warhol's *Silver Clouds*, reflected back at us is our own future self, 'Seeing oneself in the luminous and moving surface of the pillow is to see oneself in a different life, a different world' (Munoz, 2009: 137). It is 'an interruption in the mandates to labor, toil, and sacrifice that the performance principle prescribes' (ibid).

This is the strength of Munoz's position, in his illustration of the unexpected instances of queerness. For Munoz, queerness has a rhizomatic dynamism in the way it can be shown to have appeared regardless of the culture that surrounds it, just as the mass viewing of desubjectivising

pornographies have appeared regardless of the mainstream normativities that are always available and always imposed by all manner of market strategy and expertise (See Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). Munoz's work suggests an unquenchable and impossible thirst for the real, as though this reaching out is always just beneath the surface of the symbolic order in the form of a potentiality. The difference between his work and the claims of this thesis, though, can be found in the examples he excavates from the past. For the most part he uses examples of individuals who, if they were still alive, would no doubt self-define as anti-socially queer, engaging more with their transgressive jouissance than with a utopian project of futurity. They concern photo series of men's toilets of early 90s New York, the punks, the Beats, Andy Warhol, and the Latino gay clubs of LA. They are all avant-garde, and productively so. Whether they knew it or not, they were producing queer, which excludes them from being defined as possessing true anti-social alterity.

Queer porn from studios such as Pink and White, for example, seems to be instilled with the claim that it has identified the source of desubjectivation, then written it, produced it, and made it available for convenient consumption. It may have identified the 'nothing' of the Real, but it has clearly turned it into 'something'. But unfortunately for these producers, at least according to Munoz, queer is only ever something that can be reached *for*, but never reached:

Queerness is always on the horizon. Indeed, for queerness to have any value whatsoever, it must be considered visible only on the horizon...it is a call to think about our lives and times differently, to look beyond the narrow version of the here and now on which so many around us who are bent on the normative count... I offer this book as a resource for the political imagination...These pages have described aesthetic and political practices that need to be seen as necessary modes of stepping out of this place and time to something full, vaster, more sensual, and brighter. (Munoz, 2009: 137)

Yet there do seem to be a number of important overlaps between anti-social and futurist understandings of queerness. Many of the individuals cited by Munoz, for example, display clear evidence of antisocial, queer behaviour. Leigh Bowery was a flamboyant, polysexual transgressive whose club nights were known for their utter defiance of sexual convention (ibid: 76). William Burroughs was a queer heroin addict who shot his wife during a game of William Tell and adopted the cut-up technique in his writing in order to escape any influence that hegemonic power might have on his unconscious mind. Valerie Solanas shot Andy Warhol and founded The Society for Cutting Up Men (ibid: 157). And Lou Reed, apart from being the lead singer of The Velvet Underground, was also a gay prostitute with a penchant for the queens and transsexuals of 1960s New York, and who would often inject heroin on stage (ibid: 152). These are some of the figures that for Munoz represent an optimistic future. If this level of queer resistance and subversion can emerge from the cultural oppression of the 60s, 70s and 80s, then there is hope for a queer future and a queer world. But there also seems little doubt that figures such as these are exactly what Edelman and Bersani would approve of. They are in no way striving for what Duggan (2002) refers to as 'homonormativity', and they bear little resemblance to those who inhabit Edelman's 'futurch'; that is, they don't want to marry, they don't want to procreate, and they have no intention of adhering to the normative confines of neoliberal Western society. They are the 'active representatives of the death drive' that Edelman is calling out for, 'the ruthless bards of inhumanity, prophets of the end of civilisation' (Bernini, 2021: 139). In this way the utopian future that Munoz is referring to is very different to the one that Edelman is using as his critique of futurist queer theory. It is not our future or a future of procreation, of everyone having the equal right to participate in a normative, neoliberal world, but a future of individuals who embody antisociality, embrace their present and reject their own futurch. The remaining difference between Munoz's position and Edelman's position is still a significant one, and this is the way in which antisocial

theorists insist on renouncing politics, which is in itself a political act, in contrast to Munoz's assertion that queerness is not a 'singular abstraction that can be subtracted and isolated from the social matrix' (Ruti, 2017: 94).

Lee Edelman's model of anti-sociality foregrounds the Lacanian concept of the *sinthome*, which can be understood as the desubjectivised trauma that emerges from the Lacanian real during the process of psychoanalysis. It is a 'kernel of enjoyment immune to the efficacy of the symbolic' (Evans, 1995: 191), and is similar to those expressions of confusion or anxiety that can be seen in desubjectivising porn viewing and 'radical exposure'. Edelman refers to the individual who embraces the 'sinthome' as the 'sinthomosexual' (Edelman, 2017: 124). But perhaps Edelman's mistake was to designate what is still a category of identitarian sexuality into his model. The 'homo' in *sinthomosexual* attaches the idea to a group of individuals who are always susceptible to the manipulations of the symbolic order, and this confines these individuals to identity groups similar to those who engage in 'pigsex' in Florêncio's model of desire. With this information regarding the individual's sexual preference, and with enough time to act accordingly, the symbolic order will always serve to strengthen some attributes, render others unacceptable, find and uncover new attributes that it can then define, reconfigure and homogenise, no matter how desubjectivising or subversive they appear to be, as argued in the preceding section on 'pigsex'. In this way it is difficult to disconnect this identitarian element of Edelman's theory from the more subjectivising forms of desire that can be found in other queer theorists. In contrast, the element of Munoz's work that does correspond with this thesis is in the way he illustrates the always-already there of queer manifestations of desire. By tracing these manifestations across many works of performance, art and music, each emerging from a highly stringent regime of subjectivation, Munoz does effectively illustrate that given the correct conditions, queer desire will always find a way to express itself. This corresponds with the work of this thesis in the way that it illustrates the ways in which many individuals with normative frameworks of desire will often unintentionally become

aroused by non-normative pornographic materials, and although they often express confusion, shock or disgust when such a process takes place, this seems like a similar manifestation of queerness as occurs in the examples Munoz uses. It is the utopian elements of Munoz's theory that do not correspond so coherently with the position of this thesis. A utopia is a fixed object and a theoretically visible aim, but because desubjectivation in the form described in this thesis operates in a way that evades capture by the symbolic order, it can neither be fixed nor visible, and must remain within the unknowable potentiality of the Lacanian real.

GAGA FEMINISM, MOVING ONTO SOMETHING ELSE, AND WISDOM IN THE UNEXPECTED

Another influential queer theorist from this era of queer debate might be understood as a bridge between many of these positions. Considered more closely aligned with the antisocial position, in 2009 Jack Halberstam published 'The Queer Art of Failure' (2011), a work that constitutes a queer critique of Western understandings of success.

Under certain circumstances failing, losing, forgetting, unmaking, undoing, unbecoming, not knowing may in fact offer more creative, more cooperative, more surprising ways of being in the world. Failing is something queers do and have always done exceptionally well; for queers failure can be a style, to cite Quentin Crisp, or a way of life, to cite Foucault, and it can stand in contrast to the grim scenarios of success that depend upon "trying and trying again" (Halberstam, 2011: 3).

The artists cited above and connected to Munoz's work each began in failure and rejection, and each rejected the types of success that Halberstam is referring to. What makes Halberstam's work particularly interesting are the examples she uses from popular culture to illustrate the further and broader emergence of queerness in mainstream society. She seems particularly fond of using children's animation as a way to do this, uncovering the queer success of the losers and rejects in such animations as *SpongeBob Squarepants*, *Finding Nemo*, *Fantastic Mr Fox* and *Chicken Run*. Interestingly, this may even suggest another form of, perhaps ironic, reconciliation between Edelman and Munoz, because it suggests that antisocial queerness is being embedded into the children's understandings of the world, thus configuring what would have to be described as antisocial futurity. Perhaps, in fact, it is Nietzsche's assertion (forwarded by Huffer) that we are 'pregnant with a future' that might act as a model of this reconciliation. If the future is understood in the same way as desire might be understood, as a space of unpredictable potentiality, as indeterminable undoings rather than an expansion of norms, then surely it would be a futurch which Edelman would happily attend.

Halberstam's 2012 book *Gaga Feminism: Sex, Gender and the End of Normal* (2012), might also be seen as an update on her earlier work, though this is less a rearticulation and more a continuation. In fact, it is almost as though those children who were queered by the animated movies of *The Queer Art of Failure* (2011), have now grown into the Gaga feminists of this later text. Positioning Lady Gaga at the very centre of a mass-queering, a global explosion of queer identity, Halberstam identifies some basic principles of this new form of queer feminism: wisdom lies in the unexpected; transformation is inevitable, but can only be found on the periphery; what is intuitive for one generation is an obstacle for the next, so always think counterintuitively; be outrageous, impolite, abrupt, abrasive and bold. That Halberstam makes no mention of Nietzsche is a little surprising as it seems deeply indebted to much of his work; it also corresponds very closely to my own reading of Nietzsche in the previous chapter. But what this book does do is make clear

that there is an enormous mass of very disparate identities, each connected by this very specific, and I would argue very Nietzschean form of queer identity. When Halberstam writes that ‘wisdom lies in the unexpected’ (2012: 60), this seems to correspond very closely with the willingness that people have to fully engage with the desire they feel following an instance of ‘radical exposure’.

So far this chapter has considered a number of different approaches to queer theory, and it has attempted to find the corresponding form of pornography for each of these. When the connection between the porn and the theory is a coherent one, such as with Florêncio’s ‘pigsex’, or the expressions of Butlerian desire that can be found on queer porn websites such as Pink and White Productions and Lust Cinema, this will often lead to a commodification of the materials; popularity will result in a broadening of markets, regardless of the queerness of the materials themselves. But the theory that appears closest to the form of ‘desubjectivation’ that is central to this thesis is Halberstam’s, especially in *Gaga Feminism* (2012), because this work is focussed more on indeterminable becomings rather than a fixed understanding of being. By emphasising the importance of transformation, and of the unexpected, Halberstam is making clear that it is the process that is important rather than the object that awaits following this process. The types of pornography that appear to result in the desubjectivation at the centre of this thesis are often very disparate, such as animated computer game porn, audio only JOI porn, or horror porn, so it is less about what the materials contain and more about to what extent they draw out non-identitarian instances of desire. The reason *Gaga Feminism* is useful in helping us to understand what desubjectivising pornographies draw out, is because it foregrounds the inevitability of transformation, the value of engaging with the unexpected, and to always act counterintuitively.

GUCCI, PRECIADO, AND THE PROBLEM OF RESUBJECTIVATION

Contemporary queer theorist Lorenzo Bernini, in *Queer Apocalypses and Queer Theory: From Mario Mieli to the Antisocial Turn* (2017), attempts ‘to save the sexual from the oblivion reserved for it by a certain Foucauldian mainstream queer theory and to limit the risks of anti-politics and solipsism contained in antisocial queer theory’ (ibid: xxxi). This attempt emerges from a common critique of Edelman’s work - that it is essentialist in that it assumes a white, Western, homosexual male as its subject. Bernini, in emphasising the urgent necessity of political action in Italy, does provide a compelling argument for this reconfiguration of Edelman’s work. He also draws attention to Edelman’s over-reliance on the death drive and jouissance. Edelman, argues Bernini, seems to assume that these two concepts have ‘the theoretical foundations of a science, the drive of an undeniable truth about the human, of his antipolitical reality’ (ibid: 178). This seems like a convincing argument, primarily because Edelman’s work often seems dogmatic, always seeming to suggest that it offers a form of unequivocal truth that queer theory is normally used to deconstruct and disrupt. There is little reaching out for jouissance in Edelman, but an argument that seems to position it as an object that can be reached, obtained, owned and used again and again by the antisocial queer subject. However, as the previous chapter argued, when this form of desirable object is static and unchanging, it is almost always absorbed by those very elements of society that queer theory is trying to initiate our escape from.

Another contemporary queer theorist is Paul B. Preciado, transgender activist and author of *Testo Junkie* (2013) and *The Countersexual Manifesto* (2018). Preciado privileges many of the things that Florêncio privileges. He foregrounds rubber prostheses, dildos, gender indefinability, and, particularly, the anus, referred to by him as ‘an anti-system orifice’ (ibid: 111). Looking again, however, at the ways in which the transgressive, the liberatory, the queer are reabsorbed by those subjectivising elements of mass culture, one of the most recent appearances of Preciado was in a promotional film for Gucci, that has so far attracted almost 3 million views on Youtube (Gucci, 2021). A gender fluid model wakes up in a Rome apartment, watches a speech by Preciado, who

breaks the fourth wall and addresses the model directly. The model takes notes and then throws their dress from the balcony into the streets below:

But you know what I'm talking about Silvia? You know what this revolution is going to be about...This revolution is going to be about love, about changing desires...transforming desires...We are living a process that I call waking the monsters...of reversal of that logic of oppression...the monsters are taking the floor. I think the contemporary artist or philosopher is simply the monster who starts to talk and simply says no to modern patriarchal and colonial logic. (ibid)

Although this level of visibility and normalisation is no doubt a good thing for the trans community - this may even be evidence of Munoz's queer futurists beginning to broaden out and bear fruit - it seems unlikely Edelman would agree with the way that anti-normativity is entering the high fashion industry. When an identity is embraced this fully by one of the most influential and prominent fashion houses in the world, there is very little chance of any level of desubjectivation taking place, the sense of community is apparent, and the death drive is very much absent. Gucci's work with Preciado suggests that it is as much a reaching *away* from the symbolic order as it is reaching *for* desubjectivation, otherwise the symbolic order will, in this case, find a way to employ you to act out your desubjectivation as part of a marketing campaign. Genuine desubjectivation, at this point, seems further and further away from the symbolic order, operating here as a marketing campaign from within the fashion industry.

DESUBJECTIVATION AND INITIATION INTO AGAMBEN'S 'COMING COMMUNITY'

One philosopher whose work provides an interesting supplement to the connection between desubjectivising porn viewing and the Lacanian Real, and one which does allow for a model of political change to emerge from this connection, is Giorgio Agamben. In *The Coming Community* (1990), Agamben writes of the ‘whatever being’, individuals who are connected by an ‘inessential commonality’ (ibid: 25). This is a connection between individuals that is not determined by some element of their identity, as with queer porn, or by some element of their framework of inclination or preference, but by the *inessential* kernel of the being and where it leads them; by a form of yet-to-be realised radical potentiality. They are connected by something that is designified, unsignifiable, and impossible to categorise, and by an empty space rather than the object that fills the empty space. This allows for the potentiality of a ‘solidarity that in no way concerns an essence’ (ibid), and a truly individualised network of singularities defined by ‘ontological ambivalence’ (ibid: 203) which are, ‘beyond any distinction between being and beings, propriety or impropriety, [and who are] at the threshold of a new figure of humanity’ (ibid: 203). Pornography, then, if the viewing of which is defined not by the symbolic order but by this inessential commonality, becomes the unknowing midwife ‘of this new figure of humanity’ (ibid), and it is here that it may signal some connection to political change, though, as already mentioned, attempting to harness this potentiality from within the symbolic order is a difficult, maybe impossible, task.

Also at play here is Agamben’s distinction between the sacred and the profane, and he makes direct reference to pornography in a number of his writings about this distinction. For Agamben, to make something sacred is to remove it from the human world and deliver it over to divine law; to turn it into something that must not be talked about or gazed upon, designating it as ‘untouchable, accursed or contaminated’ (ibid: 171), and until the gradual emergence of pornography expanded across the Western world it was under this very jurisdiction that sex had been placed. Pornography, according to Agamben, served to ‘defile, desacralise’ the sacred object of

sex, giving it back ‘to profane use’ (ibid: 163). It is this process of expropriation that Agamben wants to ‘see generalised in politics, economy and society in order to bring about the community of whatever singularities’ (ibid: 67). This allows the individual to be more able to live ‘an absolutely profane “sufficient life” that has reached the perfection of its own power and its own communicability – a life over which sovereignty and right no longer have any hold’ (Agamben, 2000: 114). As Catherine Mills writes, however, ‘one of the immediate difficulties with the notion of happy life is that Agamben himself provides no real explanation of what he means by this idea’ (Murray & White, 2011: 88). This is understandable, but one of the reasons Agamben focusses on porn in a number of his engagements with this notion of the happy life, is because to him there is a form of democratisation taking place in the nakedness of the performers. When the clothes are removed, so are the classed identities. So when Agamben states the following: ‘the transformation of the species into a principle of identity and classification is the original sin of our culture, its most implacable apparatus. Something is personalized – is referred to as an identity – at the cost of sacrificing its specialness’ (Agamben, 2007: 59), it becomes easier to see what he is referring to. Queer porn, or the queer porn that has been referred to in this chapter, is at some distance from the anti-identitarian outlook of Agamben’s position, just as it is from the core of Edelman’s anti-social queerness. It invites a form of collectivised identification, an invitation to a group, a caring community.

The happy life, then, resides in our ability to allow our ‘specialness’ to emerge - a specialness that is disconnected from the process of homogenisation and essentialism that defines the individual through their identity. But it is the individual’s inessential commonality, their ‘whatever singularity’ that should be the primary means by which the individual comes to understand themselves. Considering Agamben’s argument from the perspective of this chapter, then, it is not through the democratisation of nakedness by which the inessential commonality of the whatever singularity can be realised, but through the utterly unique potentiality of the Real.

Agamben may be correct in saying that sex itself has been profaned or desacralised, but as the trauma of desubjectivation that occurs in some forms of porn viewing has made clear, the individual's Real remains an 'untouchable, accursed or contaminated' place, so it is this place that must be made profane. But because the Real is defined by its designified emptiness, it would have to manifest simply as a willingness to engage one's desire with the new and the unfamiliar for it to correspond with Agamben's vision of a new world.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

This chapter has argued that it is only with the pornographies that correspond with a specific configuration of anti-social queer theory that instances of desubjectivation take place, and that most 'queer porn' is limited by its attachments to identity and the symbolic order. Although Lee Edelman's radical anti-sociality provides a useful model of desire, according to which all forms of identitarian desire must be discarded, and the 'subjective dissolution' of 'jouissance' and the Lacanian 'act' can then be most effectively engaged with, this also appears to be an approach that also contains a form of intentionality that does not correspond with the type of desubjectivation that is central to this thesis. This is because at the centre of Edelman's theoretical position is a radical and wilful intentionality, that is not accessible to the normative identities that are being disrupted as a result of desubjectivation.

It is with Jack Halberstam's form of anti-social queer theory that these types of anti-normative engagements most closely correspond. The reason for this is because Halberstam, in his book *Gaga Feminism*, emphasises the importance of embracing the unexpected, thinking and acting counter-intuitively, and always being open to the outrageous. Beyond foregrounding these three things as a means to becoming, Halberstam does not fix any type of desirous engagement as an

answer to the issues connected with subjectivation. As this chapter has also argued, desubjectivation often leads to a form of resubjectivation, which leaves the individual vulnerable to becoming once again subjectivised into the symbolic order, so, unlike the other queer theorists discussed in this chapter - Butler, Edelman, Florêncio, Munoz - Halberstam provides the reasons why a type of desirous engagement will allow the individual to elude further subjectivation, without providing any kind of a fixed object with which the individual can enter into this process.

Finally, this chapter has supplemented this analytic with Giorgio Agamben's notion of the 'whatever singularity'. In 1991 Agamben predicted that a 'coming community' would emerge that is connected not by any identity marker, such as gender, sexuality or class, but by what he refers to as an 'inessential commonality', a commonality that is defined by what this chapter has argued is the part of the self that exists beyond subjectivation, beyond identity, and beyond the symbolic order. In summary, by queering these comments from the perspective of desubjectivation, the intervention of this thesis can be understood as the argument that these individuals who are experiencing desubjectivation can be understood as an example of this 'coming community'.

CHAPTER FIVE: POST TRUTH, AMATEUR PORN AND THE THIRD SLOPE OF REPRESENTATION

This chapter will examine the connections between pornography and post-truth narratives. It will argue that the search for and viewing of porn that attempts to represent some form of reality bears a number of similarities to the consumption of post truth narratives - namely, that the search for any type of authentic reality in pornography and the search for truth in various media platforms, is driven not by an empirically grounded examination of the materials at hand, but by the ‘pleasure-potential’ of the material. That is, those viewers who painstakingly search out traces of reality in porn are very similar to those who turn to post truth media narratives. This will be drawn from the idea that at the centre of post truth is a form of truth, an assumption *of* truth, just as at the centre of the viewing of amateur porn is the assumption of reality and authenticity. Much of the desubjectivising pornography that is central to this study, in contrast, signals a complete abandonment of reality and authenticity, the most obvious case being that of animated pornographies, which in no way constitute an attempt at presenting the ‘authentic’ sexual acts that are sought after with such rigour by viewers of amateur porn.

Given the central place of reality, realism and representation in this chapter, each a highly contested term in theoretical debates, as well as highly unstable concepts in any theoretical engagement with pornography, a few definitions with regard to how they will be used is necessary. Reality can be understood as being derived from the common sense understanding that it is something that ‘exists prior to, and outside signification’ (Chandler & Munday, 2020: 1528). In agreement with Jean Baudrillard, this thesis accepts that anything that is mediated by a screen cannot be anything other than a representation. When this chapter refers to ‘reality’, it is in reference to the interpretation of the viewer, or the level of authenticity of the representation. In this

way, reality and realism are qualities of experience that are to be searched for, rather than things that exist ‘outside signification’. ‘Realism’, then, is a form of representational signification that ‘purports to represent without transformation’ (ibid), which masks the processes involved in production, and whose aim is to draw the viewer into assuming they are ‘true to life’. The level of ‘realism’ in a clip is determined by whether or not a specific viewer believes it to be a presentation *of* reality, rather than representation-as-reality. ‘Representation’ in this chapter is in reference to the various processes that constitute an attempt to reflect or reproduce a pre-existing reality. Highly contested and unstable with regard to the interpretation of the viewer, representation in pornography can be understood as a framework of ‘conventions of form, style and content’ (ibid: 1573), which, in the case of much of the porn in this chapter, are constructed in a way that intends for them to be ‘perceived as realistic...as if they were recordings or direct reproductions of reality rather than representations in the form of codes’ (ibid).

Using an analytic model of post truth provided by Ignas Kalpokas (2019), this chapter will argue that the shift from the ‘Information Age’ to the ‘Experience Age’, so important regarding any understanding of post truth, can also be used to understand the changing patterns of consumption that have taken place in the porn industry. When faced with such a mass of information, just as viewers of porn are when they visit one of the main free porn sites, it is imperative that the viewer devises some form of strategy based on how much pleasure they can obtain from a particular truth claim, clip or genre. Just as adherents of post truth narratives turn to the news source that corresponds with their own desire of what they want to be true, so too do viewers of porn turn to the clip that corresponds with their desire of what they want to be real.

There are three primary claims within the post truth discourse that can be used to understand amateur porn consumption. The first is the erasure of the true/false distinction (ibid), observable in so much amateur porn, such as the performer Public Agent, whose channel claims ‘Absolutely no censorship and certainly no fiction. These are real Czech streets! Czech girls are ready to do

absolutely anything for money. Unlike other sites with similar themes, where the action is scripted and fake, this is the real thing. Authentic amateurs on the street!’ (Public Agent, 2014) The second claim is that post truth provides ‘satisfaction through confirmation of audience wishes, desires, stereotypes,’ (Kalpokas, 2019: 40) and the porn star Mia Khalifa, who became an overnight sensation when a clip she was in in which she wore a hijab initiated a political storm, is emblematic of this process. The third claim regarding post truth, that people ‘need *an* order, and the actual content of it becomes a secondary consideration’ (The Economist, 2016) seems to reflect the way in which certain clips that seem to contain a genuine representation of reality attract millions of views, regardless of how explicit the clip actually is. Often celebrated as the holy grail of porn in the comments sections, these are the clips that offer footage of couples in a situation of domestic realism, where the pleasure of consumption comes not from the sexual content itself, which is often lacking in explicit sexual activity, but from the surroundings, the conversations, and from those small traces of authenticity such as an argument, laughter or an accident that unfolds during the clip.

Maurice Blanchot’s (1995) theory of the two slopes of literature (1995) will be offered as a model of reality that fits relatively well with this situation. This is the idea that in any form of representation, signification will always lead to generalisation, and generalisation suggests that a form of symbolic death has taken place. To generalise something is to strip it of that which makes it real. This is the first slope of literature. The second slope of literature signals an attempt to reach beyond this first slope, to reach ‘beyond the flower and to the flower itself’ (Critchley, 2004: 62). This chapter will argue that a third slope has emerged, which viewers find themselves on if they misidentify the first slope as the second slope, which I will argue is happening on a massive scale in both amateur porn and post truth consumption.

Blanchot does, however, offer some form of a solution to this in his writing about surrealism (Blanchot, 1995). If the subject can find a way through the processes of signification that determine

their thoughts - and the example he uses is automatic writing - then the results will allow for a liberation from this symbolic imposition. The similarities between this and so many of the other theoretical approaches of this thesis are clear: Bataille's sovereignty, Edelman's sinthomosexuality, the Lacanian act, desubjectivation, are all attempts to overcome the same issue and to reach the same destination, and it is in the accidental stumbling across a self-shattering pornographic experience, that was initially a prurient click, where these approaches find their pornographic equivalent.

The final part of this chapter will serve as a response to the claim that the consumption of post truth narratives is a phenomenon that has been aided by postmodern theory. It will argue that although postmodernism may have predicted such engagements, this does not mean it has caused them. By uncovering the operations of simulacra, Baudrillard's work provides a warning about post truth rather than a tool that facilitates it. The same analytic can be applied to amateur porn consumption. By abandoning the search for any true reality, and allowing themselves to be convinced by anything that maximises pleasure, the behaviour of the amateur porn viewer can also be understood as being predicted by Baudrillard in this way. It also allows for a suggestion that perhaps the consumption of amateur porn may serve as a way to better understand the emergence of post truth consumption.

POST TRUTH AND THE ESCAPIST ROMANTIC FANTASY OF AMATEUR PORN

In his book *A Political Theory of Post Truth*, Ignas Kalpokas (2019) argues that we are in the midst of a transition from the 'Information Age' to the 'Experience Age'. The 'Information Age' is defined by access to 'unprecedented amounts of information' (ibid: 33); it is an overload of information, a quite sudden explosion of informational resources. From the limitations of the video

shop to the near bottomless pit of Netflix, Amazon Prime and the hundreds of channels now available on any home television or computer screen. A trip to the library is now a couple of clicks away in the form of Wikipedia or a visit to any of the illegal download sites that proliferate on the web; carefully chosen CDs or LPs have been replaced by Spotify and the hundreds of thousands of music videos on Youtube. Pornography has similarly shifted into what is now an overabundance of choice. What used to be a pile of magazines under a bed or a video cassette on top of the cupboard has now been replaced by millions of clips covering every possible sexual preference. Emerging from this unprecedented amount of information came the problem of having to decide which product to consume, and it is this trauma and the literal impossibility of being able to consume everything on offer that has initiated the 'Experience Age'.

The 'Experience Age', then, is 'an attempt at dealing with (this quantity of information) through the employment of an affective criterion: the experience of - and pleasure in - encountering and potentially consuming a particular piece of information' (ibid). That is, when the subject is faced with such an amount and variety of information, how do they choose which forms to consume? How do they recalibrate this barely finite resource of information, whether it is news based, entertainment based, or pornography based? The answer, according to Kalpokas, is that they recalibrate this framework of information according to their own desire or lack, or, to return to Lacan, their own symbolic order (ibid: 128). Everyone, he writes, 'has not only to maximise their pleasure of consumption but also to feel that they have a stake in and are integral to (or, even better, are stars in) that process of collective consumption and ensuing satisfaction' (ibid: 62). The connection to the consumption of post truth narratives is clear, especially when Kalpokas' definition of post truth as an 'escapist romantic fantasy' (Kalpokas, 2018: 1) is considered. This is the escape from the cold truths and inconveniences of Enlightenment-based empirical rationality. Just as romanticism was in part an individualistic and emotional reaction to the Industrial Revolution, post truth is a similar reaction to the disconnection of the post-traditional social world (See Giddens:

1994). People, then, expecting and desiring more than passive exposure, now search for affective connection and something that ‘makes the story stick’ (Kalpokas, 2019: 34). They expect to be able to engage with the product, influence the product, and determine the viability of the product. Regarding the concept of truth, they are not looking for *the* truth as promulgated by ‘the establishment’ or even the Enlightenment, but a form of truth that corresponds with their search for pleasure.

One of the key criteria regarding post truth is not if a truth claim is objectively true, but whether the subject would like it to be true. If it ‘feels like it should be true (or, rather, if one would feel good if it was true), then it simply has to be true, relation to verifiable facts being immaterial’ (ibid: 19). Pleasure is critical to this process, whereby the viewer chooses their own interpretation based on the possibility of pleasure that might be found. Truth claims, then, are judged according to their ability to allow the viewer to access this pleasure, and pleasure and truth thus become one and the same thing. ‘Fullness is unachievable, it is only a retrospective illusion that is substituted by partial objects embodying that impossible totality’, and for this reason,

in order to overcome—or at least hide—the deficit of existence, subjects will affectively invest a surplus of meaning in something that has come to represent the sought-after fullness, ultimately splitting the object of investment ‘between the particularity which still is and the more universal signification of which it is a bearer’. (Laclau 2006: 281)

If an individual’s present state is an unpleasant one, the easiest way of achieving change is by denying that which is perceived to be the cause of the unpleasantness. Regarding post truth this is a denial of the connection between fact and political discourse, a denial that allows a retreat into a

more pleasant fantasy. Regarding much amateur porn, as will be argued, this is a denial of the disconnect between reality and representation.

Kalpokas uses Spinoza's notion of 'conatus' (2000) as a model to understand these processes, but it seems that many of the theoretical positions so far described in this study might just as effectively be used. Considering again Foucault's notion of desubjectivation, porn viewers in search of an authentic representation of sex are clearly attempting to reach beyond their own subjectivation and towards what they perceive to be a truer form of reality or an escape from the imposition of the symbolic order/imaginary. They have identified a part of their own symbolic order as oppressive - in this case that part as determined by some configuration of positivism, the establishment, verifiable facts, expertise - and are now trying to desubjectivise themselves away from it. The difference of course - and what makes the search for authenticity problematic - is that it is their symbolic order in its most oppressive, clandestine manifestation that is driving this psearch for authenticity in the first place. What feels to this type of viewer like a form of Bataillan sovereignty, or a connection to their 'primary desire', is nothing more than the illusory product of the symbolic order at its most manipulative.

As the remaining sections of this chapter will argue, there seems to be an interesting connection between the consumption of amateur porn and the consumption of post truth narratives. Amateur porn consumption can be described as the mass consumption of a form of truth or reality that would be easily verifiable with the minimum of effort, which is (with a few notable exceptions) clearly nothing more than a performance, yet which attracts viewers due to the desirability of its truth *potential*. Writing of post truth, in the following passage Kalpokas might well have been referring to amateur porn,

even if their claims are simply too outrageous to make sense, they will still be taken up, if not verbatim, then at least for what they represent. Hence, it is

possible to claim that an assertion becomes true because we want it to be true. The adage that something is too good to be true does not apply—post-truth narratives are too good *not* to be true. (Kalpokas, 2019: 24)

But of course the porn industry must constantly nurture and maintain the facade of authenticity, which in many ways is a process that has undergone a form of constant revolution. As amateur porn is revealed to be nothing more than a poor representation of reality, the porn industry must find different ways to give the viewer an excuse to believe. One example of this is the recent emergence of ‘verified’ amateur porn. This sub-genre of amateur porn purports to offer proof of the amateur nature of the performers. This began as the sudden influx of clips which open with a scene in which the performer would face the camera and offer proof that they were not in fact a professional porn actor, with details of their job, with evidence that they had never performed in a porn clip before, or with a quick biography of their lives. But, as is explored below, these professional porn performers were soon revealed as such, and the search for the Real continued.

THE ALTERNATIVE REALITY OF ON-STREET PICKUPS

Of the many definitions of post truth that emerge from Kalpokas’ book, the one that connects it most closely to amateur porn is when he describes it as ‘a narrative that had been specifically constructed to maximise the pleasure of consumption by creating an alternative reality tailored to the audience’s needs (or, rather, desires)...’ (Ibid: 89). One highly popular sub-genre of amateur pornography is that of on-street pick-ups (these clips regularly attract tens of millions of viewers). The concept is that the male performer walks the streets until he finds a woman, then, usually impersonating a scout from a modelling agency, he eventually persuades her to have sex

with him for money. This might be carried out in a car, a hotel room, an alley way or on some derelict ground. One such performer is Public Agent (2014), a Czech man who has made over 900 movies, attracted one and a half billion viewers, and who appears to wander around East European cities with a camera, approaching strangers, offering them modelling jobs, and slowly persuading them to have sex with him for money. Until a couple of years ago the struggle for reality would unfold in the comments beneath each clip. Some viewers make a variety of claims regarding the authenticity of the clip, grasping out for what they hope is evidence of an authentic act: ‘He, he... She's a real hooker who is also very lucky! He thinks he fucked her but instead this Russian chick fooled stupid guy... Btw, she's an actress, just pretends to be a stranger and appears on these videos as well’ (2014a); ‘This slut doesn't have any money, she still had the tag on her shirt. No wonder she sells her ass for random fucking. I like her’ (Nude in France, 2015). Other viewers express confusion regarding the reality of the clip or disappointment that they have discovered that it is staged: ‘look! I hate learning the fact that these are fake scenes. It's amazing that someone always knows these porn actresses names’ (Czech Streets, 2016); ‘Is she the porn star Vicky Love? So, is all this false?’ (Public Agent, 2015); ‘Is this real or fake and if it real why she has a pornstar name ??’ (ibid).

There are also many viewers who seem to take delight in revealing that it is staged, usually by identifying the women in the films as porn stars: ‘Is real. She's not a pornstar’ (ibid). ‘What if I told you.... Its all fake and arranged in advance...?’ (Public Agent, 2022). ‘So you just met someone and fucked without a condom. 10/10 fake. You're a phony’ (ibid); ‘sure he found a well dressed girl like that in Divoka Sarka in the Middle of Czech Republic, if anyone of you just know how Czech People dress like homeless people you would notice that this is all a set up all fake’ (Public Agent, 2015a) ‘you're dumb af. It's scripted she was paid to act as a stranger’ (ibid, 2014a). Other viewers insist that although they know it is staged, they remain unconcerned by this, willing to maintain the pretense: ‘everyone knows it but nobody care she's just super hot’ (Public Agent, 2015); ‘I don't

care if this is faked or not, his convincing is as amazing as her panties. I didn't bust a nut, I am just impressed by everything. The only sad part is that they are doing this in a bar bathroom' (Czech Streets, 2015).

What is particularly interesting about these types of engagement with this sub-genre of pornography is that a general pattern seems to have unfolded over the last seven years. When Public Agent released his first clips seven years ago, many of the comments sought to assert the reality of the clip. A few years later, as these performers were recognised and revealed, the comments expressed disappointment and acceptance. Now the comments seem to take one of two connected directions. They are either simple requests for the name of the performer or they are short reviews regarding how well the clip is staged, that is, how authentic the performers, directors, producers have managed to make it *seem*.

Fake Taxi is a series of British porn films that adopt a similar strategy to Public Agent, in which a London taxi driver picks up random customers and manipulates the conversation towards sex. In 'Mature Blonde Mom has the Ride of her Life' (Fake Taxi, 2014), a comment from 2015 expresses a wish to travel from the US to London in order to find a similar woman on the streets: 'Guess I'll have to jump the pond & drop in on the merry ole' island. These mature women are the best, not presumptuous, just seem to wish for a rowdy good time w/no worries & nary a condom in sight...guess those things mean less in other countries...mmmmm' (ibid). Now, however, such comments are completely absent from any of these fake agent clips. Regarding *Mature Blonde Mom* the more recent comments constitute a form of assessment regarding the authenticity of the clip: 'One of the best fake taxis. Felt far more real' (ibid).

Writing of post truth, Kalpokas describes how

any fulfilment and pleasure achieved is never enough, does not go all the way towards eliminating the deficit (instead, the deficit is only temporarily covered):

any satisfaction achieved is not the full satisfaction that had been expected. A clear implication is, of course, that the desire for pleasure must constantly be placed and replaced on ever new objects, bodies, artefacts, or symbolic articulations that, in the end, are going to disappoint. (Kalpokas, 2019: 108)

Truth for adherents of post truth is approached in the same way that reality is for viewers of amateur porn. What connects them is that both types of viewers are reaching out for an impossible fantasy, the source of which must be renewed and maintained. The primary difference between these two forms of consumption, however, is that the pleasure and desire at stake in the consumption of pornography is not so easy to placate as the pleasure at stake in the consumption of post truth narratives. In both cases a ‘strong affective investment in expectation of a great - but ultimately impossible - return’ (ibid) is made. If this return is insufficient regarding the viewers’ desires, the search continues.

For viewers of amateur porn, however, there seems recently to have been a collapse of authenticity in the amateur porn industry. When seven years ago many viewers were convinced by these genres of porn, now it feels as though most of the producers have given up even attempting to feign authenticity. In 2019 Public Agent dropped the pretense of authenticity completely and began to include the names of the porn stars in the titles of his clips (Public Agent, 2021). Although the same stories play out in the same ways, and the same claims regarding authenticity are made on his homepage, now it is impossible to avoid the fact that it is a performance. One look at the Pornhub page entitled ‘Most Viewed Verified Amateurs’ (Pornhub, 2021) serves as evidence of this: ‘Threesome with MILF Stepmom Fucked Them Both Hard’ (ibid); ‘How to Have Fun with Your Redhead Stepsister’ (ibid); ‘Stepdad needed to work but I made him cum 4 times’ (ibid); ‘Mind-blowing Threesome on a Post Lockdown Vacation with Step Mom’ (ibid). Clearly intended to offer yet another layer of reality, ‘verified amateur’ is a sub genre of amateur porn that seems to have

emerged when amateur porn became saturated with the aforementioned reveals - but now these signifiers of the inauthentic that the viewer is now so familiar with soon began to saturate what is intended to represent the closest the viewer will get to true reality: stepmom, stepsis, hubby at work, Cougar XXXMom, teacher, lost cat, step sister stuck in a washing machine. Similarly to post truth, people seem more and more to be engaging with the act of ‘knowing that something one engages in is not real but perceiving it to be good enough to be partaken in as if it was real... a composite assemblage of content, form, and technological features that communicate and negotiate a multileveled relationship to this “real”...’ (Kalpokas, 2019: 129).

This may have happened due to what Kalpokas, in reference to post truth, refers to as the Lombard Effect:

while trying to communicate in a noisy environment, one tends to raise their voice to speak over the noise but then, since everybody does that, the noise level just keeps on rising, forcing one to speak even more loudly and so on...in the presence of competing voices, one tends to embellish their pitch to make it more appealing but then everybody starts doing the same, so something even more exciting and appealing is necessary, producing a vicious circle of gratification. (ibid: 22)

This manifests as a form of ‘confirmation bias’, in which the subject develops an ‘inclination to “look for and accept information” which supports [their] current beliefs’ (ibid: 17). By substituting the word ‘desire’ for ‘beliefs’, it becomes easier to see how a new pattern of consumption has emerged in these interconnected worlds. These viewers are predictable, unquenchable, unrelentingly willing to believe that which gives them pleasure. As Laclau writes: ‘The most relevant point for our subject is that fullness—the Freudian Thing—is unachievable; it is only a retrospective illusion that is substituted by partial objects embodying that impossible totality’

(2006: 651). Shifting to Lacan, he continues: ‘sublimation consists in elevating an object to the dignity of the Thing. As I have tried to show, the hegemonic relation reproduces all these structural moments; a certain particularity assumes the representation of an always receding universality’ (ibid). In Lacan’s words, ‘the function of the pleasure principle is, in effect, to lead the subject from signifier to signifier, by generating as many signifiers as are required to maintain at as low a level as possible the tension that regulates the whole functioning of the psychic apparatus’ (1992: 119). ‘Das Ding’ is ‘the prehistoric, unforgettable Other’, while the pleasure principle becomes ‘the law which maintains the subject at a certain distance from the Thing... making the subject circle round it without ever attaining it’ (Evans, 1996: 207). That is, the ‘truth’ in post truth and the ‘reality’ in amateur porn present themselves to the viewer as the jouissance at the centre of the Lacanian real, and it is this misrepresentation and misidentification that drives both forms of consumption. But as the earlier chapters of this study have hopefully illustrated, any semblance of conscious intentionality regarding viewer choice will always prevent access to jouissance and the Real; this is due to the subjectivising coherence of the symbolic order and the way it will determine the identity of the subject based on not what the subject’s ‘primary desire’ requires, but on some configuration of history, culture, customs and traditions, which in this case manifests as an unstable, illusory yet desirable representation of reality.

THE ‘HOLY GRAIL’ OF AMATEUR PORNOGRAPHY

As this form of unquenchable consumption unfolds, and as these viewers dupe their structures of desire into accepting these unconvincing narratives of sexual reality, sometimes what seems like a trace of genuine reality will appear within, or around, a clip. When this happens, and

when viewers feel as though they have found Das Ding, that is, when they feel they have grasped this jouissance, it seems almost as if a celebration takes place, as in the following example.

In ‘First threesome EVER for hubby and milf wants GiFuckingnormous cock’ (TemperSayShuss, 2020)⁴, a man and wife sit on a mattress in an unkempt room with another woman. The conversation, which is, along with many other topics, primarily a friendly negotiation regarding the terms of the threesome, continues for the entire fifty minutes of the clip. Although the sound is of low quality, the other topics include a roadshow, truckers, friends of theirs, the size of the man’s penis and how to relax enough in order to ‘take’ it.

INVITEE: I’m not sure what y’all want.

WIFE: I’m all about everybody enjoying themselves. I’m naked and sitting on his face, whadda you think?

INVITEE: Well okay...I...I...I didn’t know what y’all had discussed and agreed to.

WIFE: Like he said, he said he thought me and you’d make a pretty good team. It’s not like [whispers]...I won’t even let her get near him. Know what I mean?

INVITEE: Mmmhmm.

There also seems to be an unrelated argument unfolding between the married couple. Although sex takes place, there is no footage of actual penetration, the oral sex is obstructed by the participants, and other than the man’s penis and the naked breasts of the women, the explicitness of the clip is in no way comparable to much other porn. The participants also seem to be in their 40s and their body shapes are non-normative in relation to much mainstream pornography. After performing oral sex on the man for some time, the woman who was invited into the threesome

⁴ This clip has since been removed from Pornhub, and although the comments are now lost, an alternative link to the clip can be found here: Anonymous. (2021). *First Threesome EVER for Hubby and MILF wants GiFuckingnormous Cock*. [Online]. Porn Maison. Available at: <https://www.porn.maison/10445/first-threesome-ever-for-hubby-and-milf-wants-gifuckingnormous-cock/> [Accessed 16 July 2024].

attempts to sit on the man and after five minutes seems unable to continue due to the man's size. Then his wife demonstrates how to do this and after another five minutes, the invitee dresses and leaves, while the couple continue their argument, which is mostly muffled due to the sound quality. The camera is situated in the top corner of the room, and it is unclear whether the invitee is aware of it.

Although the term 'real' clearly has many difficult and unstable connotations, this clip seems very much like a genuine form of amateur porn, as far as such definitions are possible. There is little doubt it is unscripted, at least one participant seems genuinely unaware of the camera, the couple behave and converse as they might do without the camera present, there is no attempt whatsoever to bring the sexual activity fully 'onscene' (Williams, 1999). Other than illegal acts of voyeurism, which is a genre in itself, this clip seems as close as any other to a snapshot of reality. The patterns of engagement that can be found in the comments beneath this clip would also attest to this. It has attracted almost two million views in less than a year and beneath the clip there are 40 comments, none of which are attempts to attract viewers to other clips, which constitutes a large proportion of comments per million views.⁵ Most fascinating, however, are the contents of the comments, which for the most part constitute an expression of appreciation regarding the reality of the clip: 'Very hot and sexy. Commentary should stay in,,,,it lends to the authenticity. Sexy action with two hot women. Thanks for uploading it.' 'All the commentary is great its what makes this video so real.' 'So a little ectra commentary BUT this is what i been searching for GENUINE REAL footage has room for improvement. but keep it real.' 'real life - very likeable all of that!' Other comments focus on the traces of reality that are external to the sex itself: 'Someone needs to clean their room!' 'She picked her nose then put her fingers in her mouth. Lost it there.' To which one commentator responds with 'what time?' One comment seems to sum up much of this:

⁵ More mainstream clips, for example, might attract over 1000 comments but only a small amount, between 5-10 are anything other than 'clickbait'.

I'm tryin to figure out what they're talkin about - a show that has retarded looking guy with huge 3'wide dick and..truckers(?) roadshow(?) Did i hear any of that right? And at the end where your talking low not wanting to be heard - I want to know what thats all about! Its like clip of a complicated soap opera set in a very specific place and specific group of people but I missed the "Previously On..."

Also interesting in this last comment is the suggestion that it is similar to a soap opera, which serves as an example of a further collapse between reality and representation. That this viewer would use the soap opera, a classical example of a representation *of* reality, as a way to describe something whose strength seems clearly to be that it is evidence of a reality *beyond* the representation, seems like the ultimate expression of hyper reality (Baudrillard, 2004). That is, this viewer wants to observe reality, true reality, *as* representation.

The sheer excitement as evidenced in the comments section does suggest that for these viewers, they have found what might be termed the holy grail of amateur porn: an authentic sexual act that is absent of any form of performance. These viewers wish to be a fly on the wall, a witness to the act, and here they have found the closest thing to this form of voyeurism available onscreen. Considering this clip against much of the more mainstream that viewers are so familiar with, the differences are significant. The participants are unglamorous, there is no visual evidence of penetration, no orgasms, half of the conversation is muffled; viewers of this clip have, at least during these few minutes, abandoned the all-too-easy search for verifiably authentic sexual acts - penetration, erections, fluids, orgasms - and are instead attracted to a barely audible argument between a couple who are attempting, mostly unsuccessfully, to have a threesome.

As Renato Stella writes in 'The Amateur Roots of Gonzo Pornography' (2016), amateur porn relies on the use of 'webcams, mobile phones, tablets, and so on, which enable low-definition

recordings in a great variety of situations, with no need for film sets, props, or troupes' (ibid: 351). Although amateur porn is unscripted, often it will provide a preliminary story or interview, as with Public Agent, which adds a narrative of representation-as-reality. Stella also discusses the way in which these types of clips often 'become "authentic" in a manner unknown to "traditional" pornography' by demonstrating that those involved are non-professional (ibid: 356). But she also makes reference to the ways in which the market has 'drained the strength and significance' (ibid: 359) that earlier incarnations of amateur porn had for many viewers. This gradual conversion of amateur into representation-as-reality, she writes, has become 'increasingly evident in industrial production, which "mimics" them and makes them available on most generalist porn sites' (ibid), and this 'contamination' is apparent in both the often quite clear absence of authenticity in Public Agent, but also in the ways in which many, many viewers appear to be searching for the more authentic forms of representation that are now extremely rare, as exemplified in the comments beneath 'First Threesome Ever'.

There are many of clips that at least claim to be amateur, and the patterns of consumption that are in play allow further observations to be made regarding this group of viewers. What people seem to be searching for is a form of realism that is beyond the genital or penetrative realism that can be found in any unconvincingly acted clip; they are looking to be a fly on the wall rather than the consumer of a cheap soap opera.

POLITICAL REALITY AS A SUPPLEMENT TO THE REPRESENTATION

Ex-porn star Mia Khalifa's clips attract viewers that often number in their millions. Her clip entitled 'Behind The Scenes FAIL! This Is Why I Don't Shoot Anal Scenes Haha' (Khalifa, 2019) has so far gained over one hundred million views. In this short clip, which purports to provide the

reason why Khalifa cannot perform scenes containing anal sex, a stage hand attempts to insert lube covered butt plugs into her anus while she chats and giggles with her male co-star. Whether or not this is authentic, that is, whether or not Khalifa happens to be filmed while she is genuinely working with a stage hand to loosen her anus for an anal sex scene, it seems, even to someone who has scoured many hundreds of clips for traces of authenticity, to be genuine enough. This seems to be further evidence of the search for the real, for the reaching out beyond the representation. While many millions clearly enjoy Khalifa as a performer, this tiny explosion of the real has attracted five or six times more viewers than her usual clips. In another clip, 'Mia Khalifa is cumming for dinner', a bloopers reel has emerged, revealing the various outtakes that occurred during the filming of the clip. This also contains a short 'talking head' style box in the corner of the screen in which Mia Khalifa provides a commentary of the production. At the end, when the boyfriend ejaculates into the mother's face after she pushes Khalifa out of the way, Khalifa informs the viewer that this was not planned, and that 'I was supposed to get the cum shot!' To which one viewer below the clip has commented that 'Wow didn't know that other chick pushed Mia and took the cumshot when it was meant to be Mia's. That honestly makes the scene way hotter now lol' (Khalifa: 2019a). But it was a different form of reality that caused Khalifa's very sudden rise to porn megastardom.

Khalifa, a Lebanese-American performer, starred in her first porn scene in 2014. Also in 'Mia Khalifa is cumming for dinner' (BangBros, 2014) a young woman in a hijab is eating lunch with her boyfriend, then she looks under the table and finds her mother, also in a hijab, performing oral sex on him. After a brief argument they decide to have sex with the boyfriend together. A few days after the release of the clip Khalifa was publicly disowned by her parents, faced public condemnation from a number of Arab religious figures, received death threats (Saul, 2015), and found herself at the centre of a large number of newspaper reports in both the US and the Arab world. Shortly after this took place, she had risen to be the most searched for porn star in the world, and although she quit porn after less than six months, she remained in the top two for the next three

years. Now Khalifa has fully left porn and works as a public media personality, providing advice about fitness, food, politics and sports.

What seems clear here, unlike ‘First threesome EVER for hubby and Behind The Scenes FAIL!’, it was not the reality of the clips themselves that drove Khalifa’s sudden rise to stardom, but the reality of the political situation that surrounded it. This was an individual whose predicament corresponded very closely with many people’s understanding of the Arab world, of Islam, of what was understood by many as a sexually oppressive regime reified across dozens of middle eastern countries, regardless of the fact that she was a Catholic, Lebanese-American. Unlike amateur scenes, in which the popularity seems to depend on some trace of the real, whether it is a blooper, a hidden camera or a struggle with a stage hand, Mia Khalifa’s popularity was driven by its own reinforcement of viewers’ orientalist assumptions (Said, 2003). Just as it was the domestic realism that attracted so many viewers to ‘First threesome EVER for hubby’, it was the political realism of the Arab world’s response to Khalifa, so familiar to so many viewers in the US, and the realism of her parent’s response, that attracted so many viewers to her clips. Although these clips would never with any seriousness be categorised as amateur, their popularity can be understood as being driven by the same patterns of consumption; there is a form of reality attached to these clips and they serve the same purpose as any other trace of reality that might be found in porn. If what had attracted them was the hijab - the producers had clearly intended to add to the already massive genre of hijab porn - then they would have fallen into the trap of what Jean Baudrillard refers to, in reference to his second stage of representation, as a ‘perversion of reality’ (2004: 6), i.e., the use of various signifiers, in this case a brown-skinned woman of south Asian appearance and a hijab, is not intended to convince the viewer of any form of authenticity, but rather to provide them with a distorted version of their own understanding of reality, just as post truth offers the viewer an acknowledgement of the truth of their own escapist romantic fantasy.

Khalifa's career in the porn industry lasted less than six months, but following her retirement she became an online media presence, a celebrity. That the clips she performed in do not correspond with any form of amateur porn does not matter to the viewer, because the realism that they seem to rely on is external to the porn itself, and resides in the socio-political and domestic reality that followed her first clip and the fact that she became a knowable personality after her retirement, a real person as much as any other mainstream online celebrity is understood as a real person. At a sudden distance from the porn industry, the reality of Mia Khalifa embodied a whole new level of realism, previously only to be found in the few celebrity sex tapes that exist, such as those of Pamela Anderson, Paris Hilton or Kim Kardashian (whose sex tape is by far the most viewed clip in the history of Pornhub). As Kalpokas writes, 'the more nodal points for interaction with the environment a particular thing has, the more reality and, therefore, existence belongs to it' (2019: 68).

Writing of the 18th and 19th centuries, Foucault describes the lengths that authors such as Voltaire and Lawrence Sterne would go to in order to attach some semblance of authenticity to their work, making claims such as,

what I am about to relate, or what I have just related, is not the product of my imagination; I merely transcribed something that was previously written down or previously reported in a manuscript I found, or in letters that were given to me, or during a private conversation that I happened upon or overheard. I'm not the one who is speaking, but another and it's that other person who appears in the book. Consequently, what I am telling you is as true as the very existence of that person. (Foucault, 2015: 98)

Such strategies seem to resemble a very early embodiment of Baudrillard's third stage of simulacra, in which the object masks the absence of reality. But Khalifa's popularity does not correspond with this stage of simulacra. Her popularity transcends this stage and corresponds with a more complex form of reality. This is because it was the global media, external to the producers themselves, that served to corroborate the reality of Khalifa's predicament. Rather than the reality of her performance, dependent on the various strategies of the Porn industry, just as with Foucault's 18th and 19th century writers, it was the reality of her political situation that provided the impetus for this popularity.

Khalifa's popularity corresponds with Baudrillard's fourth and most advanced form of simulacra, whereby the object 'has no relation to any reality whatsoever; it is its own pure simulacrum.' This is because unlike the search for reality itself, as defined by 'First threesome EVER', the media is accepted as the highest form of reality, and reality and the simulation are recognised as one and the same thing. Unlike most porn, in which the viewer has to find a way to believe a badly acted orgasm or an unconvincing story, in this case all they had to believe was the global media itself. Just like Baudrillard's claim that the Gulf War did not take place (1995) - because other than a relatively small number of people it was only partially witnessed through the hyper reality of mass media - this is exactly how people witnessed the predicament that Khalifa found herself in following her first porn scene. The media event that Khalifa found herself embroiled in might have turned the clip into the best the amateur porn viewer can hope for in their search for reality.

To conclude this section, each of these three examples have a direct connection to the consumption of post truth narratives. Public Agent can be seen as representative of the 'erasure of the truth/falsehood distinction' (Kalpokas, 2019a: 20) that resides at the very core of the post truth phenomenon. That the believability of Public Agent has waned in the last five years, yet the

popularity has decreased only a little, suggests that the viewer is ‘prioritising affective identification with truth-claims over more conventional reasoned decision-making processes’ (ibid).

For Mia Khalifa, her own popularity is driven by the pre-existing understandings of the millions of viewers in question. Post truth provides ‘satisfaction through confirmation of audience wishes, desires, stereotypes, etc.’ (ibid: 19) which acts as a guide through the ‘complexities of everyday lives in the information-saturated communication environment,’ (ibid) also serving as a way for the consumer to move from the ‘Information Age’ to the ‘Experience Age’. This pattern of consumption is also the one that seems to be at the centre of Khalifa’s popularity, and it is a pattern that signals a ‘withdrawal into default beliefs and opinions, often those of the group to which one belongs’ (ibid: 25).

In contrast, many viewers of the desubjectivising pornographies at the centre of this thesis, seem to operate in a significantly different way. One of the key signifiers of Hentai porn, for example, is ‘ahegao’, whereby during orgasm the female character sticks her tongue out and her eyes roll into the back of her head, often displaying a cross-eyed expression (The Purple Bitch, 2019)⁶. But when non-animated actors attempt ahegao many viewers express frustration, dissatisfaction, and a complete lack of conviction in what they are attempting to do: ‘looks good on anime girls, looks like retarded bitches on rl’ (ibid); ‘It’s so strange... ahegao looks so mentally retarded... literally, cross eyes + drooling. But why is my dik hard? Why would evolution make me wanna bang a window licker? Haha 😄😜’ (ibid); ‘looks good on anime girls, looks like retarded bitches on rl’ (ibid); ‘EWWW WHY THEY LOOK LIKE THAT?????’ (ibid); ‘stuff must stay on anime’ (ibid).

⁶ This clip was removed following Kristoff’s 2020 article ‘The Children of Pornhub’. And alternative link can be found here: Gauntlet77. (2022). *ULTIMATE AHEGAO HENTI COSPLAY GIRL COMPILATION UNCENSORED*. [Online]. Spankbang.com. Available at: <https://spankbang.com/4utnp/video/ultimate+ahegao+henti+cosplay+girl+compilation+uncensored> [Accessed 18 July 2024].

Regarding 'First threesome EVER', previously referred to as 'the holy grail of porn', viewers clearly feel they have found reality, and that they have moved beyond signification and into the purest form of fly-on-the-wall consumption. But of course, as with the other two examples, this is impossible, at least according to Baudrillard. Anything that is dependent on mediatisation and that is mediated by a screen, will always take the form of a simulacra, and will always pull the viewer onto what the next section will argue can be termed Blanchot's third slope of literature. But as this thesis has hopefully made clear, and as the next chapter will further elucidate, the only genuine real is the Real that lies on the third point of Lacan's Borromean Knot, and which sits in de-signified opposition to the symbolic order and the imaginary. Porn may serve as the ingredient which allows the viewer to access this space, but the porn itself can never fully take this form. Porn can be the means, but never the end.

MAURICE BLANCHOT AND THE THREE SLOPES OF REPRESENTATION

In his essay 'Literature and the Right to Death' (1995), Maurice Blanchot writes that there are two slopes of literature. The first slope of literature describes the death that takes place during the process of writing. No signifier, he suggests, can ever live up to the depth and complexity of the signified. Writing, for Blanchot, is the negation of the real. When the real is signified by the word, the word reduces the real to a generalization. It strips it of that which makes it unique. This would be so regardless of how many words are used to describe it. As Critchley explains, '...language is murder, that is, the act of naming things, of substituting a name for a sensation, gives things to us, but in a form that deprives those things of their being. Human speech is thus the annihilation of things *qua* things...' (1997: 62). A conversation between two people, then, is no more than a series

of generalizations, whereby object after object is wrenched from its reality and used to build what Blanchot (1995) calls 'the unreal whole'.

Blanchot's second slope, however, pushes against this:

[L]iterature no longer wants to say 'a flower', but desires a flower as a thing prior to the fatal act of naming...Literature here becomes concerned with the presence of things before consciousness and the writer exist; it seeks to retrieve the reality and anonymity of existence prior to the...death drive of the writer. (1995: 64)

When the object is removed from its actual reality, from the infinite permutations of its singular reality in that space and at that moment in time, it is generalised on the page, or in this case on the screen. Although the generalisation is necessary for any sort of communication to take place, it is still a generalisation, and should be approached as such. This difference between the uniqueness of the actual moment and its generalizing rendition via language, is where the death, according to Blanchot, takes place. The second slope of literature describes those moments when the tension between these two things is acknowledged. To gain access to the second slope is to gain access to reality in its purest form.

To move beyond literature and to the various signifiers that exist across online pornographies, Blanchot's model of reality is a useful one. The vast majority of all pornographies reside, of course, on the first slope. Each scene or clip becomes a complex series of signifiers, each in its own way serving as a generalisation for the act or object that it is signifying. Porn consumption is, then, a ride down this first slope. This is not, however, enough for the consumer, as the massive popularity of amateur porn attests. Amateur porn is an attempt to provide the viewer with the means to reach the second slope, to reach beyond the word 'flower' and to the flower itself. As can be seen in the many thousands of comments that constitute a discussion of the reality of the various clips, it is this

second slope that seems to contain for many viewers the holy grail of pornography. The muffled and naturalistic conversation of 'First threesome EVER' might be understood as representative of this second slope. The political furore surrounding Khalifa's first porn scene is also emblematic of this second slope. But these examples are very rare and much sought after. As outlined, many clips are exposed as 'fake-amateur' when the performer is identified as a porn star. Even verified amateur performers, a relatively recent phenomenon, now often fall into the same category. When a stranger is picked up by a 'fake taxi' on the street and then filmed having sex with the driver, or attends a 'fake' audition, these 'strangers' are invariably recognised as professionals and exposed in the comments sections of the clips. What does seem abundantly clear, however, is that amateur porn, by some distance the most popular genre of porn on the planet, is utterly fixated on both the production and consumption of this second slope. Most amateur clips, however, do not manage to deliver anything other than a poor simulation of this second slope. Unlike Khalifa, whose emergence was attached to hyper real political reality, and 'First threesome EVER for hubby', which, regardless of its poor quality and lack of explicitness, does seem to contain a semblance of the second slope, most amateur porn has become easily identifiable as anything but amateur, that is, it has negated itself *as* amateur. Either way, according to Baudrillard, the best the viewer of amateur porn can hope for is the hyper real. 'First threesome EVER for hubby' is no more real or unreal than the Gulf War was for Baudrillard.

Beyond this sought after yet imperfect holy grail of porn, and what connects amateur porn consumption with an adherence to post truth narratives, is that these many hundreds of millions of viewers are not only reaching for the second slope, they think they have found it. But there is always the risk, when reaching beyond that first slope, that the individual will merely reach back and find the first slope in a different form, misidentifying it as the second slope, as the flower itself. Such are the difficulties of breaking free from this clandestine operation. Amateur porn's intention is to position itself as the flower itself; to position itself as the authentic, as this is what drives the

individual's demand. Amateur porn is a process that corresponds with the satisfaction of this desire, just as networks of post truth purport to do the same thing. The fantasy of reality and authenticity in both post truth and amateur porn consumption bear this resemblance. The consumption of amateur porn is an attempt to reach out beyond this first slope, to touch the sex, to experience its realness. Consequently, from this misidentification of the first slope as the second slope, a third slope has quietly emerged, a Sisyphean slope that resembles an Escher illustration, on which the viewer reaches the bottom and is immediately deposited at the top. It is the slope at play in both amateur pornography and post truth, whereby reality and truth are searched for and presented in the form of a commodity, and, as they tend to alleviate the lack/desire of the subject, they are accepted and the illusion is maintained.

Blanchot did, however, identify one way around this seemingly impenetrable and utopian delusion. In his essay 'Reflections on Surrealism', Blanchot quotes Andre Breton, the father of surrealism: 'I believe more and more in the infallibility of my thinking about myself, and it's too right. . . . By definition, thought is strong, and incapable of seeing itself at fault' (1995a: 87). Blanchot's preoccupation, just like Lacan's, Bataille's, Edelman's and so many others', is to escape from the prohibitions imposed by society, that is, to escape from the symbolic order. The surrealists, he argues, managed to find a way to do this through the processes of automatic writing and automatic drawing. Creating art without conscious intentionality, finding a way to bypass signification, allows the subject to gain access to 'the only real spontaneity: it is human freedom acting and manifesting itself...rational constructions are rejected...universal significations vanish' (ibid: 88). This manifestation of the de-signified void of what can be understood as an early form of Lacan's Real, allows for 'the complete equality of all normal human beings before the subliminal message, and to have constantly maintained that this message constitutes a common heritage' (ibid: 90). This is similar to Agamben's inessential commonality, to his 'whatever

singularity'.⁷ The words that are discovered through these automatic processes connect individuals not through the symbolic order, in the way that all other interpersonal interactions connect individuals, but through the inessential commonality of the Real. Blanchot refers to this as an 'elsewhere', 'elsewhere is nowhere; it is not the beyond; it signifies that existence is never where it is' (ibid: 92). In this way the word becomes, in a conjuring trick of the surrealists, a representation of the Lacanian Real, just as the pornographic object, whether clip or scene or act, also gains *the potentiality* to become a representation of the Lacanian Real, but if and only if it has been accessed in the same way, that is, if it is being consumed according to the sudden and de-signified surge of the drive of the Real rather than according to the desire of the symbolic order, which with regard to amateur porn, is determined by the search for authenticity.

It is no coincidence that Blanchot was closely associated with Georges Bataille (Surya, 2010), whose notion of sovereignty is closely aligned with this second slope of literature; or that Bataille himself was not only closely associated with Breton and the surrealists, but was also close friends with Lacan, who eventually married his ex-wife (ibid). Or that together, Bataille, Pierre Klosowski, Andre Masson and a number of other countercultural artists and theorists founded, in 1938, *The Sacred Conspiracy* (Bataille, 2017), a highly secretive group whose primary theoretical priority was to emphasise and re-emphasise the idea that 'secretly or not ... it is necessary to become different or else cease to be' (ibid: 124). That is, to be subjectivised is to be homogenised, and to be homogenised offers little reason to exist at all.

Indeed, the amount of effort that has been expended during the last century in an attempt to enact some kind of emancipation from subjectivation is remarkable, and in this study alone the number of theorists who seem to be preoccupied with this should be clear. In fact, as this study

⁷ It should be noted, however, that the approach of this thesis does constitute a rejection of Agamben's assertion that porn produces the unprofanable. Anti-normative engagements with porn, especially when they originate from this 'whatever singularity' via the prurience to arousal shift, seem to shake the individual free from the historically regulatory mechanisms of the sacred.

progresses, the more its foundational theoretical configuration becomes grounded in this history of theory, art and literature.

To briefly conclude, for Blanchot the only way to access the second slope is to do so spontaneously, unconsciously, accidentally, or, as is the case with the forms of desubjectivising porn at the centre of this study, in a way that is determined not by subjectivised frameworks of desire but by Lacan's primary desire. Automatic writing for Blanchot is 'an absolute event, the revelation of the *real* functioning of thought' (1995a: 92), whereas enjoying pornography after having stumbled across it amongst the chaotic algorithms of Pornhub, is a similar such absolute event, the revelation of the real functioning of the desire of 'primary queerness', Lacan's ethical act.

In 'Porn - Artifice - Performance - and the problem of authenticity', Vex Ashley (2016) asks the following question: 'Is requiring authenticity as a marker of acceptability essentially futile and in doing so can the potential for porn as a creative medium and porn performance as craft be limited?' (ibid: 187). Writing about Baudrillard, Paul Taylor writes that such forms of engagement allow for 'authentically seductive and symbolically rich forms of exchange, [whereby] social meaning is derived from the interplay of *unpredictable* interactions. Unlike the pre-encoded nature of the culture industry's products, authentically empowering play is *indeterminate* and truly fascinating' (Taylor & Harris, 2008: 157). This suggests that the answer to Ashley's question may be yes, because the authenticity that Taylor is making reference to in his writing about Baudrillard is something that is authentically seductive, so in this way it is not the clip itself that must be authentic, but the feeling that it generates. It must be unpredictable, indeterminate, and in opposition to the 'pre-encoded nature of the culture industry's products' (ibid). Ashley's position corresponds with the position of this chapter, because she argues that by foregoing any attempt at representing authenticity, pornography has the potential to 'open up greater opportunities for people to use sex and sexuality creatively, politically and culturally, with greater space for autonomy and self-determination' (Ashley, 2015: 190).

POSTMODERNISM: SYMPTOM OR PREDICTION?

Post truth is often assumed to have been inspired by postmodernist thinkers such as Jean-Francois Lyotard and Jean Baudrillard (D'Ancona, 2018). Matthew D'Ancona, conservative columnist for the Guardian, Times, Spectator and Telegraph, and author of *The Jesus Papyrus* (2008), an attempt to prove the existence of Jesus Christ with an ancient piece of papyrus, describes the work of postmodern thinkers as the intellectual genealogy of post truth: 'it would be naive to deny that the principal thinkers associated with this loose-knit school, by questioning the very notion of objective reality, did much to corrode the notion of truth' (D'Ancona, 2018: 124). But D'Ancona is clearly blaming the messenger; Baudrillard and Lyotard may have predicted post truth, but this doesn't mean they invented it. 'Unhindered by care for the truth', Trump becomes the 'beneficiary' of postmodernism (ibid: 130).

Bear in mind that Baudrillard's prophecy of social media becoming both a measure of belonging and a source of disinformation '–fake news–' was made eight years before Sir Tim Berners-Lee invented the World Wide Web, twenty-three before the launch of Facebook and twenty-five before the creation of Twitter. In this, as in other respects, post-modernist texts paved the way for Post-Truth. (ibid: 128)

It might equally be argued, however, that the inverse is true - that postmodern theory did not pave the way but laid the warning signs at the start of the road to post truth. In this way it is the

negativity of postmodernism that saves it from such damning accusations, the way in which it disrupts anything that claims towards the universal. As Newman argues: ‘revealing the discursive conditions of the emergence of truth claims in no way implies its relativization’ (2022: 54).

As Kalpokas writes: ‘post truth is not inspired by postmodernism but is, instead, a testament to the insightfulness of at least some of the postmodernist thinkers who have been able to predict something akin to the post-truth condition decades ago’ (Kalpokas, 2019: 104). This manifests as an ethical potentiality, whereby the postmodern consumer does not ‘supply reality but invents allusions to the conceivable which cannot be presented’ (Lyotard, 1984: 81). This is how Lyotard concludes *The Postmodern Condition*, by warning of a return to terror, driven by an obsession with ‘the realisation of the fantasy to seize reality’ (1984: 81). But the postmodern ‘would be that which, in the modern, puts forward the unrepresentable in presentation itself’ (ibid). The postmodern artist, similar to the surrealist, and similar, I would argue to the sovereign porn viewer who has found a way to access their jouissance, is one who works incessantly to shake off the impositions and determinations of the signifier and the ‘pleasure-maximising reality suppliers’ (Kalpokas, 2019: 105), to reach beyond it and to delight in what they find on the other side. This is an outcome assumed by Baudrillard to be impossible,

When Baudrillard says that ‘paradoxically, it is the real that has become our true utopia’, but a utopia with the substance of a ‘lost object’ (SS: 123), we should accord this its full psychoanalytic resonance as an object that, in Lacan, one relinquishes in order to enter the symbolic, but here relinquished in order to enter the hyperreal. (McQueen, 2016: 79)

But perhaps it is not impossible, and Baudrillard sets out a model of what this individual would look like were they to exist, describing them as a ‘singularity’, much as Agamben does:

‘unique, uncertain, unpredictable, incalculable, unrepresentable, untranslatable and unproductive’ (Smith, 2010: 202). These individuals threaten the drive towards a ‘globalised, secure, neutralised sameness with a radical otherness’ (ibid), a radical alterity.

A distinction opens up here between two different types of postmodern subjects. The first are those whom Baudrillard was warning against, who reify their own insistences of truth no matter how unconvincing or unlikely, who manipulate the instability of the social world and of language for the benefit of their ideological rhetoric, and whose followers - those of Trump and those who consume and remain convinced by amateur porn - are willing to passionately believe so long as their desires as determined by the symbolic order are satisfied.

The second type of postmodern subject are those who have found a way, knowingly or not, to take heed of the warnings of postmodernists such as Baudrillard, and are acting accordingly. These are the individuals who have grown unconvinced by the ‘reality’ of amateur porn, who have embraced negativity regarding anything that makes claims of reality, universal truth or the sort of grand narrative that Nietzsche alerted us to; they have abandoned the impossible search for authenticity set down for them by the capitalist machinations of the symbolic order and are instead looking inwards for traces of their whatever singularity, of their *jouissance*, in order to navigate their *sinthome*. While the identitarian normativities at play in the former group push the viewer more and more towards the impossibility of reality within the consumption of porn, the latter group will be the topic of the final chapter. It will ask the question: what happens following desubjectivation; and what are the patterns of viewing that begin to emerge for the *resubjectivised* viewer who has come to understand that ‘reality’ and remaining true to their desire are incommensurable?

In Andreas Huyssen’s introduction to Peter Sloterdijk’s *Critique of Cynical Reason* (1987), he describes Sloterdijk’s project as one which serves as an engagement with a ‘modernity gone sour and a postmodernity unable to stand on its own feet without constant groping back to what it

ostensibly opposes' (ibid: xiii). Although this may be true for many postmodern theorists, it is when considered alongside the challenge to sovereignty that defines anti-social queer theory that perhaps its primary strength becomes apparent. This is because it all depends on what the subject finds when they enact this process of 'groping back'. The truly postmodern viewer, in groping back, successfully identifies Blanchot's third slope for what it is, a deeper form of simulacra, so instead they remain on the true second slope because, simply enough, there is nowhere else to turn. When Lacan writes that 'les non-dupes errent' (Žižek, 2021), that those who are not convinced by the symbolic order are the ones who appear to have erred, this is what he is making reference to. The generalities of the first slope are insufficient, just as the painstakingly constructed representations of reality of the third slope are also insufficient, to the keen eye, which leaves the true postmodern viewer - the *resubjectivised* viewer - in the designified space of their second slope, the desubjectivising and errant slope of the Real. Here they will wait to see which form of signification will manifest. This is the form of signification that appears during the surrealist act of automatic drawing, and it is the signification that appears if the subject finds desire in what began as a prurient click regarding a form of unfamiliar, disturbing, non-normative or wholly non-realistic porn (ie, animation). Consequently, it is the signification that causes the viewer, in what is termed in the community as 'post-nut clarity', to ask: wait, what just happened?

CONCLUDING REMARKS

When the viewer is confronted by the excessive amounts of information offered to them by various forms of new media, they make their choices based not on reason, empirical evidence or an objective weighing up of facts, but on which form of information will provide them with the optimum amount of pleasure (Kalpolas, 2019: 68). This pattern applies to both the consumption of

post truth narratives and the consumption of amateur pornography. Although it might be said to apply to the consumption of all pornography in a more general sense, the important similarity between amateur porn consumption and that of post truth is that both forms are driven by what can be understood as a misidentification of the Real, whether in the form of truth or reality.

This chapter has provided three types of amateur porn, each of which corresponds to some element of post truth consumption. The popularity of Public Agent illustrates the ways in which this type of viewer is always already willing to be convinced by a representation of reality, regardless of the various signifiers that might suggest otherwise, in this case the performers' names as they appear in the titles. In another example, Mia Khalifa's sudden popularity and the domestic and political controversy it caused provided the viewer with an extra, and very important 'nodal point of interaction', the added a layer of reality that formally might only be found in leaked celebrity sex tapes. Finally, a number of very rare clips seem to offer a level of reality unavailable elsewhere in the porn industry, as suggested by the celebratory comments that follow 'First Threesome Ever', regardless of its imperfections. What these types of clips suggest is that a search is taking place for something that either does not exist, as in those representations provided by Public Agent, or that *cannot* exist, at least according to Jean Baudrillard, as with anything that is mediated through a screen. They also strongly suggest that the viewer of amateur porn utilises the same strategies as those of post truth in their respective searches for pleasure.

Using Blanchot's two slopes of literature model, this chapter then argued that the only way to access the second slope, a slope of either radical signification, as with automatic writing and drawing, or de-signification, is by shaking oneself loose from the symbolic order through the process of desubjectivation. If the viewer's desire continues to operate according the symbolic order, then it seems they have found their way to what might be conceived as a third slope. This illusory slope may feel like the second slope, the slope of the Real, but it is in fact a form of the first slope, strengthened by the viewer's unwillingness or inability to perceive this.

This final point also allows for the segue into the final part of the chapter, which serves as an engagement with the potential connection between post truth/amateur porn consumption, and postmodernism. If Lyotard's work, as well as Jean Baudrillard's, serves as a prediction rather than an affirmation of the postmodern condition, it is then possible to understand desubjectivising porn viewers as having come to perceive what might be termed the postmodern trap, and acted accordingly by abandoning the search for truth and reality. Part of the intervention of this thesis is an examination and acknowledgement of these types of consumers' propensity to abandon this search and instead look inwards for authentic feelings of desire and arousal, rather than for the representation-as-reality that various sub-genres of amateur pornography draw viewers towards. This is reflected in Lyotard's claim in 'The Postmodern Condition' that 'What we have here is a process of delegitimation fueled by the demand for legitimation itself' (Lyotard, 1984: 81). The amateur porn/post truth consumer continues to seek legitimation, rather than abandoning the search, as with desubjectivising porn viewers; they reject the impossibility of truth or reality and search for it according to their own framework of pleasure. To them, pleasure and truth have become interchangeable.

CHAPTER SIX: LAUGHTER AND THE EMERGENCE OF THE SCHIZOPORNOLOGIST

Previous chapters may have suggested that beyond the glancing touch or the fleeting, desubjectivising experience of the Lacanian Real, resubjectivation and subjectivation are one and the same thing; to enter once again into the signifying framework of the symbolic order renders the individual a subject *of* the symbolic order. While the first engagement with desubjectivising pornography might allow for a form of desubjectivation, any further involvement in these spaces following that initial, self-shattering experience, whereby the individual feels more secure or more comfortable with such practices, leads invariably back into the symbolic order. As argued in Chapter Four, the £127.37 app controlled Bluetooth Edge Prostrate Massager or the monthly subscriptions to queer porn sites suggests that this would be so. The changing tastes of the individual are collected and quantified, and the products and services that follow become the results of this valuable information. But there is also evidence that the process of resubjectivation is not as simple as the above paragraph suggests. This chapter will assess the various ideas that suggest that there are radical and liberatory potentialities in the process of resubjectivation. These are dependent, as will be argued, on a specific configuration of engagement with the symbolic order.

One of the things that has always seemed surprising, interesting and unexpected in porn commentary is that so many of these comments contain elements of humour and comedy. It is no exaggeration to state that, other than those comments that attempt to draw the consumer to some other clip, humour is one of the prevailing forms of engagement. This chapter will begin by examining a number of different theories of comedy and laughter, primarily those by McGowan (2017), Zupancic (2008) and Critchley (2002). Whether the implicit intention of comedy is to actualise a 'disruption of power' (Weeks, 2020: 8), to provide 'alternative narratives' (ibid: 2), or to

‘engender bodies with a capacity to exceed the control of structural powers’ (ibid); and whether it does this by overlapping lack and excess, by destabilising the inevitable through a surrealisation of the real, or even by relieving the tension of a situation by attaching a calculable mathematical formula to it, each of these approaches to comedy and laughter are very much present in the comments left beneath any type of porn clip.

Having shown that many forms of comedy are present within porn viewing, this chapter will then make the argument that commenters who engage this way are what Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari would refer to as ‘nomads’. These are the individuals who are constantly searching out ‘lines of flight’, behaviours and strategies that will reveal to them the paths that will lead them away from the homogenising and oppressive impositions of the symbolic order. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) label this process ‘deterritorialisation’, a redefining of space that was previously determined by some form of oppressive power. It can happen physically, but it can also happen symbolically, psychologically, emotionally, and we see this play out in the comment sections of porn websites.

What emerges from this application of Deleuze and Guattari is a form of consumer who might be labelled a ‘schizopornologist’. Early in his career, Deleuze made the distinction between a pornographer and a pornologist. A pornographer creates materials ‘reduced to a few imperatives (do this, do that)’ (1991: 17), while a pornologist confronts the medium ‘with its own limits’ (ibid). He was writing of literature rather than filmed materials, and he was writing of production rather than viewing - but regardless of this there remain a number of similarities between his definitions and the forms of viewing central to this study.

While many consumers of porn might be doing so to simply see people ‘do this, do that’, a schizopornologist, as will be argued, is an individual who enacts a constant disruption of the world in which they live. Their efforts to deterritorialise, and to follow lines of flight into nomadic territory, to assert their singularities through laughter and comedy, to take their place in what Agamben refers to as the ‘coming community’ of ‘inessential commonalities’ (1993), positions

them firmly as schizopornologists. They are confronting porn with its own limits, chipping away at its brittle foundations. Importantly, and critical to this argument, they are reterritorialising from *within* the symbolic order. Rather than simply being reabsorbed as consumers, as subjects who are incessantly attempting to overcome the paradoxical tension between desire and lack, they are instead redefining themselves in opposition to these things. The oppositional strength of any singularity is dependent not on the ontological notion of being, but on the schizoanalytical notion of active becoming, described by Weeks as ‘a positive embodiment of a nomadic existential orientation towards difference, newness, and endless transformation’ (2020: 12). It would, of course, be unrealistic to suggest that every one of these consumers can be situated within this Deleuzian framework, but rather it is setting out the principles and conditions whereby the individual will have some chance of resubjectivation without reabsorption by the symbolic order, and through these eruptions of comedy within porn viewing there seems to be manifesting definite traces of this type of individual.

Regarding deterritorialisation, Deleuze and Guattari argue that different forms of deterritorialisation can be plotted according to a pair of axes (1987: 55). The *y* axis designates the positive/negative distinction, and the *x* axis the relative/absolute distinction of deterritorialisation. This chapter will offer a diagrammatic representation of this idea, suggesting that each form of deterritorialisation described in this study can find a place on its axes. Although much porn viewing would not find any place at all on this diagram, such as that exemplified by the comment ‘that’s how real men fuck babe’ (Pornforce, 2017)⁸, any form of viewing that suggests a potentiality of deterritorialisation can be, but only a very specific form of pornographic engagement can be designated schizopornographic.

⁸ This clip disappeared from Pornhub following Kristoff’s 2020 article ‘The Children of Pornhub’. It can also be found on XVideos.com: Pornforce. (2021). *Hot Blonde German Slut Experiences The MOST POWERFUL Fuck Of Her Life*. [Online]. Pornhub.com. Available at: https://www.xvideos.com/video.klbcefv4456/hot_blonde_german_slut_experiences_the_most_powerful_fuck_ [Accessed 18 July 2024].

LAUGHTER, COMEDY AND PORN STUDIES

Comedy and humour have been something of a commonality in the content of pornography since the early films of the 1960's and 70s, and in *Hardcore: Power, Pleasure and the Frenzy of the Visible*, Linda Williams (1987) discusses the humour in the porn films that would be screened in cinemas for a mostly male audience, making clear that it was most often men that would be the victims of the jokes. In 1999 Laura Kipnis wrote of the ways in which 'Hustler' magazine used humour in pornography to critique class relations, and compares its approach to life as similar to the 16th century writer and 'bon-vivant François Rabelais, who 'used the lower body as a symbolic attack on the pompous false seriousness of high culture, church, and state' (Kipnis, 1999: 133). For Kipnis, much porn can be understood as a profanation of the sacred, which bares similarity to the work of Giorgio Agamben, as discussed in the previous chapter. Although Nina K. Martin (2006) argued that since porn has moved from the cinema into the home, it has become increasingly incompatible with humour, this chapter will illustrate that, looking at the comments beneath clips, humour is still as prevalent as it always has been.

A small number of journal articles have addressed the use of humour in contemporary pornography viewing. In Alanna Goldstein's 2021 piece 'Learner, laughter, lover, critic: young women's normative and emerging orientations towards pornography', she defines humour as a 'normative orientation', connecting it to feelings of shame with regard to porn viewing. This article concerns focus groups and discussions around pornography within traditional research settings. In this way it is more concerned with how people, in this case women, choose to discuss the viewing of pornography with each other and with researchers. The question remains, however, of what it means when individuals use humour as a means to express themselves outside of a research setting and when they are viewing pornography in the privacy of their own homes.

In contrast to Goldstein's article, in the article, 'That wasn't meant to be funny: mirth and the porn scholar', Laura Helen Marks emphasises the comedic potential in something that she describes as an 'incredibly raw, often inept, and frequently lazy media form' (2018: 21). She makes reference to Peter Lehman's point that 'one of the most over-looked aspects of the porn industry is its sense of humour' (ibid), and argues that humour 'may be central to one of [porn's] functions: in this case, selling trash in relationship to respectability' (ibid: 22). From this perspective, this thesis constitutes a continuation of this idea. Marks writes that '[l]aughing at the respectable from the vantage point of the trashy yields particular transgressive pleasures' (ibid), and this chapter will argue that it also allows for a form of empowerment from within the seriousness of the symbolic order. Looking at the comments, and as will be further detailed in this chapter, humour can be found in the comments sections beneath clips that span a wide range of genres, so this chapter will attempt to bring some level of specificity to this phenomenon. It will examine different theoretical engagements with different types of humour, and will attempt to understand why different genres of porn appear to invite different uses of humour.

THE INCONGRUENCE THEORY OF COMEDY

In his novel 'Molloy', Samuel Beckett's eponymous character applies his incessant farting to mathematical logic:

One day I counted them. Three hundred and fifteen farts in nineteen hours, or an average of over sixteen farts an hour. After all, it's not excessive. Four farts every fifteen minutes. It's nothing. Not even one fart every five minutes. It's unbelievable. Damn it, I hardly fart at all, I should never have

mentioned it. Extraordinary how mathematics help you to know yourself.

(in Critchley, 2002: 73)

This is one form of the incongruity theory of comedy, the collaboration of two explicitly unrelated themes, and this is an approach that can also clearly be applied to porn comedy. For example, a number of consumers have taken it upon themselves to apply this mathematical logic to one of Pornhub's most popular clips, 'Playing a Game With Hot Step Sister':

With it now being at 132,820,655 views and your estimate at 5ml per cum shot. That's about 660,000 litres which is about 174,353 US gallons. Now the most economical car the Hyundai Ioniq which has a mpg (mile per gallon) 247.8 mpg. If we imagine that cum is fuel for a second then that means this car could drive 35,980,560 miles which is roughly the distance from earth to Mars. So good job guys we managed to drive a car from earth to Mars with cum... Now that really is an amazing time to be alive. (Adams, 2020)

Six months later this quantification was updated by another user:

Research came to the conclusion that jacking off burns 70 calories on average. Since the video now has 130,000,000 views, we can calculate that 9,100,000,000 calories were burned since its release. That's the equivalent of running 3,500,000 marathons, 191x the distance to the moon and back or approximately the distance from the earth to the sun. It truly is an amazing time to be alive! (ibid)

This form of comedy reveals ‘the incongruence of the reality of desire and drive with all those...outlines that determine our supposedly realistic reality’ (Zupancic, 2008: 218). What determines the effectiveness of the incongruity theory of comedy is the expectation of congruence (ibid). Following a masturbatory orgasm to what is, for all intents and purposes, mainstream porn, it seems likely that the above comedic engagement is one of the last things that the consumer would expect from the comments beneath the clip. Peter Sloterdijk describes the contemporary world as ‘a stage of organised seriousness’, but ‘in so far as the joke plays with the symbolic forms of society... jokes are *anti-rites*. They mock, parody or deride the ritual practices of a given society’ (Critchley, 2002: 8).

Beneath 'Squirting MILF Gets Creampie From Sleepwalking Step Son' (Moms Teach Sex, 2021), a user writes in the comments: ‘Can someone explain how a cell copies its DNA information before dividing? (biology homework)’ (ibid), and another user replies with an accurate and detailed answer, followed by ‘I just want you to know I created an account went through ridiculous steps and took about 20 minutes so I could answer your question...’ (ibid). There are then many more users’ comments celebrating this exchange: ‘the hero we don't deserve but we got’ and ‘not all heroes wear capes’ (ibid). This is the pattern of engagement that seems to come closest to desubjectivation *through* language, an anti-identitarian form of liberatory resistance, where it is not the community itself that is the object of attention, but rather the absurdity of the situation. In this way it is an antidepressant, as Critchley argues,

that works by the ego finding itself ridiculous. The subject looks at itself like an abject object and instead of weeping bitter tears, it laughs at itself and finds consolation therein. Humour is an anti-depressant that does not work by deadening the ego in some sort of Prozac-induced daze, or by

deluding the subject with some transitory experience of manic joy, but is rather a relation of self-knowledge. Humour is often dark, but always lucid. It is a profoundly cognitive relation to oneself and the world. (Critchley, 2002: 78)

It should also be noted that there are a number of connections between these comedic viewers and the viewers of the previous chapters - those of chapters Three and Four - who engage with transgressive materials in the search for desubjectivation, and those in Chapter Five who have become resubjectivised but now reject any attempts by porn to offer representation as reality. Drink_water_fam (2020), for example, who encourages other users to stay hydrated, has a clear interest in Cosplay, Hentai, Anime, gaming porn and Ahegao (when live performers replicate the typical facial expression of Hentai women during orgasm). The individual who writes 'Not all heroes wear capes', following the user who created an account specifically to answer someone's homework question, has named themselves KrustyKrab, a reference to the cartoon SpongeBob Squarepants, which features centrally in Jack Halberstam's book, *The Queer Art of Failure*. It should also be said that this appears to be a commonality among viewers who choose to engage in humour in the comments. Looking at the details on each of their profiles, which provide limited information regarding who they are fans of, who they subscribe to and which 'achievements' that have gained, it seems clear that those who write humorous comments, regardless of the genre they are writing them about, are also often fans of many of the desubjectivising pornographies detailed throughout this thesis.

COMEDY AND SURREALISM

In *On Humour*, Simon Critchley writes of the ways in which humour ‘brings about a change of situation, a surrealisation of the real...’ (Critchley, 2002: 18). A true joke ‘suddenly and explosively lets us see the familiar defamiliarized, the ordinary made extraordinary and the real rendered surreal’ (ibid). It can afford one the ‘opportunity for realising that an accepted pattern has no necessity’ (ibid). Not only does humour release tension, it also has to ‘liberate will and the desire’ (ibid). But a ‘surrealisation of the real’ is more complex than simply attaching it to a real/unreal binary distinction. For example, in much porn viewing it seems like the reverse has taken place. Porn becomes the surreal, the unfamiliar, the extraordinary, so it is by attaching the real, the familiar and the ordinary onto it, that emphasises that the accepted patterns of both porn and normality have no necessity. Much comedy finds its power in violating taboos, but in porn the taboo is always-already violated. So in this way it is the very lack of taboo, the mundane of everyday life, that drives the comedy. Take for example the viewer who calls themselves BedInspector, and who takes the trouble of rating the various beds in different porn clips: ‘This is up to my standards. The railing is a bit much, but all-in-all 7/10 bed’ (BedInspector, 2020). Or when another writes, ‘hey that’s a nice lamp’ (ibid). Or drink_water_fam: ‘Did y’all drink water today?’ (ibid). Interestingly, this particular viewer receives a large number of responses, such as those beneath the clip titled ‘She Loves Getting Used - No Mercy for her Pussy’ (Porn Force, 2019): ‘Honestly? No’ (ibid); ‘yes thank you’ (ibid); ‘I actually forgot, thanks for reminding me. It is Important to stay healthy and hydrated’ (ibid); ‘Oh crap, thanks for the reminder’ (ibid); ‘2 gallons baby’ (ibid). Others from this same clip follow this trend: ‘fuck I just dropped my croissant’ (ibid), the response, a year later: ‘is the croissant ok?’ (ibid). Or, ‘baby golden potatoes, baby carrots, and top cut roast all simmered in a pot of beef stock, red wine, onion, garlic, seasoned salt, pepper, rosemary, thyme, and bay leaves’ (ibid). Critchley refers to such humour as a ‘conceptual disjunction’ (Critchley, 2002: 10), the humour being derived from a sudden conceptual and rhetorical shift, and the result of this might be understood as a maintaining of resubjectivation in the way it renders the subjectivising

tendencies of porn relatively powerless by making use of the ‘rhetorical effect generated by the sudden bathos of the final line in comparison to the...overkill of what precedes it’ (ibid).

CRITIQUING PORN WITH LAUGHTER

One of the most common points of departure in any text that deals with laughter or comedy is the superiority theory of laughter, as explained by Thomas Hobbes: 'Laughter is nothing else but a sudden glory arising from some sudden conception of some eminency in ourselves, by comparison with the infirmities of others, or with our own formerly' (Critchley, 2002: 103). What complicates this approach regarding the humour in porn commentary is the question of who, or what, is being laughed at. When a viewer makes a comment about the quality of a lamp, or asks the question ‘how many step-sisters does this guy have?’ (Adams, 2020), or ‘who the fuck keeps Oreos in the fridge?’ (ibid), this does not seem like they are asserting their superiority over an individual, but over porn itself. This is an expression of superiority over the absurdity of the propensity of step-family members in porn, or the unconvincing nature of the the acting, the sets, the ridiculousness of the form, or even over themselves, trapped as they are between these different points of the Borromean Knot, victim of a sort of Borromean tug-of-war, such as when one viewer says of a particularly transgressive clip from a notorious production company called Perverse Family (2020): ‘Now that I have finished masturbating to this. I can honestly say that it was fucking disturbing.’

THE BLACK SUN OF COMEDY

Another of Critchley’s many conclusions regarding comedy is that it revolves around a dark heart of humour, that it is always there to remind us what ‘an oddity the human being is in the

universe' (Critchley, 2002: 78). It adds an existential depth to the above theories of comedy. In humour, writes Critchley, 'we orbit eccentrically around a black sun' (ibid). Applying Nietzsche to this argument reasserts the existential laughter of the solitary masturbator. Writing of laughter in Nietzsche, Burnham describes it as

a release from the kinds of burdensome anxiety or seriousness that either (i) religion, morality or science tries to impose or that (ii) the higher human imposes upon him or herself, for example in the feelings of nausea, responsibility or pity. (Burnham, 2012, 201)

It is the laughter of those who have 'learned to live without metaphysical consolations' (ibid), and even this is turned into comedy in porn commentary, judging by how often God is mentioned. One viewer, playing the role of Jesus Christ, writes 'y'know I didn't get nailed to the cross to come back a few millennia to see this' (Unknown, 2017)⁹, while another writes 'my son didn't die for this, by God' (ibid). Comedy in this way becomes 'a site of uncolonizable resistance to the alleged total administration of society, a node of non-identity in the idealizing rage of commodification that returns us not to a fully integrated and harmonious *Lebenswelt* but lights up the comic feebleness of our embodiment' (Critchley, 1997: 187).

It is here, too, that comedy becomes most closely aligned with anti-social queer theory. Reading the following passage from Halberstam's *Queer Art of Failure*, it seems as though the black sun of comedy acts almost as a supplement to Halberstam's particular brand of anti-sociality:

rather than searching for ways around death and disappointment, the queer art of failure involves the acceptance of the finite, the embrace of the

⁹ This clip was removed from Pornhub following Kristoff's 2020 article 'The Children of Pornhub'.

absurd, the silly, and the hopelessly goofy. Rather than resisting endings and limits, let us instead revel in and cleave to all of our own inevitable fantastic failures. (Halberstam, 2011: 187)

So far in this chapter a number of theories of comedy have been described - incongruence, conceptual disjunction, the black sun of comedy and superiority theory - and each has been shown to exist relatively commonly in the comments beneath porn clips. The final theory of comedy is the idea of the comic as philosopher. As McGowan writes, '[O]ur widespread engagement with comedy bespeaks our desire to philosophize without actually becoming philosophers. Comedy embarks on the same project as philosophy, but it does so in a way that almost everyone eagerly partakes in' (2017: 179). Just like philosophy, he argues, comedy is speculative, an 'existential act that forces us to confront the basic structure of our subjectivity' (ibid). It disrupts any assumption of the distance between trauma and enjoyment and lack and excess, just like so much of the philosophy that has been included in this study. Laughter challenges 'the reign of the everyday' (ibid: 181), functioning as a way to disrupt the symbolic order and to corrupt the youth, just as Socrates was accused of doing through philosophy, and the commenters who are adding this comedy to porn comments appear to resemble this type of philosophising without being philosophers. In Žižek's words, philosophy alienates the individual 'from the predominant ideologico-political order, [sows] radical doubts and enable[s] them to think autonomously,' and though this is Žižek's description of the purpose of philosophy, this can also be used as a description of the comedic strategies used by many of these commenters.

As Deleuze explains in his analysis of Foucault's work, we must protect

the basic right to collapse in fits of laughter in the face of a dazzling array of perverse inventions, cynical discourses and meticulous horrors. A whole

chain of phenomena, from anti-masturbation machines for children to the mechanics of prison for adults, sets off an unexpected laughter which shame, suffering or death cannot silence...a great joy which is not the ambivalent joy of hatred, but the joy of wanting to destroy whatever mutilates life. (Deleuze, 1986: 23)

Whatever mutilates life is, from a Lacanian perspective, the same thing that represses the Real. When children's hands were tied down by Victorian parents to prevent them from masturbating, or when they were subjected to any number of anti-masturbation machines (ibid: 23), it was an attempt to overcome or overpower their drives and force them to conform to a rigid set of very specific, ideologically determined values. In a way there are a number of things that have now replaced these anti-masturbation machines. When Visa cancelled all payments through Pornhub and Pornhub duly deleted any clip that was not verified through a professional, licensed production company or performer, which led to the deletion of twelve million clips, what was left was mostly the very type of porn that the anti-porn campaigners, who pressured for this change, were campaigning against in the first place and had reified as such. In the case of the 1800s, many in the medical profession were concerned about a fictional disease caused by masturbation, *spermatorrhoea*, which caused 'blushing, crying, breathlessness, melancholy and sensitivity' (Stevens, 2009: 469), but could be cured, through abstinence, with the help of the Stephenson Spermatic Truss, among many other anti-masturbation contraptions (Lacquer, 2003: 169). But things now have shifted from punishment to discipline, from moulding to nudging, and from the Spermatic Truss to no-nut November and the labelling of porn as the 'public health crisis of the decade' (Dines, 2015). This irony, of course, must be laughed at just as much as the porn itself must be made the subject of a joke.

DELEUZE AND GUATTARI AND THE SCHIZOPORNOLOGIST

As this chapter has shown, the symbolic order in all its guises is being laughed at, ridiculed, consistently turned into a figure of fun, and revealed as an entrenched and dogmatic absurdity by what seems like a significant number of viewers. The following part of this chapter will argue that it is with the work of Deleuze and Guattari that the desubjectivising porn viewers at the centre of this study can finally be situated. This study is a work of potentialities, of invisible and unnoticed glimpses of empowerment and emancipation, of traces of power emerging from one of the places few would expect it to come from, and of the affirmation of singularities. It is about individuals reaching out without realising they are reaching out, for something they do not know is there, and away from something they do not realise is oppressive. This chapter is about the ways in which the viewer uses humour and laughter to do this from within the signified spaces of the symbolic order. Unlike in Lacan, desire is not attached to lack, or in Butler and other identity theorists, where it might be described as ‘a theatre of representation’ (Toscano, 2005: 213); for Deleuze and Guattari desire is a series of productive ‘flows’ (ibid). Although these terms will be explained shortly, this chapter will argue that in an attempt to express their singularities, these viewers are using laughter and comedy to initiate their ‘line of flight’ in order to reach a ‘deterritorialised’ space of ‘nomadic’ empowerment.

Critical to understanding any engagement with Deleuze and Guattari is their notion of desiring-production. This signals the desire of liberated singularities in free movement against the striated surfaces of the symbolic order (‘striated’ because this space can be understood as a formalised form of grid (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987: 402)). It cannot be contained or determined by the impositions of society, culture, or state-sanctioned values. It is a potentiality that is not idealistic but should be encouraged and strived for, a movement rather than an object:

Desiring-production is that aspect of desire which if it were to pass into social production and reproduction would sow the seeds of disorder and revolution as it does every time a little piece of it manages to elude the coding society imposes on it so as to contain it. (Buchanan, 2008: 45)

The central argument of this chapter is that there are many individuals who are searching for affirmation by using comedy and laughter to destabilise the structured, oppressive symbolic order in its attempts to code and re-code desire. For many viewers porn seems to have become a never ending joke, and this is similar to the way in which Deleuze and Guattari approach philosophy. They claimed to be the ‘Laurel and Hardy’ of a philosophy which ‘gets the giggles, which wipes away its tears’ (Amir, 2022: 191). This approach, according to Russell Ford, is to facilitate ‘an experience of wonder at a world that is not organized by the concepts and judgments of subjectivity’ (Ford, 2016: 90). That is, the strategies used by Deleuze and Guattari to approach the problems of philosophy are similar in this way to the strategies used by viewers to approach pornography, adding further strength to the concept of comic-as-philosopher and thus porn-viewer-as-philosopher, at least for the group at the centre of this study. By laughing at pornography, they are also laughing at the various subjectivising tendencies of much pornography, and it is here that a connection between laughter and non-normativity, and laughter and ‘primary queerness’ can be made. Because ‘primary queerness’ and the desubjectivation that has been reconfigured in this thesis can only occur as a result of a non-normative manifestation of desire, rather than as a result of viewing a particular genre of porn, laughing at porn maintains the potentiality of this occurring and re-occurring. As the next section will explain, this can be understood as what Deleuze would call a ‘line of flight’ (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987: 31).

In *Masochism: Coldness and Cruelty* (Deleuze, 1991), and writing of pornographic literature, Deleuze makes the distinction between pornographers and what he terms ‘pornologists’. A pornographer is concerned with imperatives, ‘do this, do that’ (ibid: 17), and Žižek (2004) adds to this by describing much contemporary porn as ‘organs without bodies’, that is, shots of body parts moving systematically while the performer’s actual body becomes lost in the process. Pornhub does not lack for examples of this form of viewing. ‘Took My Stepsister’s Anal Virginity’ (Vega, 2022) is one popular clips whose comments seem to be a series of the imperatives that Deleuze writes of: ‘I want to fuck this hard’ (ibid); ‘hot anal cream pie’ (ibid); ‘raw cumin in arse 2 pussy’ (ibid); ‘i like that he pushed his cum in her pussy’ (ibid); ‘that’s how a real stud fucks. She’s gonna be feeling that for days’ (ibid). These are also the spaces where Foucault’s *scientis sexualis* is found to be evident: ‘That was defo not the first time she had something in her ass’ (ibid); ‘Pitiful attempt to trick us with fake cum. At 9:59 and 10:11 you can hear the sound cuts meant to cover you filling her ass with fake cum’ (ibid). In contrast, in an effort to explore ‘how desire and representation work’ the pornologist ‘confronts language with its own limits’ (Deleuze, 1991: 14), or, as in the case of contemporary online pornography, confronts the form itself with its own limits, by ridiculing it for its surreal attempts to represent reality, by engaging it as comic-as-philosopher, by emphasising the existential black sun that resides at its centre.

Perhaps the often surprisingly large numbers that are involved in the various forms of viewing at the centre of this study attest to the idea that although singularities often become overwhelmed by structured and ideological notions of identity, they are in fact the default state of the individual. That is, the symbolic order has to work very hard to repress singularities, while in certain spaces, singularities are constantly working away at the edges of the symbolic order, trying to weaken the walls and break through:

Textual, mechanical, stereotyped repetition is the mode in which the young subject, behind the scenes of the seemingly monotonous story, repeats the exciting story of a fundamental split or incongruity in her own being and meaning...[T]he persistent failure of repetition ultimately brings us to the conclusion that the only thing that repeats without fail is difference itself... For Deleuze, the apparent failure or impossibility of repetition leads, in a switch of perspective, to the posting of the difference as pure affirmation: the only thing that is repeated is difference, the only sameness is the sameness of difference itself. (Deleuze, 1991: 172)

The young subject is the contemporary porn viewer, the ‘seeming’ monotony is the porn, or how it is understood by most, and the ‘exciting story of a fundamental split’ is the joke itself. Expressions of singularity and expressions of resistance to the symbolic order and oppressive power seem to be more commonplace than assumed, and the Real becomes not an object but a process, a becoming rather than a being. That glancing touch of the Real that comes with desubjectivation can be extended, as though the individual is walking beside a long wall with their fingers running across it. Singularities are always trying to break through, always looking for ‘lines of flight’, and now more than ever the symbolic order appears to be having trouble maintaining the barrier. From a Deleuzian perspective, It becomes apparent that accessing one’s singularity is perhaps not as difficult, dangerous or paradoxical as previous chapters might have suggested.

The porn that has been written about in this study is an example of what for Deleuze is a ‘mutation of structures’ (Toscano, 2005: 213), a structure determined by capitalism, by the history of morality, by the state and by culture, but that is being distorted, mutated and destabilised by the laughter of the singularities within it. From this laughter emerges what might be termed

‘schizopornologists’, the porn viewer who casts off what is expected of them, and who drifts away from the predictable and quantifiable networks of consumption that might be attached to their identity following what Deleuze and Guattari would call a ‘line of flight’, to a place that asserts their singularities. They laugh not only at the world in which they exist, but also at themselves in this world, and, if this is correct, this makes them more perceptive to potential means of escape from what is normally expected of them:

A ‘line of flight’ is a path of mutation precipitated through the actualisation of connections among bodies that were previously only implicit (or ‘virtual’) that releases new powers in the capacities of those bodies to act and respond...Every assemblage is territorial in that it sustains connections that define it, but every assemblage is also composed of lines of deterritorialisation that run through it and carry it away from its current form. (Lorraine, 2005: 147)

As discussed, the space of online pornography can very much be a space of oppression, hyper-capitalism, and algorithmic opportunism. But it is also a chaotic space and one that is ripe for what Deleuze and Guattari call ‘deterritorialisation’ (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987: 187). This has as many definitions as any other of their concepts; it is the ‘creative potential of an assemblage’, a ‘coming undone’; it ‘shatters the subject’, freeing up the ‘fixed relations that contain a body all the while exposing it to new organisations’ (all: Parr, 2005: 213). To give it yet another definition, it seems to suggest the redefining of a space that was previously determined by some kind of oppressive power, but that is freed up in a way that allows for singularities to thrive, or at least emerge. It signals that ‘fundamental social change happens all the time, even as the society

reproduces itself on other levels' (Patten, 2005: 72), and as should be clear, the comedic impulse in porn commentary serves as an engine that allows for these fundamental changes to occur, as a productive supplement that, along with the transgressive impulse, serves to initiate deterritorialisation.

Deterritorialisation can be plotted along the twin axes of positive/negative and absolute/relative (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). It is relative when it concerns processes within the symbolic order, and this form is negative when it is immediately reabsorbed through reterritorialisation, back into the symbolic order in a way that blocks any line of flight that may escape its re-imposition. Relative deterritorialisation is positive when 'the line of flight prevails over secondary reterritorialisations' (ibid: 73), that is, when it makes a permanent change and resists attempts at reabsorption by the symbolic order. Absolute deterritorialisation is in reference to those moments and traces of *potentiality* rather than actuality within a symbolic order, the state of 'unformed matter on the plane of consistency' (ibid: 55). It is positive when it brings about new situations, new people and new worlds, when it connects lines of flight. For real change to occur and for a situation to be truly revolutionary, newly deterritorialised elements must be 'connected' rather than simply 'conjugated' or temporarily joined (Parr, 2005: 71). If the second half of this study constitutes an assessment of what happens regarding resubjectivation, these resubjectivised individuals must wake up from their brush with the Real with their sense of humour intact and their singularities gaining some level of prominence over their configuration of identity. The diagram below categorises four different forms of pornographic engagement according to Deleuze and Guattari's model of deterritorialisation. In his foreword to *A Thousand Plateaus*, Brian Massumi describes affect as 'a prepersonal intensity corresponding to the passage from one experiential state of the body to another and implying an augmentation...in that body's capacity to act' (Massumi, in Deleuze & Guattari, 1987: 17). That is, in the case of applying deterritorialisation to porn viewing, a change must have taken place in the individual and how that individual understands the world.

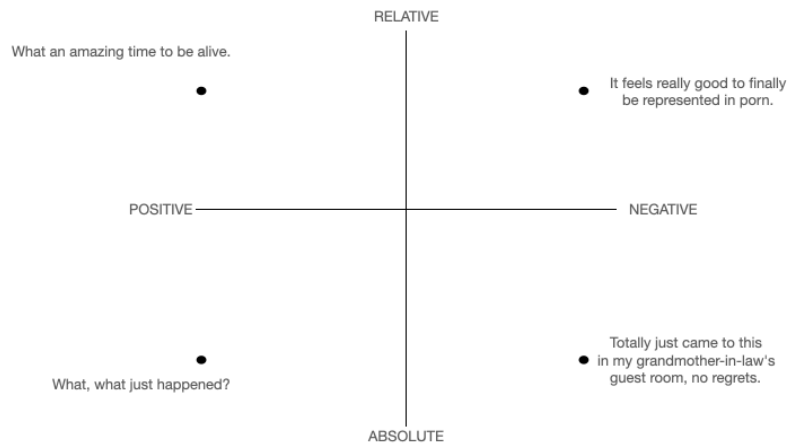


Fig 1: A figure illustrating the ways in which seemingly desubjectivising forms of porn viewing can be assessed according to Deleuze and Guattari's notion of deterritorialisation.

The top left corner concerns the extended interaction regarding how far a car could travel if it was fuelled by the semen that had been expelled during the cumulative consumption of a highly popular porn clip. This can be designated a positive/relative process of deterritorialisation. It is a comedic destabilisation of one of the world's most popular porn clips, and has drawn in multiple other users in collaboration to take the joke further. It is positive because, by applying such absurdist logic to the masturbatory results of over a hundred million people, it renders the clip with a ridiculousness that is accessible to anyone who cares to view the top comments below the clip. It is likely this comment will remain there for a very long time due to its popularity, as this is how they are ordered, and although this model of deterritorialisation is by no means unequivocal, this absurd engagement holds within it the potentiality for a line of flight for anyone who reads it, thereby 'prevailing over secondary reterritorialisations' and connecting lines of flight through the interactions that followed the initial engagement. As the first half of this chapter illustrated, this form of comedy can often signal an oppositional engagement with the symbolic order, which in the

case of this joke is a destabilisation of the whole concept of porn rather than a destabilisation of the self.

The relative/negative category is attached to one of the comments from 'Queer Escort Sex: Nonbinary pussy licking, anal, cum eating, piss, strapon, and prostate play' (Pink, 2020), where a viewer has commented that 'it feels really good to finally be represented in porn' (ibid). Although this form of porn is a form of deterritorialisation, as it pulls desire away from normativity, and although queer sex and queer porn potentially represent something of a sexual revolution, the fact that much queer porn is so serious and so focused on cliché betrays what are in fact very stable connections to the symbolic order; the queer porn community is very much a caring community, in no way related to Agamben's 'coming community', which must be connected by inessential commonalities rather than by coherent identity traits. But the queer porn community, although radical in many other ways, does contain a number of coherent identity traits. This leaves it open to almost immediate reterritorialisation, and an example of this is the way in which the clip is packaged very much as a commodity with a very specific set of identity configurations at its centre. As such, it is with comedy that these forms of deterritorialisation can more consistently be understood as positive in this sense, because the world which is being left behind has been completely destabilised by the very process of humour.

In the absolute/positive corner of the diagram the comment 'Wait, what just happened' has been used to represent the shock of the new and the way it releases the potentiality of the Lacanian real. Although it is impossible to know exactly what followed the writing of this comment, it does suggest that some level of desubjectivation has taken place, and that this is the type of experience that might have the potential to unmake the self in a way that will allow for the emergence of a singularity. Finally, in the absolute/negative corner of the diagram, this is an example of humour working in a slightly different way to how it has been used in this chapter so far. By making a joke about his grandmother-in-law (New Sensations, 2019), this user is trying to use excess against porn,

which will not have the same destabilising effect as the other forms of humour. Because it does not serve to ridicule the clip it consequently does not destabilise the identity of any users who might be watching it.

One of the central points that this study is trying to make is that it is not through production or content that porn should be understood, but through viewer engagement. The above diagram might be used as a way to assess different instances of viewing and engagement, to assess the radical and freeing elements not of the clip, but of the single experience of the viewer. Although there do seem to be patterns of content that might increase the likelihood of an act of viewing being positive/relative or positive/absolute, such as Hentai (and as mentioned, many of the jokes from the first half of this chapter are made by fans of Hentai), as things are, *any* single clip might serve as a form of liberatory act. For Deleuze the world is,

“teaming” with anonymous, nomadic, impersonal and pre individual singularities [which opens] up the field of the transcendental and allows thinking of individuals in terms of the singularities that are their condition, rather than in terms of the synthetic and analytic unities of conscious experience. (Lorraine, 2005: 207)

This is why it is important not to fix this model of the understanding of pornographic engagement as a structuralist project, as something which explains the mysteries of the unconscious, or attempts to return intersubjective relations to equilibrium (Young & Genosko, 2013: 273), but rather it should be oriented, just as Guattari makes clear in *The Machinic Unconscious*, ‘toward an experimentation in touch with the real’ (Guattari, 1979: 171). It defines a process leading to the release of potentiality that should be encouraged rather than prescribed, in which the individual realises that ‘it’s sometimes necessary to jump at the opportunity, to approve,

to run the risk of being wrong, to give it a go, to say, “yes, perhaps this experience is important”” (Young & Genosko, 2013: 272). As the following passage explains, spontaneity is important. Not knowing what will happen is critical to the process of deterritorialisation:

An improvisational jazz band forms a nomadic group, in contrast with a symphony orchestra: in the former, group coherence arises immanently from the activity of improvising itself, whereas in the symphony orchestra, it is imposed from above by a conductor performing a composer’s pre-established score. (Lorraine, 2005: 188)

This freeform, spontaneous jazz band is used here because although the musicians are part of territorialised space - they are highly trained musicians after all - they are deterritorialising it by rejecting the formalities and rules of musical composition. What makes it important is that they do not know what is going to happen and where the music will go when they sit down to play. Porn becomes music, mainstream porn becomes the symphony orchestra, and the anti-identitarian, queer or desubjectivising experience at the centre of this study becomes the jazz band. They are operating within the territorialised space of porn consumption, but they are resisting the algorithmic determinations of Pornhub’s attempts to steer their sexuality along striated, subjectivising paths, and are instead engaging with porn without really knowing what will happen next. The anti-porn campaign, and especially the situation that led to the removal of so much of Pornhub’s content, are the frustrated neighbours, determined to shut down the jazz band, though seemingly quite happy to tolerate the classical music. The good life and the affirmation of the individual through their singularity emerges from this spontaneity as a series of experiences, each signalling a derive from the individual’s usual patterns of behaviour.

In a recent Guardian article, journalist Alexis Petradis describes pop star Billie Eilish's audience as 'disaffected, hyper-creative youth' (Petradis, 2022), so perhaps there is a connection between these disaffected youths and the deterritorialising nomads at the centre of this study. These are the Gaga feminists of Chapter Four, who embody the 'practice of calling for a chaotic upending of normative categories in an act of sociopolitical anarchy' (Walsh, 2012). This creative disaffection drives the comedy and humour that has invaded people's engagement with pornography, and this disaffection comes from a deep suspicion of the symbolic order. What is critical to understand about this next generation, who appear to be a manifestation of Agamben's 'coming community' (1993), is that they number in their hundreds of millions.

It is important to assert that this study is by no means suggesting that every pornographic engagement corresponds with these ideas, but rather that potentialities seem to abound in this form of viewing. What needs to be asked of each experience is: Are these viewers turning back to face the object of their subjectivation, laughing at it, disempowering it, and having done this, are they then liberated enough to free their desire and enjoy their pleasure, which is not, as Lacan would argue, inextricably attached to their lack, but is, as Deleuze and Guattari suggest, 'a positive process of production that produces their reality' (1983: 18)? In this way, the intervention of this thesis can be formulated by a number of questions with regard to any comment: Does the individual appear to have emerged from the viewing of a pornography having experienced a 'positive, transformative existential intensification' (ibid)? One that leads to an 'affirmative, embodied comic laughter derived from radical difference [that will] prevent uncertainty from succumbing to paralysing abstract relativism' (ibid), whereby 'choices may still be made, actions taken, but without prior authorisation'? (ibid) Or did the symbolic order reassert itself with force? They may have become consumed by guilt and found their way to no-fap November or into the ideological folds of the various anti-porn campaigns. Or they may have become confused by some new and unfamiliar

source of pleasure and turn again to the familiar confines of territorialised forms of viewing, or to writing comments such as ‘that’s how real men fuck, babe’ (Pornforce, 2017).

There are also specific market forces that act in opposition to these deterritorialising patterns of pornographic viewing. A clear example of this is the way in which the comments sections for very popular clips are often algorithmically filled with thousands of comments whose intention is to attract the viewer towards what appears to be other porn, but what are usually cam or sex worker sites that are themselves masquerading as local hook-up sites. This is especially true for those clips that appear on Pornhub’s homepage. Take for example ‘He Cums Like A Horse - Choking On A Gallon Of Cum’ (Cute, 2023). In the three hours following its appearance on Pornhub’s homepage, this clip was filled with over 800 comments, all of which take the viewer to one of three fake hook-up sites. These comments each attempt to convince the viewer that ‘I WANT SEX IN THE SAME POSE fapze.net/fap19’, ‘Look my private photos here www.nicholekirlin.bid/aws’, ‘Make me anal! soos.es/oaig’ or ‘Guys rate pussy my eX girl soos.es/oaig’. In response, Pornhub remove millions of these comments every day. These opportunistic attempts to sell cam-shows to Pornhub viewers will have a stifling effect on the comedies that unfold in the comments section. They completely obscure the lines of flight that this chapter has argued have become available to the viewer through the comments sections on these websites, leading to many comments similar to the following comment by Tnessnegi: ‘Damn I was hoping to go into these comment and see something funny about how she answered the phone mid threesome all I got was bots on bots on bots’ (Brazzers, 2022).

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The central argument of this chapter makes a very simple claim. By engaging with online pornographies through the medium of laughter and comedy, the viewers at the centre of this chapter

are opening up for themselves a very specific form of freedom from the subjectivising impositions of the symbolic order. By laughing at pornography and ridiculing it, by using comedy as a form of opposition as the theories of comedy in this chapter suggest, these viewers are finding ways to do something that earlier chapters of this study might have considered unattainable. That is, they are being resubjectivised according to their own terms of engagement rather than those determined by the symbolic order.

This chapter then argued that Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari offer a theoretical model that allows for a further understanding of these patterns of viewing. Nomadology, lines of flight and deterritorialisation are all ideas that seem to apply to these viewers. The following quote sums up much of the argument contained in the second half of this chapter:

Lodge yourself on a stratum, experiment with the opportunities it offers, find an advantageous place on it, find potential movements of deterritorialization, possible lines of flight, experience them, produce flow conjunctions here and there, try out continuums of intensities segment by segment, have a small plot of new land at all times. It is through a meticulous relation with the strata that one succeeds in freeing lines of flight, causing conjugated flows to pass and escape and bringing forth continuous intensities... (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987: 161)

Just like any other form of contemporary culture, porn is in many ways a normative force. It offers normative models of sex, desire, pleasure and the body. These tendencies of comedic resistance can be defined as queer for the ways in which they operate as a form of resistance against these normativities. Perhaps any ethical approach to porn, or any attempt to construct an ethical justification of a porn clip, should do so not from the perspective of the content or the production,

but from the perspective of the viewer. How is the viewer engaging with a clip? Do they recognise it as nothing more than a representation? Do they understand the practices as ‘everyday’? Do they laugh at it or joke about it in any of the ways outlined in this chapter? Do they take it seriously? Does it subjectivise the individual according to what is deemed legitimate and acceptable by the symbolic order, or does it free the individual from the confines of their own identity, shattering the self, for however brief a moment?

CONCLUSION

This study has focused on the unintentional moments of desire that are revealed across a number of genres of online porn viewing, and which are expressed in porn comments – something that, I contend, has not been adequately taken into account in the field of porn studies research. The central argument of this thesis is that the emergence of an unintentional and non-identitarian desire that contradicts the individual's understanding of their own desire should be interpreted as a form of desubjectivation that is best understood through the Lacanian Real. In understanding desubjectivation through this prism, this thesis has argued that this can be defined as 'primary queerness', and signals what can be described as an 'emergent sexual sensibility', a new understanding of non-normative desire that may allow for a form of empowerment that has the potential to draw the individual away from the confines of more normative sexual identification. One of the reasons this appears to be taking place is because of the propensity of websites such as Pornhub to drop oddities onto their homepage in an attempt to broaden their markets. This results in individuals viewing these oddities out of prurient interest, but it is when the individual becomes unintentionally aroused that the possibility of desubjectivation emerges, leading to what this thesis has termed 'radical exposure'.

I have drawn a number of conclusions from this research, conclusions which have potentially significant implications for the way we understand porn consumption. Firstly, many viewers of porn whose sexual identities might be considered normative, are displaying non-normative sexual impulses with regard to the porn they are viewing. This suggests that there is a form of 'primary queerness', a queer universality, emerging in these individuals; a form of desire that corresponds with the Lacanian Real, that escapes the influence of subjectivised and identitarian

frameworks of desire, and that contains within it the potential for a form of non-identitarian renewal. Therefore, in the right conditions, identitarian frameworks of desire are less robust than previously understood. Secondly, these surprising and unexpected forms of desire can be defined according to Deleuze and Guattari's theory of 'lines of flight'. The reason for this is because websites such as Pornhub and XVideos will continuously reach into their 'immanent outside' in an attempt to expand their markets; they do this by dropping oddities onto their homepage, which results in creating a 'deterritorialised, smooth space' *within* a 'territorialised, striated space' - along with the private, non-social aspect of much porn viewing, these are ideal conditions for the nomadic behaviour that Deleuze and Guattari encourage in much of their work. This thesis defines this as 'radical exposure'. In summary, the primary desire that resides as a potentiality within the Lacanian Real displays here a propensity to completely disrupt subjectivised forms of identitarian desire. While many theorists believe that any engagement with the Lacanian Real can be treacherous and risky, this thesis shows that when it emerges in a space of privacy and concerns only the individual's relationship with themselves, rather than as something that must be navigated according to the social order and all of its subjectivising impositions, it appears to be far less treacherous than it is normally considered to be.

The development of this argument can open up important pathways for future research. The most significant contribution of this thesis is that it has exposed surprising and previously unexamined forms of porn viewing, something that can lead to further empirical research within the field of porn studies around themes of 'radical exposure', 'primary queerness' and 'emergent sexual sensibilities'. Furthermore, the theoretical framework developed in this thesis can potentially reconcile two formally opposed branches of queer theory. While it has long been considered that queer theory must be understood according to either identitarian and subjectivised interpretations of the self, as is the case with theorists such as Judith Butler, Mari Ruti and Lauren Berlant, *or*

according to the anti-identitarian and desubjectivised understandings of theorists such as Lee Edelman or Leo Bersani, this thesis opens the possibility of considering them together.

This thesis has examined porn comments from the perspective a number of different but related philosophical concepts, which in turn has allowed for a reconsideration of the philosophical concepts themselves. In this way this thesis is a study of the philosophy of desire.

When a viewer expresses a surprising or unpredictable reaction to a pornography - and this thesis has focussed on expressions of surprise, shock, anxiety, and humour - it seems clear that something about the pornography has caused an unfamiliar or unexpected response that cannot necessarily be traced back to the viewer's own subjectivised sexual identity. In this way it is an attempt to reconsider the subjectivised and often predictable connections between identity and the body, which can be defined as an overdetermination of coherence between desire and the self. Taking desire as 'universally indifferent' (Menon, 2015: 17) to the self, the thesis considers porn commentary - a previously unexamined resource - as a window onto this indifference, and one that can provide fascinating possibilities to questions that have not yet been asked.

After providing a critical literature review in Chapter One in order to identify the gaps in the research of the various disciplines currently engaging with online pornographies, Chapter Two was an examination of the various approaches to desire, pleasure and pornography of a number of social and cultural structures within contemporary society. This approach makes it possible to identify the instabilities, with regard to the relationship between society and the self, that allow for individuals to explore those pornographies that may lead to an experience of desubjectivation. These structures are clearly attempting to subjectivise the individual away from pornography, but if the attempts at subjectivation are inconsistent, contradictory, or unachievable, then the potential for desubjectivation remains intact.

Chapter Two firstly examined the state, which appears to be critical of pornography from an ideological perspective, but which also purports to allow for the freedom of choice more generally associated with a liberal society. One of the main instabilities on the part of the state, however, is in the way the behaviour of many state actors, through their often publicised use of pornography, results in a political culture of hypocrisy and contradiction. If the state is encouraging one type of behaviour, but often behaves in contradiction to this on an individual basis, then any condemnatory attitude towards pornography loses much of its subjectivising strength. Chapter Two then examined education, with a particular focus on PSHE provision. It illustrated the ways in which PSHE lessons most commonly approach the subject of sex, desire and pleasure from a position of risk, with little or no emphasis on the positive experiences of sex. PSHE strategies approach the individual as a problem to be overcome, and positions them within the paradoxical tension between rectifiability and incorrigibility, or between something that must be fixed and something that cannot be fixed. Using the work of Michel Foucault, this section of the chapter argued that positioning an individual as such will give them little choice but to search elsewhere for an understanding of their own frameworks of desire. This opens up what Deleuze and Guattari would refer to as a 'line of flight' (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987: 31). Similar 'lines of flight' open up with regard to the individual and the family. By rarely engaging beyond the potential victimhood of their teenage children, parents will take a similar position to PSHE providers, viewing them as recipients of culture, rather than the 'savvy' online actors that this section suggests they are. The fourth element of contemporary society that Chapter Two examined is referred to broadly as 'popular culture'. It considers the position of sex, desire and porn within examples of pop music, film and fashion. What becomes clear here is that many contemporary forms of popular culture have rendered 'mainstream' porn noticeably normative, which creates a desubjectivising split not between normative society and pornography, but between pornography that is mainstream and pornography that is not. So if these various subjectivising tendencies hinder people's relationship to desire, which consequently draws

them towards pornography, then desire's disrespect for limits will also open up a potential 'line of flight' between the viewer and the desubjectivising pornographies central to this thesis.

What this amounts to is that four of the most prevalent subjectivising structures in society are unstable in the ways in which they attempt to determine the individual within a normative framework of desire. This instability leaves intact the radical alterity of a desire that 'refuses the contours of a fixed body' (Menon, 2015: 17). This refusal becomes the lived experience of a significant number of people living in such a society.

Chapter Three examined the concept of desubjectivation more closely. It redefined the idea according to Jacques Lacan and his notion of the 'Real', making clear that for an experience to be desubjectivising it must be completely detached from the social order, language and the wilful decision making capacities of the subjectivised individual. It then repositioned this concept in line with Lacanian ethics, and attempted to strengthen this analysis by iteratively applying various articles from a number of academic journals. The central argument of this chapter was that this specific form of desubjectivation appears to be present within the expressions of shock, surprise, anxiety and disgust that are written by viewers of porn beneath the clips. It provided a number of these comments, and illustrated the ways in which they correspond with desubjectivation, adding a counterbalance to this by also providing a series of examples of more normative porn commentary. It is also at this point in the thesis that the concept of 'radical exposure' was properly articulated. This is the idea that when an individual is 'consuming' pornography, that is, choosing to 'take something into their body' (McKee et al. 2022: 6), due to the propensity of porn websites such as Pornhub to drop oddities onto their homepage, this 'consumption' will shift to 'exposure'. This is because when a viewer chooses to view one of these oddities for prurient interest rather than according to their sexual desire, the viewer will often become unintentionally aroused, thus allowing for this shift from 'consumption' to 'exposure'. Radical exposure is one of the original interventions in this thesis, and although such experiences are elusive with regard to being

articulated in the comments, this chapter provided a number of examples of instances where this appears to have taken place.

Because the individuals discussed in Chapter Three appear to be acting in an anti-normative way, and because queer theory is considered to be the radical negation of normativity, Chapter Four examined these patterns of behaviour from the perspective of various types of queer theory; in this way part of the intervention of this thesis constitutes an attempt to queer the comments it engages with. It argues that what is important with regard to the desubjectivising experience is not the material itself, but the experience, and what one does with it once it has happened. To remain with it is to become reabsorbed by the subjectivising tendencies of the social order, so it is important to move onto another experience that brings with it the same feeling, but which must be from a different type of desubjectivising material. In order to make this argument the chapter examined different branches of queer theory, and considered them alongside the definition of desubjectivation that was established in the previous chapter. It examined Butler's 'parodic repetition', Florêncio's 'pigsex', Edelman's strategic 'fuck you', and Halberstam's 'Gaga feminism', and aligned each with the type of pornographic practice that corresponds to the theory, concluding that it is with 'Gaga feminism' that the desubjectivation of this thesis finds its closest connection, which importantly foregrounds becoming over being, and the 'moving onto something else' that Foucault says is important with regard to any 'limit experience'.

Chapter Five considered questions of reality and representation within porn from the perspective of post truth narratives. It argued that searching for a form of reality within the frameworks of representation in pornography, which is a commonality among various strands of porn viewing, bears similarities to the ways in which individuals engage with post truth narratives. Using Ignas Kalpokas' argument that the desirable object central to post truth narratives is not truth but pleasure, and that the individual will forego any notions of truth in order to gain this form of pleasure, this chapter illustrated the ways in which this corresponds with the search for reality in

pornography (Kalpokas, 2019). By considering three forms of reality in pornography and the comments written beneath them, it argued that this type of viewing can be aligned with what I have defined as a ‘third slope’ of representation, whereby the viewer reaches beyond what is a clear representation to what they believe is a form of reality, only to find themselves in a third space, where for them, the representation becomes a form of illusory reality. This chapter then considered this according to the work of the previous three chapters, arguing that those who experience desubjectivation usually do so by rejecting reality completely. Because desubjectivation must come from a place in opposition to normative regimes of desire and representation, a rejection of this form of representation appears to be a prerequisite for desubjectivation; that is, those who experience desubjectivation do not do so as a result of any search for reality in porn.

The final chapter (Six) of this thesis argued that those expressions of humour that can be found amongst many of the comment threads across all genres of pornography can be considered to be small acts of resistance that might often be the result of the desubjectivising experience. It provided descriptions of a number of theories of comedy and laughter, each of which offers the individual some level of respite from the social order, and aligned each theory with one of the many forms of humour that can be found in the comments. It argued that these comedic expressions can be understood as corresponding with Deleuze and Guattari’s idea of ‘lines of flight’, which ‘deterritorialise’ individuals away from the categorisable, quantifiable and predictable structures, or ‘striated spaces’ (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987: 402), that can be found across normative forms of porn viewing. Citing Deleuze and Guattari, Brian Massumi argues that such ‘lines of flight’ are possible within capitalist spaces because capitalism must always reach into its ‘immanent outside’ (2019: 9) in order to broaden its markets. Unlike the inside of this space, the outside is a chaotic and unwieldy place where potential for growth may lie, but where unpredictability reigns. This is why this approach to philosophy is one grounded in optimism; it seeks to reveal the potentialities of

resistance and empowerment within a space that is often considered rigid and oppressively subjectivising, which is also what makes it most relevant to comedy within porn viewing.

The intervention that this thesis has made is not one grounded in empirical evidence, and it does not purport to offer unequivocal proof with regard to the arguments it has made. Instead, by illustrating one way in which ‘primary desire’ and ‘primary queerness’ are very similar, if not the same thing, it has attempted to refine, redefine, and reconfigure a number of the related concepts and forms of engagement that it has examined - it has revealed an example of queer universality, it has demonstrated that for desubjectivation to take place it must occur in opposition to the social order, and it has used its central examples of porn commentary to suggest a way in which the opposing positions within queer theory might yet be synthesised. For Deleuze and Guattari, philosophy is the creation of concepts, and this thesis has formulated a new meaning of the concept of desubjectivation according to the engagements with porn that are central to this research. When a component is added to a concept, which can be understood as a description of what has taken place in this thesis, ‘the concept will probably break up or undergo a complete change...’ write Deleuze and Guattari in *What is Philosophy?* (1994: 31). This thesis has redefined the concept of desubjectivation by considering it according to what appears to be a previously unexplored culture of desiring individuals. Its contribution to knowledge is in the way it identifies potentialities of desubjectivation in porn commentary, and then queers them according to a specific configuration of queer theory. It is a radical queering of normativity, that in turn allows for a possible reconsideration of both queer and normative desire. The necessary conditions for this to take place are twofold: firstly, the individual must be in a place of privacy, so that the only element of the social order that can coerce the subject back into their familiar regimes of subjectivation is the individual themselves; this is why ‘radical exposure’ is important, because it allows the individual’s ‘primary desire’ to intervene in the subjectivised individual’s understanding of their own desire. Secondly, although the Lacanian self is always ready to engage with a potentially desubjectivising

experience, the materials must also be available for this to take place. This is the reason why this thesis focusses on sites such as Pornhub and XVideos, because the sites' attempts to align their algorithmic strategies with the chaotic indifference of desire, which can be understood as their attempt to reach into the immanent outside of their consumer base, has the potential to result in the chaos that can allow for desubjectivation.

There are a number of possibilities for further research that have emerged from this thesis. The first, and possibly most interesting, is the question of what happens when identity is re-applied to the concept of desubjectivation. Although desubjectivation is connected to the universality of desire's willingness to act beyond frameworks of identity, identity is still very much a part of the social world. The reason this is important is that although desubjectivation must operate according to the non-identitarian part of the self, there is still an identity in the background as it is taking place. So if an experience of desubjectivation is to disrupt the identity in a positive way, by freeing up a 'line of flight', there is still the social order to contend with following this experience. In this way the various structural and systemic privileges/disadvantages of identity will still come into play when the individual attempts to use desubjectivation to move into a less subjectivised, or less striated space. Those whose identities are less privileged and more oppressed, particularly non-male and non-white individuals, will face a different level of resistance from the social order as they attempt to find the empowerment that can be found through desubjectivation. If this thesis is to inspire further research, it seems that this would be an important point of departure. Another possibility for future research would be to approach these comments from a very different disciplinary approach. Much work has been carried out on pornography from the perspective of more traditional social research strategies, such as interviews, questionnaires and surveys. Although this thesis has justified its disciplinary strategy from the perspective of intentionality, and from the position that one of the first principles of desire from an analytical perspective is that desire will often compel an individual to behave in a way that was unintended, unwanted, or surprising, it

would nevertheless be interesting, and no doubt illuminating, to ask these viewers how they felt before, during and after this instance of potential desubjectivation.

The final point concerns queerness, and especially the idea that queerness is always-already present in the self, regardless of the severity of subjectivation, and regardless of the ‘rigid binary choices between two terms’ (Bernini, 2021:64) that subjectivation imposes. It is universally present, ‘empty of content, revolutionary, indifferent’ (Menon, 2015: 18), and resides beneath the surface of normative regimes of acceptable understandings of desire. This thesis, then, acts as an illustration of this approach to queerness; by revealing the non-normative, queer moments of desire that individuals experience when faced with ‘radical exposure’, it has consequently revealed the indifference of desire with regard to normative frameworks of sexual identity. When individuals whose sexualities are normatively established stumble over an unfamiliar or odd porn clip, and when their attempt to consume the clip out of prurient interest turns into arousal and therefore ‘radical exposure’, or when their desire broadens out away from the normative confines of more mainstream materials, their articulations and expressions of shock, surprise or disgust should potentially be understood as a small and often momentary manifestation of this queerness, and might be defined as an ‘emergent sexual sensibility’. That is, queer universality exists, but it must first be allowed to penetrate the identitarian ground that it has been buried beneath by the histories and cultures of the social order. This thesis serves as a reminder that the radical and empowering alterity of queerness remains a potentiality within everyone.

BIBLIOGRAPHY OF WRITTEN MATERIALS

Agamben, G. (1990). *The Coming Community*. Minnesota: Minneapolis.

Agamben, G. (2000). *Means Without End: Notes on Politics*. Trans. Vincenzo Binetti and Cesare Casarino. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Agamben, G. (2007). *Profanations*. Trans. Jeff Fort. New York: Zone.

Aggleton, P. and Campbell, C. (2000). *Working with young people – towards an agenda for sexual health*. *Sexual and Relationship Therapy*, Volume 15 (3): 283–296.

Allen, L. (2008) “‘They think you shouldn’t be having sex anyway’”: young people’s suggestions for improving sexuality education content’. *Sexualities*, Volume 11 (5): 573–594.

Allen, L. (2004) ‘Beyond the birds and the bees: constituting a discourse of erotics in sexuality education’. *Gender & Education*, Volume 16 (2): 151–167.

Amir, L. (2022). *The Legacy of Nietzsche’s Philosophy of Laughter*. Routledge: London.

Angelides, S. (2013) “‘Technology, hormones, and stupidity’”: the affective politics of teenage sexting’. *Sexualities*. Volume 16 (5/6): 665–689.

Anonymous. (2019). *Age 19 – Read Your Brain on Porn. I owe most of my success to it..* Available: <https://www.yourbrainonporn.com/rebooting-accounts/rebooting-accounts-page-3/age-18-i-am-more-energetic-more-confident-and-happier-overall/>. Last accessed 30th Jan, 2021.

Anonymous. (2020). *Age 14 – With more energy I discovered a passion for philosophy and mathematics*. Available: <https://www.yourbrainonporn.com/rebooting-accounts/rebooting-accounts-page-3/age-14-with-more-energy-i-discovered-a-passion-for-philosophy-and-mathematics/>. Last accessed 30th Jan, 2021.

Anonymous. (2020). *ED, DE, prone masturbation – my success story*. Available: <https://www.yourbrainonporn.com/rebooting-accounts/rebooting-accounts-page-3/ed-de-prone-masturbation-my-success-story/>. Last accessed 30th Jan, 2021.

- Anonymous. (2020). *True Story: How Hentai Porn And Chat Rooms Twisted My Sex Life*. Available: <https://fightthenewdrug.org/hentai-porn-chat-room-role-play-distorted-my-sexuality/>. Last accessed 30th Jan, 2021.
- Arvidsson, A. (2007). Netporn: The Work of Fantasy in the Information Society. In: *C'Lick Me: A Netporn Studies Reader*, by Jacobs, K. Janssen, M. Pasquinelli, M. 69–76. Amsterdam: Institute of Network Cultures.
- Ashley, V. (2015). Porn–artifice–performance–and the problem of authenticity. In: *Porn Studies*. 3, (2). 187-190.
- Assumpcao, P. (2009). *Review: Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity by José Esteban Muñoz*. Available: <https://hemi.nyu.edu/hemi/en/e-misferica-71/assumpcao>. Last accessed 3rd Feb 2021.
- Attwood, F. Maina, G. Smith, C. (2018). Conceptualising, researching and writing about pornography. in: *Porn Studies*. 5, 1: 1-5.
- Attwood, F. Mercer, J. Smith, C. (2023). Editorial. In: *Porn Studies*. 10, 2. 117-119.
- Attwood, F. (2002). Reading porn: the paradigm shift in pornography research. *Sexualities*, 5 (1), 91-105.
- Barratt, M. Madox, A. (2016). Active engagement with stigmatised communities through digital ethnography. *Quantitative Research*. 16(6), pp.701-719.
- Bassett, E. H., & O’Riordan, K. (2002). Ethics of Internet research: Contesting the human subjects research model. *Ethics and Information Technology*, 4(3), 233–247.
- Bataille, G (1962). *Eroticism: Death and Sensuality*. San Francisco: City Lights.
- Bataille, G. (1954). *The Inner Experience*. SUNY: New York.
- Bataille, G. (2017). *The Sacred Conspiracy*. Eds: Galletti, M. Brotchie, A. Atlas: London.
- Baudrillard, J. (1995). *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place*. Indiana University Press: Indiana.
- Baudrillard, J. (2004). *Simulacra and Simulation*. Michigan Press: Michigan.
- Bernini, L. (2021). *An Introduction to Queer Theory*. Routledge: London.
- Bernini, L. (2017). *Queer Apocalypses: Elements of AntiSocial Theory*. Palgrave: London.
- Bersani, H. (1996). *Homos*. Harvard University Press: New York.

- Bersani, Leo. (1987). Is the rectum a grave?. *October* 43 (3) 197–222.
- Bersani, L. (2018). *Receptive Bodies*. University of Chicago Press: London.
- Blake, P. (2019). *Age verification for online porn: more harm than good?*. [Online]. <https://www.tandfonline.com/>. Last Updated: 26 Feb 2019. Available at: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/23268743.2018.1555054> [Accessed 7 November 2023].
- Blanchot, M. (1995). Literature and the Right to Death. In: *The Work of Fire*. Stanford: California.
- Blanchot, M. (1995a). Reflections on Surrealism. In: *The Work of Fire*. Stanford: California.
- Bruns, G. (2010). *On Ceasing to be Human*. Stanford University Press: California.
- Buchanan, I. (2008). *Deleuze and Guattari's Anti-Oedipus*. Continuum: London.
- Burnham, D. (2012). *The Nietzsche Dictionary*. Bloomsbury: London.
- Butler, J. (2011). *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limit of "Sex"*. Routledge: London.
- Butler, J. (1990). *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. Routledge: London.
- Butler, J. (2005). *Giving and Account of Oneself*. Fordham University Press: New York.
- Butler, J. (1997). *The Psychic Life of Power*. Stanford University Press: Stanford.
- Cameron, D. (2013). *David Cameron's porn speech in full*. Available: <https://www.politics.co.uk/comment-analysis/2013/07/22/david-camerons-porn-speech-in-full/>. Last accessed 9th Feb 2021.
- Cameron, D. (2010). *Too Much, Too Young*. Available: <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-1252156/DAVID-CAMERON-Sexualisation-children-too-young.html>. Last accessed 3rd Feb 2021.
- Cardenas, M. (2014). #QUEER #FISTING #PORN: Queer Porn as Postcapitalist Virus. In: *Porn After Porn*. Eds: Biasin, E. Maina, G. Mimesis: New York.
- Cardi B. (2020). *WAP*. Available: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hsm4poTWjMs&ab_channel=CardiB. Last accessed 3rd Feb 2021.
- Chandler, D. Munday, R. (2020). *Oxford Dictionary of Media and Communication. 3rd Ed*. Oxford University Press. Oxford.
- Cornell, D. (1995). *The Imaginary Domain*. Routledge: New York.

- Cortese, A.J. (2008). *Provocateur: Images of Women and Minorities in Advertising*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Inc.
- Coleman, R. Ringrose, J. (2013). *Deleuze and Research Methodologies*. Edinburgh University Press: Edinburgh.
- Coleman, L. (2018). The Gentle Side of Pornography. In: *The Philosophy of Pornography*. Eds: Coleman, L. Held, J. Rowman and Littlefield: London.
- Coleman, L. Held, J. (2018). *The Philosophy of Pornography*. Eds: Coleman, L. Held, J. Rowman and Littlefield: London.
- Critchley, S. (2002). *On Humour*. Routledge: London.
- Critchley, S. (2004). *Very Little...Almost Nothing: Death, Philosophy, Literature*. Routledge: London.
- Cruz, J. (2017). *Miley Cyrus VMA 2013 with Robin Thicke SHOCKED*. Available: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LfcvmABhmxs&ab_channel=JuanManuelCruz. Last accessed 3rd Feb 2021.
- D'Ancona, M. (2008). *The Jesus Papyrus: The Most Sensational Evidence on the Origins of the Gospels Since the Discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls*. Random House: London.
- D'Ancona, M. (2018). *Post Truth: The New War on Truth and How to Fight Back*. Ebury: London.
- Daniel, D. (2010). Trading Futures: Queer Theory's anti-anti-relational turn. In *Criticism*. 56. (5). 325-330.
- Daskalopoulou, A. Zanette, M. (2020). Women's Consumption of Pornography: Pleasure, Contestation, and Empowerment. *British Sociological Association*. 54(5), p.-. [Online]. Available at: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0038038520918847> [Accessed 14 June 2023].
- Deleuze, G. Guattari, F. (1997). *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Minnesota Press: Minneapolis.
- Deleuze, G. Guattari, F. (1987). *A Thousand Plateaus*. Minnesota: Minneapolis.
- Deleuze, G. (1986). *Foucault*. Minnesota Press: London.
- Deleuze, G. (1991). *Masochism: Coldness and Cruelty*. Zone Books: London.
- Deleuze, G. Guattari, F. (1984). *What is Philosophy?* University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis.

- Department for Education. (2019). *Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education*. Available: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/908013/Relationships_Education__Relationships_and_Sex_Education__RSE__and_Health_Education.pdf. Last accessed 29th Jan, 2021.
- Dines, G. (2017). *Culture Reframed: Helping Build Resilience and Resistance to Hypersexualised Media and Porn*. Available: <https://www.culturereframed.org/>. Last accessed 30th Jan, 2021.
- Doan, A. (2015). *Statement of Faith*. Available: <http://www.andrew-doan.com/statement-of-faith.html>. Last accessed 30th Jan, 2021.
- Duggan, L. (2002). The New Homonormativity: The Sexual Politics of Neoliberalism. In: *Materializing Democracy: Toward a Revitalized Cultural Politics*. Duke: New York.
- Duncan, T. (2014). Utopian Futures of the “Other”. In: *The Philosophy of Pornography*. Rowman: London.
- Dymock, A. (2011). But femsub is broken too! On the normalisation of BDSM and the problem of pleasure. *Psychology & Sexuality*. 3(1), pp.54-68.
- Dworkin, A. (1981). *Pornography: Men Possessing Women*. The Woman’s Press: London.
- Eagleton, T. (1983). *Literary Theory: An Introduction*. Blackwell: London.
- The Economist*. (2016, September 10). Art of the Lie. <https://www.economist.com/news/leaders/21706525-politicians-have-always-lied-does-it-matter-if-they-leave-truth-behind-entirely-art>. Accessed 8 January 2018.
- Edelman, L. (2016). An Ethics of Desubjectivation? In: *differences*. 27 (3): 106–118.
- Edelman, L. (2017). Learning Nothing: Bad Education. In: *Differences*. 28(1): 124-173.
- Edelman, Lee. (2005). *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive*. Durham: Duke.
- Edelman, L. Berlant, L. (2014). *Sex, or the Unbearable*. Duke: London.
- Endinghiv. (2017). *How to have anal sex (R18)*. Available: <https://www.endinghiv.org.nz/articles/sex/how-to-have-anal-sex-r18/>. Last accessed 3rd Feb 2021.
- Evans, D. (1995). *An Introductory Dictionary to Lacan*. Routledge: London.

- Florêncio, J. (2020). *Bareback Porn, Porous Masculinities, Queer Futures: The Ethics of Becoming Pig*. Routledge: London.
- Ford, R. (2016). Humour, Law and Jurisprudence. *Journal of Theoretical Humanities*. 21, (3). 89-102.
- Foubert, J, D. (2023). *John D Foubert: About*. [Online]. Dr John D. Foubert. Last Updated: -. Available at: <https://www.johnfoubert.com/> [Accessed 7 November 2023].
- Foubert, J. (2017) "The Public Health Harms of Pornography: The Brain, Erectile Dysfunction, and Sexual Violence," *Dignity: A Journal of Analysis of Exploitation and Violence*: 2(3), 6.
- Foucault, M. (1991). *Abnormal: Lectures at the College de France 1974-1975*. Verso: London.
- Foucault, M. (2003). *Birth of the Clinic*. Routledge: London.
- Foucault, M. (2020). *Discipline and Punish*. Penguin Classics: London.
- Foucault, M. (1994). *Ethics, Subjectivity and Truth*. Gallimard: New York.
- Foucault, M. (2011). *The Gay Science*. In: *Critical Inquiry*. 37. (3): 385-403
- Foucault, M. (1998). *The History of Sexuality: Volume 1*. Penguin: London.
- Foucault, M. (1990). *History of Sexuality, Volume Two: The Use of Pleasure*. Vintage: New York.
- Foucault, M. (2015). *Language, Madness and Desire*. Minnesota Press: Minnesota.
- Foucault, M. (1990). *Politics, Philosophy, Culture*. Routledge: London.
- Foucault, M. (1977), *Power, Knowledge. Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-77*. Pantheon: New York.
- Foucault, M. (2003a). A Preface to Transgression. trans. Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon, *The Essential Foucault: Selections from Essential Works of Foucault, 1954–1984*, ed. Paul Rabinow and Nikolas Rose. New York: New Press.
- Foucault, M. (1984). *The Foucault Reader*. Ed: Rabinow, P. Pantheon: New York.
- Foucault, M. (2001). *The Order of Things*. Routledge: London.
- Foucault, M. (1988). *Politics, Philosophy and Culture*. Routledge: London.
- Foucault, M. (1977), *Power, Knowledge. Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-77*. Pantheon: New York.

- Freud, S. (1987). Civilization and Its Discontents. In: *Civilization, Society and Religion*. Middlesex: London.
- Gavey, N. (2012). Beyond 'empowerment'? Sexuality in a sexist world. In: *Sex Roles*. 66, (11): 718–724.
- Giroux, C. (2021). Early exposure to pornography: a form of sexual trauma. *Journal of Psychiatry Reform*. 10(15), p. 1-4. [Online]. Available at: <https://journalofpsychiatryreform.com/2021/12/07/early-exposure-to-pornography-a-form-of-sexual-trau> [Accessed 14 June 2023].
- Giddens, A. (1994). Living in a Post-Traditional Society. In U. Beck, A. Giddens, & S. Lash (Eds.) *Reflexive Modernization: Politics, Tradition and Aesthetics in the Modern Social Order*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Goffman, E. (1986). *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*. Schuster: CA.
- Goldstein, A. (2020). *Beyond porn literacy: drawing on young people's pornography narratives to expand sex education pedagogies*. [Online]. tandfonline.com. Last Updated: 29 May 2019. Available at: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/14681811.2019.1621826> [Accessed 7 November 2023].
- Goldstein, A. (2021). Learner, laugher, lover, critic: young women's normative and emerging orientations towards pornography. *PornStudies*, 8:1, 5-20, DOI: [10.1080/23268743.2020.1736608](https://doi.org/10.1080/23268743.2020.1736608)
- Guattari, F. (1979). *The Mechanic Unconscious*. Semiotext: LA.
- Goss, K. (2019). Pornography, psychoanalysis and the sinthome: ignorance and ethics. In: *Porn Studies*. 6, 1. 59-73.
- Grant, M. (2020). *Nick Kristof and the Holy War on Pornhub*. [Online]. newrepublic.com. Last Updated: Dec 10 2020. Available at: <https://newrepublic.com/article/160488/nick-kristof-holy-war-pornhub> [Accessed 7 November 2023].
- Grebowicz, M. (2013). *Why Internet Pornography Matters*. Stanford Briefs: California.
- Guattari, F. (1991). *Soft Subversions: Texts and Interviews 1977-85*. Semiotext: CA.
- Gucci. Van Sant, G.. (2021). *Episode 1: At Home | Ouverture Of Something That Never Ended | Silvia Calderoni and Paul B. Preciado*. Available: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zKqbG6TLYnc&t=613s&ab_channel=GUCCI. Last accessed 25th Jan 2022.
- Gutting G. (2005). *Foucault: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford University Press: Oxford.

- Halberstam, J. (2012). *Gaga Feminism: Sex, Gender and the End of Normal*. Beacon: Boston.
- Halberstam, J. (2011). *The Queer Art of Failure*. Duke: London.
- Halley, J. (2006). *Split Decision: How and Why to take a Break from Feminism*. Princeton University Press: Princeton.
- Halperin, D. (1996). *Saint Foucault: Towards a Gay Hagiography*. Oxford University Press: New York.
- Halperin, D. (2003). *The normalizing of queer theory*. *Journal of Homosexuality*. Binghamton, N.Y.: Haworth Press. **45** (2–4): 343.
- Hancock, B. Garner, R. (2009). *Changing Theories: New Directions in Sociology*. University of Toronto Press: Toronto.
- Hanson, E. (2018). *Internet porn: top tips for how to respond*. Available: <https://parentinfo.org/article/internet-porn-top-tips-for-how-to-respond>. Last accessed 29th Jan, 2021.
- Hanson, E. (2020). *What is the Impact of Pornography on Young People: A Research Briefing*. PSHE Association.
- Hanson, E. (2021). *talks-papers-media*. [Online]. <https://www.drellyhanson.com/>. Available at: <https://www.drellyhanson.com/talks-papers-media> [Accessed 15 February 2024]
- Hasinoff, A.A. (2015) *Sexting Panic: Rethinking Criminalization, Privacy, and Consent*. Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press.
- Healy-Cullen, S. (2022). *How do youth, parents, and educators use discursive sexual scripts to make sense of youth engagement with internet porno*. [Online]. tandfonline.com. Last Updated: 17 Nov 2022. Available at: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/23268743.2022.2125898> [Accessed 7 November 2023].
- Hester, H. (2013). *Beyond Explicit*. SUNY Press: New York.
- Hills, M. (2002). *Fan cultures*. London: Routledge.
- Holland, E. (2015). Deleuze and Psychoanalysis. In: *The Cambridge Companion to Deleuze*. Eds: Smith, D. Somers, E. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge.

- Horbeit, S. (2022). *Pornhub's Year in Review: Here Are 5 LGBTQ Porn Trends That Defined 2021*. [Online]. <https://hornet.com/>. Last Updated: Jan 14 2022. Available at: <https://hornet.com/stories/pornhubs-year-in-review-lgbtq-porn-trends/> [Accessed 7 November 2023].
- Horbury, A. (2019). A psychoanalytic ethics of the pornographic aesthetic. In: *Porn Studies*.
- Huffer, L. (2020). *Foucault's Strange Eros*. New York: Columbia University Press
- Huffer, L. (2010). *Mad for Foucault: Rethinking the Foundations of Queer Theory*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Heywood, C. (2018). 'Leaving masculinity at the car door': Dogging, de-subjectification and the pursuit of pleasure. *Sexualities*. 21(4), pp.587-604.
- Irvine, J. (2018). *Dirty words, shameful knowledge, and sex research*. [Online]. tandfonline.com. Last Updated: 29 Jan 2018. Available at: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/23268743.2017.1386124> [Accessed 7 November 2023].
- Jacobs, K. (2010). Lizzy Kinsey and the Adult Friendfinders: an ethnographic study of Internet sex and pornographic self-display in Hong Kong. In: *Culture, Health and Sexuality*. 12, (6). 691-703.
- Jacobs, K, S. (2014). Undisciplining Pornography Studies. In: *The Philosophy of Pornography*. Rowman: London.
- Jearey-Graham, N. Macleod, C. (2015). 'A Discourse of Disconnect: Young People from the Eastern Cape Talk About the Failure of Adult Communications to Provide Habitable Sexual Subject Positions.' *Perspectives in Education* 33 (2): 11–29.
- Jenks, C. (2003). *Transgression*. Routledge: London.
- Johnson, A. (2017). Reliability of Measurement. In: *The Sage Encyclopedia of Communication Research Methods*. Ed: Allen, M. Sage: London.
- Jordan, L. (2023). *Kim Kardashian's Nipple Bra Isn't For Everyone, And That's Ok*. [Online]. [elle.com/](https://www.elle.com/uk/fashion/celebrity-style/a45734912/kim-kardashian-nipple-bra-not-for-everyone). Last Updated: 3 Nov 2023. Available at: <https://www.elle.com/uk/fashion/celebrity-style/a45734912/kim-kardashian-nipple-bra-not-for-everyone> [Accessed 7 November 2023].
- Kalpokas, I. (2019a). Joy to the World: The Satisfaction of Post Truth. *Soft Power*. 20, 6. (1).
- Kalpokas, I. (2018). On guilt and post-truth escapism: Developing a theory of Post Truth. In: *Philosophy and Social Criticism*. 44 (10), 1.

- Kalpokas, I. (2019). *A Political Theory of Post Truth*. Palgrave: London.
- Kant, I. (1991). *Groundwork for the Metaphysic of Morals*. Routledge: London.
- Kipnis, L. (1998). *Bound and Gagged*. Duke University Press: Carolina.
- Klein, J. T. (2012). Research integration: A comparative knowledge base. In A. F. Repko, W. H. Newell, & R. Szostak, *Case studies in interdisciplinary research*. Sage Publications.
- Koksal, F. (2021). *Compulsive Conditioned Sexual Responding of Male Japanese Quail in Extinction*. Available: <https://www.yourbrainonporn.com/relevant-research-and-articles-about-the-studies/sexual-conditioning/compulsive-conditioned-sexual-responding-of-male-japanese-quail-in-extinction/>. Last accessed 30th Jan, 2021.
- Kozinets R. (2010). *Netnography: Doing ethnographic research online*. London, England: Sage.
- Kozinets, R. (2015). *Netnography: Redefined*. Sage: London.
- Kristoff, N. (2020). *The Children of Pornhub*. Available: <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/12/04/opinion/sunday/pornhub-rape-trafficking.html>. Last accessed 3rd Feb 2021.
- Kuhn, A. (1994). *The power of the image: Essays on representation and sexuality*. London: Routledge.
- Lacan, J. (2005). *Ecrits: The First Complete Edition in English*. Norton: New York.
- Lacan, J. (2007). *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*. Routledge: London.
- Lacan, J. (1977). *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*. Norton: London.
- Lacan, J. (1989). Kant Avec Sade. *October*. 51 (1), 55-75.
- Lacan, J. (1973). *Television*. Norton: New York.
- Laclau, E. (2006). Why Constructing a People Is the Main Task of Radical Politics? *Critical Inquiry*, 32(4), 646–680.
- Lacquer, T. (2003). *Solitary Sex: A Cultural History of Masturbation*. Zone Books: London.
- LaPlanche, Jean. (1999). Masochism and the General Theory of Seduction. In *Essays on Otherness*. London, New York: Routledge.
- Law, J. (2004). *After Method: Mess in Social Science*. Routledge: London.

- Levine, S. (2017). *Why Women My Age Are Reading 50 Shades*. Available: https://www.huffpost.com/entry/why-women-my-age-are-read_b_1434554. Last accessed 3rd Feb 2021.
- Ley, D. (2020). *Science Stopped Believing in Porn Addiction and You Should Too*. Available: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/gb/blog/women-who-stray/201808/science-stopped-believing-in-porn-addiction-you-should-too>. Last accessed 3rd Feb 2021.
- Litsou, K. Graham, C. Ingham, R. (2021). Women in Relationships and Their Pornography Use: A Systematic Review and Thematic Synthesis. In: *Journal of Sex and Marital Therapy*. 42, 4. 381-413.
- Long, C. (2022). *I've Got to Live with Being the Tractor Porn MP*. [Online]. The Times. Available at: <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/neil-parish-ive-got-to-live-with-being-the-tractor-porn-mp-6jpnzk> [Accessed 30 November 2022].
- Longstaff, G. (2019). 'Bodies that splutter– ' theorizing jouissance in bareback and chemsex porn. *Porn Studies*. 6(1), pp.74-86. [Online]. Available at: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/23268743.2018.1559090> [Accessed 16 October 2023].
- Lorraine, T. (2005). *The Deleuze Dictionary*. Ed: Parr, A. Edinburgh University Press: Edinburgh.
- Lune, S. (2011). Interview Shine Louise Houston by Sadie Lune. In: *Bend Over Magazine*, no. 4.
- MacKinnon, C. (1994). *Feminism Unmodified: Discourses on Life and Law*. Harvard: Cambridge
- MacKinnon, C. Dworkin, A. (1988). *Pornography and Civil Rights: A New Day for Women's Equality*. Organising Against Pornography: Minneapolis.
- MacKinnon, C. (1985). *Pornography, Civil Rights and Speech*. In: Harvard Civil Rights-Civil Law Review. 20 (2). 1-71
- MacKinnon, C. (1984). Not a Moral Issue. In: *Yale Law & Policy Review*. 2. (2). 321-345.
- Malik, S. (2015). *Boris Johnson: jihadis are porn-watching 'wankers'*. Available: <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2015/jan/30/boris-johnson-jihadis-are-porn-watching-wankers>. Last accessed 3rd Jan 2021.
- Marks, L. (2018). That wasn't meant to be funny: mirth and the porn scholar. *Porn Studies*. 5:1, 20-26, DOI: 10.1080/23268743.2017.1415037

- Martina, M. (2020). *Afro-Caribbean Women Reclaiming their Bodies and Sexuality: Nicki Minaj and Cardi B's Ambivalent Self-Portrayals*. Available: <https://popmec.hypotheses.org/3304>. Last accessed 3rd Feb 2021.
- Martin, Nina K. (2006). Never Laugh at a Man with his Pants Down: The Affective Dynamics of Comedy and Porn. In *Pornography: Film and Culture*, edited by Peter Lehman, 189–205. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.
- Massumi, B. (2019). *99 Theses on the Reevaluation of Value*. Minnesota Press: London.
- Massumi, B. In: Deleuze, G. Guattari, F. (1987). *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Minnesota Press: London.
- Massumi, B. (2002). Navigating Movements: in *Hope*, ed: Mary Zournazi. New York: Routledge.
- McGlotten, S. (2014). Zombie porn: necropolitics, sex, and queer socialities. In: *Porn Studies*. 1, 4. 360-377.
- McGowan, T. (2017). *Only a Joke Can Save Us*. Northwestern Press: Illinois.
- McKee, A. (2018). *The pornography consumer as Other*. In: *The Routledge Companion to Media, Sex and Sexuality*. Eds: Smiths, C. McNair, B. Routledge: Oxon.
- McKee, A. Litsou, K. Byron, P. Ingham, R. (2022). *What Do We Know About the Effects of Pornography After Fifty Years of Academic Research*. London: Routledge.
- McQueen, S. (2016). *Deleuze and Baudrillard: From Cyberpunk to Biopunk*. Edinburgh University Press: Edinburgh.
- Mehlman, J. (1972). The "Floating Signifier": In: *From Lévi-Strauss to Lacan, French Freud: Structural Studies in Psychoanalysis*. Yale French Studies, No. 48, F (1972), pp. 10–37.
- Menon, M. (2015). *Indifference to Difference: On Queer Universalism*. University of Minnesota Press: London.
- Mesli, R. (2015). Gayle Rubin's Concept of "Benign Sexual Variation": A Critical Concept for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality. In: *South Atlantic Quarterly*. October. 803-826.
- Miles, E. (2020). Porn as practice, porn as access: pornography consumption and a 'third sexual orientation' in Japan. In: *Porn Studies*. 7, 3. 269-278.

- Miller, P. (2007). Lacan's Antigone: The Sublime Object and the Ethics of Interpretation. in *Phoenix*. 61 (1-2), 1-14.
- Morgan, R. (1974). Theory and Practice: Pornography and Rape. In: *Going too Far: The Personal Chronicle of a Feminist*. Random House: University of Virginia.
- Morris, P. (2017). Triangulation. In: *The Sage Encyclopedia of Communication Research Methods*. Ed: Allen, M. Sage: London..
- Mowlabocus, S. Wood, R. (2015). Introduction: audiences and consumers of porn. *Porn Studies*. 2(2-3), pp.118-122. [Online]. Available at: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/23268743.2015.1056465> [Accessed 16 October 2023].
- Munoz, J, E. (2009). *Cruising Utopia*. New York University Press: New York.
- Munoz, E. Dean, T. Edelman, L. Halberstam, J. (2005). The Antisocial Thesis in Queer Theory. *PMLA*. 121, (3). 819-828.
- Murray, A. Whyte, J. (2011). *The Agamben Dictionary*. Edinburgh University Press: Edinburgh.
- Nedoh & Zevnik. (2017). *Lacan and Deleuze: A Disjunctive Synthesis*. Edinburgh University Press: Edinburgh.
- Newman, S. (2022). Post-truth and the Controversy over Postmodernism. Or, was Trump Reading Foucault? In: *Continental Thought and Theory*. 3(4). 54-72.
- Nigianni, C. Storr, M. (2009). *Deleuze and Queer Theory*. Edinburgh University Press: Edinburgh.
- Nigro, R. (2005). Experiences of the Self between Limit, Transgression, and the Explosion of the Dialectical System: Foucault as Reader of Bataille and Blanchot. In: *Philosophy and Social Criticism*. 31, (5-6). 649-664.
- No Author. (2018). *Curious about the latest research on internet porn's effects?*. Available: <https://www.yourbrainonporn.com/>. Last accessed 30th Jan, 2021.
- No Author. (2019). *Defeat Porn. Together*. Available: <https://www.covenanteyes.com/>. Last accessed 29th Jan, 2021.
- Nobus, D. (1999). *Key Concepts of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*. Other New York.
- No Author. (2020). *Fetch: Fashion. Fetish. Fun*. Available: <https://www.fetchshop.co.uk/our-stores>. Last accessed 25th Jan 2022.
- Nobus, D. (2017). *The Law of Desire: On Lacan's Kant With Sade*. Palgrave: London.

- Ogden, C. Harrison, K. (2018). *Pornographies: Critical Positions*. University of Chester Press: Chester.
- Paasonen, S. Cardoso, D. (2019). *The value of print, the value of porn*. [Online]. tandfonline.com. Last Updated: 17 April 2019. Available at: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/23268743.2020.1760125> [Accessed 7 November 2023].
- Paasonen, S. (2013). *Carnal Resonance*. MIT Press: London.
- Paasonen, S. (2018). Diagnoses of Transformation: “Pornification,” Digital Media, and the Diversification of the Pornographic. In: *The Philosophy of Pornography: Contemporary Perspectives*. Eds: Coleman, L. Held. Rowman & Littlefield: London.
- Paasonen, S. (2018). *Monstrous Resonance: Affect and Animated Pornography*. In: In Alphen, E. Jirsa, T. (eds.), *How to Do Things with Affects: Affective Triggers in Aesthetic Forms and Cultural Practices*. Amsterdam: Brill: 143-162.
- Paasonen, Susanna. 2007. ‘Strange Bedfellows: Pornography, Affect and Feminist Reading.’ *Feminist Theory* 8 (1): 43–57. doi: 10.1177/1464700107074195.
- Park, J. Blomqvist, A. Mahmut, M. (2021). The differentiation between consumers of hentai pornography and human pornography. In: *Sexologies*. 31. 226—239.
- Parr A. (2005). *The Deleuze Dictionary*. Ed: Parr, A. Edinburgh University Press: Edinburgh.
- Pathmedra, P. Raggatt, M. Megan, S. Marino, J. Skinner, M. (2023). Exposure to Pornography and Adolescent Sexual Behavior: Systematic Review. *Journal of Medical Internet Research*. 25(23), p.-. [Online]. Available at: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC10015350/#:~:text=In%20adults%20and%20older%20populatio> [Accessed 14 June 2023].
- Patten, P. (2005). *The Deleuze Dictionary*. Ed: Parr, A. Edinburgh University Press: Edinburgh.
- Penley, C., Shimizu, C.P., Miller-Young, M. and Taormino, T. (2013). Introduction: The Politics of Producing Pleasure. In: T. Taormino, C.P. Shimizu, C. Penley, M. Miller-Young, eds. *The Feminist Porn Book*. New York: Feminist Press.
- Penney, J. (2013). *After Queer Theory*. Pluto Press: London.
- Petridis, A. (2022). *Billie Eilish review – still an icon of disaffected, hyper-creative youth*. Available: <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2022/jun/08/billie-eilish-review-still-an-icon-of-disaffected-hyper-creative-youth>. Last accessed 12th July 2022.

- Pidoux, J. (2023). A comparative study of algorithmic–user classification practices in online dating: a human–machine learning process. In: *Porn Studies*. 10, (2): 191-209.
- Pornhub. (2021). *2021 Year in Review*. [Online]. Porn Hub Insights. Last Updated: December 14 2021. Available at: <https://www.pornhub.com/insights/yir-2021> [Accessed 1 October 2022].
- Pornhub. (2020). *The latest on our commitment to trust and safety*. Available: <https://www.pornhub.com/blog/11422>. Last accessed 3rd Feb 2021.
- Pornhub Insights. (2023). *2023 Year in Review*. [Online]. Pornhub. Available at: <https://www.pornhub.com/insights/2023-year-in-review#age-demographics> [Accessed 15 February 2024].
- Pornhub Insights. (2022). *The Popularity of Pegging*. [Online]. Pornhub.com. Available at: <https://www.pornhub.com/insights/pegging-searches> [Accessed 10 March 2024].
- Poynor, R. (2006) *Designing Pornotopia: Travels in Visual Culture*. New York: Princeton Architectural Press.
- Preciado, P. (2018). *The Countersexual Manifesto*. Colombia Press: New York.
- Preciado, P. (2013). *Testo Junkie*. Feminist Press: NYC.
- Press Association. (2018). *Parliament reports 24,000 attempts to access pornographic websites since election*. Available: <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2018/jan/08/parliament-reports-24000-attempts-to-access-pornographic-websites-since-election>. Last accessed 3rd Feb 2021.
- PSHE Association. (2020). *Addressing pornography through PSHE education – teacher briefing*. Available: <https://www.pshe-association.org.uk/curriculum-and-resources/resources/addressing-pornography-through-pshe-education-%E2%80%93>. Last accessed 29th Jan, 2021.
- PSHE. (2021). *The association for PSHE teachers, leads and other practitioners*. Available: <https://www.pshe-association.org.uk/>. Last accessed 29th Jan, 2021.
- QueerPornTV. (2010). *QueerPorn.TV Interviews gender queer porn star Jiz Lee*. Available: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uJ96OEckj9g&t=116s&ab_channel=queerporntv. Last accessed 4rd May 2021.
- Rama, I. Bainotti, L. Gandini, A. Giulia, G. Semenzin, S. Agosti, C. Corono, G. Romano, S. (2023). The platformization of gender and sexual identities: an algorithmic analysis of Pornhub. In: *Porn Studies*. 10, 2. 154-173.

- Robards, B. (2017). Totally straight: Contested sexual identities on social media site reddit. *Sexualities*. 21(1-2). [Online]. Available at: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1363460716678563> [Accessed 16 October 2023].
- Roberts, S. (2020). *Pornhub crackdown by credit card companies cuts off sex workers' livelihoods*. [Online]. <https://www.nbcnews.com/>. Last Updated: Dec 15, 2020. Available at: <https://www.nbcnews.com/business/business-news/pornhub-crackdown-credit-card-companies-cuts-sex-work> [Accessed 7 November 2023].
- Roberts, S, T. (2019). *Behind the Screen: Content Moderation in the Shadows of Social Media*. Yale: London.
- Rubin, G. (2011). Thinking Sex. In: *Deviations*. Duke University Press: London.
- Rubin, G. (2011a). The Leather Menace. In: *Deviations*. Duke University Press: London/
- Ruti, M. (2017). *The Ethics of Opting Out*. Columbia University Press: New York.
- Ruti, M. (2012). *The Singularity of Being*. Fordham University Press: New York.
- Ryberg, I. (2015). Carnal fantasizing: embodied spectatorship of queer, feminist and lesbian pornography. *Porn Studies*. 2(2-3), pp.161-173. [Online]. Available at: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/23268743.2015.1059012> [Accessed 16 October 2023].
- Sade, M. (1994). *Œuvres complètes*, vol. 4. New York: Grove Press. Pg: 640–41. In: Foucault, M. (2015). *Language, Madness and Desire*. Minnesota Press: Minnesota. Pg: 104.
- Said, E. ([1978] 1995). *Orientalism* (2nd ed). London: Penguin. In: McKee, A. (2018). *The pornography consumer as Other*. In: *The Routledge Companion to Media, Sex and Sexuality*. Eds: Smiths, C. McNair, B. Routledge: Oxon.
- Saul, H. (2015). Pornhub star Mia Khalifa receives death threats after being ranked the site's top adult actress. *The Independent*. Retrieved January 7, 2022.
- Saunders, R. (2023). Sex tech, sexual data and materiality. In: *Porn Studies*. 10, 2. 120-134.
- Schaschak, S. (2014). *Pornography and Seriality*. Palgrave: London.
- Sheldon, P. (2017). Documentation of online data. In: *The Sage Encyclopedia of Communication Research Methods*. Ed: Allen, M. Sage: London.

- Sinnovator. (2020). *Sinnovator Cephalopod Tentacle Platinum Silicone Dildo 7.87 Inches to 11.8 Inches (3 Sizes)*. [Online]. <https://www.sinnovator.com/>. Available at: <https://www.sinnovator.com/sinnovator-cephalopod-tentacle-dildo-7-inches--85888.html> [Accessed 11 November 2022].
- Sloterdijk, P. (1987). *A Critique of Cynical Reason*. Minnesota Press: London.
- Smiths, C. Attwood, F. (2013). Anti/pro/critical porn studies. *Porn Studies*. 1(1), pp.7-23. [Online]. Available at: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/23268743.2014.887364> [Accessed 16 October 2023].
- Smith, C. Attwood, F. Barker, M. (2015). Queering Porn Audiences. In: *Queer Sex Work*. Routledge: London.
- Smith, C. (2012) 'I guess they got past their fear of porn': Women viewing porn films. In: *Peep Shows*. Ed: Mendik, X. London: Wallflower Press, 155–167.
- Smith, C. (2007). *One for the Girls: The Pleasures and Practices of Reading Women's Porn*. Intellect: Bristol.
- Smith, C. (2021). Putting Porn Studies (Back) Into Porn Literacy. *Synoptique*. 9(2), pp.161-182. [Online]. Available at: https://www.synoptique.ca/_files/ugd/811df8_d8ebaadae87e4f1fbdab97459ebfec9.pdf [Accessed 15 February 2024].
- Smith, C. Attwood, F. Barker, M. (2013). *Porn Studies*. [Online]. Taylor and Francis Online. Available at: <https://www.tandfonline.com/journals/rprn20> [Accessed 14 June 2023].
- Smith, C. Attwood, F. Barker, M. (2015). Queering Porn Audiences. In: *Queer Sex Work*. Eds: Laing, M. Pilcher, K. Smith, N. Routledge: London.
- Smith, C. Attwood, F. Barker, M. (2015). Why Do People Watch Porn? Results from PornResearch.Org. In: Comella, L. Tarrant, S. (Ed). *New Views on Pornography: Sexuality, Politics, and the Law*. Oxford: Praeger.
- Smith, R. (2010). *The Baudrillard Dictionary*. Edinburgh University Press: Edinburgh.
- Solon, O. (2020). *Pornhub crackdown by credit card companies cuts off sex workers' livelihoods*. Available: <https://www.nbcnews.com/business/business-news/pornhub-crackdown-credit-card-companies-cuts-sex-workers-livelihoods-n1251246>. Last accessed 3rd Feb 2021.
- Spinoza, B. (2000). *Ethics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Steele, V. Staley, C. Fong, T. Prause, N.. (2013). Sexual desire, not hypersexuality, is related to neurophysiological responses elicited by sexual images. Available: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3960022/>. Last accessed 29th Jan, 2021.
- Stella, R. (2016). *The amateur roots of gonzo pornography*. [Online]. www.tandfonline.com. Available at: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/ref/10.1080/23268743.2016.1241157?scroll=top> [Accessed 29 January 2024].
- Stewart, H. (2017). *Damian Green sacked as first secretary of state after porn allegations*. Available: <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2017/dec/20/damian-green-resigns-as-first-secretary-of-state-after-porn-allegations>. Last accessed 3rd Feb 2021.
- Stoya. (2014). *Feminism and the Mainstream*. [Online]. tandfonline.com. Last Updated: 21 March 2014. Available at: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/23268743.2014.888256> [Accessed 7 November 2023].
- Strossen, N. (1995). *Defending Pornography: Free Speech, Sex and the Fight for Women's Rights*. NYU Press: New York.
- Stephens, E. (2009). Coining Spermatorrhoea: Medicine and Male Body Fluids, 1836—1866. *Sexualities*, 12 (4), 467-485.
- Surya, M. (2010). *George Bataille: An Intellectual Biography*. Verso: London.
- Taylor, P. Harris, J. (2008). *Critical Theories of Mass Media: Then and Now*. Open University Press: Maidstone.
- Tembo, K, D. (2021). A sketch of two parallaxes of porn and its use: revelation and regulation. *Porn Studies*. 8(4), pp.439-463.
- Tildenberg, K. (2021). *Sex, Power and Platform Governance*. [Online]. <https://www.tandfonline.com/>. Last Updated: 27 Sept 2021. Available at: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/23268743.2021.1974312> [Accessed 7 November 2023].
- Toscano, A. (2005). *The Deleuze Dictionary*. Ed: Parr, A. Edinburgh University Press: Edinburgh.
- Twomey, A. (2020). *Book Review: Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity (10th Anniversary Edition)*. Available: <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/lsereviewofbooks/2020/11/13/book-review-cruising-utopia-the-then-and-there-of-queer-futurity-10th-anniversary-edition-by-jose-esteban-munoz/>. Last accessed 4rd May 2021.

- Unknown. (2006). *Rule 34*. Available: <https://knowyourmeme.com/memes/rule-34>. Last accessed 3rd May 2021.
- Walsh, K. (2012). *Preparing for the “Gagapocalypse”*: J. Jack Halberstam’s *Gaga Feminism*. Available: <http://caphemagazine.com/gaga/>. Last accessed 12th July 2022.
- Watson, A. (2018). Young People, Sexuality Education and the Media. In: *The Routledge Companion to Media, Sex and Sexuality*. Eds: Smiths, C. McNair, B. Routledge: Oxon.
- Weeks, M. (2020). Affect philosophy meets incongruity: about transformative potentials in comic laughter. In: *The European Journal of Humour Research*. 8 (1) 1–13.
- Wiegman, R. Wilson, E. Introduction: Antinormativity’s Queer Conventions. In: *differences* 26, no. 1 (2015): 1-2.
- Williams, L. (1987). *Hardcore: Power, Pleasure and the Frenzy of the Visible*. University of California Press: London.
- Williams, L. (2004). *Porn Studies*. Duke University: New York.
- Williams, L. (2008). *Screening Sex*. Duke University Press: London.
- Willis, E. (1983). Feminism Moralism and Pornography. In: A. B. Snitow, C. Stansell, & S. Thompson (Eds.), *Powers of Desire: The Politics of Sexuality*. (pp. 460-467). New York: Monthly Review.
- Wilson, G. (2012). *The great porn experiment* | Gary Wilson | TEDxGlasgow. Available: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wSF82AwSDiU&t=2s&ab_channel=TEDxTalks. Last accessed 30th Jan, 2021.
- Ybarra, M. L., Mitchell, K. J., Hamburger, M., Diener-West, M., & Leaf, P. (2011). X-rated material and perpetration of sexually aggressive behavior among children and adolescents: Is there a link? *Aggressive Behavior*, 37(1), 1-18.
- Young, E. Genosko, G. (2013). *The Deleuze and Guattari Dictionary*. Bloomsbury: London.
- Žižek, S. (2007). *Enjoy Your Symptom!: Jacques Lacan in Hollywood and Out*. Routledge: London.
- Žižek, S. (1997). *Kant and Sade: the Ideal Couple*. Available: <https://www.lacan.com/zizlacan4.htm>. Last accessed 3rd May 2021.
- Žižek, S. (2021). *LES NON-DUPES ERRENT*. Available: <https://thephilosophicalsalon.com/les-non-dupes-errent/>. Last accessed 26th Jan 2022.

Žižek, S. (2008). *Looking Awry: An Introduction to Jacques Lacan Through Popular Culture*. October Books: London.

Žižek, S. (1996). *Love beyond Law*. Available: <https://www.lacan.com/zizlola.htm#:~:text=Another%20way%20to%20put%20it,register%20from%20desire%20to%20drive.&text=What%20I%20actually%20desire%20is,which%20always%20finds%20its%20way..> Last accessed 3rd May 2021.

Žižek, S. (2004). *Organs without Bodies*. Routledge: London.

Žižek, S. (2000). *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Center of Political Ontology*. New York: Verso.

Zupancic, A. (2008). *The Odd One In*. MIT Press: London.

BIBLIOGRAPHY OF ONLINE MATERIALS

21Sextreme. (2019). *DOUBLE FISTING with Cathy Heaven*. [Online]. XVideos.com. Available at: https://xvideos.com/video20362941/b._double_fisting_with_cathy_heaven [Accessed 19 December 2023].

Alex Adams. (2020). *Playing a Game With Hot Step Sister*. Available: https://www.pornhub.com/view_video.php?viewkey=ph5a7f1ba584481. Last accessed 12th July 2022.

Angel Au Lait. (2021). *GOONGASM - learn the MINDSHATTERING GOON NO-CUM ORGASM GOONER PORN*. [Online]. Pornhub. Available at: https://www.pornhub.com/view_video.php?viewkey=ph5fd7ff41db2b6 [Accessed 18 February 2024].

Angel Au Lait. (2021). *Shred Your Gooner Brain*. [Online]. Pornhub.com. Available at: https://www.pornhub.com/view_video.php?viewkey=ph5fd7ff41c727e [Accessed 20 December 2023].

BangBros. (2014). *Mia Khalifa is cumming for dinner*. Available: https://www.xvideos.com/video27693557/stepmom_videos_-_mia_khalifa_is_cumming_for_dinner_-_julianna_vega_mia_khalifa. Last accessed 25th Jan 2022.

Barebear34. (2019). *Breaking into Extreme*. [Online]. XVideos.com. Available at: https://www.xvideos.com/video47961961/breaking_into_extreme [Accessed 20 December 2023].

BedInspector. (2020). *BedInspector's profile*. Available: <https://www.pornhub.com/users/bedinspector>. Last accessed 25th Jan 2022.

Bratty MILF. (2023). *Milf Armani Black teases Stepson, Are You Looking at My Pussy?*. [Online]. Pornhub.com. Last Updated: 14th October 2023. Available at: https://www.pornhub.com/view_video.php?viewkey=65276d359c61f [Accessed 14 November 2023]

Brazzers. (2022). *Katie Kush Can't Decide Who To Fuck With, Aubree Valentine Or Her Bf.. What Will She Do?*. [Online]. Pornhub.com. Available at: https://www.pornhub.com/view_video.php?viewkey=ph624ac4437d375 [Accessed 15 July 2024].

Carla Cute. (2023). *He Cums Like A Horse - Choking On A Gallon Of Cum - THROATPIE*. [Online]. pornhub.com. Available at: https://www.pornhub.com/view_video.php?viewkey=ph62ee872f5faf8 [Accessed 11 February 2024].

Czech Streets. (2015). *Dont be afraid, Nobody will see it!*. Available: https://www.xvideos.com/video26535509/dont_be_afraid_nobody_will_see_it_. Last accessed 25th Jan 2022.

Czech Streets. (2016). *F-Sized Tits Mature Get Fucked in Flower Store*. Available: https://www.xvideos.com/video15699047/f-sized_tits_mature_get_fucked_in_flower_store. Last accessed 25th Jan 2022.

dawnskye55. (2021). *Giantess attacked by gummy bears but she eats and squishes them all*. Available: https://www.pornhub.com/view_video.php?viewkey=ph5c4db171660f0. Last accessed 3rd May 2021.

drink_water_fam. (2020). *drink_water_fam's profile*. Available: https://www.pornhub.com/users/drink_water_fam. Last accessed 25th Jan 2022.

Fakehub Originals. (2020). *FAKEhub Japanese Babe Rae Lil Black Repeatedly Fucked*. Available: https://www.pornhub.com/view_video.php?viewkey=ph5f4f6f8eb032f. Last accessed 3rd May 2021.

Fake Taxi. (2014). *FakeTaxi Mature Blonde Mom has the Ride of her Life*. Available: https://www.pornhub.com/view_video.php?viewkey=1019682983. Last accessed 25th Jan 2022.

Freckledred. (2018). *Fucking A Sex Doll In Public*. [Online]. xvideos.com. Available at: https://www.xvideos.com/video51204217/fucking_a_sex_doll_in_public [Accessed 11 November 2022].

Freckledred. (2021). *Squirting on a Cucumber on a Parking Lot*. [Online]. XVideos.com. Available at: https://www.xvideos.com/video48855365/squirting_on_a_cucumber_in_a_parking_lot [Accessed 27 November 2023].

Horrorporncom. (2019). *HORRORPORN - Wild Beast*. [Online]. XVideos.com. Available at: https://www.xvideos.com/video30376619/horrorporn_-_wild_beast [Accessed 20 December 2023].

Hotgameporn. (2020). *3D ANIMATED HENTAI monster with big cock // hard fuck*. [Online]. Pornhub.com. Available at: https://www.pornhub.com/view_video.php?viewkey=ph5f5bc50ace88a [Accessed 14 November 2023].

Lust, E. (2023). *The Wedding*. [Online]. Lust Cinema. Available at: <https://lustcinema.com/movies/the-wedding> [Accessed 18 February 2024].

Lust Cinema. (2021). *Lust Cinema Movies*. [Online]. Lustcinema.com. Available at: <https://lustcinema.com/movies> [Accessed 18 February 2024].

Michael Masters. (2020). *Apology to my Innocent Stepsis during Quarantine*. Available: https://www.pornhub.com/view_video.php?viewkey=ph5ee30aa615f86. Last accessed 3rd May 2021.

miakhalifa. (2019). *MIA KHALIFA - Behind The Scenes FAIL! This Is Why I Don't Shoot Anal Scenes Haha*. Available: https://www.xvideos.com/video46676983/mia_khalifa_-_behind_the_scenes_fail_this_is_why_i_don_t_shoot_anal_scenes_haha. Last accessed 25th Jan 2022.

Mia Khalifa. (2019a). *Never Before Seen Bloopers From The Most Popular Porn Scene In The World*. Available: https://www.xvideos.com/video45687329/mia_khalifa_-_never_before_seen_bloopers_from_the_most_popular_porn_scene_in_the_world. Last accessed 25th Jan 2022.

Moms Teach Sex. (2021). *Squirting MILF Gets Creampie From Sleepwalking Step Son*. Available: https://www.pornhub.com/view_video.php?viewkey=ph5997746d7db8d. Last accessed 12th July 2022.

MrsVictoria. (2021). *She just keeps to fuck his ass even though he came three times*. [Online]. Pornhub.com. Available at: https://www.pornhub.com/view_video.php?viewkey=ph5e5d338025701 [Accessed 19 December 2023].

Naughty Gaming. (2018). *Nier: First [Ass]embly [Studio FOW]*. [Online]. Pornhub.com. Available at: https://www.pornhub.com/view_video.php?viewkey=ph5a206e2ee6ff8 [Accessed 27 November 2023].

New Sensations. (2019). *Kimmy Granger Likes it Rough*. Available: https://www.pornhub.com/view_video.php?viewkey=ph573b676ac1581. Last accessed 12th July 2022.

Nude in France. (2015). *Anal experience sexy young redhead small titted amateur caught up in street*. Available: https://www.xvideos.com/video11481741/anal_experienceSexyYoungRedheadSmallTittedAmateurCaughtUpInStreet. Last accessed 22nd Jan 2022.

Ohshititslele. (2018). *Listen. JOI english ASMR relax soft voice edging*. [Online]. Pornhub.com. Available at: https://www.pornhub.com/view_video.php?viewkey=ph5a27049e50a7d [Accessed 27 November 2023].

Perverse Family. (2019). *PERVERSE FAMILY - Anal Compilation*. [Online]. XVideos.com. Available at: https://www.xvideos.com/video65681099/perverse_family_-_anal_compilation [Accessed 27 November 2023].

Perverse Family. (2020). *Shared Wife With Daddys Friends*. [Online]. XVideos.com. Available at: https://www.xvideos.com/video50422595/shared_wife_with_daddys_friends [Accessed 27 November 2023].

PIGBOY. (2022). *PIGBOYRUBEN: BEST OF 2020*. [Online]. Pornhub.com. Available at: https://www.pornhub.com/view_video.php?viewkey=ph5fee0b9ad5aac [Accessed 20 December 2023].

PinkWhite. (2020). *About Pink and White Productions*. [Online]. PinkWhite. Available at: <https://pinkwhite.biz/> [Accessed 18 February 2024].

Pink, K. (2020). *Queer Escort Sex : Nonbinary Pussy Licking, Anal, Cum Eating, Piss, Strapon, and Prostate Play*. Available: https://www.pornhub.com/view_video.php?viewkey=ph5d42356ca7969. Last accessed 4rd May 2021.

Porn Force. (2017). *Hot Blonde German Slut Experiences The MOST INTENSE Fuck Of Her Life - BLEACHED RAW*. Available: https://www.pornhub.com/view_video.php?viewkey=ph5fbc1ee6c0f54. Last accessed 12th July 2022.

Porn Force. (2019). *She Loves to get Used - NO MERCY for her Pussy - BLEACHED RAW - Ep III*. Available: https://www.pornhub.com/view_video.php?viewkey=ph5e9b96c51244f. Last accessed 12th July 2022.

Pornhub. (2021). *'Most Viewed Verified Amateur'*. Available: <https://www.pornhub.com/video?c=138&o=mv&cc=gb>. Last accessed 25th Jan 2022.

Public Agent. (2014). *Public Agent Homepage*. Available: <https://www.pornhub.com/channels/public-agent>. Last accessed 21st Jan 2022.

Public Agent. (2014a). *PublicAgent 18 Year old Russian Cutie is Fucked in her Hotel Room*. Available: https://www.pornhub.com/view_video.php?viewkey=2113382019. Last accessed 22nd Jan 2022.

Public Agent. (2015). *Public Agent Cheating Wife with Short Blonde Hair Fucks for Cash*. Available: https://www.pornhub.com/view_video.php?viewkey=ph58d55bfb2d382. Last accessed 25th Jan 2022.

Public Agent. (2015a). *Public Agent Hot 19 Year old Fuck makes Perfect Boobs Bounce*. Available: https://www.pornhub.com/view_video.php?viewkey=ph5bfbfe56a0de2. Last accessed 25th Jan 2022.

Public Agent. (2021). *Chanel Kiss Sucks Cock before being Bent over in Public Toilets for Sex*. Available: https://www.pornhub.com/view_video.php?viewkey=ph61e934915d067. Last accessed 25th Jan 2022.

Public Agent. (2022). *Sexy Teacher Fucking in a Car*. Available: https://www.pornhub.com/view_video.php?viewkey=ph585eb3f97a55e. Last accessed 25th Jan 2022.

The Purple Bitch. (2019). *ultimate_ahegao_henti_cosplay_girl_compilation_uncensored*. [Online]. www.xvideos.com. Available at: https://www.xvideos.com/video52721997/ultimate_ahegao_henti_cosplay_girl_compilation_uncensored [Accessed 9 November 2022].

Rai, A. (2023). *My best friend's mom turned out to be a very hospitable MILF*. [Online]. Pornhub. Last Updated: 14th October 2023. Available at: https://www.pornhub.com/view_video.php?viewkey=65267bd4d4c6a [Accessed 14 November 2023].

SissyMilana. (2022). *Best Shemale Sissy Cum Compilation*. [Online]. Pornhub.com. Available at: https://www.pornhub.com/view_video.php?viewkey=ph63958bf9c5c70 [Accessed 19 December 2023].

Studio FOW. (2016). *Konuichi 2*. Available: https://www.pornhub.com/view_video.php?viewkey=ph56455e1eab5b0. Last accessed 3rd May 2021.

Sugar Waifu. (2020). *Thot Flirts With You and Sucks Your Cock*. [Online]. Pornhub.com. Available at: https://www.pornhub.com/view_video.php?viewkey=ph5e131016f1459 [Accessed 21 November 2023].

TemperSayShuss. (2020). *First Threesome EVER for Hubby and MILF wants GiFuckingnormous Cock*. Available: https://www.pornhub.com/view_video.php?viewkey=ph5e1596b34f736. Last accessed 25th Jan 2022.

Trouble Films. (2020). *QueerPornTV*. [Online]. Queerporn.tv. Available at: <https://queerporn.tv/wp/> [Accessed 18 February 2024].

Unknown. (2017). *Unknown*. Available: https://www.pornhub.com/view_video.php?viewkey=ph5c4ce332b72ea. Last accessed 4rd May 2022. Note: This is among the 12 million clips that were deleted from Pornhub following the 2020 New York Times expose as mentioned in Chapter Two.

Vica TS. (2021). *Ann shorty jerk off pussy, athletic ass*. [Online]. www.xvideos.com. Available at: https://www.xvideos.com/video27419675/ann_shorty_jerk_off_pussy_athletic_ass_ [Accessed 11 November 2022].

Vincent Vega. (2022). *TOOK MY STEP SISTER'S ANAL VIRGINITY*. [Online]. Pornhub. Available at: https://www.pornhub.com/view_video.php?viewkey=ph628b4cf286bd0 [Accessed 16 November 2022].

Yanks. (2018). *Transgender Lief Blowher Playing with Iris Ives*. [Online]. XVideos.com. Available at: https://www.xvideos.com/video39597607/yanks_transgender_leif_blowher_playing_with_iris_ives [Accessed 20 December 2023].

Yasosu Bibu. (2019). *2B Whore for Monster*. Available: https://www.pornhub.com/view_video.php?viewkey=ph5bfea551bb2ae. Last accessed 29th Jan, 2021.