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Pornography has often been presented as a form of violence against women or an expression of patriarchy, and more recently, as the source of the sexualization of mainstream culture with significant negative impacts on women. At the same time the development of feminist porn studies (see for example, Penley et al., 2013; Maina, 2014) and 'The 'Fifty Shades phenomenon' in which EL James' book trilogy (2011-2013) became a worldwide bestseller, followed by a widely publicized film (2015), has made women more visible than ever as producers and consumers of pornography.

In this chapter I provide an introduction and brief overview of some of the developments in pornographies that are produced and consumed by women. This is necessarily highly partial given both the timescale I am interested in (1970s to the present day), the wide range of pornographies and other varieties of sexually explicit material that are available, and the relative scarcity of academic work on the production, content and reception of pornographies for women. My aim here is to introduce some of the key contributions to academic literature in the area, chart some of the most well-known areas of production and consumption during the period, and consider three key themes - characterizing women's porn, authenticity, and participation.

Domesticating Pornography

The relationship between women and pornography has often been described as fraught. An expectation that both men and women will pass judgement on images of women in terms of their desirability has been evident in women's lack of ease with sexual imagery in some studies (Boynton, 1999; Eck, 2003). As partners of men who engage with porn, women have expressed 'strong dislike' or 'uncomfortable acceptance' of their partners' consumption (Shaw, 1999), and

a tendency to associate porn with men's tastes (Wilson-Kovacs, 2004, p. 8). A perception that porn is disapproved of both as anti-feminine and anti-feminist and a concern about the treatment of women as porn labourers have also been factors in women's responses to porn (Ciclitira, 2004; see also Parvez, 2006). As Clarissa Smith has noted 'female consumers of pornography are constantly dogged by questions of harm, subordination, objectification and authenticity and the need to consider women's well-being before their own pleasures in watching or reading porn' (2013, p. 167).

Yet there is a reasonably long documented history of women's engagement with pornography. A growing academic literature traces this, noting pornographies such as slash (amateur productions that take fictional characters as a starting point for creating narratives of desire, sex and romance) and yaoi (media produced by professionals and amateurs depicting boys and men in a range of sexual scenarios), the 'domesticated' forms of porn that women have been able to access most easily (Juffer, 1998), the more recent visible engagements with a variety of pornographies, new forms of production and consumption, and the growth of 'female-friendly', feminist, lesbian and queer pornographies.

As Jane Juffer has argued, 'women have had a longer, more productive history writing and reading erotica than they have in producing or watching visual porn' (1998, p. 5); a finding borne out in Wilson-Kovacs' study of women's employment of sexually explicit materials 'in everyday passionate encounters' where she found that women perceived erotica to be 'informative', 'inspiring' and a source of solitary pleasure (2004, pp. 14-15). Alongside erotica, the 'domesticated' pornographies that Juffer describes, such as sexual self-help books and videos, lingerie catalogues, and adult cable programmes have been much more accessible for women than other kinds of pornography. The success of these has often depended on emphasizing their difference from (and downplaying their similarities to) other kinds of sexually explicit material, for example, through a focus on 'finding the truth of one's identity' in some erotica, in the aspiration to 'better partnership' in sexual self-help materials (Juffer, 1998, p. 7), or in the claim to possess aesthetic value. This has allowed domestic

pornographies to circulate more widely than other kinds of pornography and to become more visible in mainstream venues (Juffer, 1998, p. 122).

Another avenue for women's involvement in pornography has been in the amateur production and consumption of forms such as slash and femslash fiction. Becoming popular in the 1970s with the pairing of *Star Trek* characters Spock and Kirk (Penley, 1991; Jenkins, 1992), amateur communities developed more extensively online (Busse and Lothian, forthcoming).

Porn comics have also been a popular site for women's pornography. Little academic attention has been paid to Anglophone porn comics for women produced within the US market (Roberts, 2015) but the development of a Japanese tradition has been quite widely researched. Originating in shojo-manga (girls comics), originally dominated by male mangaka, shonen-ai— a genre of male-male romance was developed by female mangaka during the 1970s, focusing on intense, eroticized relationships between bishonen or 'beautiful boys' (Madill, forthcoming; see also McLelland, 2000; Levi, McHarry and Pagliassotti, 2010; Nagaike and Suganuma, 2013). A related genre - 'ladies comics' (see Shamoon, 2004, p. 82) - portrayed 'real (or at least realistic) women actively pursuing their own sexual pleasure' and 'taking the initiative in sexual experimentation' (Shamoon, 2004, p. 79; see also Jones, 2005), the comic format allowing for the portrayal of female pleasure and orgasm in a way that is not possible on film. Whereas ladies comics virtually excluded the male body, putting the female body on display (2004, p. 83) - as Anglophone comics for women have also tended to do (Roberts, 2015) - boys' love manga focused on men's bodies and sex between men.

Based on the shonen-ai of the 1970s a wider range of Boys' Love (BL) media, often focussing on uke ('bottom') and seme ('top') pairings (see Sihombing, 2011), featuring a range of sexual themes including rape, non-consensual sex, BDSM, incest, and underage sex, with a mainly female fan-base and mostly created by women (Mizoguchi, 2003), has gained increasingly wide circulation. Through the mid- to late-1990s Boys' Love (often called yaoi outside Japan and

with a corresponding genre in China called 'danmei', see Chao, forthcoming) developed a global market and transnational fandom (Nagaike & Suganuma, 2013; Wood, 2006; Wood, 2013), becoming the site of many amateur online productions.

A focus on men's bodies has continued to be a popular one for many female consumers of porn. As Alexandra Hambleton (forthcoming) notes, the female-friendly porn films produced by Silk Labo draw on aspects of popular Japanese media culture such as tv dramas with their focus on 'stressed career women, lonely women who have given up on men, university students looking for love, young couples dating in fashionable or exotic locations' and J pop 'idols' who provide the style template for Silk Labo's 'eromen' performers. Lucy Neville (in press) suggests that women's pleasures in m/m (male/male) porn are partly explained by the lack of pressure to identify with any of the performers. Participants in her research reported feeling less anxious about the enjoyment of watching male performers, and appreciating what they viewed as the better production values and acting, more experimental and interesting performances, and wider range of body types in m/m porn.

A third area of development has been in female-friendly and feminist visual porn in the US, Australia and Europe. Notable in the 1980s in this respect was the founding of Femme Productions dedicated to making porn from a woman's point of view and the launch of lesbian porn magazine *On Our Backs* and lesbian porn company, Fatale Video. As Lynn Comella notes (2013), the advent of the VCR, video technology and desktop publishing in the early 1980s provided feminists with access to affordable means of porn production. New means of distribution were provided by entrepreneurs, creating a 'sex-positive synergy' that linked together a range of enterprises. For example, Susie Bright, a founder of *On Our Backs* and creator of the widely-toured lecture/show 'How to Read a Dirty Movie', curated a selection of porn videos for the feminist sex shop *Good Vibrations* in the 1980s¹, as well as developing *Herotica*, a book of erotica

¹ Carol Queen (2015, pp. 179-190) notes that the collection built by Bright includes 'almost all the women-made movies that existed, sexy art films of Annie Sprinkle, Susie's favorite Golden Age dramas, like *The Opening of Misty Beethoven* and all the

by women with Good Vibrations owner, Joani Blank. Similarly, the work of Tristan Taormino, the feminist porn director and sex educator, was strongly influenced by her contact with customers at the sex shop Babeland (Comella, 2013).

Carly Milne has describe the 1990s development of women's involvement in porn as a 'cultural revolution ... when younger women took inspiration from the sex pioneers of the 1970s and 80s, thereby setting off a new wave of women pornographers' (2005, p. xiv). Women steadily became more visible within well-known porn businesses - for example, the performer Belladonna became the first female director for Evil Angel in 2003, and took on a wider variety of roles within porn work - as journalists, editors, photographers, producers, marketers, curators, retailers, product developers, promoters and sales workers (see Milne, 2005), and later still, as online s/experts, cultural intermediaries and sexbloggers (see Attwood, 2010). A series of discussions by feminist writers challenging the conventions of pornography and exploring its possibilities for women were also published (see for example, Tisdale 1994, Palac 1998, Sprinkle, 1998). The rise of feminist porn critics and reviewers such as Susie Bright and later Violet Blue, also amplified this process. Blue described her experiences of searching for porn that might appeal to women; 'I saw authentic female orgasms that had me gripping my thighs together in stunned erotic empathy. I saw riveting blow jobs that made my mouth water with envy. I found websites where pairs of women and men tore each other's clothes off with passion that started me. I watched films with gorgeous cinematography, natural lighting, beautiful real people as performers. And I saw a whole host of independent porn that blew my mind' (2006, p. xi).

The emergence of women-owned porn sites has been cited as 'a significant trend in the industry' since the mid 1990s (Lane, 2000, p. 113), with women's

other Henry Paris/Radley Metzger flicks in the great XXX director's filmography' as well as 'newer movies' such as *Cafe Flesh* and *Smoker*; a couple of gay male movies, including the classic *El Paso Wrecking Company*; transsexual feature *Sulka's Wedding*; and even a few R or NC-17-rated sexy classics that put everything else into context'.

involvement often seen as 'helping shape and change society's views on sexuality' (Milne, 2005, p. xiii). The launch of The Feminist Porn Awards in 2006, books such as Violet Blue's *Smart Girls Guide to Porn* (2006) which 'tells women how to find porn they'll like' and porn sites for at women such as Hot Movies for Her, Porn Movies for Women, Porn for Women and For the Girls have all worked to make porn for women more visible and accessible. More filmmakers have identified themselves or their work as feminist including Shine Louise Houston and Madison Young in the US , Ms Naughty in Australia and Erika Lust, Anna Span, Petra Joy and Mia Engberg in Europe.

Consuming Porn

Little research has been carried out with actual porn consumers but I draw on a handful of studies here to introduce some of evidence we have about women's experiences with pornography, beginning with an outline of differences and similarities in the accounts of women and men. Maika Böhm et al.'s (2015) study of pornography consumption by German students aged 20 - 30 found a higher incidence of male students who consume pornography, and that those male students who do so consume pornography considerably more frequently. Male students had also been familiar with porn since their adolescent years, while female participants were more likely to become pornography consumers at a later age. For both, porn consumption and masturbation were closely linked. Women experienced pornography as sexually arousing but were concerned with ethical practices around pornography while men worried about addiction (though none matched the criteria for this). In relationships, pornography was accepted as a part of the partner's solo sexuality. While both male and female students drew inspiration from their consumption, of porn, this was mainly to enrich their own sexual fantasies - ideas from pornography were only occasionally introduced into partner sex. Porn consumption as a couple appeared to be more problematic; participants - especially men - seemed to find harder was admitting in a relationship context the kind of pornographic material they preferred. Generally speaking though, the study found that both male and female participants showed a high degree of

competence in choosing and employing pornography and in integrating it into their lives.

The pornresearch.org project (see Smith et al. b, 2015) also found some differences in the responses of male and female participants. Men rated their engagement with pornography more highly than women and reported more frequent engagement. In terms of sources of porn, downloads were important for men, as were amateur sites and specialist sites catering to specific sexual interests, while women were more interested in fiction sites and sex blogs. Men seem more inclined to use porn to *express* arousal, whereas women are more likely to use pornography as a *means to arousal*. Women also reported that they were more likely to engage with porn as a means to reconnect with their bodies, and to use with partners. Men reported that they were more likely to choose to turn to pornography when feeling bored or having nothing better to do.

Yet there were also a number of similarities in participants' responses. Very few men or women reported that they were attracted by pop-ups, suggesting that both groups actively searched for porn. In terms of sources of porn for men *and* women the most popular by far were tube sites while roughly equal numbers consumed porn in DVD and magazine form. In addition differences were apparent *within* groups that identified by gender and by sexual orientation. For example, younger women (18-25) engaged with pornography much more than older women, indicating a possible generational shift. Although 'When I feel horny' came out as a top answer across the survey, queer respondents were more likely to cite 'to feel involved in a world of sex out there' (26.1%), 'to reconnect with my body' (16.2%), 'for recognition of my sexual interests' (52.5%), 'to see things I wouldn't do' (11.2%) than other respondents. These choices suggest that for queer viewers pornography is significant in coming to terms with their sexualities.

Looking at the detailed responses of participants is an important way forward in understanding women's engagement with pornography. A set of interviews with women carried out by Clarissa Smith (2013) suggested that porn provides an

important space for engaging imagination, the body and sexuality. For example it could serve the purpose of engendering 'a sense of preparing and planning for being part of a couple' (2013, p. 159). It could be about recovering something that was experienced as lost - for example, a former self which was 'sexy, spontaneous, responsive', be a means of keeping alive a sense of excitement in the midst of the domestic' (2013, p. 160) that might involve a 'heightened perception' of the body (2013, p. 161), or open up 'the possibilities of play and ... agreeing to explore fantasy' (2013, p. 163).

In the pornresearch project while young female participants² described their engagements with porn as linked to arousal, there were also indications that porn played a role in terms of relieving stress, building moods and contributing to an overall feeling of wellbeing. Participants also described engagements with porn that they perceived as part of their sex lives, regardless of - and sometimes quite separately to - others;

Solo sex is really important to me, whether or not I'm in a relationship, and porn is one of the components of that, for me.

For some participants it was an important part of their relationships with others;

It provides stimulation, and inspiration for sexual fantasies. It also provides ideas for trying new things with my partner. It also provides a way to turn us both on when watching it together, and give us a different kind of sexual experience.

This took on a particular importance when women were separated from their partners;

² Based on the accounts of 21 women aged 18-25 who identified as heterosexual and rated the importance of porn in their lives as 'extremely' or 'very' important, currently unpublished data.

Being from different countries, my partner and I must now and then spend extended periods of time apart. To keep intimacy alive and to connect sexually with each other during this time (and sometimes when we're together!) we share pornographic videos and images we find online

In addition porn played a particular role in relation to the development of sexual interests, desires, fantasies and energies. One participant described porn as 'a safe and fun way of exploring', another remarked that engaging with porn 'taught me what I like and what I don't like', while a third noted that it was significant 'because i constantly meditate about my desires and my sexuality, i like to be confronted by my desires, even the ones i would never admit in public' and another told us 'I'm a submissive girl currently without a Dominant, so I have to channel my submissive energy and the best way I've found is through Dominant/submissive porn'.

What is notable here, even in this small group of participants, is the range of roles that porn engagement can play. Even if we consider the broad theme of 'learning from porn', it is clear that this can take a number of different forms; it can be used as for ideas of things to do with a partner, it can be a way of exploring sexuality safely, it can work as part of a process of figuring out what a person's fantasies are and it can play a role in helping someone confront their own - possibly unnameable - desires. Porn can also have varied significance and function for the same person. As one participant noted, 'I've used it "casually" in terms of laughing over parody porn and a few drinks with friends, more traditionally as a tool for arousal before or during masturbation or partnered sex, as a sort of adult sex education (to be taken with a grain of salt), to help keep my sex life active during long distance relationships, and as a course of study during my undergraduate career.'

Developing Women's Porn Studies

In this final section I want to take up three issues; characterizing women's porn, authenticity and participation - and to relate these to the work I have outlined here.

One of the interesting questions that arises from the public developments in porn production and the more private accounts revealed through audience research is how we might disentangle what we count as 'women's' porn from 'porn for women', 'female-friendly', 'feminist', 'lesbian' and 'queer' pornographies (Maina, 2014). Clearly, not all porn produced or consumed by women is feminist. Neither need one be a woman to make, perform in or consume feminist porn. There is no clear-cut model of where and how feminist pornographers work. Some are independent while others work for or with more 'mainstream' companies. Others identify as feminists but do not label the films they perform in as feminist (Taormino in Voss 2014, p. 204).

Anne Sabo has characterised women's 're-visioned' porn as that which features 'women who confront culturally imposed sanctions regulating their behavior', 'who reject the speed limits of desire enforced upon women' and 'who refuse to be labeled' (2012, p. 5). The authors of the *Feminist Porn Book* describe feminist porn as a movement 'promotes aesthetic and ethical practices that intervene in dominant sexual representation and mobilize a collective vision for change' (Penley et al. 2013, p. 15). Those interventions include contesting and complicating 'dominant representations of gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, class, ability, age, body type, and other identity markers', exploring 'concepts of desire, agency, power, beauty, and pleasure', and seeking to 'unsettle conventional definitions of sex, and expand the language of sex' (Penley et al. 2013, pp. 9-10). Another common theme in both feminist and queer pornographies is the way they focus on performers' agency and consent (Penley et al. 2013, p. 12), on notions of fair-trade and sustainable modes of production (Maina, 2014), on ethical labour, and on the provision of a safe and, consensual work environment (Penley et al. 2013).

Debates about what counts as 'feminist' porn continue (see for example, Stryker, 2015), as do attempts to quantify 'women's porn'. The Australian feminist pornographer Ms Naughty notes that 'Women's erotic tastes are just as expansive and diverse as men's' (2013, p. 76), yet she also suggests that in her own experience what has been most likely to sell to women is 'Heterosexual couples porn, both romantic and "tasteful hardcore" ... 'good-looking naked men and erotic fiction' (2013, p. 76). A key issue has become which women are being referred to in discussions about 'women's' porn. As Ms Naughty argues, these discussions often rest on an assumption that the 'women' in question are 'heterosexual, cisgender, white, and middle class' (2013, p.76) and as she notes, the term 'porn for women' can be 'stereotypical, assumptive, problematic, and just plain wrong' (2013, p.76; see also Hill Meyer, 2013).

As Giovanna Maina has argued (2014), a pivotal concept in the development of pornographies for women and for feminism has been 'authenticity', though what counts as authentic and real often varies dramatically (see Attwood, 2009). Female-friendly porn and erotica has sometimes been regarded as 'soft, tender, non-explicit' (Williams, 1990, p. 231), in line with notions of an authentically feminine taste and expression of sexuality. Femme Productions, founded in the 1980s by Candida Royalle privileges storylines, high production values and romance to this end. A prominent lesbian porn aesthetic however, has focussed instead on appropriating 'sex acts once considered definitive of heterosexual and gay male pornography, such as penetration, dirty talk, rough sex, and role-playing' (Butler, 2004, pp. 181-182, 169). Authenticity has also been claimed in terms of the social context of production and reception (Levin Russo 2007, pp. 239-240). For example, the Cyber-Dyke online porn network claimed its porn as 'aimed at real women and lesbians' as part of a broader political project to 'redeem porn' (in Moorman, 2009, p. 158).

In contrast, queer approaches may not 'take the gender binary or the pursuit of genuineness so seriously' (Ward, 2013, p. 135). Indeed in some queer porn authenticity is linked less to an idea that the authentic can be characterized and more to the representation of diversity and the refusal of the 'politically correct'.

While some feminist producers such as Petra Joy exclude practices such as 'extreme anal sex' and 'cum shots into the woman's face' as 'degrading' (quoted in Mondin 2014, p. 191), Barbara DeGenevieve (2014) the artist and pornographer, has maintained that the fetishization and objectification of (queer) bodies and practices is necessary for generating the dynamics of authentic pornographic desire. Her site, Ssspread.com, which operated from 2001 to 2004, featured everything 'from vanilla sex, to masculinity, to blood sports, to violence' (2007, p. 234), providing a place where 'power dynamics are subverted, inverted and perverted' (2007, p. 236). This queer approach can be seen as part of a broader mission to challenge the distinctions between categories such as art, porn, erotica, sex, education, and spirituality, found also elsewhere in the work of Annie Sprinkle and of 'post-porn' producers (see Stuttgen, 2009; Biasin et al., 2014).

Authenticity may also mean different things for individual porn consumers. In Bohm's study worries about authenticity seem to underpin women's concerns about the pleasure performed by female porn stars and how 'real' it is, while men worried about how porn might impact on the 'real' of their bodies, sex lives, wellbeing and relationships. At the same time porn clearly played an important role in the participants' sense of sexual self, one that was often rather separate to partner sex. Smith notes that for one participant in her study authenticity seemed to refer to 'a sense of the performative exceeding its own scripting where the performers appear to go beyond the call of duty to a spontaneous loss of their professional control in unguarded pleasure' (2013, p. 164), while for another, the pleasure of the porn she liked lay partly in its ordinariness, recognizability, and 'the seeming genuineness of the various performances', though another still appreciated the 'professional' polish of porn performance (2013, p. 165).

A number of researchers have pointed to community and connection as being particularly important in the development of women's and of feminist pornography. Ingrid Ryberg describes queer, feminist and lesbian pornography as constituting a kind of interpretive community 'characterized by a politics of

constructing safe space' (2012, p. 190). Slash and other fan cultures can also be understood as communities that may be separate and sometimes rather hidden forms of culture, though they are clearly related to other developments both in media culture and in political activity. For example, Busse and Lothian (forthcoming) argue that gay and lesbian television representations of the 1990s and 2000s, gay and lesbian political movements and the shared pleasures of slash fan fiction are connected as part of the same landscape. Other kinds of online communities congregate around particular porn styles and preferences as taste cultures (Attwood, 2007). In the fan cultures of Silk Labo and m/m porn community-making is also important. Hambleton (forthcoming) has argued that the parties held for Silk Labo fans create a space in which pornography loses its taboo quality for women and becomes something to celebrate. Neville (in press) shows that m/m porn represents a kind of queer space for some of its female consumers, one which allows them to explore non-conformist, non-reproductive and non-familial sexuality, push boundaries and engage with taboo and unknowable sexual experiences. Julie Levin-Russo (2007, p. 243) argues that in fact it is the development of community based around shared cultural and political values that is the most significant way in which porn can really be said to represent something 'authentic'. But connection need not take the form of tight-knit networks. According to Deller and Smith (2013) reading *Fifty Shades of Grey* is, in part, 'a declaration of participation' for its readers, participation in the phenomenon of the book and its huge success, and in taking up a position in the public debates about female sexuality, erotica and BDSM practices that the book occasioned, thereby becoming 'part of the conversation' about these significance of these topics.

As Jane Juffer predicted, women's increased involvement in the production and consumption of sexually explicit texts has led to 'an expansion of access for more, different groups of women' (1998, p. 236). And these texts are extremely diverse -there is no monolith of porn or erotica, but a range of forms. Neither are these cordoned off from 'the mainstream' as is often argued, nor does porn flow into mainstream media, changing and corrupting it. Indeed pornographies may well draw on existing forms and genres from the mainstream and

elsewhere. Ladies comics and yaoi derive from an earlier tradition of shojo manga. The domesticated pornographies that Juffer describes draw on sex advice, fashion, self-care, adult cable shows. Some of the pornographies that women enjoy are appropriated from other markets - hence the appeal of m/m pornography - or they use aesthetics derived from elsewhere in popular culture as Silk Labo does when it models its eromen performers on pop idols. Others use subcultural iconographies, draw on queer culture, or mix together porn, performance and art forms. These pornographies do not take a clear and simple form that tell us something concrete or straightforward about what 'women' like. In some instances a focus on women's bodies emerges as the most important thing; in others women's bodies become invisible as sex between men takes centre stage. Some 'female-friendly' porn is gentle and non-explicit, foregrounding sensitive vanilla lovemaking, but elsewhere - in lesbian porn, or in slash and yaoi, for example, the sex might be kinky, rough or hard, feature dominant and submissive encounters, and include non-consensual sex.

What is also clear from a brief examination of trends in porn production and consumption for women is the variety of its dimensions for those who engage with it. It may be important for individuals in terms of connecting with their bodies, relieving stress, developing a sense of solo sexuality, preparing for sex with a partner, and creating a fantasy world. It has particular relevance for groups of women who want to share imaginative encounters around porn and particular sexual preferences, and has special meaning for women who are constructing particular sexual identities that are made visible as lesbian or queer. For some women and with some kinds of porn, there is also political importance. This can operate at the level of intervening in the regimes of sex and gender representation; working to challenge, subvert, appropriate or make new kinds of visual and written texts. It may focus on the making visible of a range of body types and sexual identities that are hidden or taboo elsewhere in visual culture. It may challenge the boundaries of what counts as sex. In some cases it may work to provide new models of labour and business. The study of porn made by and for women is still very much in its infancy but the work that

has been done so far reveals a complex scenario and one that is deserving of further investigation.

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