

‘PORNOGRAPHY: DEGRADATION OR LIBERATION?’ A STUDY ON THE SHIFTING FEMINIST APPROACH TOWARDS PORNOGRAPHY

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ABSTRACT

Pornography has been gaining a lot of priority in feminist studies for years, and specifically on behalf of sex & identity. This article is inspired from a book named “Striptease Culture: Sex, Media and Desire”. It is believed over and over that pornography is a sexualized culture generally, which occupies a prominent mark in our everyday lives, whether we admit it or it’s behind the closed doors. Particularly, media and also the developing technologies typically use the catchword “Sex Industry”. Sex ‘sells’ in fact, in the magazines, commercials, TV shows, movies, and majorly in pornographic movies or ‘Blue Films’; to everybody’s surprise sex industry has the highest demand among the customers. Yes, ‘Sex’ is purchased as well!

KEYWORDS: *Sexualized Culture, Developing Technologies, Biological Procreative Role*

Article History

Received: 25 Sep 2019 | Revised: 08 Oct 2019 | Accepted: 18 Oct 2019

INTRODUCTION

We tend to come to the present purpose from the Vintage era, the time when sexual preferences were hidden, carrying a burden of shame. This was the time when sex was only an activity that was confined within the individual selves. But in the Modern times, irrespective of its biological procreative role, Sex is also considered as a psychological activity that expresses love, passion and desire. Pornography is one among the visual expressions of sex and gender, however turning into widespread as economic process and new technologies seem, porn has additionally been a really crucial, debated issue amongst feminists since it brings up questions about the body, sexuality, power, inferiority and oppression.

The aim of this article is to answer the question of whether or not pornography is degrading or liberating. To begin, firstly, the outline of pornography and its relationship with gender should be discussed. Then, after that, various feminist views on the problem of pornography – particularly with creating the excellence of the views influenced by modernism and by genre. A small introduction on ‘Erotica’ i.e., readable porn would also be included. Finally, the article would make an attempt to come back to a conclusion concerning whether or not porn is degrading or liberating, because of the varied feminist approaches.

Sexuality and Pornography: The Sexualized Culture

Sex matters & it matters a great deal. And now in the Modern Era where sex isn't simply outlined as a biological tool for sequence transmission, however it evolved into “the psychological capability to feel concupiscence and knowledge consummation as in modern age, particularly intense type of physical and emotional pleasure.” (McNair, 2002: 2). Sex has

henceforth become gender-oriented or sexual priorities. Gender comes to be understood as a social construction of the body or our biological form. But this wasn't enough to elucidate however our instincts, drives, sexual behaviours, needs are shaped. It absolutely was the society, and for feminists, the patriarchic order that created the meanings of desire. Richardson talks concerning the work of Gagnon and Simon (1973) that claims "not solely can we learn what 'sex' suggests, and World Health Organization claims or what's sexually arousing doing to us, however, we tend to additionally learn the need of sex" (Richardson, 1997: 157). In alternative words, society provides bound meanings to limit bodily activities. To the contrary, an individual should tend to learn and need to observe sure bodily activities, and our own 'sexual desires'. An individual should have the mentality & freedom to think & accept their own sexuality. If we view the positive side of Pornography, it enables an individual through its visuals that there's nothing sinful in having sexual urges. It also clears the concept by rejecting body shaming, that you need not have a perfect body to indulge yourself in love-making. It also supports a gay or a lesbian of the fact that there's nothing wrong in developing feelings for the same sex. It also helps in making us accept the facts that it is completely natural for a Transgender to have sexual feelings & desires 'cause they too are normal human beings. We often state that 'Love has no limits', but on the opposite side of the coin, we only question people who fall in love or get married to people having huge age-gaps. Pornography is something that is beyond age limits & solely focuses upon your physical needs & sometimes it supports your mental stability as well.

Our society also has a belief that a Man should always have his hold when having sex. He is the one who should speak out his desires & fulfil them. A woman is only a way through which he is able to satisfy himself and his needs. This is the patriarchal over-view of the society when it comes to discussing about sex. But in the porn movies, we often see shifting of roles. In these videos a woman can also have the hold upon her man & a man can also think of satisfying his partner, because women too have sexual urges & those too need to be fulfilled. This brings the equality among two opposite sexes. Visual media has its impact upon the mind-set of its audience & helped in broadening the mentality of the people.

Sexuality and its representations were additionally seen as an emblem of power during which gender is subject to state and establish control. Through prohibitions of sexual practices, sexual consent, age and then on, this was first cited by physicist, World Health Organization, he believed that sex was created through the definition, categorization and additionally by the regulation and management. Feminists revised this Foucauldian plan by claiming the regulation and dominant of gender results in the upkeep of the patriarchal order. This dimension of gender is what matters for feminists the foremost. Gender was seen as the key intruder of structure and women's oppression by Radical Feminists. Widely known Radical Feminist MacKinnon describes sex "as practices, includes abuse, of ladies and kids chiefly. They're abused in sex, within the course of the observe of sex, so as for (primarily) men to urge the pleasure that defines sex." (MacKinnon, 2005: 272).

Pornography's importance in feminist debates is high at present times. Since it's believed that gender could be a social construction, attributing specific meanings to enclose bodily activities and constructing a sexual drive, which is the key to women's oppression. Porn on the other hand involves to be a tool for teaching the acceptable sexual urges and to internalise the patriarchal order. Pornography is claimed to be unreal in mid-nineteenth century; the Victorian era that attempted to suppress sex and gender. However the time was additionally vital for the invention of "Pornography" since technology was developing, having the ability to make space for the pictures to be disseminated apace. (Weeks, 2011: 136).

Pornography typically connotes negativity along with it. However, the boundaries of it would never be certain. The increase of access of porn (hard-core & soft-core) is successfully changing the sexual culture all over the world. This sexualized culture created an ethical panic and censorship rules from time to time. However, this article will certainly point out a leap from sexual suppression to sexual release, chiefly through media. Hickman says that media has been 'the main engine of sexual revolution' (Hickman, 1999: 245). It absolutely was accountable for the cultural capitalism; that seeks profit in cultural commodities, chiefly through advertisings, magazines, and most importantly, Pornography.

Pornography is "sexually specific material consisting in graphic pictorial depictions and verbal descriptions of sexual organs and varied modes of coitus" (Tong, 1989: 112) and was continually a difficulty for discussion in movement. Now, it is to clarify a number of the feminist approaches and debates on the problem of porn and reveal the transformation from the second wave feminism to the present times.

Attitudes of Various Feminist Views on Porno

Before the emergence of the feminist attack on pornography in Seventies, thanks to its absence in thought and lack of availability, the sole discussion on porn went on between spiritual conservatives and civil libertarians. The conservatives viewed porno as "a threat to the ethical development of kids, ancient family values and the ethical material of society." (Fineman, Jackson, Romaro, 2009: 369). Civil libertarians on the opposite-hand emphasised the artistic and social price of sexually specific material and instructed a liberation on the bottom of most pleasance and satisfaction (Tong, 189:112). This discussion that went on concerning the disagreement of individual liberty, was followed by feminist anti-pornographers' voices. It wasn't concerning the public morality or the individual liberty as before, however it absolutely was concerning the women's equality (Tong, 189 :112).

Anti-Pornography Discussion

The Radical Feminist Andrea Rita Dworkin introduced an 'Anti-Pornographic' movement which portrayed porn as sexual discrimination, shaming women and having a consumptive and degrading nature. During this purpose, a distinction between Erotica and Thanatica was made. The previous representing sexually specific material that doesn't damage anyone whereas the latter was related to BDSM performances that involves a great deal of damage and chiefly, the damage of ladies. Anti-pornographers claimed through this distinction that thanatica promotes "sexual harassment, rape, and ladies fighting, and usually by degrading them." (Tong, 189:113). These feminists assumed an immediate link between male violence and porno, for instance in her study of porno and rape, Diane Russell claims that there's a causative link between the 2 by language that "pornography will induce a want to rape ladies in males.

Anti-pornography movement is generally related to radical feminists. They visualised porn as an important tool to take care of oppression against women. The unconventional Feminist, Andrea Dworkin says sex and gender are the medium of oppression that build ladies a distant within the subordinated method. She says that "pornography is the material that suggests sexualizing inequality; which is why porno could be a central observe within the subordination of ladies." (Dworkin, 2000: 30).

These feminists saw porn as a defamation and a civil rights violation (Tong, 189: 115), and instructed censorship on porn but after all, what's 'sexy' and what's not were extremely debated. MacKinnon supports this read by language that through porn, "women are non-human through the learning of male gender to their patriarchal abuse, that sexualizes, therefore lowers, ladies across the culture, not solely in specific sexual interactions. Porn makes ladies a public sexual spectacle and customary sexual property." (MacKinnon, 2005: 316).

In addition, the Radical Feminists opposed the censorship of porn and sexually specific materials. Their negative read on pornography, censorship and sexual repression remain unchanged. They thought that the harmful effects of porn will be subverted through equal relationships between men and ladies.

But porn was a part of free speech, that was protected terribly strictly within the amendment. Liberal feminists rather outlined porno as a tool for sexual liberation. Sex was for them, helpful and pleasure giving and sexual expression was necessary for an individual's being's self-fulfilment and progress; a thought that they borrowed from Enlightenment.

Some of the independent Liberal Feminists argued that anti-pornography movement showed porn, the reason behind is gender violence. The anti-pornographers unnoticed the larger political and economic conditions that cause gender violence. It's necessary to notice here that some profeminist men additionally joined the antipornography movement since it was absolutely and additionally harmful for men. Stoltenberg, one among those profeminists, unconcealed that porn was in favor of white men, inflicting associate degree difference towards alternative masculinities and racism (Stoltenberg: 1989, 454).

This era also gave birth to Postmodernism perspective about Pornography and also the rise of multiculturalism directly in relation with race and post-colonialism:

The modernist accounts of catholicity, truth and essentialism were challenged by replacing the Feminist approach. This genre primarily rejects all universal and generalized accounts; and instead claims that meanings and subjectivities are social constructions. Emphasising on the multiplicity of power and discourses, postmodernist feminists reject the essentialist class of ladies and patriarchy. The postmodernist examples given below are from school of thought and international feminists. World Health Organization thinks that gender, race and postcolonial location within the world affect the sort of oppression that ladies encounter; and from queer theory, assumes that sexual identities are fluid and no class is critical.

Multicultural and international feminists, specifically black feminists saw porn from another dimension. Collins claims that black women's or Ebony representations in porn were completely different than of white women. They were described as "breeders, raped for pleasure and profit of their homeowners" (Collins, 1997: 389). This master-slave relationship shows, however race and postcolonial scenario could have a sway on sexy representations and women's oppression. Collins talks concerning the colonial ladies slavery; and shows however it relates to this representation of Black ladies in interracial porno. First is that Black ladies being the sex objects for white men goes parallel with the sex-dominant representations of these ladies being sexually offered for men. Secondly, the act of rape of Black slaves, ladies within the past is analogous to the rape and violence scenes in porn. Third, the passivity and quality of the Black slave ladies against the white rapist shows similitude with the feminine passivity & racism common in porn.

If we glance closely to the treatment of Black women's bodies in nineteenth century, we are going to face domination and racial discrimination. These will be counted because the roots for constructing Black women's sexualities maybe the treatment to those ladies upon whom porn industry rests upon. "The additional ancient roots of contemporary porn are to be found within the nearly always sex dominant treatment of black ladies. World Health Organization, from the instant they entered slavery... were subjected to rape because the 'logical' convergence of sex and violence. Conquest, in short" (Walker: 1981, 42).

Gilman provides the instance of wife Bartmann. She was a Black lady in nineteenth century Europe. She unconcealed herself, dressed in smart set to many parties. Those times were when the whites drew lines between white and black in case of sexualities as well; Blacks were seen as having extreme sexual activities and bodily variations. Bartmann

was additionally reduced to her sexual elements, receiving attention from the white audience (Gilman, 1985). This illustration of Bartmann was however an opposite image from what is generally expected. This shows the gender, race and gender were associated with the subordination and domination of ladies. And this trend goes on with the representations of Black ladies in porn. "Black ladies weren't adscititious into a pre-existent porn, however rather than porn itself should be reconceptualised as associate example of the interlocking nature of race, gender, and sophistication oppression" (Collins, 1997: 391). For these ladies, porn existed in an exceedingly social-class relationship. Porn isn't a universal and glued however it clearly relates the colonial experiences of Black community.

What the feminists have stated is that in porn white women were represented in porn as 'objects,' Black ladies were represented as animals. White ladies were represented as human bodies if not beings, Black ladies were represented as shit (Walker, 1981: 52). Here, being white represents the trendy, civilized "objects" wherever as black is not any human. Therefore, race becomes a determinant within the reasonably objectification ladies would face. Black ladies' philosophical system portrayal shows the subordinate standing of Afro-American women and also the stratification amongst the ladies generally. Black feminists' read of porno connected to the body, gender and race. So, it gaps another dimension on the problem on porno. Also, this inquiry helps us to perceive the new dynamics of power as a supply of domination. For Black feminists then, porn could be a gender/race system that entraps everybody (Collins, 1997: 393).

The Rise of Sexual Identities: The Case of Gay/ Lesbian Community and Queer Theory

With the technology and digitalisation, porn has become a widespread and offered immense access. Therefore, new genres were occurred in pornography together with that of homosexual intercourse and queer performances adds to new dimensions & new fantasies coming into visibility.

Lara Karaian, a modern authoritative Canadian intellectual and academician pointed at the problem of porno amongst gay/lesbian communities and queer individuals. She provides a present day example of a court case, Butler; that represents the Canadian law and censorship on sexually specific materials. As associate degree extension of the 70s anti-pornography movement; this law lost its validity in 2000. The Art department store that's a Vancouver based shop kept mostly gay and lesbian porn material came beneath scrutiny. However, the Court selected behalf of the bookstore agreed to the fact that homosexual porno was in reality healthy and necessary for that community; "access to gay and lesbian porn, not like its heterosexual counterpart, is vital, as a result of it contributes to a way of community and identity" (Karaian: 2005, 120). It was absolutely decided that porn doesn't damage all ladies however rather, the homosexual porno is liberating for sexual minorities.

However, promising this case could seem, it still shows the essentialist views of lesbians that are terribly kind of like the previous approaches on ladies and heterosexual porn creating a distinction between them. This reduces them into classes and maintains a binary opposition between heterosexual/ homosexual; whereas attributing positive traits to the former and negative ones to the latter. This case will be seen as an ideal example of the increase of sex that didn't build a big amendment by protective modernist read.

Queer theory, on the opposite hand, rejected the categorization of those sexual identities with an additional postmodern approach in their mind than before. It refers to the philosophical theory of each labelling, each class and each identity; since they believe that those classes are all created among patriarchal order. We tend to get out of the dominant discourse, and settle for the thinness of identities. There aren't simply lesbians, gays and heterosexuals however additionally bisexuals, transgenders, non-conformist bodies and needs. There are several sexual identities as there are people in general.

So, we will outline the queer porn because the pictures of non ancient sexual identities playing a sexual activities for less than agitating pleasure within the audience (Karaian:2009,385). This can be clearly a replacement approach on porn, since queer porn's concern is on the representations of varied sexualities and their pleasure. It tells us that we've got completely different sexual needs, attitudes or desires. It emphasizes the liberating perform of porn, completely different than before.

CONCLUSIONS: IS PORNOGRAPHY DEGRADING OR LIBERATING?

This certain article witnessed a shift in feminist views on porno from viewing it as oppressive and harmful, to ascertain it as liberating, giving visibility to completely different sexual identities.

As per the conclusion, the author believes pornography as liberating for many reasons. First is that media doesn't serve any oppressive and subordinate heterosexist values any longer. On the contrary, it's aware of the transformations our society has been longing. Therefore, a great deal has modified in media's illustration of sexual identities; particularly with the contribution of Queer theory within the field. For example, TV shows concerning gay men (Queer as Folk), and lesbians (The L World) and even transgender identities (the drag character on Glee) are discharged and are happening for over 5 seasons. This shows that the ratings for these shows are terribly satisfactory.

Second, pornography is liberating for transportation of once-invisible sexual identities to a public visibility. Genres in porn are varied right now; together with lesbian, gay, drag, transgender and plenty of queer identities. This additionally implies that there's a good variety of sexual discourse offered to public access. Marginal identities are currently a locality of in style culture due to porn. Technology is one more contribution during this; transportation several opportunities to urge concerned in this fragmented sexual culture, which censorship has the smallest amount risk to be performed on this new media.

Related to this argument, third reason to look at porno as liberating is as a result of it's a 'democratization of desire' as McNair instructed, we tend to witness that our desires that are perhaps labelled by society as perversion, abnormality or extreme, are liberated and celebrated. Pornography will be concerning desires; our sexual drives, fantasies and actions; and once free of repression and inferiority. We will embrace ourselves & settle for us. All needs, if respectful to the sensitivities of others, are equal (of course some will be excluded like BDSM or paedophilia); there's no got to repress or hide them. Pornography reveals however varied our needs are, and can be. Therefore, we tend to could learn to measure with our needs, with no shame in the slightest degree.

Paradigms are in exceedingly constant change. Whereas, Seventies will be characterised as a domination of radical feminism within the field. We tend to witness a growing variety of theories on women's oppression for years; radical feminism is a simply one. That archetype had to get replaced with others, as a result of the planet is dynamic, our society and our culture is also changing. We tend to be currently in domination of postmodernist thought; wherever identities are assumed to be fluid and fragmented, wherever sexual identities are various and transcend the normal boundaries. We tend to be within the age of a celebration of multiplicity, diversity and distinction.

With the widespread of porno, it's not only for male gaze any longer. The variety and also the audiences, porn is currently for everybody. BDSM performances are served for those who get pleasure from it, whereas only one click ahead you'll be able to watch a compassionate intercourse between a gay couple. So, the harmful result of porno on ladies as once claimed, is not any longer valid; since for instance, in gay porno we tend to now not will assume that ladies or girl are injured and objectified as a result of there aren't any women within the scene. Also, new classes emerged during which ladies are in the dominating position whereas men are unconcealed as overwhelmed

Finally, as an optimistic because it could seem that porn provides us pleasant and arouse with no sudden consequences; we can't get sexual illness or physiological condition through porno. It's the smallest amount of unhealthy manner for sexual satisfaction.

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