Porn and/as Pedagogy, Sexual Representation in the Classroom

A Curated Roundtable Discussion

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Graduate students writing a dissertation on pornography and/or sexually explicit media experience a great deal of anxiety connected to academic (un)employment and the perceived (un)seriousness of their work. While the scholarly journal *Porn Studies* is now in its seventh issue and the Society for Cinema and Media Studies has a Scholarly Interest Group dedicated to adult film and video, pornography remains a source of tension at academic conferences and in various graduate programs. As two of the contributors to this roundtable attest, the #MeToo movement, while an important intervention, has also led to trepidation about sex and sexuality both in the classroom and in academic discourse. Current social and political movements aside, many scholars simply do not take pornography studies seriously, while others remain stuck in the discourse of the feminist sex wars, unable to see pornography as a series of theoretically rich and historically specific cultural objects that need not be analyzed in terms of "for" or "against." As Lauren Berlant and Lee Edelman remark, many intellectuals see sex as passé (2013, 63). "Critical discourse," they contend, "centers instead on questions of rights (civil, natural, and human), of sovereign power and states of exception, of the definition and limits of the human, and of the distribution and control of populations through the categories of citizen and noncitizen. Sex, in this context, can carry the odor of anachronism, narcissism, or something irreducibly and disconcertingly personal, and any impulse to linger on its place in the social, cultural, and political fields can suggest a stubbornly narrow gaze or a refusal to move on" (ibid). Provocative and precarious, hopeful and boundary-pushing, porn studies occupies a vexed place in contemporary academe. How might junior scholars in this field proceed?

From trigger warnings to the job market, this roundtable addresses some of the most pressing concerns for scholars of pornography and sexual representation in cinema and media. Do porn studies scholars have a harder time securing tenure-track jobs or other academic appointments? What institutional supports or drawbacks are there for pornography scholars? What are some of the most neglected research areas? The contributors to this roundtable all come to pornography studies from different angles but converge around the idea that studying pornography is necessary for understanding contemporary society and culture. I have selected my co-authors (or my co-participants) not only because of their superlative contributions to the field but because they have each been important to my own development as a junior film, pornography, and queer studies scholar.

Dr. Peter Alilunas, Associate Professor of Cinema Studies at the University of Oregon and author of *Smutty Little Movies: The Creation and Regulation of Adult Video* (2016), gave the first scholarly presentation on pornography that I ever attended. Titled "'Closed Due to Pressure from the Morality Squad': The Cinema 2000 and Pornography Regulation in Toronto," his talk was at the annual SCMS conference in Toronto in 2018. I was in awe of his gifts as an orator and how passionate and knowledgeable he was about Canada's history of draconian censorship and obscenity laws—a history that is touched on in this roundtable. Peter's mentorship has also impacted me and many of my colleagues. He has gladly shared information and resources and conducted a vibrant workshop for graduate students at the University of Toronto in 2018. A remarkable historian, he is also one of the friendliest faces in cinema and media studies.

Academic work on queer theory and Canadian criminal jurisprudence would be incomplete without the work of Dr. Ummni Khan, Associate Professor of Law and Legal Studies at Carleton University and author of *Vicarious Kinks: S/M in the Socio-Legal Imaginary* (2014), who lends her passionate, singular, interdisciplinary voice to this roundtable. I admire Ummni's intellectual temerity and her commitment to independent critical thought that crosses disciplinary boundaries. Not since I discovered the work of Shannon Bell (1995) have I encountered a scholar so willing to put it all on the line—to go the distance with and for her ideas. I appreciate her willingness to tackle controversial topics, from rape culture (2017) to the media coverage of the "Disney World Girl" (2009). I marvel at her commitment to sex-positive feminism even if the current social and political climate renders that difficult at times.

Dr. Laura Helen Marks, Professor of Practice at Tulane University and author of *Alice in Pornoland: Hardcore Encounters with the Victorian Gothic* (2018), also contributes to our dynamic roundtable. Laura has emerged as one of the most important voices in pornography studies, bridging her knowledge of classical and canonical literatures with contemporary film and sexuality studies. I discovered *Alice in Pornoland* soon after its release while completing a term/conference paper on the pornographic horror comedy *Dracula Sucks* (1978) and the precedent-setting obscenity trial that ensued in Edmonton in the early 1980s after the film's release. I could not have written the paper without Laura's exacting historical work on the film and her location of it within a larger trajectory of pornography inspired by the Victorian gothic.

Dr. Thomas Waugh, Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Film Studies at Concordia University and author of many works on pornography and erotica, including the seminal *Hard to Imagine: Gay Male Eroticism in Photography and Film from Their Beginnings to Stonewall* (1996), is our final co-conspirator, and possibly our most illustrious. Has anyone contributed more to queer cinema and gay pornography studies than Tom? From his admirable, relentless archival research to his battles against censorship, pioneering queer cinema and pornography classes, and mammoth books on documentary and Canadian cinema, Tom is one of the most important voices—in the West and internationally—on sexual representation. He has also been an invaluable mentor for generations of queer scholars that have followed in his footsteps.

Many scholars have addressed the subject of pornography and/as pedagogy. Chuck Kleinhans, for instance, once argued that the porn studies classroom can serve as a unique space for objective, neutral discussion on pornography that research on the subject typically evades. Indeed, while Kleinhans could not pretend to be neutral as his scholarly work took a stance in the "sex wars," his classroom "create[d] a space for discussion that allow[ed] frank expressions of difference on all sides" (1996, 119). Similarly, Susanna Paasonen argues for classrooms that are attuned to the myriad *responses to*—as opposed to merely *positions on*—pornography (2016, 435). Yet, with all that has been said on the controversies and potentialities of pornography in the post-secondary classroom, a transdisciplinary, intergenerational roundtable on the subject featuring scholars from different countries has yet to be published or archived.

Perhaps now more than ever, the voices of pornography scholars need to be heard. Humanities departments and arts faculties are being gutted as university administrators wield the language of austerity and scarcity. How will a field seen by many to be frivolous or irrelevant—or as having no "use"—survive cuts and "restructuring"? The university classroom is rapidly changing not just technologically but in terms of student engagement, experience, and expectations. On the one hand, teachers and scholars of pornography may find themselves in a bind if their classroom is averse to frank discussions about sex or unwilling to let go of ingrained beliefs about pornography. On the other hand, and as this roundtable attests, many instructors encounter classrooms that are ready to challenge archaic sex and porn myths. There does not seem to be a right or a wrong way to contextualize pornography and to address its place in the classroom. In this cultural and academic moment of uncertainty and liminality, my interlocutors form a representative sample of contemporary pornography scholars who have secured full-time employment in academia and continue to push the boundaries of intellectual discourse. How have they gotten to where they are, and what lies ahead?

Kyler Chittick (KC): Talk a little bit about your intellectual and pedagogical trajectory with respect to pornography and/or sexual representation. What led you to study pornography and/or sexuality in film and media?

Peter Alilunas (PA): My interest in pornography studies started with my interest as an undergraduate in feminist film theory. I was energized by learning about the dynamics of gender and power. As an M.A. student, I had a seminar on sexuality and film with Janet Staiger, where I had a realization that pornography is the ideal terminus for studying gender, something that Linda Williams pointed out in her field-establishing book *Hard Core* (1999, 267). Reading that book changed my academic life. But it was really during my doctoral studies where it all coalesced. It was Dan Herbert, my advisor, who put everything together for me. He hired me to be a research assistant on his brilliant book *Videoland* (2014), for which he traveled across the United States tracing the remaining video rental stores. During that work I realized there was a gap in two adjacent sets of literature: home video histories mostly avoided adult film history, and pornography studies didn't really address the video era. Herbert was completely supportive when I proposed a dissertation on that topic, and other folks at Michigan such as Richard Abel were immensely foundational, too. The emphasis and training there on historiography made me the scholar I am today. I've also been really fortunate to have had informal mentors like Chuck Kleinhans, Eric Schaefer, Gayle Rubin, Lucas Hilderbrand, and Whitney Strub, all of whom really helped me start to understand what high-level research and argumentation looks like and how this profession works, not to mention just inspiring me.

Ummni Khan (UK): I was introduced to pornography vicariously. In the early 90s, during my undergrad years, some friends invited me to attend a screening of the classic—to some infamous—NFB documentary *Not a Love Story: A Film About Pornography* (1981). The experience skewered me with the double-edged sword of disgust and arousal. Like a good feminist, I channelled my ambivalence into rage. This was fueled by reading classic feminist analyses, most importantly MacKinnon's seductive reductionism, where all porn fit within the master narrative of patriarchy. I learned that the linchpin to all female woes (from rape to unequal pay to backdoor abortions) was the eroticization and naturalization of male dominance and female subordination, expressed most powerfully in porn. Caught up in my own zeal, I was able to gorge on hardcore pornography in rad feminist texts—mediated to be sure—but nonetheless, deliciously graphic. Then I fell in with a postmodern crowd. My new pals created an epistemological space for the inner conflict I had been feeling, but mostly suppressing, in the name of solidarity. They introduced me to writers like Gayle Rubin, Pat Califia, Carole Vance, and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and to theories like anti-essentialism, queer theory, sex-radical and sex-positive feminism. What was so enlightening was not just the idea that pornographic images and text are unstable signifiers, but also, awareness that an erotic charge is embedded within the feminist porn debates, regardless of which side you're on. My interest in pornography continued through my legal education, during which I learned about Canada's "progressive" precedent-setting decision, *R. v. Butler* (1992). Incredibly, the judicial justification for censorship in that case more or less replicated the rad feminist assessment of the "violent," "degrading" and "dehumanizing" nature of porn, including not just depictions of force or kinky roleplay, but also consensual representations of fellatio (see Cossman et. al 2017). As I like to joke, the Supreme Court couldn't swallow that some women like to swallow. Who wouldn't want to theorize that?

Laura Helen Marks (LHM): I entered my Ph.D. program in 2005 with no intention of studying pornography or even film. Trash cinema and body genres had always been an interest, especially horror and action genres, but I had not considered pursuing these genres in graduate school. I did my Ph.D. in English, so I came to porn studies from a literary angle. My interest was cemented by a trip to the local video store. At that time, I was taking a class on gender and sexuality in the South, and we had recently watched the 1970s exploitation film, *Mandingo*. Having spent my formative years subscribing to a rather naïve anti-porn brand of feminism, in graduate school I was exploring pornography with a wide-eyed enthusiasm, making up for lost time and rethinking my assumptions. So, I would browse the room behind the curtain at the video store. On this particular visit, I noticed a bunch of films starring a performer called Mandingo. I reacted with surprise and a mild horror. Why would a black man choose such a name? And, upon discovering a wealth of interracial titles that traded in nineteenth-century slavery rhetoric, I began to interrogate the rhetoric of interracial titles. This ultimately led to an about turn in what I planned to write about for my dissertation. As an English major, I wanted to draw the literary and the cinematic together (as opposed to writing a film studies dissertation with a perfunctory chapter about literature) and wound up writing about pornographic film that draws on late nineteenth-century literature and tropes for erotic appeal.

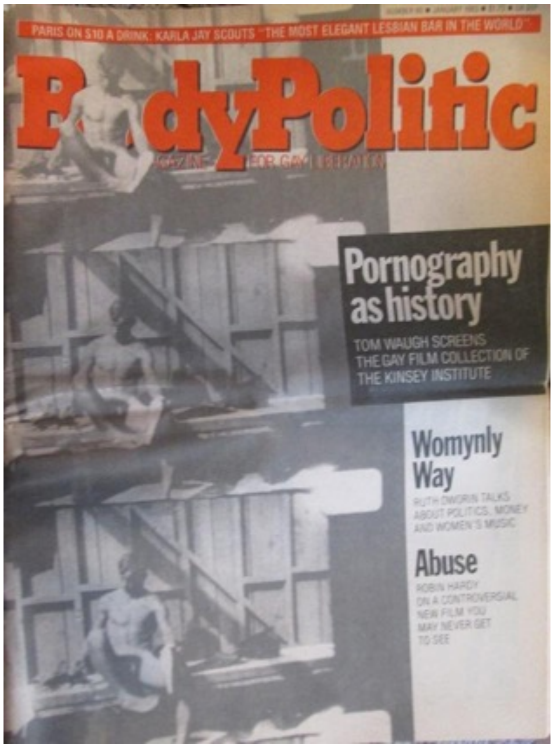
PARIS ON $10 A DRINK: KARLA JAY SCOUTS "THE MOST ELEGANT LESBIAN BAR IN THE WORLD"
BodyPolitic
Pornography as history
TOM WAUGH SCREENS THE GAY FILM COLLECTION OF THE KINSEY INSTITUTE
Womynly Way
RUTH DWORIN TALKS ABOUT POLITICS, MONEY AND WOMEN'S MUSIC
Abuse
ROBIN HARDY ON A CONTROVERSIAL NEW FILM YOU MAY NEVER GET TO SEE

Figure 1.
Tom Waugh's first "formal publications" on porn. *The Body Politic* (Toronto), no. 90, 1983.

Thomas Waugh (TW): I was part of the 1970s New Left baby boomer generation that launched the discipline of film studies. I chose research topics like most of my kindred spirits that were close to my heart and identity. Neither auteurist studies of Hitchcock and Ophuls that I was force-fed at Columbia nor the fashionable "Screen Theory" were my thing. As a committed New Leftie seeking to transform the discipline, but also caught up in the historiographical branch of the field, I had started out with Old Left documentary histories, with Québec direct cinema as my M.A. topic (1974) and Joris Ivens as my dissertation topic (defended 1981). Thereafter, having got out of my system for the time being left documentary with my 1984 anthology *"Show Us Life": Toward a History and Aesthetics of the Committed Documentary*, and greatly influenced by the feminist film studies breakthroughs of the 1970s—both in terms of politicizing the "personal" and uncovering an archive—I determined that porn studies in general, and protoqueer porn studies in particular, fit these various agendas.

My first formal publications on the topic of porn were in the Toronto community newspaper *The Body Politic* beginning in 1982. My research scouting expedition to the Kinsey Institute Archives earlier that year had changed my life. That this came at the height of the "porn wars" only strengthened my conviction

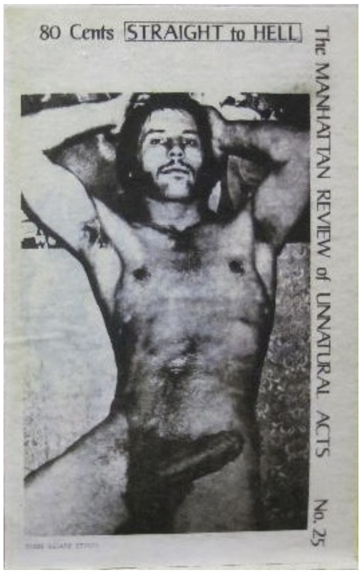

Figure 2.
"Folk Raunch." *Straight to Hell:* cover, c. 1975 (New York, Boyd McDonald, ed.)

that my work must engage more with present struggles.

This work was a natural extension of several years of queer cinema reviewing in community media in both Toronto and Montreal as well as in the American *Jump Cut*. I was not personally an obsessive user of mainstream gay porn but rather an aficionado of esoteric vintage materials, that I would discover in Manhattan second-hand stores, and marginal media like what I would soon be calling "folk raunch," e.g. the chapbook *Straight to Hell* with its recycling of rich first-person narratives and physique beefcake from earlier generations.

KC: In your view, what is the value of studying and/or teaching pornography and sexual representation?

PA: There's a few different levels of importance to and value to what we study and teach. The first is pretty basic: all kinds of media should be studied, and their histories should be traced and mapped and understood. For adult film, that means the usual sorts of media-related questions. Eric Schaefer points out that adult film history adds some unique layers to these histories, things like the alternative aesthetics that characterize these films, as well as the fact they are unique documents of places, people, and behaviors (Schaefer 2005, 91-92). That this particular history is culturally charged (I mean, very few other disciplines even have to *think about* questions of value, which is a constant for us) only makes that clearer. The second level is a mix of basic media literacy combined with sexual literacy; it's sad that college professors are tasked with this when that should really be the job of elementary schools, something that's practically unthinkable in the United States, unfortunately. But it's true: most of our students need to be taught some basic sexual media literacy. The third level is related to how *sexually explicit representations* become *pornography,* which really defines how I approach my research and teaching. I have always strongly subscribed to Walter Kendrick's argument that pornography isn't a thing, it's a thought structure, so how that thought structure is created and changes over time (which is, in a nutshell, the process of regulation) is immensely important (Kendrick 1987, xiii). It links back to so many facets of life, industry, culture, politics, all of them constantly changing and shifting.

UK: I'm now a legal and cultural studies scholar who focuses on the criminalization of consensual sexual representations and practices that are labelled "harmful." Included in this category would be some pornography, some BDSM, and all sex work. As many critical sexuality scholars have pointed out, the claim of "harm" has replaced accusations of "immoral" or "indecent" or "offensive" because harm has liberal traction. If you can convince people that a pornographic text is "harmful" then you're justified in criminalizing it, just as assault is criminalized. Of course, the supposed "harm" is always nebulous. For example, one overlapping legal and feminist justification for censorship is the prevention of "attitudinal harm." The claim is that porn consumption leads male consumers to view all women as "sex objects" or to believe all women like it rough. Meanwhile, the argument goes, porn causes women to lose self-esteem and to base their worth on their sexual desirability. Such arguments perpetuate a sexual morality that disproportionately targets queer and kinky text as harmful. In order to confront the ideological underpinnings of these kinds of harm arguments, you have to deconstruct the claims and the legal semiotics, and if possible, engage with some of the criminalized text.

I also teach fictional films and TV about non-normative sexuality in conjunction with legal discourse, for example, in relation to BDSM. I do this, in part, to challenge legal positivist claims of law as a discrete arena unaffected by wider social processes. Instead, I position cases and statutes as cultural artifacts in conversation with multiple sectors and diverse discourses. Students then can study how legal claims regarding the harms of BDSM practice actually mirror fictional representations (instead of, unfortunately, empirical studies that overwhelmingly find BDSM to be a benign practice). For example, judicial decisions often suggest that kinky practices that are initially consensual and safe will escalate into dangerous and violent abuse, a slippery slope argument that is reflected in many pop culture narratives (Khan 2018). Another notable parallel between film and law is their overlapping tendency to afford greater tolerance to BDSM that occurs within heteronormative relations.

LHM: Tom (below) and Peter (above) articulate the bulk of my feelings quite beautifully. I would add that the study and teaching of pornography is vital to acquiring the language with which to articulate our own lives and interactions with a media form that is so present and yet so pushed to the edges of discourse. It is remarkable that, in 2020, students respond to discussions about pornography with an almost tangible sigh of relief in part due to how easily I talk about sexual representations and in a way that avoids embarrassment, excess, or titillation. My classes are probably the first time they have encountered someone talking about sexually explicit media in the same way they might talk about music. Students have told me how grateful they are to simply have the language and knowledge to navigate their experiences, their relationships, and their media consumption. This is an important aspect of porn studies.

TW: Quite simply, it's about our responsibility to understand our cultural environment—70 years after the Sexual Revolution, a quarter century after the internet revolution. To maintain film and media studies' contact with the culture at large, not only to propagate a museum subculture. The value is of course interdisciplinary and intersectional, and both terms are political as well as intellectual.

KC: What kind of institutional supports or drawbacks are there (or have there been) for you in terms of researching, teaching and/or publishing on pornography or representations of sexuality?

PA: I've been extremely fortunate that, for the most part, there has been support at every stage of my career for my work. Of course there have been challenges: I was frequently told early on by various people (to my face, but also in whispers and such) that writing a dissertation about pornography would not work, that it would prevent me from getting a job, that publishing a book on pornography would prevent tenure, and that teaching about pornography would lead to negative evaluations and reviews. None of those things have been true. These are common things I've heard from other folks, many times, and they all seem based on vague-but-widespread anxieties, all stemming from the toxicity of pornography. What has definitely happened to me, though, has been an increased level of scrutiny at various stages, a little more outside attention "just to make sure" that things are "serious" and "rigorous," a type of institutional surveillance that is sort of like the volume has been turned up a bit compared to other scholars.

But, ultimately, I have been supported at every stage of all of those processes, by universities, publishers, and editors. The University of Michigan was extremely supportive of my dissertation research, and the University of Oregon, my department, and my colleagues have been terrific supporters of my work as it has evolved. The University of California Press was an ideal home for my book (2016), especially given its history publishing pornography-related books. Mary Francis, who has since moved on to the University of Michigan Press, is the best in the business and an invaluable supporter of our work. I can't sing her praises loudly enough. SCMS has been a wonderful institution to our field, supporting the creation of the Adult Film History Scholarly Interest Group that Schaefer put so much work into creating. That's a really important part of his massive legacy. SCMS has also recognized many of us, including me, with writing awards, and regularly accepts a high rate of our papers, panels, workshops, and events. There have been a very small number of minor tension moments at the conference over the years, mostly with some other members who have some misgivings about our field of study, but, overall, the membership and the organization have been overwhelmingly supportive.

But my situation is not indicative of what many others have faced. The fact is, most senior faculty have actively steered students away from the topic or insist that it can only be a small part of something "bigger," or express relief when students choose not to work on pornography, which maddeningly just keeps alive the sad-but-real mythology of "you won't get a job." I have heard many stories about this, and all of them make me just feel sad, but definitely not hopeless. The only way we will change these myths and anxieties is if more scholars, and especially early-career, tenure track faculty *stop believing these myths have power* and absolutely, unequivocally *stop perpetuating them*. That includes perpetuation through silence or inaction. Here's the truth: the up-and-coming scholars in pornography studies are doing incredible, field-changing work, as vibrant and exciting as anything in media studies. We need vocal, ongoing, enthusiastic, and field-wide support for those scholars, in hiring, promotion, and peer-review. That's how we will make permanent change.

UK: I've received a lot of support and mentorship throughout my academic career, including from Professor Thomas Waugh, who taught me film at Concordia! Since then, I've been blessed with inspiring mentors and supporters who encouraged me to follow my naughty muse in tackling taboo topics. In the context of my doctoral work at a law faculty, I did receive some advice from well-meaning profs and peers who said that I should change my topic (BDSM in law and society) because it was too fringe, or people would assume I had a personal stake in the topic. I didn't listen to them because of the support of my extraordinary supervisor, Brenda Cossman, and because I had been trained and encouraged by sex-positive feminism to take risks, methodologically and substantively. I also stuck with it because I was a brat who wanted what I wanted. I enjoyed scandalizing legal spaces where discussions of sexuality were usually confined to the themes of violence or same-sex spousal rights. To put pleasure on the table was fun.

LHM: This is a bit complicated for me. I started my Ph.D. in 2005 and started the dissertation process around 2007/2008. At that time, there was no *Porn Studies* journal, no social media group for porn scholars, and far less recognition of porn studies as a field. The initial years of my dissertating were an incredibly anxious and isolating experience with quite a bit of what felt like simmering resentment on the part of some faculty. I went from being pretty cocky to being frightened, reclusive, and nervous about putting my thoughts on paper. This was productive in some ways—my thinking became more nuanced and I was less annoying—but in other ways I regressed and really had to gather myself and regain my confidence. Happily, some of this self-gathering came as a result of a slow but sure burgeoning in departmental and university support in tandem with greater acceptance of porn studies as a discipline. I won a university-wide fellowship and other awards, achievements that demonstrated a shift in understanding of what I was working on. During these later years in my doctoral program, being "the porn girl" started to feel like it might have some benefits. My work was titillating and seemed novel, which generated interest in terms of publication and conferences where the editor or organizer wanted to sex things up (or, in some cases, recognized the value of studying porn and felt strongly about including my work). That was fine by me and gave me the opportunity to demonstrate porn's place in a multitude of disciplines. Certainly, I had to deal with overly intrusive conversations at academic functions, and I still felt quite alone in the world, but I was happy to have so many people from different fields taking an interest in my research and giving me a place to publish. (Now, thanks to social media and the expansion of the field, I enjoy the friendship and collaboration of a wonderful, supportive cohort of porn studies scholars.)

Still, I was regularly told why I would never secure a job and was keenly aware of not only the difficulties of selling porn studies to a potential employer, but also the difficulties of categorizing my research. I was an English major, but I wrote about film. I wrote about film, but the films I wrote about were not considered to be film. I worked on adaptations of literature, but the adaptations were pornographic and therefore not really adaptations. I studied nineteenth-century literature and culture, but as a way of discussing twentieth and twenty-first century porn. Needless to say, I struggled to secure even an interview for several hundreds of jobs I applied to over those five years, although I don't know that my researching porn was the biggest obstacle. The academic job market is a struggle for everyone.

TW: I've been very privileged. Institutional support has always been impeccable. And I am speaking not only of academic support. Everything from agency funding to library infrastructure to our university film archive/teaching collection. I must also mention technical support: what a luxury to research and teach in an institution that has strong audio-visual infrastructure and funding built up over the generations! This includes professional projection in our seminars and lecture classes: I had to pinch myself sometimes as 35mm projection in our teaching auditorium continued well into the 21st century and our archival print of *Deep Throat* (1972) would unspool on that giant screen—just as it did in Times Square when I saw it in 1972.

This support was already in place in the years in the 1980s before the advent of the video porn revolution and the advent of legal accessibility of porn in the Canadian landscape. It's important to remember the climate here until well into the 1990s: obscenity prosecutions of paintings in galleries (!) continued well into that decade, especially in other provinces—not to mention Canada Customs' systemic harassment, including suppression of safer sex instructions in imported gay skin magazines.

State funding agencies are part of the landscape: the peer jury review process at both the federal and provincial levels for both arts agencies and scholarly research agencies has always favoured openness to the kind of work that frightens the horses in Washington. I remember once a couple of decades ago the Canada Council sent me a portfolio for a look: the jury had been perplexed by an art video that consisted of dozens of close-up vignettes featuring male masturbation with subject voice-overs—that is, a counterpoint of performances, verbal and corporeal—and wanted an "expert" opinion!

KC: Have there been any issues for you in terms of securing an academic position or receiving tenure/promotion as a scholar of pornography?

PA: I'm a broken record, but the truth is that I've been deeply fortunate that the University of Oregon has been so supportive of my work, first in hiring me, then in understanding and supporting my research, and then in tenuring and promoting me—not only was that a smooth process, it happened a year early. I'm equally grateful to the anonymous tenure evaluators who saw the value in my work and supported it. I have certainly had moments, especially early on in my career, where there was some interest in "what else I could do," which is common for all junior faculty, but I felt a few times like I might have heard it a bit more than others. Overall, though, my departmental colleagues, and colleagues across campus, have been great. Like most pornography scholars, I'm mostly isolated on campus, but that's not unusual. All departments are mixes of interest and expertise, which is a good thing and healthy for the field. Here's the important thing: tenure is a powerful mechanism that lends institutional weight and validity to research. We need to foster the development of more tenured faculty who specialize, and not just dabble, in pornography studies (Williams 2014, 32). It's essential to the stability and future of our field.

The other reality is that my inherent privilege—I am a cishetero, white, male professor—has given me a leg up in academia from the first day I stepped on a campus, and that has continued all the way through tenure. That has certainly smoothed my path, no question. Academia must dismantle its deeply embedded systems that continue to reward certain people over others, and to propagate inherent biases that have resulted in all kinds of imbalances, but especially around race, sexuality, and gender. Pornography studies scholars have an opportunity to help lead the way on those challenges, given our expertise and unique understanding of these intersectional disparities, and we absolutely must be at the forefront of those changes in our institutions.

UK: It's hard to know to what extent my scholarship may have interfered with my career. Unfortunately, when you don't get an interview, or, if you do get an interview but don't get a job offer, they never come right out and say they disapprove of your topic or arguments. The times when I did not get an interview or offer, if I was told anything, it was that I was not the right "fit." It's probably a self-serving narrative, but there is one faculty where my expertise fit the job description perfectly. I didn't get an interview and I'm convinced it's because my theoretical position conflicted with the anti-porn and anti-sex work stance of some of the senior professors there. I was lucky that Carleton's Legal Studies Department was hiring at the time I entered the market, and I got the position. This is an interdisciplinary department, and my colleagues are trained in diverse subject areas. Because of this, I think our differences are not just tolerated but appreciated, including our differences on issues like pornography. My experience may have been different if I had wound up teaching in a professional law school. But maybe not. Some of my most courageous and cutting-edge sex radical collaborators are positioned in law schools.

LHM: I explored this in my previous answer, but I should add that I have never been without a paid academic position. I am extremely lucky in this regard. I think this is due in part to the incredible job market guidance provided at LSU, especially under the guidance of Dan Novak. He did not put all of the emphasis on tenure-track jobs, which allowed me to understand the various different types of faculty positions available to me. I was also aware, again thanks to the wonderful English department at LSU, that rhet-comp positions are more bountiful and a more likely prospect than many others. I tailored my CV accordingly. After graduating in 2013, I spent a year as a postdoctoral teaching fellow at LSU and the following year secured a teaching postdoc at Tulane University, teaching first year writing. This was a position I very much wanted. Initially, it was a five-year postdoc, an unusually long time that offered a substantial safety net for someone navigating a demoralizing job market. I was very lucky that, three years into my appointment, the department decided to convert all the postdoc positions into permanent Professor of Practice positions. The department conducted a national search and the postdocs had to reapply. I was offered one of these positions and enthusiastically accepted.

At no point during my time at Tulane have I experienced issues relating to my research. This is almost entirely due to my position, which is focused on teaching and does not require research. Even so, faculty and students have shown interest in my research and I have worked with undergraduate and graduate students in the capacity of committee member, independent study instructor, guest speaker, etc. Of course, all of these endeavours are for my own personal fulfillment, desire to share my work with others, and maintaining an active scholarly record—it counts not at all toward promotion. The school has been supportive of my teaching, though, which even in the first-year writing classroom intersects with porn studies and sex work policy and which definitely does count toward promotion.

Peter is right about the importance of tenure and recruitment of graduate students. Still, in our current job market (especially post-COVID-19), the reality is that many of us will not enjoy tenured positions and it is important to develop porn studies pedagogies in this context where, in addition to being more vulnerable, we are teaching survey and introductory courses. I think this context offers an opportunity to further normalize and validate the study of pornography via classes that are not exclusively about pornography and don't show any pornographic media. This is especially important to consider in the current state of academia where (despite what some departments continue to suggest), tenure is becoming increasingly antiquated as a career path. What will become of porn studies in an academic future where tenure is obsolete? Where, perhaps, humanities departments disband their graduate programs? In my case, as a Professor of Practice (a relatively secure, renewable position with no possibility of tenure) whose teaching assignments are primarily first-year writing, I have attempted to integrate porn studies (along with many other gender and sexuality related fields) into a required, gen ed course. Based on student work, evaluations, department/university assessment, and my own observations of the classroom dynamic and student learning, this effort has been remarkably successful.

Thanks to the profoundly interdisciplinary nature of porn studies, I can imagine this also being the case in undergraduate courses focused on media studies, gender studies, law, business, anthropology, statistics, technology, computer science, etc… This would not only normalize the study of pornography but (more importantly and the reason why normalization is important) also enrich higher education. The absence of pornography as a point of discussion and learning in courses that are not exclusively about pornography reveals a problematic gap in higher education as well as a tendency to avoid engaging with challenging material in gen-ed courses. We needn't watch porn in class, or even discuss the content of pornographic media, in order to do porn studies. If we were to destigmatize, demystify, and de-sensationalize the study of pornography in gen ed courses, students would enjoy a more complex and relevant education that creates a foundation for those who do go on to take pornographic media courses or pursue porn studies at the graduate level.

TW: Again, I've been very privileged. Only once to my knowledge was I harassed for the content of my research and that was ineffectual: I was red-baited during my tenure hearing rather than queer-baited or porn-baited by a colleague I like to call Yosemite Sam, who is sadly no longer with us.

I've always been given full freedom to choose my syllabi and teaching load, by both my hands-off colleagues and the administration. Of course, since I started teaching porn in 1982, I believe, I've always been hyper-vigilant about issues around pedagogical ethics. Over the years, however, I've come to realize that students do not need to be babied or condescended to.

KC: What are the most urgent or neglected research areas in porn studies and/or sexuality and media right now?

PA: We still have only the most basic understanding of the history of adult film and pornography, all over the world. There will always be a need to theorize what pornography means, and why it instigates various cultural responses, but we've only scratched the surface on what happened, who did it, when, where, and how. David Bordwell's arguments about mid-level research have been profoundly influential on me, and really serve as a touchstone that guides my work and what I encourage in my students (1996, 3-36). Specifically, I really believe in problem-driven research about particular historical phenomena that examines intersections of industry, culture, and power, through lenses that account for the ideological motors that drive society. I think we need more of that kind of research. A lot more.

Non-adult cinema histories are deep, comprehensive, and thoroughly excavated. For just one example, look at something like the ten-volume *History of American Cinema* set, which gathered preeminent scholars to produce a staggeringly invaluable map of the trajectory of Hollywood cinema. Adult film scholars have, for years, had to piece together a woefully incomplete history from various places, with huge gaps and voids scattered throughout. Linda Williams' *Hard Core: Power, Pleasure, and the "Frenzy of the Visible"* (1989) was released thirty-one years ago—we've made tremendous progress as a field since then, but we have a long way to go. We need ten-volume collections, we need big, sprawling monographs that take years to produce, we need quick hit small books, we need edited collections, we need the microhistories that can target smaller moments, and we need a steady flow of journal articles, conference papers, and dissertations. Of course, these are the exact things that folks in our field have been saying for years, so what I'm saying here is literally nothing new (Williams 2014, 24-40; Schaefer 2005, 79-105). But it's extremely important to keep saying it. There does seem to be a recent surge of energy and enthusiasm in our field that has been growing for 25 years and is ready to be harnessed in some exciting ways. Look at the work by people such as Finley Freibert, Desirae Embree, Daniel Laurin, Brandon Arroyo, Darshana Mini, Ben Strassfeld, John Stadler, and our wonderful host Kyler Chittick, along with so many others who I'm unintentionally leaving out—the people who are going to do that ten-volume set one day. We need more of that, and we need to support it.

UK: We need to bring some insights from the "porn wars" to the current moment. While mainstream feminism does not seem particularly preoccupied with porn anymore (although of course, there is still some anti-porn discourse out there, often in the guise of health or addiction discourse). However, in my milieu, there is a downright obsession with detecting "rape culture" in pop culture. Many of the same reductionist narratives are repeated. For example, the news media and blogosphere had a recent hate-on for the erotic mainstream film *365 Days.* This was yet another moral panic policing sexual fantasy, reifying female vulnerability and perpetuating the "attitudinal harm" arguments we saw with porn earlier. What is interesting to note is that those who object to "rape culture" often identify as sex-positive and even as porn-positive. But there appears to be a belief that mainstream audiences will naïvely interpret eroticized representations of force as literal prescriptions for real life. In other words, the critics implicitly promote the tired "media effects" theory without having to deal with messy empirical evidence, thereby ignoring the fact that most studies do not support the monkey-see, monkey-do hypothesis. There is also, it seems to me, a desire to perform one's superior erotic taste (à la Bourdieu) by labelling mainstream non-consent fantasies—like *365* Days—as "rape culture" as well as "trashy" (see Bourdieu 1984).

Another burning issue is race. Thankfully, the new generation of anti-respectability scholars, particularly those coming from a Black feminist grounding like Ariane Cruz, Mireille Miller-Young, Jennifer C. Nash, and Christina Carney, are carving out cutting-edge approaches to theorize overlooked archives, as well as the relationship of racialization to sexual expression. Their work has been paradigm-shifting for rethinking pornography and racial fetishization within complex networks of power and marginalization. For me, it has also been affirming. When I was a student, and even sometimes now as a prof, some of my critics accuse me of being "white-identified." Pleasure, they suggest, is a privileged area of research, an indulgence that only white women can afford. Such critics have insisted that the "real" and "urgent" work for racialized scholars is sexual violence, not sexual pleasure. I now have a roster of established racialized scholars whom I can cite who reckon with pleasure and agency alongside exploitation and coercion under forces like racial capitalism. It's not either/or, and in many ways, these scholars have provided ways to understand pleasure as a force to combat literal and epistemic violence. Not that I'm saying pleasure needs an instrumental alibi to be tolerated. In my view, pleasure is its own good.

LHM: In typical academic form, having just written the response above it occurs to me that research on porn pedagogy in the undergraduate gen ed classroom is a pressing need that I should start researching right away. But more seriously, the lack of attention to pornographies from outside the United States, beyond the security of traditional narrative film, and beyond the thrill of hardcore, is something that remains a stark gap in porn studies research. Here, I am echoing Linda Williams in her 2014 reflection on the area of study she helped to create, "Pornography, Porno, Porn: Thoughts on a Weedy Field" (24-40). Williams also points to the overemphasis on queer texts (or, perhaps, the lack of attention to hetero texts), something that has been partially resolved in the intervening years. In general, I think it is important to acknowledge the expansion of porn studies over the last decade as we have seen an uptick in single author books and sustained scholarship (as opposed to what I call "dabbling"—scholars outside of porn studies who spice up their research with some porn, never to return to the fold again). Much of this scholarship has addressed gaps in the field—race, the video era (thank you Peter!), global pornographies, sexploitation and softcore, specific filmmakers/films, gonzo and non-narrative porn, and so forth—yet I am still left with the sense that we are merely scratching the surface. Having been treated to Mireille Miller-Young's *A Taste for Brown Sugar* (2014) and Jennifer C. Nash's *The Black Body in Ecstasy* (2014) in the same year, will we now enjoy further books that get to grips with race and pornography? Will there be a book about the films of Gregory Dark? Interracial pornographies? Black masculinities in porn/sex work? I hope so. Yet (and this speaks to Peter's point about ensuring the continued recruitment of students and expansion of the discipline at the graduate level), it feels as though there are so few dedicated scholars in secure, well-paid, flexible positions to shoulder the responsibility of such a massive undertaking. The topics I just mentioned in passing are the porn studies equivalent of, say, the films of Quentin Tarantino, interracial romance in Hollywood film, and masculinity in the Western. It is absurd to imagine a media studies landscape where those books were not plentiful.

This brings me to a consideration that intersects with my comments on pedagogy. Imagine if that book on masculinity in the Western included discussion of *A Dirty Western* (1975). Pornography is seen as so "other" that it rarely if ever gets included in scholarly work focused on "film." A friend once told me about a paper she was working on about incest and the South in film. I enthusiastically told her about *Carmen Goes South*, a wonderful and weird David Stanley feature that includes incestuous scenes set against a backdrop of confederate flags and other stereotypical southern tropes. "Oh...," my friend replied, "I'm not really working on...*that*." In this way, the responsibility of covering all of pornography rests almost exclusively on the shoulders of a tiny group of hard-working nerds. It would be interesting to see if the proliferation of porn studies in neighboring fields might further cement and validate our field as well as enrich theirs.

TW: I will mention just one. Below I mention the "lacunae" that are evident in the research spectrum that has been explored by porn studies over the years. One of these is unbridled research into the relationship of porn to the carceral state. I never tire of repeating that there are now more porn users locked up in North America than at any other time of history—all in cahoots with the privatization of the punitive penal system, the #MeToo weather system, the total lockdown on any conversation about youth sexual agency and intergenerational sexual relations, the industrialization of the sex offenders registries program, the pseudo-feminist therapy industry, and the lingering criminalization of consensual sexual exchange. We have only begun to explore the relationship of sexual imagery, commoditized or non-, to all of these dynamics.

KC: Comment on your experiences with "trigger warnings" and "safe spaces" in the classroom and where you stand with respect to this debate. On the one hand, many students claim that trigger warnings are important in order to guard against re-living traumatic events. Some instructors, however, have suggested that trigger warnings are not grounded in the current research on trauma and function to censor classroom content and stifle conversations around difficult knowledge. Some suggest that they infringe on free speech. Do you use trigger warnings in your classes? Do students ask for them or do you implement them on your own? What do you think about trigger warnings both in theory and in praxis?

PA: We should, first and foremost, center this topic within a framework of contemporary politics. "Trigger warnings" as a conceit have been weaponized in this latest iteration of the Culture Wars in the United States and have been co-opted by conservatives in an ongoing anti-intellectual war against higher education and, particularly, the humanities. Because of that, the concept itself has become devoid of its original meaning, and, unfortunately, the result has been that many students have fallen into a defensive mode in which they expect lots of classroom time devoted to parsing through all the ways something could be offensive, to whom, and why. It's less about them *actually* feeling this way, I think, and more about them now being pre-conditioned to expect dialogue about it. In that sense, students have been directly impacted by the way conservatives have hijacked this topic in order to blame, falsely, liberal politics. I really don't want any part of that in my classroom, and I work really hard not to feed that fire in any way. All of this means that this current landscape is completely separate from the *actual intention* of content advisories.

Early in my career, I was heavily influenced by an interview that Kevin Bozelka did with Peter Lehman and Linda Williams in 2007, where they talked about their approach to these kinds of topics (62–68). I agreed then and continue to agree with what Linda described: I put a warning on my syllabus about graphic material that advises students not to take the course if they are unable to discuss and study this material in a detailed and thoughtful way. But I'm cautious to go too far beyond that, since, as she points out, it can become a self-fulfilling prophecy. She says, "You set them up to be traumatized at some point in the class, and sure enough, they will be! They're going to act out trauma because it's expected of them" (65). I'm really cautious about pre-conditioning students any more than culture has already done.

What I've come to realize, though, partly after really productive conversations with Whitney Strub, is that professors should absolutely not, even inadvertently, use our power as teachers to spring things on students, or to have a paternalistic attitude that subtly or unintentionally sends the message that "we know what's best for you even if it hurts." Also, it's basically the definition of cishetero white privilege for me to suggest that I could even be capable of building some neutral learning environment where we don't have to account for actual lived experiences, which are unquestionably and disproportionately unfair, and even fatal, for many people. To stick blindly to the mythology that the classroom is free from those systemic power imbalances will only result in being complicit in perpetuating them.

At the same time, there's simply no way to know what will be painful or difficult for each student. I tend to reiterate clearly that many topics are going to be offensive, and that, in many cases, they were *deliberately designed* to be offensive. That helps students see their scholarly potential. As historians, sometimes our role is to contextualize and trace how, where, and when that process of offensiveness happened, or to examine why certain things are offensive at various historical points. It's naïve to think we aren't going to be presentist in our analyses, so I try to have a mix of presentism and contextual positioning. I always and continually invite students to meet with me and talk about their concerns, and I work really hard to create a welcoming and safe environment where that can happen. I stress that my goal is always the opposite of the sort of suspicious, judgmental, condescending, and paternalistic conversations that conservatives bizarrely seem to want to require and take pleasure in, which to me seems all a part of a deeply disturbing (and, sadly, growing) desire to punish people for practicing empathy. Empathy is the single most important professorial trait and should always be at the foreground of our pedagogy. Finally, it's critically important to note that students receiving professional treatment and support for trauma—which is, as a general rule, outside of our expertise area as professors—are protected by a formal structure of accommodations and university policies and shouldn't be casually folded into these cultural debates.

UK: I feel torn about trigger warnings. I do think they can have a chilling effect on what professors teach and what can be discussed. I am also concerned they might prime some students to interpret all negative affect as "traumatizing," when in fact, what they are experiencing is sadness or anger in response to class material. While it can be distressing to have such emotions in class, they are not the same things as being triggered and re-experiencing trauma. My other major concern is the sexual exceptionalism that seems to accompany trigger warnings, such that depictions of non-sexual violence do not seem to garner as much concern. Nonetheless, I tend to give "content warnings" and even offer accommodations of alternate material if it occurs to me that something might be categorized as "triggering." However, I also engage in dialogue about the topic. I like to address the issue of trigger warnings in my first class, where students can discuss these issues. I convey my own concerns with them, which are actually shared by many of the students. In this way, we work to create shared norms around what kind of content warnings, if any, we will have, while being cognizant of the drawbacks of using them. It's a compromise, but at least it positions trigger warnings as a subject of critical inquiry.

LHM: Like Peter, I have found commentary by Linda Williams and Peter Lehman to be very useful in navigating the issue of trigger warnings and showing/discussing sexually explicit material in class. When I have taught porn studies, the first readings assigned grapple directly with this question: Peter Lehman's "Why Teach and Study Pornography?" (2006) and Linda Williams's "Porn Studies: Proliferating Pornographies On/Scene" (2004). Opening with these readings provides the opportunity to discuss this very question as a group and figure out how we will navigate our feelings and reactions to the materials we will study. My experience is a little different from those who teach porn studies as a regular course that any student can sign up for. I have taught porn studies twice, both times under the mantle of an independent study although in reality these independent studies functioned more like small (four people) classes made up of students I already taught and who requested I teach the course. It was pretty great. The students and I already understood each other's learning/teaching styles and the students were more actively opting in with a full grasp of the material with which they would be engaging than undergraduates who sign up online.

Beyond those initial readings, I make it clear that a good deal of our discussion will revolve around reactions, feelings, thoughts, questions. In other words, if you are triggered, let's talk about why. I would never force a student to talk about their discomfort, but in my experience it has always served as a valuable starting point for analyzing a particular film or scene. In short, I do not offer a trigger warning before every class or film. Instead, I try to integrate the experience of being "triggered" into the substance of the class.

TW: In principle, I am opposed to trigger warnings—I agree with the premises you mention, questions around censorship, difficult knowledge, and free speech. In practice, undergraduate teaching is different from grad seminars, required courses different from elective courses, and any teacher must navigate several different contexts. Also, quite frankly, Concordia Fine Arts and sexuality programs in cosmopolitan Montreal, which used to be the sin city of Canada (our administration building used to house a porn cinema) and still is in many ways—are light years away from the situation of say an untenured teacher in a state institution in rural Indiana, where Trumpite student spies are planted in their courses, and even feminist discourses are dangerous let alone explicit materials, both to careers and to institutional funding approved annually by state assemblies, etc. etc.

I'm not dogmatic though: when I would teach Deanna Bowen's *Sadomasochism*, the most "difficult" film in my sex rep syllabus, I would casually suggest that viewers fasten their seatbelts. This is simply because the first time I showed this very complex interweaving of a diasporic voice with archival footage of police violence against African American protesters and with a suggestive BDSM narrative, a student had confided in me in a very pedagogically supportive way that the screening had been difficult for her as an abuse survivor. In general, “difficult” films often need contextual introductions for a variety of reasons.

As for the question of spoilers, I personally love them and secretly harbour the arrogant opinion that spoiler queens do not qualify as professional film users. The spoiler as a concept was created by the publicity industry. The role of surprise in cinematic narrative is greatly exaggerated: I love going to Bollywood movies with Indian friends who always know after the first five minutes exactly how a film is going to end, based on both narrative formulae and extra/para-cinematic discourses, and this never dampens my pleasure in the slightest.

KC: What are the biggest challenges you face as a scholar or teacher of pornography/sexuality?

PA: As a field, we face what feels like a permanent struggle against the cultural anxiety around our topic, something that Michael Warner perfectly explains as a struggle for control based in insecurity and fear (1999). These anxieties are deeper than sexually explicit media, they’re

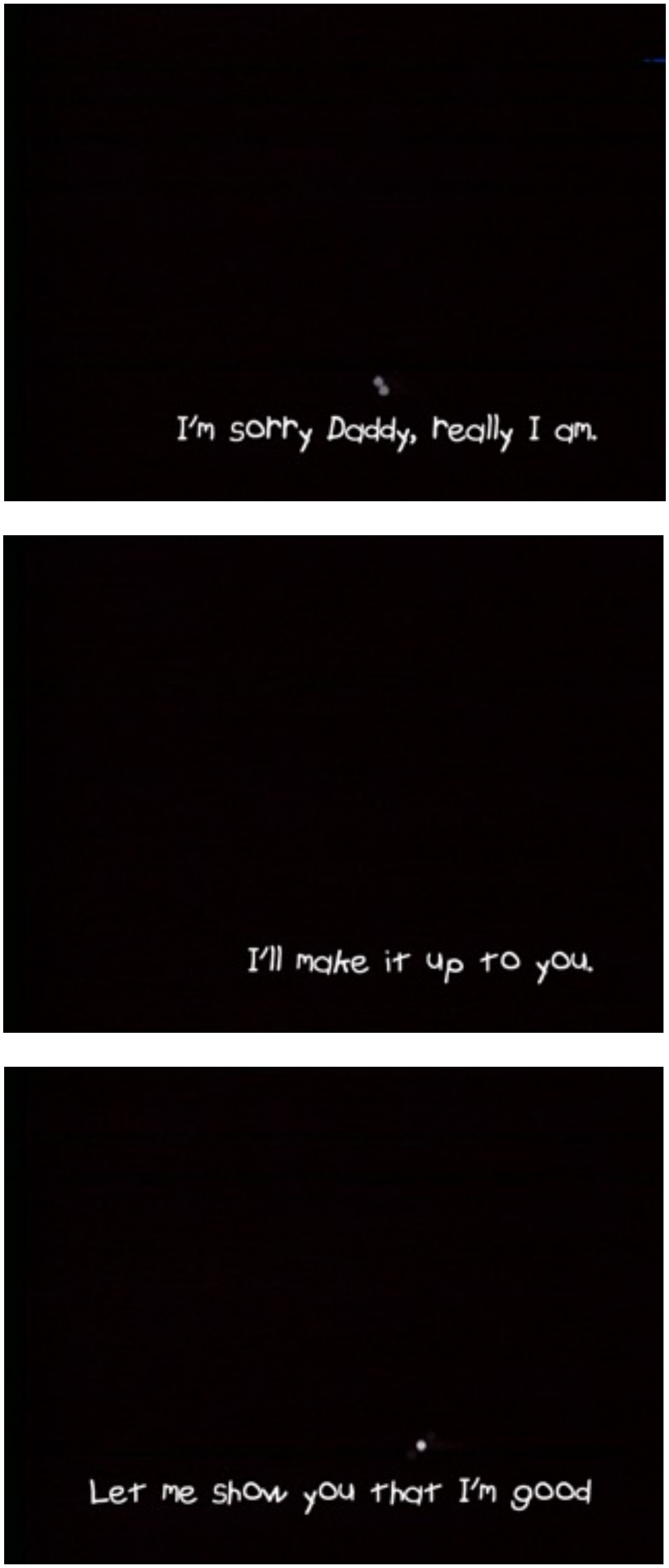

Figure 3.
Sadomasochism (frame grabs), dir. Deanna Bowen (1998).

about pleasure: what kinds of pleasure people are having, what kinds of pleasure people should be allowed to have, who should decide, and how. Sexually explicit representations often depict pleasure, and are often intended to produce pleasure, which means they're an ideal flashpoint for those tensions. The degree to which various regulatory mechanisms—be they religious, juridical, or cultural—become actualized changes over time, as does what constitutes pornography, but the tensions just continually simmer. For some people, scholars who study those representations embody the potential for normalization and acceptance of pleasure, especially pleasure for pleasure's sake, the most dangerous kind. Ultimately, pornography studies scholars make people nervous and anxious just by making pleasure legible on a most basic, bodily level. In other words, our literal presences remind people that pleasure is a thing that exists—and since pleasure is so contentious, we become the terrain on which those anxieties play out.

Sometimes these anxieties take very visible forms, such as anti-pornography feminism, which in its most recent form is the manufactured public health crisis, the rhetoric from which takes up a lot of airspace and time. It deliberately draws people into tired quarrels and arguments that are designed to create legitimacy through opposition and push opponents toward insidious and false middle ground discourses. These people are also just plain exhausting, and they know it. That's the strategy. They have (sometimes literal) religious zeal and an unending supply of moral righteousness, but they also are, at the root, just afraid. Other times these anxieties are more subtle, such as the way we're continually asked to justify our area of research, spend rhetorical time giving counter-arguments, or even just the mindless bureaucratic labor of explaining to university administrators why we need research funding for sexually explicit media, or reimbursements for travel related to that research, and so on. For example, I recently spent hours trying to convince an IT administrator that the university's email filters were sending many of my incoming emails to a spam folder because of their pornography-related contents; I guarantee other faculty on my campus aren't using their time for *that* problem.

What has served me extremely well in the midst of the occasional tension has always been to act as if my area of expertise is completely *normal*. When someone acts otherwise, I tend to respond as if those reactions are confusing and *abnormal*. We've kind of been conditioned as a field to act in the opposite way, and to be suspicious and defensive, given the past histories of how this work has been treated. But, in the end, I really believe that defensiveness only highlights the anti-pornography position that there's something suspicious about all of this. There isn't. It's endlessly important just to point out that the emperor isn't wearing any clothes, and not to accede any false middle-ground discourses, something that Gayle Rubin gave us a road map for a long time ago (1984, 267–319). Ultimately, I've found that the best strategy for dealing with these challenges is just making things ordinary. Really just plain old ordinary, which, by the way, it all is. From anti-pornography activists to wary department heads to suspicious neighbors, culturally driven anxiety makes people think pleasure and, by extension, sexually explicit media, are perverse and dangerous. Any chance we get to say that they aren't, either literally or just by *being in this profession*, works toward making a new and better reality.

UK: One of the big challenges for me in this moment is trying to nuance conversations around sexuality and consent post-#MeToo (the current pop feminism version, not the original grassroots movement started by Tarana Burke). Of course, I believe this "reckoning"—as it's been called—has created a safer space for survivors to share experiences while holding (some) perpetrators accountable for their actions. But there are also ways that the desire to expose sexual violence, call out the "predators" and demand that they "pay" for their misconduct (whether through the criminal justice system or shaming/cancel culture) is reminiscent of earlier conservative sex panics and a carceral mentality. Take the documentary *The Hunting Ground* (2015), an exposé that tackles the prevalence of sexual violence on campuses and the victim-blaming responses by university administrators. While some of the scenes do important consciousness-raising work, the film also relies on a facile David and Goliath narrative that squashes the complexity of consent and the ways that racialized male students—particularly Black male students—are vulnerable to being branded as sexual threats. Furthermore, the ideology of the film suggests that the consequences for perpetrators are not sufficiently punitive, as if punishment and banishment are effective tools to address the complex factors that contribute to sexual misconduct. This is carceral feminism. Just the name itself, "the Hunting Ground," relies on sensationalism, while the poster conveys a horror movie aesthetic. It's another incitement to rape culture discourse that—as Foucault has taught us—proliferates its own kind of perverse pleasures. In my experience, such critiques of *The Hunting Ground* have been met with animosity and a sense of betrayal, as

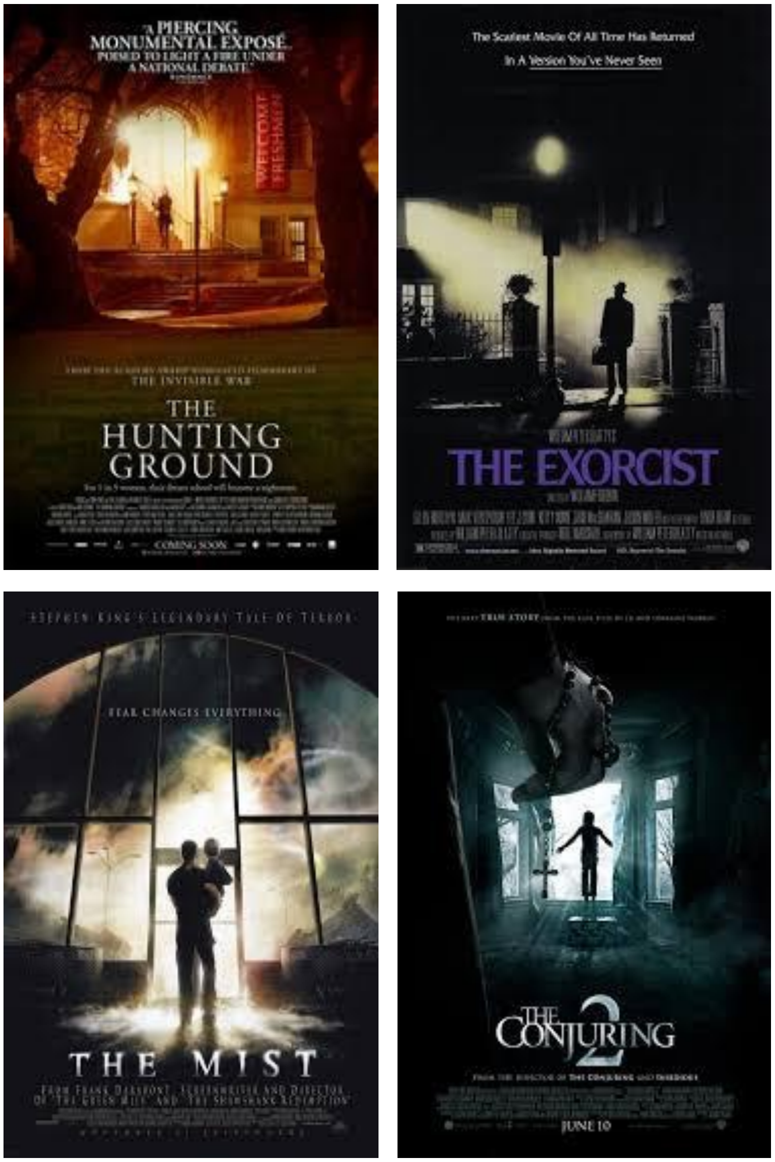
"A PIERCING MONUMENTAL EXPOSÉ POISED TO LIGHT A FIRE UNDER A NATIONAL DEBATE."
THE INVISIBLE WAR
THE HUNTING GROUND
COMING SOON
The Scariest Movie Of All Time Has Returned
In A Version You've Never Seen
THE EXORCIST
STEPHEN KING'S LEGENDARY TALE OF TERROR
FEAR CHANGES EVERYTHING
THE MIST
THE CONJURING 2
JUNE 10

Figure 4.
Movie posters for *The Hunting Ground* (2015), *The Exorcist* (1973), *The Mist* (2007), and *The Conjuring 2* (2016).

if there is only one authentic feminist response to the film: whole-hearted and unquestioning endorsement. In response to situations like this, a big part of my work right now is to create opportunities for dialogue and disagreement within feminist and progressive circles, whether in my scholarship or with my teaching.

LHM: This challenge may start to wane as I move past middle age, but the biggest challenge has been lecherous and predatory individuals at academic conferences. I wrote about those experiences in an article, "How Did You Get Into This? Notes From a Female Porn Scholar" (2014). Some encounters of this type were genuinely traumatizing and I tend to be on guard when discussing my research, especially in boozy contexts like a conference. Another challenge is my fear that I will alienate woman undergraduates who have only been exposed to one feminist discourse on pornography. Most of the time, this is not an issue. The vast majority of undergraduate women are very excited to have their preconceived ideas challenged and even to have their simmering suspicions addressed in a scholarly context.

Oh, also I faced a challenge when purchasing a bookcase off Craigslist. Upon our first meeting, the seller thought I was the bee's knees. By the time I came by to pick up the bookcase, the seller had googled me and, well, the encounter was....very uncomfortable. She refused to speak to me or even look at me. Family friends, family of your partner/spouse, or acquaintances outside of academia may well google you and see nothing more than publications out of context, many of which have provocative titles. This is something to consider when moving around in the civilian world and when applying to jobs outside of academia. In addition, you may find yourself on the receiving end of hostile anti-porn and anti-trafficking organizations that seek to publicly shame you, get you fired, or otherwise make your life difficult. This is especially stressful for those who do not have tenure and/or work at conservative institutions.

TW: One huge challenge might be termed "generational": how to communicate to the PornHub generation the legacy of the history of sexual representation as a repository of emancipatory ideals and communities, of utopian glimpses of desire and fulfilment? Moreover, aside from this issue, Generation Y and Z students are having trouble developing skills in textual analysis, and understanding their applicability to porn studies, not to mention basic reading and writing. They're also not interested enough in the archive, more focused on "WAP" than on its 1937 ancestor *Marked Woman*.

Struggles against censors are not as overwhelming as they were when I started (my 1982 *Body Politic* piece on vintage gay porn film was almost withheld because the journal's legal advisers thought that it would be seen as baiting the Toronto police. And from another direction the Kinsey Institute would soon come after me because they determined a queer community publication did not count as "scholarly"—the word included in their researcher use contract).

However, the spectre of censorship still exists. With regard to my most recent book *I Confess: Constructing the Sexual Self in the Internet Age* (an anthology coedited with Brandon Arroyo, 2019), an abusive peer reviewer almost succeeded in scuttling the publication because he was uncomfortable with some of our material.

Self-censorship is still an issue in this subfield. If you look at the tables of contents from the first decade of the review *Porn Studies*, obvious lacunae are visible (including the skittishness around using visual material). And then there's the job market: if you look at all the PhDs out there who researched porn but who are now jobless, a pattern emerges.

The challenge of diversity has been much discussed, but there's still a lot of catching up to do in terms of porn heritage. At Kinsey I watched 17 wonderful artisanal films in 8mm from the sixties by one Ben Dover, a Manhattan African American flamer who called his outfit "Big D Productions" and his onscreen persona "Iva Crusty Crotch." But I couldn't pursue this research because the materials were in 8mm and subsequent initiatives didn't pan out. Those films are still waiting there to be claimed… and the insights they offer into the erotic imagination of racialized queer minorities during the Sexual Revolution still waiting to be parsed… alongside no doubt many, many other films.

Introduction and questions by Kyler Chittick.

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