

# **PORNOGRAPHY:**

**You're Not Some Kind of Pervert, Are You?**

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## DEFINITIONS

The word pornography is derived from the Greek roots ‘porn’ (prostitute), ‘grapho’ (to write or record), and ‘ia’ (state, property, or place of). So the complete translation is, “Place to record prostitutes.” While having a technical description is useful, the actual reality of what pornography “is” cannot be as easily defined. Is pornography, in light of the grammatical roots, directly related to prostitution? Is pornography inherently offensive, obscene and without value? What, if any, discernible object or act constitutes the essence of pornography? The difficulty in answering these questions arises from the fact that pornography, as it has evolved, has been evaluated and analyzed through a variety of contextual and ideological paradigms, and seems unable to be contained by a single, grand and all-encompassing definition.

Pornography as we know it today revolves around the depiction of sexual acts. To be clear, sexual imagery dates back to prehistory: Neanderthal man painted sexual images in caves during the Paleolithic era. Early cultures often associated the sexual act with supernatural forces, creating a mystical connection between religion and such depictions.<sup>1</sup> In many Far Eastern and Asian countries such as India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Japan and China, representations of sex have specific spiritual meanings within the native religions, Hinduism, Buddhism, Shinto and Taoism. The Greeks and Romans produced a variety of erotic art and decoration, much of it integrated with their religious beliefs and cultural practices. In these early times, erotic depictions were often a subset of the indigenous or

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<sup>1</sup> Osanka, Franklin Mark, and Johann, Sara Lee. Sourcebook on Pornography; p.214.

religious art of each culture; they were not set aside or treated differently than any other type of art.<sup>2</sup>

It was not until the hyper-evolving Victorian era in Great Britain, dating back roughly to the early 1830s, that the modern definition of pornography began to take shape. The Victorian era itself, commonly used to refer to the period of Queen Victoria's rule (1837-1901), is associated with a variety of social sensibilities and political concerns that began with the passage of the Reform Act of 1832.<sup>3</sup> Queen Victoria's reign in Britain was a time of cultural, political, social, economic and scientific advancement. The emergence of the ideas of Lyell and Darwin began to challenge conventional notions of humanity, history and religion. This led to a great degree of social change, including evangelical revivals and legal changes in the personal and property rights of women. However, the influence of new ideas did carry over into the "entertainment" industry as well, and many gambling casinos and brothels were the target of reform legislation. It was in this environment, which itself was undergoing the process of modernization, that the modern definition of pornography was first entered in English medical dictionaries in 1857 as "a depiction of prostitutes or prostitution, as a matter of public hygiene." In 1864, Webster's had adopted that pornography consisted of "licentious painting employed to decorate the walls of rooms sacred to bacchanalian orgies, such as those at Pompeii."

For much of the nineteenth century, the definition of pornography was inexorably linked to obscenity. Standards of obscenity have changed over time, but the Hicklin test, introduced in the mid-nineteenth century, was the first to describe obscenity as "the tendency to corrupt—that is arouse sexually—those whose minds are vulnerable,

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<sup>2</sup> Kendrick, Walter. *The Secret Museum: Pornography in Modern Culture*; p. 71.

<sup>3</sup> Sigel, Lisa Z. *Governing Pleasures: Pornography and Social Change in England, 1815-1914*; p. 84.

including women, children and the weak of mind. This changed after 1932, with the establishment of the Ulysses standard, which defined obscenity as “any work that would tend to arouse the average person.” In 1957, Roth introduced the idea of “applying contemporary community standards to determine if the dominant theme of the material taken as a whole appeals to the prurient interest.” Another variation, the Memoirs standard of 1964, consists of three coalescing elements: a dominant theme that appeals to a prurient interest in sex, patently offensive material that is an affront to contemporary community standards in regards to the description or representation of sexual matters, and a complete and utter lack of redeeming social value. Most recently, the Miller standard examines whether the work, taken as a whole, lacks serious literary, artistic, political or scientific value. Each of these notions of obscenity is somewhat flawed; vague in their language, perhaps intentionally, and obscuring the exact definition into which obscenity might fit.

Wikipedia, the definitive contemporary social chronicle, defines pornography as “the explicit depiction of sexual subject matter, especially with the sole intention of sexually exciting the viewer.” Taking into consideration the variety of communication media available, a truly modern definition of pornography might be: The explicit depiction of sexual subject matter, included but not limited to: printed literature, photos, sculpture, drawing, painting, animation, sound recording, film, video or video game. It is interesting to note that, in each of these definitions, live sex acts in front of an audience are excluded. The roots of this phenomenon might exist in the idea of pornography as a physically manipulated creation or depiction—observed through some manufactured medium—instead of the physical act of sex itself.

## **HISTORICALLY SPEAKING**

The primary reason for the fluctuating definition of pornography is that pornography itself as a text has a history of change. Eroticism was obviously prevalent in the artwork of early cultures. Ancient Greeks and Romans left a legacy of clay pottery covered with erotic imagery. Sunga carvings from India dating back to 1 B.C. depict men and women in various sexual poses. Japanese erotic woodblocks, known as Shunga (Japanese for “Spring,” a euphemism for sex), have existed since the early 1300s. These cultural traditions carried over to the written word as well. In China and Japan, eroticism played a role in the development of literature. Books such as *The Tale of the Genji*, published in the 11<sup>th</sup> century and widely regarded as one of the world’s first novels, tell stories of scandalous affairs in discreet but carnal language.

The development of erotic language itself has an interesting history. In instances of certain ‘charged’ or ‘perverse’ word, monosyllabic language might have been considered rude, but polysyllabic language was acceptable. One of the commonly cited examples comes from Victorian Britain, where the words “breaking wind” were commonly substituted for the less-civilized “fart.”<sup>4</sup>

A complete discussion of literature must include Johannes Gutenberg and the printing press, which after 1450 allowed for mass production of printed texts. Where the commission of printed literature was once a luxury afforded only by the wealthy, Gutenberg’s invention allowed low-cost reproductions to be available to the masses. In turn, erotic imagery and literature are given much credit for the economic success of print as a medium of mass communication.

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<sup>4</sup> Loth, David. *The Erotic in Literature: A Historical Survey or Pornography as Delightful as it is Indiscreet*; p. 104.

One of the most influential producers of erotic literature was Italian poet Pietro Aretino. Aretino was one of the first authors to employ what was generally considered by scholars of the time to be explicitly vulgar language. The prostitute Antonio in Aretino's *Ragionamenti* calls for the eschewing of euphemisms, "Speak plainly, and say, 'fuck,' 'prick,' 'cunt' and 'arse.'<sup>5</sup> In 1524 Aretino published *I Modi*, a set of 16 sexually explicit sonnets. Each sonnet came accompanied by an erotic engraving depicting classic mythical figures in a series of unconventional sexual positions. Researchers have noted that Aretino's notoriety seems to have derived from the fact that no one before him, and very few writers in the three centuries after, regarded the sexual act as an arena for diversity and experimentation.<sup>6</sup> It was from the examination of *I Modi* that some of the early notions of the sacred and the profane emerged, and pornography became a medium for artists to explore, experiment, or express dissent.

The subversive context of pornography, born in the Italian Renaissance, was seized upon by Enlightenment free-thinkers who used erotic imagery as a tool for satirical social and political commentary. In the period leading up to the French revolution, flyers portraying the fantastic orgies of Marie Antoinette and the sexual inadequacies of Louis XVI were circulated to stir political unrest. After the revolution, the famous works of the Marquis de Sade were printed, often accompanied by illustrations with political subtext.

Illustrations became actual depictions after 1839 with the development of the first daguerreotypes, stereoscopy and calotype glass negatives. Artists were quick to utilize each new medium to capture the nude female form. In 1880, the introduction of halftone

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<sup>5</sup> O'Toole, Laurence. *Pornocopia: Porn, Sex, Technology and Desire*, p. 2.

<sup>6</sup> Kendrick, Walter. *The Secret Museum: Pornography in Modern Culture*; p. 65.

printing allowed the cost-efficient reproduction of photographic images in black-and-white, whereas only carvings, woodcuts and line cuts had been available as illustration before. As a result, pornographic magazines became more inexpensive and widely available than ever before. The steady proliferation of pornography was bolstered by the availability of a wide variety of sexually explicit publications based on consumer taste and fetish.

The next major advance in the creation and viewing of pornography came with the creation of motion pictures. William Kennedy Dickson, an employee of Thomas Edison, invented the first 35mm celluloid film in the late 1800s. Dickson also created the kinetoscope, a device which allowed the film to be viewed on a loop and was the predecessor to the motion picture projector. Dickson later left Edison's employ and created the mutoscope, a revolving drum that was cranked by hand to rotate an illustrated image taken from a piece of film. As with other mediums of communication, the development of each new technology was quickly followed by pornographic applications.

The earliest pornographic motion picture that can be definitively dated is "*A L'Ecu d'Or ou la bonne auberge*", made in France 1908. However, there are films, such as the Argentine pornographic film *El Satario*, which are alleged to be even older. Pornographic films were widespread during the silent film era of the 1920s and were often viewed in brothels. However, because of the clandestine nature of these films, which were viewed only in "private clubs," little is known about them. Many historians assert that the majority of erotic films produced before 1950 have been destroyed.<sup>7</sup>

The motion picture industry itself has a lengthy and relevant history in regards to pornography. The introduction of video technology in the late 1970s had significant

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<sup>7</sup> Kendrick, Walter. The Secret Museum: Pornography in Modern Culture; p. 164.

economic and cultural effects on the pornographic film industry. Not only did video provide a cost-efficient alternative to film, it allowed audiences to view pornography in the comfort and privacy of their own homes. As with previous forms of media, pornographic videos became a major economic influence as major adult entertainment studios chose the VHS format over Sony's allegedly superior Betamax technology. VHS quickly became the generally accepted format for home video recording and viewing, while Betamax experienced a rapid decline and, ultimately, extinction.

The introduction of CD-Rom and then DVD in the 1990s was another major milestone for pornography. CD-Roms made adult video games, although still a niche market, more common. DVD offered unmatched picture and sound quality, as well as innovations such as interactive scenarios, multiple camera angles and computer-based features. Reminiscent of the format wars of the 1980s, the pornography industry played a major role in deciding the next-generation DVD standard: Most major studios selected the high capacity Blu-ray technology, while smaller production companies prefer the less expensive HD-DVD format.

It may be argued that no new technology has affected aesthetic, social, economic and legal models of pornography so profoundly as the Internet. The World Wide Web has had a resounding effect on where, when and how individuals view pornography. The adult entertainment industry has been forced to shift packaging and marketing strategies to appeal to a growing segment of Internet pornography consumers. The ultra high-definition digital format of many productions has prompted many adult film stars to undergo cosmetic surgery to remove blemishes or cellulite that may have not been visible with previous video quality standards. The introduction of non-commercial pornography,

as well as user-produced content on websites such as YouPorn and Xtube, are a direct result of the popularity of Internet pornography. An analysis of cyber-porn conducted by Carnegie-Mellon university concluded that more than 80% of the Internet is used to store or display sexually explicit content.

Perhaps most significantly, the prominence of adult content on the Internet has brought pornography back into the mainstream social discussion. Some adult film stars enjoy mainstream recognition and, to a limited degree, success. The stars of adult film are indeed legitimate pop icons; the current “Queen of Porn,” Jenna Jameson, is immortalized in wax at Madame Tussaud’s Museum in New York. If nothing else, the existence of the title of “Queen of Porn” is indicative of society’s tendency to idolize pornographers and put them on a pedestal.

Most recently, computer generated imagery (CGI), has created a sub-genre of fantastic, animated pornography. Known commonly as Hentai because of cultural roots in Japan, the sexually explicit cartoons feature themes, particularly science fiction, that are commonly left unexplored by conventional adult cinema. The average Hentai clip might feature a female with feline or pixie qualities being raped by a robot, demon, alien or simply a bunch of amorphous purple tentacles. CGI has literally removed the boundary between imagination and imagery, leaving no sexual fantasy or fetish outside of the realm of possibility.

### **PARADIGMS OF PORN (PORNODIGMS)**

An interesting aspect of pornography is that the definition of pornography changes as the paradigm through which it is discussed shifts. Pornography is not a singular or secular industry. It is intertwined with a variety of communication media and

technologies and requires a certain, simultaneous detachment and investment from its audience. The production and consumption of pornography crosses social and economic boundaries in a way that it demands a variety of perspectives to completely analyze its far-reaching effects.

### Aesthetics

An aesthetic paradigm of porn examines the explicit content of erotic art that has evolved since its conception. At each significant point of plotment in its history, the concept of pornography has experienced distinct changes that slowly transform it from one period to the next. The first erotic nudes were expanded to depict couples, then groups. Nude images underwent a slow unfolding, from pure nudity, to soft-core depictions of genitalia, to explicit hard-core sex. After the birth of motion pictures, the medium underwent a period of progression from nude imagery and striptease, to soft-core scenarios or simulations, and then to hard-core sex. This pattern of progression seems to repeat with the introduction of each new technology with pornographic application.

A discussion of aesthetics would be incomplete without an examination of social conceptions of beauty. In early cultures, roundness suggested fertility, and thus more natural, full-figured depictions of women were common. This standard of beauty has been replaced by a taller, thinner, shinier, cosmetically enhanced model. While pornography is available that offers obese, vertically challenged or otherwise unconventionally built actors, the majority of popular “mainstream” pornography still features tall, long-legged and big-breasted actresses and muscular, chiseled actors with impossibly large penises as the socially accepted models of beauty. This sea change is not a phenomenon unique to pornography, but is a larger trend visible in many aspects of

Western society, most prominently advertising and media. However, it is important to note that in many countries, indigenous cultural norms continue to dictate the perception of beauty.

### Technology

The perspective that most easily traces the evolution of pornography is the one that views erotica through the paradigm of technology. The major points of narrative emplotment regarding pornography have been technological advancements. Just as the written word allowed pornography to evolve from imagery to literature, each consecutive advance in printing, photography and motion picture technology helped broaden the boundaries of what pornography could possibly encompass. In the cases of most technology with pornographic applications, the relationship is reciprocal: Just as technology helps advance the limits of pornography, pornography helps drive new technology.

### Economy

Such reciprocating relationships, as well as the adult entertainment industry as a whole, can be viewed through an economic paradigm. Research studies have estimated adult entertainment to be a \$4 billion industry.<sup>8</sup> The industry includes not only pornographic films, but also adult business such as casinos, adult toy producers, confectioners and erotic service or vacation providers. The economic impact of pornography can be traced from early technologies to the VHS-Betamax format wars of the 80s and into the digital age. Technology was a driving factor in the growth of specialized niche pornography, including, but not limited to, a variety of pornographic sub-genres that may be organized by physical characteristics of the participants, fetish,

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<sup>8</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sex\\_industry](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sex_industry).

sexual orientation or intended audience. The economic strength of the adult entertainment industry is a major factor for the continued evolution and proliferation of pornography into the mainstream.

Pornography and economics have more subtle connections as well. Researchers have argued that the demand for pornography is generated by sexual repression, which, in turn, reinforces the established social order.<sup>9</sup> Following this line of reasoning, Soble presents a Reichian<sup>10</sup> analysis that even sexual activities unleashed by the lifting of some sexual prohibitions are already the products of repression.<sup>11</sup> Soble also acknowledges economic influences with a Marxist perspective of agnostic socialist-feminism as relating to pornography in his argument that women become prostitutes in patriarchal capitalism because they are economically coerced but also because they are psychologically coerced by unconscious self-hatred (or self-denigration) generated by patriarchal institutions.<sup>12</sup>

### Government

Examining pornography through a legislative paradigm reveals a long history of suppression and censorship. As long as erotic imagery has existed, it has seemingly been regulated in an effort to control sexual desire. The first discoveries of Greek and Roman erotic artwork were so shocking that they were stored in secret museums to be viewed only by aristocratic scholars. The lengthy history of government regulation of pornography can be traced to Great Britain and the Obscenity act of 1857 and the

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<sup>9</sup> Soble, Alan. Pornography: Marxism, Feminism and the Future of Sexuality, p. 12.

<sup>10</sup> Wilhelm Reich (1897-1957) was an Austria-American psychiatrist and psychoanalyst whose theories centered on sex and sexuality.

<sup>11</sup> Soble, Alan. Pornography: Marxism, Feminism and the Future of Sexuality, p. 13.

<sup>12</sup> This is actually a quote from Sexual Politics, by Kate Millet, that is used by Soble in Pornography: Marxism, Feminism and the Future of Sexuality, p. 48.

creation of the aforementioned Hicklin standard. The standard became outdated as pornography, and by association the definition of obscenity, continued to evolve.

As recently as 1957 the United States Supreme Court held that obscenity was not granted first amendment free speech protection because obscene material was utterly lacking in redeeming quality<sup>13</sup>. In 1964, Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart attempted to provide an all-encompassing definition of obscenity with the now-famous statement, “I know it when I see it.”<sup>14</sup> By 1973, the Court’s opinions on the nature of obscenity had generally changed, Potter recanted his own view as being “simply untenable” and the aforementioned Miller standard was established<sup>15</sup>.

The possession of pornography has been expressly challenged as well. In 1969 the Supreme Court ruled that the possession of obscene material in the home was within the limits of the law.<sup>16</sup> In the face of a growing problem, the possession of child pornography was made explicitly illegal in 1986. States have even attempted to pass legislation taxing pornography and pornographic advertising revenue.<sup>17</sup> With each stage of its evolution, pornography has encountered legislation designed to regulate its’ purchase, storage, exhibition and creation. It is through legislative examination that the furthest boundaries of pornographic exhibition are explored.

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<sup>13</sup> Roth v. United States (1957), a landmark ruling in California centering on material, specifically individual passages, that might be deemed “obscene” in the literary works of Balzac, Flaubert, Joyce and Lawrence; [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roth\\_v.\\_United\\_States](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roth_v._United_States).

<sup>14</sup> Jacobellis v. Ohio (1964); [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Potter\\_Stewart](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Potter_Stewart).

<sup>15</sup> Miller v. California (1973), overruled Roth v. United States and provided a more exhaustive definition of what constitutes unprotected obscenity for First Amendment purposes; [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Miller\\_v.\\_California](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Miller_v._California).

<sup>16</sup> Stanley v. Georgia (1969); [http://www.oyez.org/cases/1960-1969/1968/1968\\_293](http://www.oyez.org/cases/1960-1969/1968/1968_293).

<sup>17</sup> Zillmann, Dolf, and Bryant, Jennings. Pornography: Research Advances & Policy Considerations; p. 189.

## Religion

A religious perspective on pornography, whether examining the impacts on marriage or ambiguity of sexual ethics, discovers the role of sexuality in the religious imagination. Christian tradition is full of scorn for women, an opinion that overflows into canon law and medieval theology. The notion of women as inherently lustful is reflected in clerical attitudes toward women and in witchcraft mania. If the gospel is good news about salvation, it is bad news about sex. The teachings of traditional Christianity are built upon a disdain of women and a profound abhorrence of sex.<sup>18</sup>

## Auteurs

A “great men” model of pornography traces the significant influences, ranging from technological innovators to film producers to the adult entertainment stars. Many adult entertainers enjoy popular notoriety long after their pornographic careers are over. Names such as Tracy Lords, Marylin Chambers, Ron Jeremy and Jenna Jameson are iconic and inherently associated with great eras in the adult entertainment industry. In other cases, minor celebrities have been known to release sexually-explicit videotapes with the hopes of boosting their careers. Actor Colin Farrell, British model Keeley Hazell and American socialites Paris Hilton and Kim Kardashian all have private sex videos circulating on the Internet and have enjoyed varying degrees of fame according to the popularity of the tapes.

This model can be reversed to feature the scholars and politicians who have made their careers evaluating pornography. Feminist theorists such as Diana Russell, Andrea Dworkin, Catharine MacKinnon, Susan Brownmiller, Dorchen Leidholdt, Ariel Levy and Robin Morgan have been the most vocal crusaders against pornography and its

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<sup>18</sup> Baird, Roberts M., and Rosenbaum, Stuart E. Pornography: Private Right or Public Menace?; p.156.

oppression of women. Sex-positive feminists such as Ellen Willis and Susie Bright distinguish between anti-pornography philosophy and sexual freedom.<sup>19</sup> The many Justices of the Supreme Court who have weighed in with significant opinions regarding pornography have been major influences on the definition of obscenity and pornography. These many stratified demographics of people deserve recognition for being part of the web of “great men” that integrates pornography into society.

### Society

Perhaps the most intriguing perspective through which pornography may be viewed is the social paradigm. Researchers have pointed out that as sex roles have changed dramatically during the past thirty years, cultural understanding of masculinity and manhood has been in flux. A scientific justification for pornography might ease the discomfort these changes have wrought. Critics of pornography have pointed out the violent scenarios and degradation of women that is common in many pornographic films may influence the real-world behavior of pornography viewers.

The differing perspectives of conservative, libertarian and feminist theorists applying psychoanalytic or behavioral approaches each create new areas of perception regarding pornography that must be addressed. Social behavioral problems such as Internet pornography addiction are becoming more widely acknowledged and openly discussed. Opponents of censorship, such as Jenkins, cite education, progressive thinking and sexual liberation as a reasonable defense of the legitimacy of pornography.<sup>20</sup> Others

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<sup>19</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Feminism>.

<sup>20</sup> Jensen, Robert. Getting Off: Pornography and the End of Masculinity, p. 121.

are quick to point out that were pornography so sexually liberating, there would be little outrage or taboo about it at all.<sup>21</sup>

Many of the negative aspects of pornography, such as the degradation of women, sexual violence and sexual depictions of children are hotly contested topics of debate. The normalization of seemingly abusive sex acts is often cited as the most prevalent destructive message imbued by pornography.<sup>22</sup> Progressive theorists are eager to explore the implications of pornography viewership, such as desensitization, increased sexual behavior and moral corruption. Whereas adult film studios are a highly regulated industry with oversight, Internet forums, chat groups and message boards are relatively autonomous and anonymous. Child pornography is a substantial presence on the Internet, and its audience is reputedly growing.<sup>23</sup> Television programs such as NBC's "To Catch A Predator," although not specifically limited in scope to pornography, focus on the dangers of sexual predators on the Internet. In a sense, pornography is hidden all over the Internet—in plain sight.

Some researchers theorize that pornography allows men to gain a sense of control.<sup>24</sup> Many feminists focus on the portrayal of women as victims and the danger of men interpreting female pain as pleasure. In many cases, incidents that muster outrage in the "real world" elicit little response when supposedly relegated to the realm of pornography.<sup>25</sup> A clear line must exist between the depiction of two people making love

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<sup>21</sup> Paul, Pamela. *Pornified: How Pornography is Transforming Our Lives, Our Relationships, and Our Families*, p. 247.

<sup>22</sup> Russell, Diana E. *Making Violence Sexy: Feminist Views of Pornography*; p. 220.

<sup>23</sup> Jenkins, Phillip. *Beyond Tolerance: Child Pornography and the Internet*; p. 204.

<sup>24</sup> Soble, Alan. *Pornography: Marxism, Feminism and the Future of Sexuality*, p. 80.

<sup>25</sup> Paul, Pamela. *Pornified: How Pornography is Transforming Our Lives, Our Relationships, and Our Families*, p. 240.

and the portrayal of the rape of women for male sexual simulation.<sup>26</sup> The degree to which these images of women's bodies are politically problematic is indexed to the degree to which agency is seen to be removed from the women whose bodies are on display.

Feminists have argued that, regardless of how explicitly it is represented, the after-hours image of women being paid to perform sexually with/to men may be less worrisome than the all-pervasive image of voiceless women performing as fetish objects *for* men.<sup>27</sup>

Opponents of the feminist perspective note that, regarding the matter of sex objects, men no less than women have shallow, thing-like personalities in pornographic representations.<sup>28</sup>

The difficulty in making a clear analysis on the definite social effects of pornography arises because much of the current research on the subject is inadequate.<sup>29</sup> Researchers seem to agree that individuals who view heavy doses of pornography are less likely to believe in the need for restrictions of pornography for minors and are less likely to favor restrictions in broadcasting.<sup>30</sup> Purveyors of pornography, and those who regard it as harmless, tend to consider sex in an Aretinian manner, as a self-contained activity with no necessary impact on the other aspects of its participants lives. Opponents take the older view that there is no such thing as sex, pure and simple, that is so complexly interwoven with the rest of life as to be separable only by fraud or violence.<sup>31</sup> Research has been unable to provide a clear link between pornography and real-world violence.

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<sup>26</sup> Lederer, Laura. *Take Back the Night: Women on Pornography*, p. 207.

<sup>27</sup> Paasonen, Susanna, Nikunen, Kaarina, and Saarenmaa, Laura. *Pornification: Sex and Sexuality in Media Culture*; p. 125.

<sup>28</sup> This is actually a quote from essayist Phillip Lopate, cited by David Loftus in *Watching Sex: How Men Really Respond to Pornography*; p. 65

<sup>29</sup> Lederer, Laura. *Take Back the Night: Women on Pornography*, p. 216.

<sup>30</sup> Paul, Pamela. *Pornified: How Pornography is Transforming Our Lives, Our Relationships, and Our Families*, p. 275.

<sup>31</sup> Kendrick, Walter. *The Secret Museum: Pornography in Modern Culture*; p. 65.

Many of the men surveyed have acknowledged being aroused by violent depictions of sex, particularly in certain carefully defined and limited contexts; some had been inspired to act out quasi-violent scenarios; and the vast majority agreed that a person can consent to violent sex. But not a single one could point to an instance in which he personally saw evidence to support the thesis that consumption of pornography leads to violence.<sup>32</sup>

A major obstacle in the analysis of pornography is the actual viewing of the text itself. Disdain for pornography makes for difficulties in research.<sup>33</sup> It is also difficult to define who the “average” pornography consumer is. O’Toole gives one example of a female survey respondent named Kate, a “feminist porner.”<sup>34</sup> While the two ideologies and lifestyles may seem contradictory, O’Toole provides Kate as an example that there are no definite conventions regarding pornography or the individuals who choose to watch it. It has been stated that the factual evidence bearing on the relationship between pornography and sexual behavior is scanty and conflicting, and the inferences drawn from any one body of observations are likely to prove misleading.<sup>35</sup>

Pornography itself is, in fact, misleading. Featuring actors that are cosmetically enhanced and sexual acts that are often comically unnatural, is it any surprise that the messages decoded by viewers of pornography are conflicting and misleading as well? Many male watchers of pornography express alienation of their own sexuality. While they feel a desire for intimacy and physical affection, they may end up thinking what they want is to be laid by a Playboy Bunny.<sup>36</sup> Researchers have found that many men will admit to having made some unfavorable comparisons between themselves and the guys

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<sup>32</sup> Loftus, David. Watching Sex: How Men Really Respond to Pornography; p. 98.

<sup>33</sup> O’Toole, Laurence. Pornocopia: Porn, Sex, Technology and Desire, p. 298.

<sup>34</sup> O’Toole, Laurence. Pornocopia: Porn, Sex, Technology and Desire, p. 308.

<sup>35</sup> Yaffe, Maurice, and Nelson, Edward C., The Influence of Pornography on Behavior; p. 16.

<sup>36</sup> Baird, Roberts M., and Rosenbaum, Stuart E. Pornography: Private Right or Public Menace?; p. 80.

on the page and screen as they grew up. There was nowhere else they could see the nude bodies of other men except in the school locker room and showers, and nowhere else to learn what a male's sexual performance could and ought to be except through the exaggerated public boasts of their peers.<sup>37</sup> The social paradigm asks relevant questions regarding the nature of masculinity, femininity and relationships, and also about our selves as the purveyors and viewers of pornography. Using social paradigms as a lens through which to view erotic texts, historians and researchers are better able to ask questions about pornography regardless of the social taboo that might surround it.

## **CONCLUSION**

Pornography is not simply the depiction of sexual acts. It is an aesthetic medium, a technological imperative, an economic indicator, a tool for social expression and a cultural phenomenon. Accordingly, research into pornography cannot be limited in scope to only one ideological paradigm of study. A thorough history of pornography must include a discussion of artistic and technological influences as well as acknowledgment of economic and political effects. The fragmented, postmodern society in which we live sometimes requires a kaleidoscopic lens in order to see what are otherwise obvious truths. Erotic images have been a part of human culture since there has been a culture to speak of. A better understanding of our fixation with pornography may ultimately lead to a better understanding of our own humanity and our selves.

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<sup>37</sup> Loftus, David. Watching Sex: How Men Really Respond to Pornography; p. 67.

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