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**The counter-discourse of porn: Sexual activism in
Spain and United Kingdom, from Webpages to Porn
Festivals**

DOCTORAL THESIS

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ABSTRACT

During the 1980s, a wave of dissident pornographic trends emerged in response to the dominance of traditional pornography, which was primarily created by and for a male audience. Women began to challenge this norm, taking control of the cameras and producing their own pornographic content that prioritised female pleasure. This new approach gave women —and other marginalised groups often neglected or misrepresented in mainstream porn— a platform to be subjects of their own desire. This doctoral thesis presents a comprehensive chronology of the various pornographic movements, with a particular focus on audiovisual works produced in the United Kingdom and Spain. It explores self-proclaimed feminist and ethical non-mainstream companies, as well as the post-pornographic actions that have actively engaged the public on the streets of Barcelona. The core of this study consists of a curated selection of feminist, ethical and post-pornographic porn films and videos, along with a brief sample of European pornographic film festivals. Though this analysis, the thesis examines the manifestos driving these companies, the narratives they craft, and the potential for a shared pornographic experience that fosters connections, consumption and positive spaces for sex workers. Furthermore, the research delves into the emergence of erotic and pornographic festivals, which have not only provided a venue for diverse expressions of sexuality but have also facilitated the creation of alliances and supportive communities within the industry. These festivals are highlighted as critical spaces where alternative forms of pornographic consumption and experience can thrive, contributing to the ongoing evolution of feminist and ethical pornographic practices.

Key words: Erotica, Feminism, Film Festivals, Performance, Pornography.

RESUMEN

Durante la década de 1980, surgió una ola de tendencias pornográficas disidentes en respuesta al dominio de la pornografía tradicional, que era creada principalmente por y para una audiencia masculina. Las mujeres comenzaron a desafiar esta norma, tomando el control de las cámaras y produciendo su propio contenido pornográfico que priorizaba el placer femenino. Este nuevo enfoque brindó a las mujeres —y a otros grupos marginados, a menudo ignorados o mal representados en la pornografía convencional— una plataforma para ser los sujetos de su propio deseo. Esta tesis doctoral presenta una cronología exhaustiva de diversos movimientos pornográficos, con un enfoque particular

en las obras audiovisuales producidas en España y el Reino Unido. Explora tanto a las compañías autoproclamadas feministas y éticas no convencionales, como a las acciones post-pornográficas que han involucrado activamente las calles de Barcelona. El corpus de este estudio se basa en una selección curada de películas y videos feministas, éticos y post-pornográficos, junto con una muestra de festivales de cine pornográfico en Europa. A través de este análisis, la tesis examina los manifiestos que impulsan a estas compañías, las narrativas que construyen y el potencial de una experiencia pornográfica compartida que fomente conexiones y espacios positivos para los trabajadores sexuales. Además, la investigación profundiza en el surgimiento de festivales eróticos y pornográficos, que no solo han proporcionado un espacio para diversas expresiones de la sexualidad, sino que también han facilitado la creación de alianzas y comunidades de apoyo dentro de la industria. Estos festivales se destacan como espacios críticos donde pueden prosperar formas alternativas de consumo y experiencia pornográfica, contribuyendo a la evolución continua de las prácticas pornográficas feministas y éticas.

Palabras clave: Erótica, Feminismo, Festivales de cine, Performance, Pornografía.

RESUM

Durant la dècada de 1980, va sorgir una onada de tendències pornogràfiques dissidents en resposta al domini de la pornografia tradicional, que era creada principalment per a una audiència masculina. Les dones van començar a desafiar aquesta norma, prenent el control de les càmeres i produint el seu propi contingut pornogràfic que prioritzava el plaer femení. Aquest nou enfocament va oferir a les dones —i a altres grups marginats, sovint ignorats o mal representats en la pornografia convencional— una plataforma per ser els subjectes del seu propi desig. Aquesta tesi doctoral presenta una cronologia exhaustiva de diversos moviments pornogràfics, amb un enfocament particular en les obres audiovisuals produïdes a Espanya i el Regne Unit. Explora tant les companyies autoproclamades feministes i ètiques no convencionals, com les accions post-pornogràfiques que han involucrat activament els carrers de Barcelona. El corpus d'aquest estudi es basa en una selecció curada de pel·lícules i vídeos feministes, ètics i post-pornogràfics, juntament amb una mostra de festivals de cinema pornogràfic a Europa. A través d'aquesta anàlisi, la tesi examina els manifestos que impulsen aquestes companyies, les narratives que construeixen i el potencial d'una experiència pornogràfica compartida que fomenti connexions i espais positius per als treballadors sexuals. A més,

la recerca aprofundeix en l'aparició de festivals eròtics i pornogràfics, que no només han proporcionat un espai per a diverses expressions de la sexualitat, sinó que també han facilitat la creació d'aliances i comunitats de suport dins de la indústria. Aquests festivals es destaquen com a espais crítics on poden prosperar formes alternatives de consum i experiència pornogràfica, contribuint a l'evolució contínua de les pràctiques pornogràfiques feministes i ètiques.

Paraules clau: Eròtica, Feminisme, Festivals de cinema, Performance, Pornografia.

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“If you feel safe in the area you are working in, you are not working in the right area. Always go a little further into the water than you feel you are capable of being in. Go a little bit out of your depth. And when you do not feel that your feet are quite touching the bottom, you are just about in the right place to do something exciting”

David Bowie.

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INTRODUCTION

The definition of pornography, its practices, customs and myths have been the subject of constant debate particularly in branches of feminist thought and activism. In the 1960s pornography was often seen as a signifier of sexual freedom with the potential to ensure female sexual liberation. From the 1970s onwards, many feminist academics and political groups were taking a more negative view of porn which, by the 1980s, resulted in a division between anti-pornography feminists and pro-sex feminists, a division that became so acrimonious it was described as the ‘Sex Wars’. The division centred on the defence of pornography as a modality of freedom of expression against those who criticise it for its connection to the exploitation of women’s bodies (Ballester Brage et al., 2014, 166), and still continues today. Some feminist activists and academics, porn performers and sex workers believe that pornography can contribute to women’s sexual freedoms and actively work to create a new adult cinema aesthetic. Meanwhile, radical feminists fight to eliminate and criminalise porn, due to its misogynist approach.

At present, pornography is often treated as a problem, particularly in the popular media and policy arenas, sometimes in relation to obscenity, or the particular ‘putative’ harms to women’s status.¹ Currently the focus seems to be mostly on how porn might operate as a form of ‘sex education’. In many countries there is no sex education in schools and searching for information is a key reason why most young people access pornographic websites. As Analia Iglesias and Martha Zein proposed in their essay *Lo que esconde el agujero: El porno en tiempos obscenos* (2018), pornography is hugely important in the contemporary production of sexuality and, in that sense, in the understanding of sex education. The two authors created the term ‘native porn’ to denote generations that have learned about sex and their own sexuality through pornography. Specifically, they are talking about the millennial generation (people born between 1981 and 1996) and onwards (centennials or generation Z), as an age group that grew up with the boom of Internet pornography. As Valeria Flores (2010) points out, porn is a “highly codified pedagogy, to which young people go in search of true sex”(*).² Pornography constructs and perpetuates a ‘naturalised’ representation of sex that both reflects and

¹ Information on the discussion of the nature of pornography as obscene and harmful towards women at Chapter 1, subsections 1.1.1 and 1.2.1.

² Throughout this dissertation, various Spanish-language sources are referenced, and unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own. Certain terms are also translated from Spanish to English. All translations are marked with an asterisk (*) at the end of each quotation

shapes societal norms and expectations. It serves as a powerful medium for teaching, reinforcing, and normalising specific sexual practices, body ideals, and sexual orientations. By doing so, pornography not only influences individual perceptions of sexuality but also contributes to the broader cultural discourse surrounding gender roles, sexual behaviour, and desirability. This process can have profound implications on how people understand and experience their own sexuality, as well as how they relate to others in intimate contexts.

Pornography has been established as the ‘didactics of pleasure’ or what is understood by sexual pleasure in a society that produces and consumes it. Although, as Kath Albury suggests there is “no universal consensus on what porn teaches its consumers and how it functions as an educator” (2014, 172). Pornographic films can create the imaginary of sexual postures, movements and actions, to watch and, perhaps, to practice; and it can transmit sexual stereotypes and prejudices, along with representations outside the traditional discourse of sex. Pornography is everywhere and available to all people. It is not an isolated phenomenon, as it circulates through the Internet and reaches all kinds of digital devices in this modern era of continuous development and communication. Its scope is global, for this reason, we must not ignore the impacts it may have on consumers.

The production and consumption of pornography has been transformed largely by the Internet which has enabled accessibility, affordability, and abundance. The widespread availability of mainstream American-made pornography³ made possible by the infrastructure changes in global communications also opened up the potential for the emergence of representations by pro-sex movements —porn performers, researchers, activists and sex workers who sought to critique traditional porn. Since the 1980s, there have been performances of pornography from post-porn movements that seek to challenge traditionally accepted beliefs around sexuality, ability, age, ethnic origin, body type, gender and class. Those activists focus on desire, power, agency and pleasure, pushing against the limits of the established gender hierarchy, against heteronormativity and homonormativity. With their interventions they attempt to expand the language of sexuality.

³ Mainstream pornography is produced and distributed by large porn production companies, circulating over the Internet, and is freely accessible and anonymous. Florian Vörös describes mainstream porn as “pornographies marketed primarily to heterosexual male audiences, whose main attractions are hard-core close-ups of oral, vaginal and anal penetrations, and in which bodily performances are organised around a strict masculine/feminine binary alignment of sex, gender and sexual role” (2014, 241).

This essay examines the conceptions of pornography within Western culture, focusing on its representations of sexuality, the discourse surrounding it, and the ways in which it is regulated. A comparative analysis will explore the ethical and feminist porn movements in the United Kingdom and Spain, shedding light on the growing presence of ‘dissident’ voices within the porn industry,⁴ seeking to transform pornography through activism, performance and art. This research is organised into seven chapters.

The first chapter offers an in-depth feminist analysis of pornography, tracing its historical, cultural, and academic dimensions. It begins by exploring the etymology and classical definitions of pornography, highlighting the persistent dichotomy between viewing it as art versus obscenity. Traditionally, pornography has triggered heated debates about the boundaries between obscenity and eroticism and freedom of expression and censorship. Pornography is more than a visual event. It is, therefore, a cultural, social, political, anthropological and aesthetic phenomenon. Its meaning emanates from the social relationship established by viewers with these images and what may be pornographic for some will not be for others. This discussion extends to the complexities researchers face in arriving at a precise definition, which has led to the development of Porn Studies as a legitimate academic discipline. Pioneering figures and their contributions to the study of pornography and sexuality will be highlighted, underscoring the significance of a movement that originated from social activism and the production of pornographic films, and ultimately gained recognition as a subject of scholarly inquiry in universities. Additionally, the chapter critically examines how mainstream pornography functions as a powerful cultural force in shaping and representing sexual norms. Mainstream porn is not merely a depiction of sexual acts; it is a constructed narrative that often reinforces specific ideas about gender roles, desire, and sexual behaviour. The section explores how these representations tend to privilege certain bodies, practices, and orientations, thereby creating a narrow and often unrealistic portrayal of sexuality.

The chapter then delves briefly into the debates within feminism regarding pornography. It critically assesses the ‘Sex Wars’ in the United States (1970 to 1980s), where opposing anti-porn and pro-porn factions emerged, each advocating different perspectives on the role and impact of pornography in society. These debates are crucial

⁴ ‘Dissidents’ refer to pornography producers and productions that challenge or deviate from the norms and practices of mainstream pornography.

in understanding the divergent feminist viewpoints on the subject, and how those positions are still active. The chapter explores the rise of sexual activism and its role in constructing new, alternative forms of pornography that challenge mainstream norms. This section emphasises the transformative power of activism in redefining sexual representation. Finally, the chapter concludes with a detailed examination of North American pornographic representations, focusing on key figures who have significantly influenced the feminist discourse on pornography: Annie Sprinkle's pioneering work in post-pornography, Candida Royalle's contributions to the sex-positive movement and the creation of pornography 'for women', and Tristan Taormino's role as a feminist pornographer. These figures not only redefined the landscape of pornography, but also advanced feminist thought and activism within the realm of sexual expression and representation.

The second chapter provides a conceptual analysis of the history of pornography in the United Kingdom and Spain, examining how cultural, political, and social contexts have shaped the development and reception of pornographic content in these two countries. It explores the influence of American feminist activism and politics on porn in the United Kingdom, where efforts have been made to create a niche within existing structures for 'women's porn' or 'porn for women'. This approach in the UK is characterised by attempts to produce more inclusive and ethically driven content that caters to female audiences within the mainstream framework, rather than aiming to dismantle or revolutionise the system entirely. In contrast, the chapter examines the Spanish approach, which places greater emphasis on radically rethinking and overhauling the social structures surrounding sex and pornography. In Spain, feminist movements have often pursued more transformative changes, challenged traditional norms and advocating for a complete redefinition of how sex and sexuality are portrayed and understood in society. Movements such as post-pornography and 'pornoterrorismo' exemplify this more radical stance.⁵ Through this comparative analysis, the chapter highlights the different paths of feminist pornography in the UK and Spain, reflecting the broader cultural and political landscapes of these nations. It underscores the varying degrees of success and challenges faced by feminist movements in integrating their visions within the broader pornographic industry and society at large.

⁵ 'Pornoterrorismo' can be translated as 'terrorist porn', but the Spanish term will be used throughout the thesis.

The third chapter outlines the research methodology used to examine feminist, ethical, and dissident pornography. It begins with a discussion of feminist film theory, emphasising how feminist scholars, particularly through Laura Mulvey's theories on the male gaze, have transformed the study of pornography. Mulvey's ideas have been crucial in critiquing the objectification and patriarchal representations prevalent in traditional pornographic texts, thereby reshaping feminist analytical approaches to film and media. The chapter then develops the theoretical framework for the study, exploring the established norms and conventions within the pornographic genre. This foundation is essential for understanding how feminist, ethical, and dissident pornographic texts either align with or diverge from these conventions. The methodology section details the selection of pornography for analysis, which includes works from feminists and ethical companies based in the United Kingdom and Spain, as well as post-porn performances conducted in Spain. The choice of films from pay-to-view platforms is justified by the principle that ethical porn should be financially supported, like viewers pay for cinema tickets or subscription services like Netflix, Disney+, or HBO. This approach underscores the importance of compensating creators and supporting projects that offer alternatives to standard pornography found on free 'tubes'.⁶ Additionally, it advocates against piracy and unauthorised distribution, emphasising the value of respecting intellectual property and promoting ethical consumption practices.

Chapters four and five provide a detailed analysis and comparison of four films produced in the United Kingdom and four produced in Spain. Chapter four focuses on the work of the companies Four Chambers and Thousand Film Faces, while Chapter five examines the XConfessions project by director Erika Lust. These chapters examine the narrative structures, sexual interactions and performer roles of the chosen movies, focusing on the storyline and the cinematographic techniques employed to achieve the film's objectives. Scenes are scrutinised to assess how sexual acts are represented, including the dynamics between participants. The analysis also addresses body representations and sexual identities portrayed in the films.

Chapter six provides an in-depth examination of two Spanish post-porn performances. It looks at how these performances challenge traditional pornographic conventions by incorporating experimental and avant-garde elements. The chapter will

⁶ 'Tube' site is short for a porn website with a communication system similar to the YouTube pattern: videos uploaded by users, a like/dislike method, comments, number of views, etc.

evaluate how these post-porn performances work to deconstruct established norms and offer alternative narratives and representations of sex and sexuality. It also explores the impact of these performances on viewer perceptions and their role in expanding the discourse around sexual representation.

Chapter seven explores the phenomenon of pornographic film festivals, drawing from both researcher and consumer perspectives. It provides a chronological overview of the emergence of these festivals, highlighting their significance for networking and their role in generating tourism for the host cities. Adopting an anthropological approach, the chapter reflects on my experiences attending several porn film festivals (both in person and online) to observe firsthand the dynamics within these spaces. It examines the interactions, audience demographics, and the overall impact of these festivals on society. To conclude, the chapter seeks to offer a comprehensive and collaborative perspective by incorporating interviews to gather detailed insights and more nuanced information on the festivals' contributions and significance.

In recent years, there has been a notable effort to document the history of pornography through various analyses, underlining its inherently marginal nature as a compelling subject of study. This thesis aims to amplify the voices of feminist groups that do great educational work using pornography as their main resource, queer communities that challenge conventional notions of bodies, age and race through their performances, and porn film festivals that underscore the need for spaces for discussing sex, pornography, and sex education. From a feminist perspective, this research investigates the creation and distribution of alternative and artistic pornographic films, emphasising their importance in a society often shaped by misogynistic, racist and class-biased messages, which spread quickly and effectively.

Corpus and objectives

The corpus of this thesis consists of eight films from feminist and ethical porn web pages (pay-to-view ones) and two post-porn performances. Based on these resources, a series of objectives are proposed and examined in the different chapters. The main objectives of this research are:

- Feminist and ethical pornography: exploring the concept of feminist pornography and demonstrating that it is more than just a commercialised idea of porn 'for women'. Exploring the main features and values of feminist pornography, including the ways feminist porn seeks to challenge the traditional objectification of women's bodies,

promotes female pleasure and agency, and aims to represent diverse bodies and sexualities. The analysis involves examining specific examples of feminist pornography, pointing out that there is no need to compare them with mainstream pornographic films, because the differences between mainstream and feminist porn is not so much about aesthetic differences as about work practices, storylines, body types, among other issues.

- Trajectory of radicalised women in porn: analysing the evolution of radicalised women's porn since the 1980s to the present day. Exploring the key players and movements that have contributed to the development of radicalised women's porn, including post-porn activism in Spain and the emergence of ethical and alternative porn in the United Kingdom. Examining, also, how radicalised women's porn has responded to changing social and cultural contexts, including feminist and LGBTQIA+ movements.

- Feminist perspectives in the creation of pornography: this theme involves examining pornography with an avowedly feminist perspective, focusing on working conditions, who is behind the camera (companies, feminist groups, artists, activists, among others), the myths and values that are transmitted, and the representations of sexuality, sexual orientations, and body types. Studying how feminist perspectives are reflected in the principles and policies of creation, including the existence of a manifesto or policy document.

- Porn film festivals as spaces of queer/feminist resistance: studying the appearance of porn film festivals in Europe since the early 2000s and what they offer to the porn community (alliances, work, transgression, education, among others).

This research engages with an epistemological, political, and cultural framework to investigate political dissent within the emerging typologies of ethical, feminist, and independent pornography. It explores the nuances of these new forms of pornography and examines online artistic spaces (websites) and convergence hubs, such as porn film festivals. This approach aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how these platforms and genres challenge conventional norms and contribute to broader discussions about sex, representation, and cultural critique.

Research hypothesis

Based on these objectives and the resources to be inspected, three interrelated hypotheses are proposed:

- Hypothesis 1: In ethical or feminist porn, greater importance is given to representing women as decision makers.
- Hypothesis 2: Behind ethical pornographic productions there is a manifesto or code of values that governs their actions.
- Hypothesis 3: The presence of alternative pornographic film festivals offers a ‘safe space’ for the queer community to share sexual productions that represent the collective.

CHAPTER 1: WHAT IS PORN? A FEMINIST APPROACH TO PORNOGRAPHY

This chapter delves into the concept of pornography, exploring its etymology and the various meanings attributed to it over time. It critically examines how researchers and academics have defined pornography, highlighting the inherent dichotomies such as artistic/vulgar, erotic/pornographic, and good/bad, among others. The chapter also addresses the complexity of arriving at an impartial definition of pornography, acknowledging the challenges posed by the concept's deep entanglement with social, moral, and economic values. The discussion suggests that it is not pornography that inherently threatens morality, but rather morality that complicates the definition of pornography, with much of the theoretical and legal efforts focused on formulating a workable definition.

The chapter also offers a brief analysis of mainstream or traditional pornography, providing context for understanding its role within the broader discourse. Additionally, it explores the emergence of Porn Studies as a field of critical analysis, noting that this area of study continues to face scepticism and even opposition within some academic circles, where it is often dismissed as non-essential or unimportant. The chapter further examines the feminist 'Sex Wars' of the 1980s in the United States, specifically the intense debates between anti-porn and pro-pornography feminists. These debates, with arguments and concepts still relevant today, have shaped ongoing discussions about pornography's role in society. The chapter concludes with a look at the North American porn industry, focusing on the rise of porn 'for women', the post-porn movement, and key figures who have been influential in these developments.

1.1 Pornography: etymology and classical meaning

There is no comprehensive definition of what we universally understand as pornography, especially since its meaning has varied over the years, but culturally we can attribute its concrete meaning to any expression of human sexuality that involves an intention of sexual arousal towards its receivers (Aravena 14, 2019). According to a well-known aphorism, "pornography is like an elephant. It is difficult to define exactly, but you recognise it when you see it"(*, Malem 1992, 220). This aphorism reflects the theory of those who argue that giving a particular and detailed concept of pornography is almost impossible.

The concept of pornography is rooted in its etymology, tracing back to the Greek words —used in English since the mid-19th century— *porne* ‘prostitute’ (originally bought or purchased, related to *pernai* ‘to sell’) and *graphein* ‘to write’, creating the word *pornographos* meaning that “depicting prostitutes” or “writing about prostitutes” and initially referred to written or visual material designed to cause sexual arousal.⁷ The modern use of the term pornography began to take shape in the 19th century, particularly in Europe, where it was used to describe sexually explicit materials considered obscene by the social standards of the time. This shift reflected growing concerns about public morality and the impact of such materials on society. Over time, the meaning of pornography has evolved and expanded, particularly in Western culture, to encompass a wide range of sexually explicit material across various media, including literature, film, and digital content. Porn can be said to represent sexual encounters, nudity, genitalia and other elements that are specifically associated with sex for the exclusive aim of sexual stimulation and can be presented in a variety of different media.

The concept of pornography has been explored from various academic perspectives, leading to a range of definitions depending on the disciplinary focus and context. On the one hand, Catharine A. MacKinnon (1987) defines pornography as the graphic, sexually explicit subordination of women, where women are portrayed as dehumanised objects or commodities, often depicted in situations of pain or submission (Ronald Dworkin and Pia Lara 1994, 98). Catharine A. MacKinnon, alongside Andrea Dworkin, were pioneering figures in the radical feminist critique of pornography, asserting that it plays a significant role in perpetuating the subordination of women. Their definition of pornography, which frames it as the graphic and sexually explicit subjugation of women, was central to their broader feminist activism. This definition was not merely theoretical but was also embedded in practical efforts to combat the harms of pornography. MacKinnon and Dworkin introduced this definition as part of a proposed ordinance in the city of Minneapolis, aimed at regulating the growing adult entertainment industry (Parent 1990, 2005). Their ordinance sought to classify pornography as a violation of women’s civil rights, thereby giving women the legal means to sue pornographers and those who profited from the distribution of pornography. Although the ordinance was ultimately struck down by the courts, it was a groundbreaking attempt to

⁷ See: <https://www.etymonline.com/search?q=pornography> (Last consultation on December 21, 2023).

legally address the ways in which pornography contributes to gender inequality and the exploitation of women.

Linda Williams, on the other hand, defines pornography as the explicit representation of sexual activity intended to arouse the viewer, focusing on its function within the cinematic genre. Her work is foundational in understanding pornography as a cinematic genre rather than merely a social issue or moral problem. In her influential book *Hard Core: Power, Pleasure, and the "Frenzy of the Visible"* (1989) Williams explores the ways in which pornography functions as a form of visual culture designed to elicit sexual arousal. She argues that pornography is not simply about sex, but about the representation of sexual acts in ways that appeal to the visual pleasure of the audience.

Pornography has a mutable character, that is, any attempt to address its classification and conception is directly conditioned, not only by the subjectivity of the person who observes it, but also by the historical moment in which it is observed. Caroline West (2004) points out in her article "Pornography and Censorship":

The term 'pornography' is often used with an additional *normative* force [...] when many people describe something as 'pornographic', they seem to be doing more than simply dispassionately describing its sexually explicit content or the intentions of its producers [...] They seem to be saying, in addition, that it is *bad*—and perhaps also that its badness is not redeemed by other artistic, literary, or political merit the work may possess [...] When some aspects of reality are underlined to the detriment of others, it is done from some perspective of value, either to prescribe their acceptance or order their rejection.

These definitions highlight the complexity of the term, influenced by moral, social, and cultural considerations. The very description of porn is normative and relative, and so any accurate conceptualisation should contemplate not only the content of the pornographic representation, but also the creator's purpose and the result of their action. As Egaña Rojas points out, "it is openly considered a genre whose objective is the sexual stimulation of viewers, as if narrativity were an antidote to arousal. But presenting it this way makes the ideological nature of pornography invisible, and above all naturalises the reasons for arousal, homogenising and standardising them ad infinitum"(*, 2009a, 1). These definitions attempt to demarcate porn as different from other media, setting it apart from other forms of content that also provoke actions but are not viewed through the same lens. Unlike pornography, other media, such as cookbooks with their images of food and

detailed recipes for the sole purpose of getting people to cook, or instruction manuals that guide the assembly of furniture, are not framed in terms of their intent to provoke a specific response. These forms of media are purely functional, designed to educate or guide the user towards a specific task without any underlying moral or cultural implications. In contrast, pornography is often scrutinised and defined by its ability to provoke sexual arousal, which places it in a category that is culturally and ethically charged in ways that other instructional or visual media are not. This distinction highlights the unique societal and psychological perceptions surrounding pornographic content.⁸

Pornography is defined and treated in a totally different way to other types of media, in accordance with the moral values of the society in question. In the end, pornography is much more than a standard designation, attacked and censored for its content and messages by one part of the population and celebrated and debated by another part. Porn is a cultural product that continues to generate friction between detractors and consumers. It has grown rampantly over the centuries, leaving its legacy through photographs, magazines, movies and now, the Internet.⁹ Pornography has become a mass phenomenon that can be found on any digital device. Access to pornography has never been so simple, fast, convenient and private, since the consumer only needs to ‘click in’ to start a session in a vast free offering of porn. Users can contact women and men through sex chats and fulfil their fantasies browsing through the numerous categories and sections that each porn site offers (BBW, JOI, POV, VR, Mature, Teen, Lesbian, among many

⁸ Pornography is viewed through a unique lens compared to other media, reflecting society’s tendency to commodify sex, which fuels moral debates not seen with other media. This commodification extends into everyday life, giving rise to trends like ‘food porn’, where the sensuality of food is visually celebrated and shared in ways that mirror the aesthetic and arousal-driven appeal of traditional pornography. ‘Food porn’ refers to the visually captivating images or videos of food shared widely on social media, designed to evoke strong cravings and aesthetic pleasure. This trend has flourished on platforms like Instagram and TikTok, where it drives consumer engagement and shapes food trends by highlighting food as both entertainment and art (Krogager, S. G. S. and Leer, J, 2024).

⁹ The appearance of photography transformed pornography forever, triggering the professionalisation of the pornographic market. Pornography was popularised through the circulation of nude photos and explicit sex in the form of postcards, calendars, etc. When the first ‘men’s magazines’ appeared (in the last decade of the 19th century), pornography found a way to reach the mass market. (Valero 2022, 37).

others)¹⁰ and lose themselves in a sea of content created for each type of desire. On the Internet, pornography has found the ideal channel to spread and become what it is today: a multi-million-dollar global industry.¹¹ Paul B. Preciado (2008) notes that pornography has become the ‘dark side’ of the entertainment industry. In pornography lies the key to understanding the model of profitability and efficiency to which every neoliberal industry aspires. It is the paradigm of post-industrial business, since it manages to produce in the body the excitation-frustration-excitement circuit necessary to maintain consumption levels.

Having examined the different definitions of pornography, a number of critical questions emerge that I believe are essential to address. As Juan Soto wonders, why does the representation of sex impact society? Why does it have the power to scandalise the conventional morality of societies? (2015a, 233). It is evident that it is not sex itself which is capable of unleashing unusual controversies in the different sectors of society, but rather the social forms it adopts in practice and representation. To a certain extent, the sexual life of societies is ‘normalised’ and regulated by a set of values that are part of the corpus of morality. Although the rules do not automatically emanate from values and may change over time, the limits between moral and immoral, obscene and not obscene, move in relation to the social and historical dimensions that define them. The modern concept of pornography (arising in the Victorian era of the 19th century) is used to define all sexual expression contrary to the hegemonic written moral code of the time (Valero 2022, 33). Porn has a morally judgmental connotation used to classify sexually explicit representation that violates the social standards of integrity, decency and morality.

The media and institutions rarely confront the issue of pornography. When they do, their starting point is almost always based on “porn is bad”, confusing child abuse, sex trafficking, and the non-consensual dissemination of sexually explicit material with sex work and pornography in general (Valero 2022, 23). Ultimately, we can conclude that pornography is a product, speech and representation, and even sometimes, art. It is a cultural form defined by social, political, legal and gender conventions. Defining pornography, however, has proven to be a complex and contentious task. As Osborne

¹⁰ BBW: Plus Size Women, JOI: Jerk-Ogg Instruction, POV: Point of View and VR: Virtual Reality.

¹¹ Gail Dines: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2011/jan/04/pornography-big-business-influence-culture> (Last consultation on August, 22, 2024).

points out “whenever the subject of pornography is discussed, there is a problem of definition. And I say problem because on this aspect it seems impossible to reach an agreement. There are as many definitions as there are people wishing to propose one” (*, 2002). The term is often caught in a web of social, moral, and legal interpretations, making it difficult to pin down a universally accepted definition. Scholars and legal systems have struggled to distinguish between what is considered ‘erotic’ art and what is deemed ‘obscene’ or ‘pornographic’, leading to ongoing debates about its boundaries and implications.

1.1.1 The porn dichotomy: art versus obscenity

The definition of pornography is subjective, and for that very reason it is sometimes difficult to define; that is because the imagery that might be considered erotic in one society may be condemned as pornographic in another, so pornography is very much in the eye of the beholder. As Gore Vidal (1966) showed porn it is usually defined as that whose purpose is to provoke sexual excitement, but since what excites X can disgust Y, two people will not respond in the same way to the same stimulus.¹² Therefore, there has always been a dichotomy between porn and eroticism, where porn is seen as obscene, negative and bad and eroticism as decent, positive and good.

As Leonardo Xavier Brito and Luis Ortiz (2016, 5) suggest, eroticism is initially framed as an artistic narrative that can offer a critical perspective on the world. Its consumption is defined by the reflective capacity of humans, as we tend to view eroticism as a higher form of art, to be appreciated from an informed standpoint. Erotic imagery creates a narrative suspense and mystery, encouraging the viewer to actively engage with the story behind the image. In this context, the imagination plays a central role, making the viewer an active participant in the creation of meaning. In contrast, pornography is often seen as something vulgar, where the artistic element is replaced by a succession of explicit sexual images, driven by the sexual appetite of both the performers and the audience. It is important to evidence that while pornography always involves sex, obscenity does not necessarily do so; obscenity has a broader scope, encompassing any

¹² See: <https://www.nybooks.com/articles/1966/03/31/on-pornography/> (Last consultation on December 21, 2023).

form of crude behaviour.¹³ Not all elements of pornography are present in obscenity, but all obscenities can be found within pornography. As Teresa del Valle (1993, 143) reflects in her book *Gendered Anthropology*, the perception of bodily functions such as defecating, urinating and sexual contact differs depending on whether they are presented as art or pornography, as decent or obscene. Despite the legal standpoint that, according to Valero (2022, 24), no longer justifies censoring pornographic content on grounds of public morality, discussions around pornography remain challenging in various contexts.

An element that contributes greatly to the confusion surrounding the understanding of pornography lies in the fact that it is frequently shrouded in positions that sustain prejudices and personal convictions about sex (Malem 1992, 219). As moral criteria change over time, what was forbidden in one era almost automatically becomes less pernicious in another. Following the public debate on pornography in the 1980s, Walter Kendrick concludes that “pornography names an argument, not a thing” (1987, 31).¹⁴ Then, what is perceived as ‘pornographic’ depends on the prevailing moral concepts of the time. In other words, changes in mores and moralities promote changes in pornographic sub-genres without intending to. So as Smith and Attwood (2014a, 9) point out “pornography is not a neutral topic”. Morality has accompanied research on pornography since its beginnings, receiving a special status that allows morally evaluative judgments to be disguised as descriptive ones.

The distinction between erotic art and pornography is subtle and often depends on the cultural and historical context. The intention behind the representation of nudity can vary widely, as seen in the case of the Venus of Willendorf, the oldest known sculpture, which was likely created to venerate women and motherhood. Conversely, sexually explicit themes depicted on clay figurines, vessels, and walls have been a long-standing tradition in various parts of the world, possibly serving to document or reflect the sexual customs of different cultures. Regardless of the intention, numerous artefacts around the world showcase diverse representations of sexuality. In her essay *Pornografía y género*, María Teresa Hurtado de Mendoza explores the history of sexuality and its representation across cultures, citing examples such as the Bacchic rites, Lupercalia and Floralia in

¹³ The word obscene has its roots in the Latin phrase ‘ob scene’ which means ‘out of scene’ and is used by the law to classify what tends to debauch public morality due to its indecency (Valero 2022, 22).

¹⁴ About that reflexion at: <https://doi.org/10.4000/chinaperspectives.10276> (Last consultation on December 21, 2023).

ancient Rome, which were depicted through sculptures, amulets, and building façades. Similarly, in India, the Khajuraho temples, built between 950 and 1050 after the Christian era (CE), feature walls adorned with figures engaged in sexual activity, possibly intended to teach the Kama Sutra to young people (2019, 56-60). Currently, suggestive representations of sexual activity are often considered as pornography or sexually explicit material, appearing not only in drawings but also in videos, films, and various digital formats, easily shared through social media.

Traditionally, pornography has provoked intense debates over the distinctions between obscenity and eroticism, freedom of expression and censorship and, more broadly, between those who embrace pornography and those who oppose it (Soto 2015a, 230). Porn intersects with cultural, political, anthropological, social and aesthetic dimensions. However, the core of these discussions has always been, and will likely continue to be, the nature of the image itself. Different societies adopt varying policies on what constitutes pornography, shaped by their unique relationships with images, texts, and videos. Consequently, the distinction between what is considered erotic versus pornographic often hinges on contrasting perspectives: the subtle versus the explicit, the refined versus the profane, the serious versus the vulgar (Pardo 2017, 456). This dichotomy frequently leads to the devaluation of pornography, labelling it as lacking in positive symbolism and perpetually defining it as offensive, indecent, and vulgar.

1.1.2 The complexity of a proper definition from researchers and the emergence of Porn Studies

The challenge of defining pornography lies not in the complexity of the concept itself, but in its deep connection to the moral perspectives of society. What is considered pornographic has always been shaped by the prevailing social norms and values of each historical period. Researchers often note that, while some view pornography as a means of openly expressing diverse sexualities, others see it as a representation of male dominance and desire. Thus, the definition of pornography remains fluid, influenced by the cultural and ethical context in which it is considered.

The academic study of pornography is well-established, with film and media scholars, historians, sociologists, and others having researched and written about it for many years. One of the main pioneers of porn studies is Linda Williams, a film studies professor at the University of Berkeley. In 1989 she published her book *Hard Core: Power, Pleasure and the “Frenzy of the Visible”*. Her work analysed popular

pornographic films and videos, positioning pornography a legitimate subject of scholarly inquiry. Williams distinguished herself by shifting the focus away from traditional views of pornography as merely a legal or feminist issue, instead approaching it as a cinematic genre deserving of serious analysis. By the time the second edition of *Hard Core* was released in 1999, the study of pornography had begun to emerge as a distinct academic discipline. This marked a turning point in scholarly discussions, which started to move beyond debates centred on violence and the societal harm of pornography, opening more nuanced, critical dialogues. Further contributing to the field, Williams edited a collection of essays on pornography titled *Porn Studies* in 2004, featuring contributions from Berkeley students and other scholars, solidifying the academic discourse surrounding pornography. In 2008, she continued to expand on this work with the publication of *Screening Sex*, a comprehensive history of sex in pornographic films. Williams's contributions have been instrumental in establishing pornography studies as a legitimate and critical area of academic research.

Porn studies emerged within academia as a critical investigation of pornography, recognising it as a cultural product and a representation system with distinct historical, cultural, economic, institutional, cinematic, and political dimensions (Rodríguez Suárez 2017, 29). Porn studies are an academic field related to cultural, gender, queer, postcolonial and film studies that deals with pornography as a social phenomenon and as discourse. It is an interdisciplinary discipline and approaches pornography from various perspectives —sociology, anthropology, gender, LGTBIQA⁺, queer theories, feminism, economy, medicine and cinema, among others. Academics and researchers are increasingly focused on developing studies that explore the history of pornography, analysing its production, distribution and consumption, examining its aesthetics and ethics within the industry, assessing its impact on audiences, and understanding its role in contemporary culture.

Pornography studies have gained increasing recognition in academic circles, reflected in the growing number of conferences dedicated to the topic. For over a decade, the 'Filmforum Udine/Gorizia'¹⁵ in Italy has featured a dedicated porn studies section, which delves into the social, national, regional, and cultural aspects of porn. This forum seeks to foster a deeper understanding of various forms of pornography as a cultural phenomenon. Additionally, 'The Feminist Porn Conference' at the University of Toronto

¹⁵ See: <https://filmforumfestival.it/> (Last consultation on December 21, 2023).

exemplifies the interdisciplinary nature of this field, bringing together “academics, porn producers, performers, sex workers, cultural critics, students and fans [...]to discuss feminist porn as an industry, a genre and a movement” (Ms. Naughty 2015, 292). These gatherings underscore the expanding interest and legitimacy of porn studies as an important area of academic inquiry, highlighting the diverse perspectives and critical discussions within pornography studies.

An academic journal named *Porn Studies* was launched in 2014, published by Routledge. This journal is co-edited by Professors Feona Attwood and Clarissa Smith and is the first international peer-reviewed journal to explore porn and its historical, cultural, economic, institutional, legal and social contexts. From a critical and transversal perspective, they delve into sexuality studies of gender, sex, race, class, age and ability, among other topics. The journal focuses on expanding knowledge about porn in the past and present, from its various forms of expression, creation, distribution and consumption around the world.¹⁶

The appearance of the *Porn Studies* journal garnered a variety of positive and negative opinions. As Attwood and Smith point out:

Academic journals do not usually grab popular media attention. However, the press release announcing the launch of *Porn Studies* attracted a great deal of interest across the media in summer 2013. On balance, the announcement of the journal’s launch was largely positive. There were, of course, attempts to poke fun at the silliness of academic investigations of pornography in keeping with the perennial accusations of the superficiality of media studies, as well as more negative coverage questioning the need for a publication of this kind (2014, 1).

Pornographic research is linked to this type of vicissitudes, which makes academics fight for proper recognition of this research topic. There are numerous publications, conferences and scientific journals on pornography, but as Soto (2015a, 233) notes “as an academic research topic, pornography has been neglected”. With few exceptions, pornography is typically excluded from academic discourse and often dismissed as mere entertainment for those with unconventional interests. As Attwood

¹⁶ In 2013, the Stop Porn Culture organisation created an online petition criticising the appearance of *Porn Studies* magazine, noting that the journal would prioritise only a pro-porn perspective and ignore dissenting opinions (anti-porn postures). They got 1,031 signatures: https://www.ipetitions.com/petition/porn_studies_bias/ (Last consultation on October 18, 2021).

and Smith point out “by offering a space for researchers to develop conversations across different disciplines, the study of porn will move in new directions. This is how areas of study grow and develop over time” (2014, 3). The increasing academic interest in pornography has the potential to broaden our understanding of how sexuality is represented and practiced in contemporary societies.

Ongoing studies of pornography are required for deepening our understanding of the representations of sexuality, bodies, and sexual orientations over time. By establishing a historical timeline, researchers can examine the evolution of production and distribution in this genre and explore its complexities more comprehensively.¹⁷ As Smith notes, it is crucial to understand the significance of pornography on three different levels:

Pleasure, censorship, and controversy. First, porn is an important part of many people’s intimate lives, including their sexual relationships and identities, as well as their desires and fantasies. Second, pornography is often the focus for thinking about issues like censorship, regulation, freedom of speech, and ethical issues around sex and the media. And thirdly, pornography continues to be a controversial topic in the media and in other public forms of commentary.¹⁸

Pornography studies are crucial as they provide comprehensive insights into a range of topics. It is important to further develop innovative methods and theories to address the significance of various technologies in the production and distribution of diverse types of pornography. Additionally, we must examine the contexts in which this film genre is consumed—from private settings, such as home use, to public spaces, including festivals, conferences, debates, and performances. Understanding these dynamics, as well as the diverse audiences that engage with pornography, is essential for a thorough exploration of its cultural impact and evolution.

¹⁷ Patrick Catuz (independent author, filmmaker and co-founder of the artistic porn company Arthouse Vienna) conducted a series of interviews with various academics—Linda Williams (University of California), Clarissa Smith (Northumbria University), John Mercer (Birmingham City University) and Feona Atwood (Middlesex University London)—related to the importance of Porn Studies. Complete interviews:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OEloFULSRQw&list=PLx2ocB7ItOuijuvz23o74Bk2CH0szvFqD&index=1&t=0s> (Last consultation on April 14, 2023).

¹⁸ Quote from “Why pornography deserves its own academic journal” by Lynn Comella. *Pacific Standard*. 2013. See: <https://psmag.com/social-justice/why-pornography-deserves-its-own-academic-journal-57816> (Last consultation on March 20, 2021).

1.2 The eternal debate inside feminism

Feminist discourse approaches pornography as both action and expression (Soto 2016c, 82). When viewed as action, the emphasis is on the ways in which pornography perpetuates abuse, and violence, and how these portrayals may encourage similar behaviours in real life. When considered as expression, pornography is seen as a reflection of the creators' and producers' perspectives, contributing to the broader discourse through which the public understands itself and the world, whether or not it engages with pornography.

The debate surrounding pornography often carries moral rather than philosophical implications.¹⁹ Porn was swiftly embraced by certain feminist groups as a pivotal issue, leading to the rise of the anti-pornography feminist movement, which highlighted the perceived violence of pornography against women and advocated for its eradication. In response, pro-pornography or pro-sex feminism emerged, countering this perspective by arguing for the positive potential of pornography and emphasising the importance of sexual freedom and diverse expressions of sexuality. They decided that censorship was never a solution and believed in creating different porn to empower minorities who were not being represented in traditional porn.²⁰ The two sides of this debate quickly became polarised, with each side bolstering its defences against its opponents' attacks. As a result, the 'Sex Wars' appeared in United States in the late 1970s early 1980s. Although much has been written about it, it is important to continue mentioning the 'Sex Wars', because the division between feminists on issues such as sex work remains a recurring theme today. This chapter, however, is only intended to provide an outline of the history, there

¹⁹ Conservative positions appeal to the corrupting and offensive effects that the display of obscene materials has on public morality, while anti-pornography or abolitionist feminists understand that it harms women, as it is an instrument of degradation, humiliation and violence against them. In contrast, liberal positions require a causal relationship, and the existence of specific damage associated with pornography so that its limitation can be justified (Valero 2022, 91-92).

²⁰ This division confronts the irreconcilable positions of abolitionist feminists and those of pro-sex or sex positive feminists. While for the former, pornography is nothing more than the visual incarnation of the patriarchy and violence against women; the latter consider it to be a vehicle for channelling women's erotic expression and, consequently, a mechanism for their sexual liberation.

are many essays and research available for consultation on this same topic by sex workers, feminists and academics.²¹

1.2.1 ‘Sex Wars’ in the USA: anti-porn and pro-porn movements

Initially, it was the issue of violence, not sex, in the media, that firstly encouraged feminists into action. Women Against Violence Against Women (WAVAW) was established in 1976 in Southern California and was the first national feminist association dedicated to addressing the problem of sexual violence in the media. WAVAW focused on the violent and sexist images in advertising, music, fashion and film media, demanding that corporations take responsibility for the images and products they produced. In relation to the gendered nature of sexuality and violence, WAVAW focused on studying the role of media in teaching men about how women liked to be dominated while, simultaneously, educating women to accept their subjection. The main idea of WAVAW’s was that mass media did more than just please audiences; it spread controlling beliefs that influenced how people thought about themselves and the society in which they lived (Comella 2015, 441).

WAVAW gave other feminist groups an opportunity to voice their concerns about pornography. Thus, in 1976 Women Against Violence in Pornography and Media (WAVPM) appeared and in 1979 Women Against Pornography (WAP). WAVPM emerged in San Francisco and began organising a variety of events in bookstores, schools and on the streets. WAVPM was against all kinds of pornography, pointing out that it objectified women’s bodies.²² As Malem notes (1992, 230-231), they found a direct relationship between pornography and violence by men towards women and pointed to three main outcomes of porn in society: degradation of the image of women (women relegated to the category of object), inequality in the balance of power between men and women (male domination) and an increase in crimes related to sexual violence (rape, abuse, and even murder).

²¹ María José Rodríguez (2005), Andrew McBride (2008), Nancy Prada (2010), Carolyn Bronstein (2011), Lynn Comella (2015), Lorna Norman Bracewell (2016), Esther Moreno Morillas (2017), Ana Valerio Heredia (2022), among others.

²² In England, the Campaign Against Pornography and Censorship (CPC) was created in 1989 with the aim of influencing the adoption of laws regulating pornography. Like the radical feminist movements in the United States and other European countries, it demanded regulation for pornography, arguing that it harmed women (Valero 2022, 112).

The movement was so strong that they began to organise themselves in other cities in the United States, such as New York, where they held a concentration against the sex shops in Times Square. As Comella highlights “the ascendancy of Women Against Pornography fundamentally altered the landscape of feminist anti-violence organising. WAP quickly became the leading voice in a national campaign against pornography, overshadowing the movement’s previous focus on sexual violence” (2015, 449). WAP took a more radical approach drawing on essentialist theories about sex and power, in which male sexuality was seen as selfish, aggressive and toxic and women’s sexuality as more loving, tender, romantic and connective. WAP tried to redefine violence as ways of looking at and consuming women. A perspective in which pornography, as Bronstein observes, “reified a hegemonic, aggressive masculinity and taught men to treat women as sex objects, as less than fully human” (2011, 8).

One of the most important figures involved in the anti-pornography movement was Andrea Dworkin. To Dworkin, porn was not only dangerous in its creation, but it was also destructive in its consumption because men internalised the misogynistic characterisation of women in pornography. She linked pornographic content with violence, asserting that porn was the cause of every kind of violence against women. In this way, porn was considered to project a sexual dynamic based on inequality —men superior to women— reaffirming sexual behaviour centred on discrimination, domination and exploitation of others.²³ Dworkin affirmed that any heterosexual relationship is in itself an act of rape, even if the woman believed she was voluntarily participating in it, since her will was alienated by the systemic oppression to which she had been subjected (Valero 2022, 119). In this case, Dworkin believed that consent in sexual relations and in pornography was only ‘apparently voluntary’.

Catharine Mackinnon was also a leading figure in the anti-pornography movement, since she enacted anti-pornography legislation. The bill defined pornography as the graphic and explicit sexual subordination of women, either in photographs or in words, and specified as pornographic materials that fell within this definition, those that present women enjoying pain or humiliation, degraded or tortured, bleeding or exhibiting themselves in positions of submission (Ronald Dworkin and Pia Lara 1994, 98). No

²³ Anti-pornography feminism considered pornography to be a powerful mechanism for perpetuating sexism and violence against women, through the stereotyping of bodies, the sexual objectification of women, and the androcentric construction of sex.

exceptions were made for artistic or literary value. The Indianapolis statute prohibited any production, sale, display, or distribution of any pornographic material, arguing that some forms of pornography significantly increased the danger that women would be raped or physically assaulted. The legislation considered that porn not only caused physical violence, but a more general and endemic subordination of women which contributed to inequality. MacKinnon said that pornography produced two types of damage: firstly, on women who directly participate in the making of pornography; and secondly, the violence against all women in society, who are harmed as a direct consequence of the distribution of pornographic material.

With the rise of the anti-porn movement and its emphasis on sexual violence, there was limited cultural space for feminists who wished to explore the more positive aspects of sexuality. As the anti-porn movement gained strength, a dichotomy of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ sex also was being constructed. At a time when the New Right was taking measures in relation to the expression of sexuality —especially of women and sexual minorities— lesbian sex radicals were on the front lines of resistance.²⁴ The origins of the feminist pro-pornography movement (also called pro-sex, sex-positive, sex-radical feminism and sexually liberal feminism) can be traced back to the conflicts that took place in the late 1970s between Samois²⁵ —a BDSM²⁶ lesbian feminist organisation— and WAVPM (Comella 2015, 451). WAVPM members saw sadomasochist lesbians eroticising male superiority with their sexual practices and magnifying unequal control in sex relations essential to a patriarchal society. Anti-porn arguments emphasise that pornography

²⁴ Abolitionist feminism in the United States ended up allying itself in the 1980s with the self-righteous conservatism of the Reagan Administration. Starting from the idea that pornography was the cause of female oppression, President Ronald Reagan called for the union of all women —including those on the political right and religious fundamentalists— to combat it.

²⁵ Male leather culture has existed since the late 1940s, when it likely grew out of post-World War II biker culture. Although gay men are the most visible demographic of the leather community, there are numerous women who identify as ‘leatherwomen’. Relatively few lesbian women were visible during the early emergence of the leather subculture. Pat Califia —who identified as a lesbian at that time— was an activist in the San Francisco leather subculture and is credited for defining the emergence of lesbian leather subculture. On June 13th, 1978, Samois was created, a lesbian and feminist BDSM organisation in San Francisco. Samois aimed to address the stigmatisation of BDSM within feminist circles and the broader society. They worked to normalise and validate BDSM practices, emphasising consensual and respectful interactions and challenging the negative stereotypes often associated with BDSM.

²⁶ Abbreviation for bondage, discipline (or domination) sadism (or submission), masochism.

inherently reinforces harmful gender dynamics and commodifies bodies, regardless of the intentions behind its production.

Pro-sex feminists were aware of the ways in which women were limited by sexuality, yet they were also wary of defining female sexuality solely in terms of insecurity and vulnerability.²⁷ For this reason, they saw the need to fight against sexism and sexual repression while also demanding to re-appropriate their own sexuality as subjects. For pro-sex feminists, these were not mutually exclusive goals, and, in turn, they wanted to broaden the debate on pornography by highlighting issues such as sexual pleasure, a concept that many considered overshadowed by the focus on sexual danger (Comella 2015, 452). Modern pro-sex feminism, however, emerged in the early 1980s in direct response to the anti-pornography movement inside feminism. Many within the pro-sex movement saw this as a step toward censorship and further coercion of female and minority sexualities. Pro-sex feminists believed that sexual freedom was basic in the fight for individual sexual autonomy, recognising that the hetero-patriarchal nature of our culture not only represses women's sexuality but also restricts the sexual expression of all people.

They advocated for stereotype-free and non-normative porn, in addition to the autonomy of pleasure. Inside pro-sex feminism, there were many important academics and activists. A remarkable figure within the pro-sex movement was Gayle Rubin, writer of *Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality* (1984) a work regarded as one of the main theoretical pillars of pro-sex feminism. Pat Califia (now Patrick Califia) was another important key figure in the pro-sex movement. Along with Gayle Rubin, he was one of the founders of Samois; Strong defender of S/M practices,²⁸ which had been refuted by lesbian feminism, as it expected unequal power between sexual partners (McBride, 2008).²⁹ Pro-sex feminists propose building a theory of sexuality not only from danger and guilt, but also from pleasure.

The political strategy of pro-sex feminism was organised with the participation of lesbians, porn actresses, sex workers, and other groups. Unlike the anti-porn feminist movement, which sought state intervention to ban pornography, pro-sex feminists

²⁷ The pro-sex movement was established to advocate for sexual freedom as a fundamental aspect of women's liberation (Valero 2022, 129).

²⁸ S/M: Sadomasochistic practices.

²⁹ For further details at: <https://outhistory.org/exhibits/show/lesbians-20th-century/sex-wars> (Last consultation on March 20, 2021).

refrained from seeking state support. They viewed the state as part of the system that perpetuates problems for women and sexual minorities.³⁰ Pro-sex feminists chose to reclaim and reshape the technologies of sexual representation and pleasure, aiming to create a new kind of pornography that pushed beyond the boundaries of normative sexual representation. By doing so, they resisted the trend toward censorship and championed the free expression of sexual practices that were often considered pathological, deviant, or non-normative. In this way, with these considerations and approaches, queer theory began to address post-pornography. This approach laid the groundwork for queer theory's engagement with post-pornography, which sought to challenge and dismantle the heteropatriarchal and binary foundations of sexuality, body representation, and desire.³¹ Driven by these principles, many women became pioneers in the creation and deconstruction of a genre that had long seemed unchangeable. This movement aimed to present a much broader and more inclusive vision of sexuality, challenging the dominant pornographic industry and advocating for a transformative shift in how sexuality is portrayed and understood.

Ever since it first appeared, pornography has been the subject of discussion by multiple groups and has been given multiple definitions. Depending on the favourable or detracting position of the person, the term has been used to refer to sexually explicit art, to all material that seeks to achieve sexual stimulation for its audience, even to products with a corrupting capacity, to a subversive genre that allows sexual exploration, or, lastly, to a form of degradation or even violence against women (Valero 2022, 109). During the sex wars, the debate centred on the relationship between male domination and violence against women, while also emphasising the need to explore alternative expressions of sexuality and pleasure that deviated from conventional norms. More recently, the discussion has focused on the lack of sex education across society, especially for children and teenagers, and the repercussions of pornography for them. In most countries, sex education is scarce or even non-existent and that is one of the reasons why most young people access online pornographic sites in the search for information. As Comella

³⁰ Feminist Anti-Censorship Task Force (FACT) allied with groups of publishers, media, artists, and civil rights advocates having ordinances against porn —like MacKinnon's— declared unconstitutional (Valero 2022, 129).

³¹ Queer theory is an intellectual movement that emerged in the early 1990s, challenging traditional gender and sexual norms by deconstructing fixed identities and exploring the fluidity of sexuality and gender.

evidences, we can still find versions of both anti-pornography and sex-positive feminism in “academic and activist conferences, books and anthologies, educational slide shows, documentary films, and, importantly, new generations of feminists who, like their predecessors, are inspired to take a stand—one way or the other—in the debates around pornography and sex work” (2015, 454-455). This tension highlights a complex debate within feminism about whether porn can ever truly align with feminist values or if it inevitably sustains patriarchal structures.

I consider it is time to put aside pro-porn and anti-porn discourses to promote a neutral perspective towards the current state of online pornography and the porn industry. We should reframe the conversation around porn by focusing on sexual awareness and education rather than reinforcing stigma and misperceptions about sex work. Looking at the sex industry for what it really is, with all its internal complexities and innovations, just as we need a new generation of sex-positive citizens. This can be achieved through sex education and by fostering a public dialogue about sex and porn that critically examines their underlying messages and modes of expression. Such an approach would help evaluate the potential harm they may cause—not only to women, children and teenagers—but also to the broader societal understanding of sex and intimacy.

1.3 Mainstream porn: a (re)presentation of sex

The term ‘mainstream’ typically refers to dominant trends or influences over a period. When applied to pornography, mainstream denotes content produced and distributed by major pornographic companies, widely circulated on the Internet, and accessible anonymously.³² Mainstream pornography usually features more conventional sexual scenarios, avoiding niche fetishes or less commonly acknowledged practices.³³ It often

³² Companies like Pornhub, RedTube, and MyDirtyHobby, which are part of Aylo (formerly MindGeek from 2013-2023, Manwin from 2010-2013 and Mansef from 2004-2010), have played a significant role in the industry. MindGeek, now Aylo, is a virtual monopoly of online pornography. See: *Pornocracy: The New Multinationals of Sex* (2017), directed by Ovidie.

³³ As sexologist and psychologist Denise Renye evidences, “fetish is typically referred to as behaviour that someone cannot get sexually aroused without. Fetishes can also be a term people use to describe sexual arousal that is coupled with a typically non-sexual object [...] While people often use the terms ‘fetish’ and ‘kink’ interchangeably, a kink means an activity or behaviour that someone enjoys that exists outside the ‘norm’ of ‘traditional’ sex”. For additional information: <https://www.allure.com/story/common-sexual-fetishes-kinks> (Last consultation on October 18, 2021).

includes heterosexual and lesbian scenes —primarily designed to cater to male desires— as well as depictions of female masturbation.

Pornography shapes and normalises specific notions of gender roles and sexual behaviour by presenting a formulaic depiction of sexual encounters. It typically involves a repetitive sequence where the stages of a scene correspond to ‘preliminaries’, ‘intercourse/penetration’ and ‘orgasm/ejaculation’ (typically male). The medium often employs close-ups and detail shots that focus intensely on the genitals, contributing to the fragmentation of the body. Moreover, it frequently idealises and normalises certain body types —such as hyper-feminised or hyper-masculinised figures who are white, attractive, young, and perpetually eager for sex. The relationships depicted tend to reinforce heterosexual norms, further privileging these representations.

In mainstream pornography, men are usually portrayed as active subjects driven by sexual desire, while women are often reduced to passive objects whose primary role is to fulfil this desire. Women are frequently objectified, depicted merely as passive bodies. This form of pornography is underpinned by a fundamental inequality between men and women, reflecting and reinforcing the sexual preferences and interests of heterosexual men. Historically, men have held the power to define, select, and legitimize the narratives and representations deemed relevant, thereby shaping the portrayal of sexuality according to their own perspectives.³⁴ Sylvia Bejar highlights that our society is characterised by “the primacy of male pleasure [describing it as a] phallocracy or dictatorship of the penis, where intercourse is regarded as the paramount sexual activity” (*, 2003, 29). In contemporary pornography, the body is often fragmented to the extent that it becomes a mere ‘sex machine’, with the penis cast as the central figure. Heterosexual representation is normalised, and the roles performers are expected to play predominantly involve women submissively satisfying male pleasure.

Mainstream porn films are normally categorised by a range of sexual practices, which largely conform to the extensive content available on pornographic websites. These films are often structured around a central idea or narrative, framing sexuality within a

³⁴ Digital or mainstream porn has its own narratives that are clearly sexist and misogynistic, offering an imaginary where the representation of sexuality is determined by the domination of the male gaze, and where violence against women is normalised and eroticised. As Prada notes, “violence against women is endemic in our societies, so porn cannot be pointed to as the cause of sexism but rather as a symptom of it” (*, 2010, 63).

set of ‘standard’ or normative practices. This approach limits the scope for imagination and diversity in sexual representation. As Ballester et al. (*, 2009, 173) note:

Currently, pornography shows all kinds of women (young and old, thin and fat, etc.) and almost all types of men (a requirement is the duration of erections). What is shown in a stereotyped way is the whole sexual relationship, from beginning to end, with a predominance of characteristic aspects of sexuality based on male domination: [1] masculine desire (in heterosexual filming) is what should be satisfied [2] everything begins and ends with the male erection [3] the central fantasies that are represented are masculine. That is, men and women can be very diverse, but their relationships are a representation of dominant gender models.

While there is now greater diversity in body types represented in pornography, the predominant and most accepted image remains that of the white, Western body. Pornographic websites do feature categories for various ethnic groups —such as Asian, Brazilian, Japanese, among others— but these are often presented separately and through stereotypical lenses. The pornography industry tends to market and fetishise these different ethnicities, reinforcing rather than challenging stereotypes. As Chitra Nagarajan (2013) points out “in conventional pornography we have the following gender, race and sexuality stereotypes that are inscribed on every ‘body’ depicted”³⁵. Conventional porn stereotypes sex performers according to their ethnicity, generating prejudices and false sexual beliefs about people, distorting their bodies to their traditions and reproducing racial hierarchy. As porn actress and educator Kali Sudhra notes, white pornography directors and producers have subjugated BIPOC people³⁶ to fit a certain narrative about sexuality, portraying them as ‘the submissive’, ‘the exotic’, ‘the fetish’ (2021, 72). They usually play secondary roles rather than the main role in movies.

Traditional porn reproduces predictable and stereotypical representations of sexuality for an increasingly niche oriented marketplace. As Miller-Young explains “this limited erotic vision may also be the result of sexually conservative regulatory systems, such as obscenity laws [...] The regulation of sexual culture has reinforced severely

³⁵ See: <https://chitrasudhanagarajan.wordpress.com/2013/03/10/the-cult-of-pornography-a-black-feminist-perspective/> (Last consultation on October 19, 2021).

³⁶ Acronym for black, indigenous and person of colour. For further insight see: <https://www.thebipocproject.org/> (Last consultation on August 11, 2023).

narrow representations of gender, desire, and sexuality that make it difficult to construct alternative imaginaries” (2004, 8-9). Pornography, like other forms of media such as cinema, news, advertising, and music, reflects and perpetuates societal values. Conventional pornography often mirrors prevailing societal norms, resulting in narratives that are sexist, racist, ageist, ableist and homophobic.³⁷ This underscores the importance of alternative pornographic trends, such as post-porn, ‘porn for women’, and feminist porn, which advocate diverse, pluralistic, and ethically grounded representations.³⁸ Despite their relatively marginal status, these alternative trends are significant because they challenge gender roles and sexual binarism while aiming to disrupt entrenched power dynamics. They provide a platform for exploring new sexualities and perspectives. As Valero (2022, 154) argues, to counteract the dominance of male-centric porn that objectifies women for male pleasure, it is crucial to support and amplify the voices of women who seek to create, interpret, and engage with egalitarian pornography. This approach emphasises the need for a pornographic discourse that upholds values of equality, respect for fundamental rights, and pluralism, rather than resorting to moralistic prohibitions. It is not about banning pornography but rather about fostering a genre where equality and respect are integral. In conclusion, fostering pornography that embodies values of equality and respect not only challenges traditional norms but also paves the way for a more just and diverse representation of sexuality in society.

1.4 Sexual activism: North American post-porn awakening

The pornographic industry has long been dominated by a heterosexual male gaze, which has narrowed the depiction of female sexuality. Consequently, female desire has been distorted, as it is filtered through this male-centric perspective. This concept derives from a seminal article called *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema* (1975) by film theorist Laura Mulvey. The ‘gaze’ is a term that describes how viewers interact with visual media (advertisements, cinema, and television). The concept of the ‘male gaze’ describes how

³⁷ Part of mainstream pornography normalised a model of sexual relations based on the celebration of the subjugation of women, of their reduction to a mere object of pleasure and a source of male sexual satisfaction, with the following common practices, as Valero notes: treating women as urinals (‘Human Toilets’), make them vomit (‘Gag On My Cock’), slap them (‘Slappy Happy’), ejaculate on their eyes (‘Pink In The Eye’), suffocate them, spit on them and other forms of humiliation (2022, 144).

³⁸ On the different pornographic trends at subsections 1.4.1, 1.4.2 and 1.4.3.

visual arts and literature often depict the world and women from a masculine, heterosexual perspective, invoking the sexual politics of the gaze and suggesting a sexualised way of looking that empowers men and objectifies women. In pornography, this means that female pleasure is frequently constructed and depicted to satisfy male viewers' desires and fantasies. Scenes therefore often emphasise exaggerated expressions of female pleasure that cater to what is presumed to be appealing to male viewers. This includes vocalisations, body language, and scenarios that may not accurately reflect authentic female sexual experiences. The male-centric portrayal of female pleasure in pornography can shape viewers' expectations and understandings of sex. This can lead to misunderstandings about what constitutes consensual and pleasurable sex for women. These portrayals reinforce gender stereotypes about sexual roles and behaviours, contributing to the broader cultural narrative that prioritises male pleasure over female pleasure.

The concept of 'porn for women' emerged in the United States during the 1980s in response to the male-dominated narratives prevalent in mainstream pornography. During this time, a group of pioneering female pornographers began creating content that centred on women's desires, fantasies, and pleasures, which had largely been ignored or misrepresented in existing pornographic media. These trailblazers sought to redefine pornography by crafting narratives and imagery that resonated with women's experiences, offering a more inclusive and authentic exploration of female sexuality. Their efforts marked a significant shift in the industry, challenging the status quo and paving the way for more diverse and woman-centred representations of sexual desire.

Throughout the 1990s in the United States and in the early 2000s in Europe, the term 'post-porn' and 'feminist porn' began to be used, which better reflects the intentions of an increasingly diverse group of people who intend to construct an alternative pornography that not only centred on female desire but also challenged and expanded the boundaries of how sex, gender, sexual orientation, race, beauty standards, functional diversity, and age were portrayed. The evolution of the terminology responds to the changes within feminist thought, since the term 'porn for women' ended up being problematic—despite stressing that women and their sexual tastes can be diverse; it finally ended up associated with essentialising issues and reproducing a hetero-colonialist vision. Thus, 'porn for women' was usually used to refer to a current of pornography in which the directors were women—which does not guarantee that what they create is alternative and/or feminist—or to classify a series of films that showed specific creative

and aesthetic parameters such as more ‘delicate’ and romantic storylines, which would imply the existence of a specifically ‘feminine taste’ when it comes to consuming sexual images. As Suárez points out, “this category has also been criticised from queer and postcolonial perspectives because most of the pornographic fictions that are included in it are carried out by and aimed at white, heterosexual, middle-class and cis-gender women”(*, 2017, 61). This makes identification processes complex for women of other races, orientations, classes and transsexual women.

Post-porn emerged within the context of anti-censorship, sex-positive and queer/feminist discussions in the United States in 1990s, and embraced a more radical approach, questioning not just the content but the very structure and purpose of pornography itself. In post-porn, sex becomes a space for critically examining impulses that are inherently biological, social, cultural, political, and technological. This approach contributes to analysis of the nature/culture divide by questioning not only sexuality and gender but the very notion of sex itself. Post-pornography challenges the idea that genders are anything more than social constructs, deliberately avoiding the replication of established gender representations. Participants in post-pornography aim to perform gender roles from a non-essentialist perspective, dismantling societal norms and stereotypes through various mediums such as essays, poetry, videos, and performances. By exploring sexuality through different lenses, post-pornography utilises tools like prosthetics to reconstruct the body and includes the audience to disrupt the traditional subject/object divide. Ultimately, it serves as a platform for critiquing and questioning the connections between sex, sexuality, capitalism, ableism, heteronormativity, racism, and cisnormativity.

Meanwhile, feminist porn, emerged in response to the male-centric tendencies in traditional pornography, seeking to create content that prioritises female pleasure and agency. This genre emphasises authentic representations of women’s sexual experiences and challenges traditional power dynamics in sexual encounters. Feminist scholars and activists advocate for more comprehensive sex education that includes discussions about consent, mutual pleasure, and realistic depictions of sex. This aims to counteract the limited and often misleading portrayals found in mainstream pornography. These efforts contribute to a more nuanced and equitable understanding of sexuality, challenging the dominance of the male gaze in pornographic content. These movements have been instrumental in broadening the scope of pornography, making space for narratives and representations that were previously marginalised or excluded. They have opened the

door for new conversations about the role of pornography in society, advocating for more diverse and realistic depictions of sexual experiences that resonate with a wider audience, as Aravena points out, ‘feminist porn’ and ‘post-porn’ seek to change that paradigm (2019, 88). Creating pornography that portrays people engaging in sex as equals, rather than men simply ‘having sex’ with women, can help dismantle sexist gender stereotypes and offer a more realistic, relatable depiction of sex and human sexuality. This approach challenges the dominance of a single, narrow narrative around sex, sexuality, and gender representation, opening space for diverse perspectives and experiences.

As Linda Williams note in her book *Hardcore* (1999) the pornography industry has increasingly incorporated feminist ideas into its portrayal of female pleasure. This shift reflects a growing awareness of the need to represent women’s sexual experiences more authentically and distinctively. However, as pornography attempts to appeal more to women and couples, it often faces the challenge of representing female pleasure in a way that is separate from, yet not entirely disconnected from, traditional male-centred desire. The more the industry strives to cater to a female audience, the more it grapples with the complexity of depicting female pleasure as something that is both autonomous and yet intertwined with broader sexual dynamics. The emergence of alternative pornographic visions is therefore crucial, as it introduces new discourses, stories, and ways of representing both women and men. By moving away from the traditional patterns that have long dominated the pornographic industry, these new approaches contribute to a broader and more inclusive understanding of sexual dynamics, reflecting the complexity and diversity of human sexuality. The following sections will delve into the pioneering voices behind these diverse pornographic movements —‘porn for women’, post-porn, and feminist porn— to explore how they have redefined and broadened representations of sexuality

1.4.1 ‘Porn for women’: Candida Royalle, a sex positive figure

As the pornography industry expanded, it increasingly sought to attract women as consumers. With the legalisation and mainstreaming of pornography, it became more widely available and more responsive to the feminist movement’s growing critique and scrutiny of the industry (Juffer 40, 1998). Candida Royalle was a sex educator, artist, porn producer, and a leader in the adult film industry, particularly for her focus on creating pornography that resonated with women. During a time when the industry was overwhelmingly male-dominated and catered primarily to male fantasies, Royalle’s

approach was revolutionary. She recognised the lack of content that addressed female sexuality from a woman's perspective and sought to change that. Innovating the notion of 'couple's erotica', she created Femme Productions in 1984, to produce adult films that spoke from a woman's perspective and could be entertaining while promoting positive sexual role modelling for couples to view together.³⁹ These films were not just about the physical act; they explored the relationships and emotions behind the scenes, making them more relatable and appealing to female viewers.

Her movies were praised by therapists for depicting a realistic, natural, and healthy replication of sexual activity. By emphasising the significance of female sexual pleasure, Royalle educated a generation of women on the need to verbalise their wishes and fantasies related to sex, a ground-breaking idea that has inspired a new wave of sex positivity.⁴⁰ Peter Alilunas emphasises the importance of recognising the complex realities that women face in the industry —both as consumers and workers— where progressive attitudes towards their pleasures and experiences are not always prevalent. Thus, sexually explicit content labelled as 'for women' may possess some transgressive potential that may not have been fully acknowledged at times (2019, 131-132).

In Royalle's films, female characters acquired more depth and dimension. The conventional female protagonist, often crafted by men as a mere sexual fantasy, became less defined. Instead of portraying a woman who appears certain of her sexual desires, her characters were depicted as individuals beginning to explore and understand their own preferences. Her movies featured sex scenes with contextual buildup (foreplay), and the narratives did not necessarily conclude with ejaculation.⁴¹ In some of her movies, post-intercourse intimacy follows the sex scenes, a rarity in most pornographic films. The intimate moments are characterised by emotional depth and narrative coherence, contrasting sharply with the random, anonymous encounters typical of mainstream pornography. As Juffer highlights in her book *At Home with Pornography*, the 'porn for women' movement faced several challenges, the genre was sometimes co-opted and could potentially reinforce essentialist views, inadvertently consolidating some of the

³⁹ By 'female perspective', Royalle referred to creating a pornography that incorporated women's viewpoints and experiences regarding sex and pleasure. At that time, the industry was predominantly driven by men, resulting in a singular, dominant narrative known today as mainstream pornography.

⁴⁰ Royalle's work at: <http://candidaroyalle.com/> (Last consultation on April 27, 2022).

⁴¹ Royalle suppressed facial ejaculation from her movies considering it was a misogynistic sexual practice.

very norms about gender and sexuality that it aimed to critique. This includes the portrayal of female sexuality as more consensual and less aggressive, which aligns with certain dominant discourses rather than challenging them (7, 1998).⁴² Associated with Royalle's approach to pornography, Aravena observes the tendency for "her actresses to adhere to a fairly hetero-normative standard of beauty and the broad assumption that they all prefer a more romantic style of sex than the one shown in traditional porn" (*, 2019, 73). It is important to recognise that Royalle's significant contribution was placing female desire as the centre of pornographic films, a crucial shift at a time when the industry was predominantly male (cis, white, middle-aged, and heterosexual) and catered largely to a male audience. As Juffer evidences, "not all pornography tries to be transgressive, and not all pornography circulates in conditions that stress its transgressive qualities (18, 1998). Royalle's work emphasised the importance for women's voices to be heard in the pornographic industry, evidencing how, at that time, women's desires and pleasure were often rendered invisible.

Royalle's films have been favourably received by viewers and the media, as well as the sexology community. She was the first erotic filmmaker to have been invited to become a member of the American Association of Sex Educators, Counsellors and Therapists (AASECT) due to the message of 'positive sexuality' in her films.⁴³ In 1992, she founded Feminists for Free Expression (FFE), an organisation comprising diverse feminists dedicated to safeguarding women's rights to create and distribute material of their choosing. The group opposed speech-censoring legislation and defended women's free expression. In October 2004, Royalle authored her first book, *How to Tell a Naked Man What to Do: Sex Advice from a Woman Who Knows*. In this work, Royalle combines her expertise as a pornographic filmmaker with her insights as a feminist and sex educator. The book provides candid and practical advice on sexual relationships from a

⁴² Jane Juffer's explores the intersection of sexuality, gender, and culture in her book *At Home with Pornography: Women, Sexuality, and Everyday Life* (1998) emphasising the importance of recognising and validating female sexual desire. Juffer critiques societal norms and media representations that often marginalise women's sexual experiences. She argues that mainstream culture often suppresses female sexual desire, treating it as less important or less legitimate compared to male desire. This suppression is reflected in societal expectations and media representations that prioritise male pleasure and often depict women as passive participants in sexual encounters.

⁴³ A nonprofit organisation devoted to the promotion of sexual health through the development and advancement of sexual therapy and education.

female perspective, aiming to empower women with knowledge and confidence about their own desires and sexual experiences. In 2007, she also created a new line of ‘ethnic erotica for couples’ called Femme Chocolat in order to provide high quality erotica for the underserved market of ethnic women and couples. She moved on to the role of mentoring young new female directors so that they could continue the Femme line while expressing their own visions and ideas.

Many actresses of the time were confined to roles that were often objectifying, with little consideration given to the female gaze. Although some, like Nina Hartley⁴⁴ and Annie Sprinkle, later explored more artistic and feminist approaches to their work, Royalle was one of the first to establish a clear and sustained focus on women’s experiences and desires in adult films. Her films offered a nuanced and respectful alternative to the conventional fare, significantly contributing to the development of the feminist porn movement. By combining her experience as an actress with her vision as a director and producer, Candida Royalle influenced the way female sexuality is portrayed in adult films. Her work helped lay the groundwork for more inclusive and diverse representations of sexual pleasure and paved the way for future feminist explorations within the industry.

1.4.2 Post-pornography: Annie Sprinkle a sex-work pioneer

The term ‘post-porn’ was coined by the erotic photographer Wink van Kempen in the 1980s to describe a set of photographs that, while featuring explicit sexual content, were intended to transcend traditional pornographic purposes.⁴⁵ Van Kempen’s work sought to challenge established norms by presenting sexuality in ways that provoke thought and discussion rather than merely serving as a tool for masturbation. This innovative approach laid the groundwork for the post-porn movement, which emerged as a critical response to

⁴⁴ Nina Hartley is a renowned adult film actress, director, and sex educator known for her influential work in the industry, her advocacy for sexual health and empowerment, and her contributions to feminist pornography. In 2006, she published her book *Nina Hartley’s Guide to Total Sex* with her husband Ira Levine.

⁴⁵ *Post/porn/politics: symposium/reader: queer-feminist perspective on the politics of porn performance and sex-work as culture production* by Tim Stüttgen et al, 2010. See: <https://search.worldcat.org/title/postpornpolitics-symposiumreader-queerfeminist-perspective-on-the-politics-of-porn-performance-and-sexwork-as-culture-production/oclc/608175441> (Last consultation on August 29, 2024).

conventional pornography, aiming to interrogate and deconstruct its conventions and offer more politically engaged portrayals of sexuality. Post-porn was born as an eclectic visual genre that combined sex, politics, criticism, and humour, aiming not merely to stimulate pleasure but to critically examine and question the mechanisms behind it. Fundamentally, the post-porn movement challenges the generalization of sex, the objectification of individuals, physical stereotypes, and the distortion of female desire through the male gaze, thereby engaging in a critical and political discourse. It should be viewed as a symbolic critique of social structures rather than merely a sexual act. Consequently, post-porn highlights and represents minority sexualities that are often deemed abject and marginalised.

Post-porn functions as a force of sexual dissidence, challenging traditional notions of desire and sexual gender. Unlike conventional pornography, which often reinforces established norms, post-pornographic representations —whether performative or audiovisual— tend more towards political critique. As Aravena reflects, post-porn “seeks to re-appropriate fundamental concepts of pornography, transforming its mechanisms, discourses, and tools into acts of dissent while deconstructing the social frameworks that pornography has historically shaped and normalised” (*, 2019, 59). Post-porn emerged in response to the dominant pornography, with the idea of breaking binary categories (such as man/woman and heterosexual/homosexual) and shift sexual representation away from the male gaze, genitalization, and the male orgasm. Ultimately, post-porn should be understood as a symbolic critique of social structures by confronting and reimagining the conventions of pornography. Post-porn offers a transformative approach to understanding and representing sexuality, contributing to a broader dialogue about gender, desire, and societal norms.

Annie Sprinkle is a significant figure in the post-porn movement, a former adult film star who transitioned into a career as a sex educator, performance artist, and advocate for sexual freedom. Sprinkle began her career in the adult film industry in the 1970s and quickly became one of the most recognisable figures in porn. However, by the 1980s, she shifted her focus to explore the intersections of sex, art, and education. She coined the term post-porn to describe a new wave of sexual expression that goes beyond traditional pornography, using explicit content to explore issues such as gender, identity, body politics, and the nature of desire. In her performance ‘Public Cervix Announcement’, she invited attendees to explore her vagina with a speculum, using the act as a parody of the longstanding obscurantism surrounding female genitalia and questioning the androcentric

representation of the body in hegemonic iconography.⁴⁶ Sprinkle's performances emerged from a desire to interrogate and challenge conventional codes of gender, pornography, and sex, aiming to demonstrate how porn could play a crucial role in reshaping understandings of sexuality.⁴⁷ As Noémi Aulombard-Arnaud points out:

This performance creates a representation of the female body which is at odds with mainstream pornographic imagery. The sexual organs are usually considered obscene: something that must be relegated to the invisible and intimate sphere. But Annie Sprinkle's performance managed, with its light and humorous tone, to show the female genitalia in a different way and thus question their relegation to the category of "obscene".⁴⁸

Sprinkle's background as a pornographic actress motivated her to critically assess the prevailing pornography industry. She examined the hetero-patriarchal frameworks embedded in these productions and their influence on sexual practices and fantasies. Her critique of pornographic imagery and its impact on real bodies and sexualities developed concurrently with the rise of porn studies and queer theory in the 1980s.

In the early 1990s, she adopted the title 'Post-Porn Modernist', which led to appearances in art museums and universities where she addressed contemporary issues in

⁴⁶ "You may be wondering why I am going to show you, my cervix. What is this all about? There are probably 1,000 reasons. I will just tell you three. Reason number one: a cervix is such a beautiful thing, and most people go through their whole lives and never get to see one. I am really proud of mine, and I would like to give that opportunity to anyone who wants it. Reason number two is, I find it is a lot of fun to show my cervix in little groups like this. And reason number three is, I want to prove to some of the guys out there that there are absolutely no teeth inside there". 'Public Cervix Announcement' at: <https://anniesprinkle.org/ppm-bobsart/cervix2.html> (Last consultation on April 19, 2021).

⁴⁷ Annie Sprinkle has researched and explored sexuality producing and actively participating in her own porn film production, photographic work, teaching workshops, and lectures at universities. She is also an acclaimed artist who travels the world with her plays and her visual art shows, usually based on her experiences of life, sex, and love. Sprinkle is also an active fighter for the rights and health of sex workers. She became the first known porn performer to get a doctoral degree in 1996, with a PhD in Human Sexuality from the Institute for Advanced Study of Human Sexuality in San Francisco. See: <https://hemisphericinstitute.org/en/hidv1-collections/item/2690-annie-sprinkle-post-porn-modernist-1993.html> (Last consultation on April 19, 2021).

⁴⁸ Further information at: <https://shs.cairn.info/journal-clio-women-gender-history-2021-2-page-185?lang=en#re13no13> (Last consultation on August 29, 2024).

pornography.⁴⁹ For Sprinkle, the solution was not to censor porn but to create better, more thoughtful representations. Rather than advocating for the censorship of pornography, this approach focuses on addressing the devaluation of women's bodies in pornographic imagery by creating alternative sexual performances that challenge androcentric and heteronormative conventions. Through her performances, Sprinkle has often combined explicit sexual content with educational and artistic elements, aiming to demystify and destigmatise sex, blended theatre, documentary, and porn, inviting audiences to engage with sexuality in a more considerate and inclusive way. In conclusion, these performances have played a pivotal role in advancing sex-positive feminism, which champions the acceptance of all forms of consensual sexual expression. By redefining the landscape of adult entertainment, they foster a more equitable and nuanced dialogue about sexual expression and desire. This transformative approach not only challenges traditional norms but also promotes a broader understanding and acceptance of diverse sexual experiences.

1.4.3 Feminist pornography: Tristan Taormino, sex educator and activist

Tristan Taormino is a sex educator and writer, but she is better known for directing and starring in her own feminist porn movies. She runs her own adult film production company, Smart Ass Productions, and has directed twenty-four sex education and pornographic films, including her multi-award winning debut film based on her book, *The Ultimate Guide to Anal Sex for Women* (1997).⁵⁰ She was an editor of the lesbian porn magazine *On Our Backs* and a sex columnist for the *Village Voice*. Her documentary-style series *Chemistry* has won several 'Feminist Porn Awards',⁵¹ and her series *Rough Sex* won the 2011 'Feminist Porn Award' for 'Hottest Kink Movie'. Taormino was an exclusive director for Vivid Entertainment for six years, during which she created and directed the sex education company's line, Vivid-Ed. She directed several sex educational shorts for The Smitten Kitten, an education-based sex toy and supply store located in Minneapolis.⁵² In 2010, she received the 'Feminist Porn Trailblazer Award', and in 2012

⁴⁹ See: <https://anniesprinkle.org/ppm-bobsart/menu.html> (Last consultation on August 29, 2024).

⁵⁰ Winner of the 'AVN Award' in 2000 for 'Best Group Sex Scene —Video' and winner of 'Best Anal— Themed Tape'. Nominated by the 'X-rated Critics Organization' (XRCO Award), for 'Best Video' in 2000. The book won the 'Firecracker Alternative Book (Sex)' award in 1998.

⁵¹ She was the winner of the 'AVN Award for Best Gonzo Movie' for *Chemistry, Volume 1* (2006).

⁵² See: <https://www.smittenkittenonline.com/> (Last consultation on November 2, 2023).

she was inducted into the ‘XRCO Hall of Fame’.⁵³ She has hosted and produced the long running podcast *Sex Out Loud* since 2012. Tristan Taormino has profoundly impacted feminist porn through her directorial work, which accentuates consent, diversity, and realistic portrayals of sexual pleasure. Her contributions extend to writing and education, advocating for more inclusive and empowering representations of sexuality while critiquing mainstream pornography’s limitations.

In 2013, she co-published the book *The Feminist Book: the Politics of Producing Pleasure*. In her opinion, feminist porn seeks to expand ideas regarding desire, beauty, pleasure and power through unconventional representations, aesthetics and cinematographic styles. The term feminist porn encompasses explicit, complex and varied sexual imagery that reflects a range of identities —such as gender, race, ethnicity, nationality, sexuality, class, ability, and age— as well as various practices, desires, and preferences, all aimed at challenging and redefining traditional, dominant representations. The primary objective of feminist porn is to empower both its creators and its audience. This form of pornography is dedicated to enhancing women’s agency, allowing them to take on roles as directors, producers or performers, and to authentically represent female bodies and sexuality. Feminist porn recognises that women’s empowerment extends beyond social, economic, and cultural spheres to include sexual autonomy. Consequently, it is crucial to develop pornography grounded in feminist principles.

Feminist porn explores the concepts of desire, pleasure, beauty, agency, power, including pleasure within and through inequality and against the limits of the gender hierarchy, as well as against heteronormativity and homonormativity, expanding the language of sex as erotic activity. Feminist porn creates alternative visuals and develops its own aesthetics and iconography, expanding established sexual norms and discourses. It does not assume a single female viewer but rather acknowledges multiple viewers, with many different preferences. Feminist porn sees the representation of sex and its production as a terrain for creating resistance and change, celebrating the female point of view, and trying to create more realistic, respectful, and powerful content.

Tristan Taormino identifies that the production of feminist porn must be a fair, ethical process, as well as a positive work environment. This type of pornography should try to counteract the messages that society sends such as that sex is shameful, bad, dirty,

⁵³ The ‘XRCO’ (X-rated Critics Organisation) is a group of editors and writers from the U.S. pornographic industry who each year present awards in recognition of achievement within the industry.

scary, dangerous, or that it is the domain of men, where only their wishes and fantasies are fulfilled, presenting it in a positive way as something joyful, fun, safe, mutual and satisfying for everyone (2016, 404). Similarly, it should show plural, complex and three-dimensional characters, rather than simplistic stereotypes. In feminist porn, sex must be represented not as a stereotypical power imbalance but as a space to play with it and organise other forms of consensual exchange of power.

Feminist porn, sometimes also called ‘ethical porn’, embodies a set of feminist values in the production, representation, and distribution of adult films. Companies that use these labels aim to highlight their commitment to the well-being of everyone involved in the filmmaking process, from performers to crew members handling cameras, lighting, sound, makeup, direction, and art. This approach emphasises fair wages, transparent communication throughout the production, and a broader commitment to addressing various crucial concerns in the industry. Some performers, such as Maria Riot and Jiz Lee, have pointed out that the ‘ethical’ or ‘feminist’ porn label served at a specific time to make visible other ways of making porn beyond what we find in the free ‘tubes’, but perhaps currently what we should do, as Riot evidences in her essay “El porno que queremos” in the anthology *El dedo en el porno*, is to appropriate the word porn, so that when we use it, we have in mind an imaginary of multiple forms, practices and bodies, as a representation of all pornography as a whole (2021, 104), rather than the current hegemonic, stereotypical image of pornography. Jiz Lee explained to *Vice* magazine that “‘feminist porn’ catches people’s attention [...] because society needs to understand that sex work and feminism are not polar opposites”.⁵⁴

As Patricia Macleod points out, discussions about pornography often focus on the notions of ‘realness’ and ‘authenticity’. This debate encompasses critiques that pornography may be either perceived as inauthentic or excessively authentic, as well as support for works that strive to present more ‘genuine’ representations of bodies, identities, and sexual practices. The quest for authentic porn becomes a contentious issue, particularly for feminists who seek reassurance from perceptions of actual pleasure and legitimate sex when they access porn. This desire for authenticity might be more pronounced in the absence of transparent information about production ethics and labour conditions (2021, 693), as can be found more on free ‘tubes’ where piracy and

⁵⁴ Full interview at: <https://www.vice.com/en/article/nk47/feminist-porn-awards-asks-the-existential-question-is-there-feminist-porn> (Last consultation on February 9, 2024).

unauthorized content is added. Therefore, while feminist consumers may appreciate genuine representations, it is crucial to scrutinise how these expectations for genuineness align with broader initiatives aimed at mitigating stigma and exploitation within the pornographic industry (Macleod 2021, 693). Therefore, prioritising realism and authenticity is crucial for challenging stereotypes and presenting diverse representations, while also respecting the labour and autonomy of performers, ultimately contributing to a more ethical and inclusive pornography industry.

The emerging models of pornography —such as ‘porn for women’, post-porn, feminist and ethical porn, among others— share a common goal: they aim to move beyond binary judgments of ‘good’ versus ‘bad’ pornography (feminist versus mainstream). Instead, these approaches seek to dismantle the stigma associated with pornography by showcasing diverse bodies and varied sexual practices. The current objective of feminist porn is to ensure the term ‘porn’ encompasses a broader, more inclusive spectrum of representation, allowing for a richer and more pluralistic expression within the genre. Ultimately, these new models strive to redefine and expand the understanding of pornography, reflecting a wider array of experiences and identities. ‘Porn for women’ highlights female pleasure by prioritising the desires and experiences of women, aiming to shift the focus away from traditional male-centric narratives. Post-porn, on the other hand, challenges and subverts conventional pornographic norms, often engaging in provocative and transgressive acts that question societal and sexual taboos. Finally, feminist porn strives for authenticity and realism, providing a nuanced portrayal of sexuality that reflects genuine experiences and diverse identities. Together, these approaches work to expand the boundaries of pornography, emphasising female pleasure, pushing against norms, and seeking a more truthful representation of sexual experiences. The next chapter will explore the emergence of alternative pornographic movements in the United Kingdom and Spain, setting the stage for the core analysis of this doctoral thesis.

CHAPTER 2: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF PORNOGRAPHY IN THE UNITED KINGDOM AND SPAIN

As discussed in Chapter 1, feminist pornography, which originates from American feminist activism and politics, is based on the idea that there is a need for pornography that specifically addresses women's issues. It aims to recognise vulnerabilities and power dynamics while producing content that resonates with and empowers women. Chapter 2 turns its attention to the history of alternative and feminist porn in the United Kingdom and Spain. This chapter adopts a more historical and informative approach, tracing the development of these movements within their unique cultural and legal contexts. While the American approach, which also gained popularity in the UK, focused on creating space within existing frameworks for women's porn or porn tailored to women, the approach in Spain took a different path. In Spain, the emphasis has been on a more radical transformation of the social structures related to sex.

The chapter delves into the legal landscape in the United Kingdom, examining the censorship laws applied to pornography and the movements that emerged in opposition to these restrictions. This section explores the development of an alternative pornography, characterised by artistic and ethical approaches to content creation. The chapter concludes with an analysis of the post-porn movement that emerged in Spain around the year 2000, particularly in Barcelona. It discusses how various groups and artists turned the city into a hub of activist, artistic, and sexual performances, establishing Barcelona as a recognised porn capital where mainstream and feminist pornographic creations coexist. The primary objective of this chapter is to trace a detailed chronology of the various pornographic movements that have emerged in the United Kingdom and Spain from the 2000s onward. This chapter will explore not only the origins and development of these movements but also their influences, key figures, and underlying goals. It will examine how these movements have evolved in response to cultural, social, and legal contexts, highlighting their impact on the broader landscape of pornography. Additionally, the chapter will delve into the intersection of these movements with feminist, queer, and ethical perspectives, illustrating how they have challenged traditional norms and contributed to a more inclusive and diverse representation of sexuality.

2.1 Censorship and desire: an exploration of pornography in the UK

The history of pornography in the UK is a captivating reflection of broader social, cultural, and technological shifts over the centuries. From the rise of erotic photography

in the 19th century to the widespread availability of online porn in the 21st, this history illustrates the changing dynamics between society, law, and sexual expression. The roots of pornography in the UK can be traced back to the Victorian era, a time when erotic photography began to circulate more widely. The invention of the camera in the 1830s made it possible to create and distribute explicit images, although these early photographs were often sold or exchanged discreetly due to their scandalous nature. Victorian society, with its strict moral codes, imposed heavy censorship on such materials. Great Britain established the legal precedent for protection of the private sphere with the passage of its first anti-obscenity legislation in 1857, “the Obscene Publication Act [...] sought to protect young middle-class women whose pornography consisted of the romantic novel” (Juffer 37, 1998). This Act made it illegal to produce or distribute content deemed obscene, setting the stage for future legal battles over pornography. As Wong evidences, “the 1857 [Obscene Publications] Act was a response to the specific problem of the Holywell Street trade in pornographic materials, obscene pictures and ‘periodical papers of the most licentious and disgusting description’” (2009, 96).

In the post-World War II era, social norms began to relax, leading to the emergence of pornographic magazines in the UK during the 1950s and 1960s (Harry Cocks 2016, 171). Publications like *Health & Efficiency* (H&E)⁵⁵ and *Spick and Span*⁵⁶ featured nudity and sexually suggestive content, often presented under the guise of health or lifestyle topics. These magazines operated in a legal grey area due to the ambiguous nature of British obscenity laws. Under the 1959 Obscene Publications Act, material could be prosecuted if it was deemed to “deprave or corrupt” those who encountered it.

⁵⁵ According to their website: “H&E originally stood for “health and efficiency”, the theory being that continued exposure to the sun and air, in combination with a good diet and regular exercise, was beneficial to health and made the body work more efficiently. Nowadays, naturism is more of a lifestyle choice with much less importance placed on the perfect body image —and more emphasis on travel, sunbathing, naked activities and, most of all, fun”. See: <https://www.henaturist.net/> (Last consultation on September 5, 2024).

⁵⁶ *Spick and Span* was a popular British magazine from the 1950s and 1960s that featured images of women in lingerie or skimpy outfits, often in suggestive poses. Although was framed as a fashion or a lifestyle magazine, the primary appeal was the erotic imagery, which pushed the boundaries of what was legally acceptable at the time. The magazine operated in a legal grey area under strict censorship laws. For some photographs from the magazine at: <https://vintagefetish.website/> (Last consultation on September 5, 2024).

However, the act also introduced the “public good” defence, allowing content to be legally permissible if it was judged to have artistic, scientific, or literary merit.⁵⁷

As Oliver Carter illustrates in *Under the Counter: Britain’s Trade in Hardcore Pornographic 8mm Films* (2022), Britain’s domestic hardcore pornography trade expanded significantly in the early 1960s, with photographs, typescripts and 8mm films being sold in the backrooms of Soho’s bookshops and through mail-order services. Crucial to the growth of this economy was the Obscene Publications Act 1959. Intended as a liberalising measure and a way to differentiate between works of artistic merit and low-brow pornographic material, the vagaries and inconsistencies of this legislation allowed for many loopholes. This ambiguity was seized upon by the Obscene Publications Squad, colloquially known as the ‘Dirty Squad’. This small, insular unit operated a corrupt protection racket, implementing an informal ‘licensing system’ that allowed producers and distributors of pornography to continue their operations in exchange for bribes, effectively blurring the line between law enforcement and organised crime. Paul Bleakley highlights that:

The “Dirty Squad” [...] were responsible for policing material they believed was at risk of corrupting the general public; although the intent of the legislation was primarily to address the proliferation of pornography, the language of the act effectively gave police the power to subjectively determine which material was considered corruptive. This included sexually explicit images and texts, as well as more conventional artwork and left-wing publications (2019, 19-20).

British entrepreneurs skilfully navigated obscenity laws to capitalise on the rising demand for uncensored adult films, generating significant profits from their illicit operations. Corrupt members of the Metropolitan Police’s Obscene Publications Squad were instrumental in allowing this trade to thrive, accepting bribes in exchange for turning a blind eye. Britain had earned a global reputation for producing ‘rollers’, that is, short, hardcore films distributed on 8mm reels. These films, often produced in clandestine studios, were covertly smuggled out of the UK and sold across Western Europe, cementing Britain’s position in the international black market for pornography (Oliver Carter, 2022). Britain’s role in this clandestine industry highlighted both the flaws in its

⁵⁷ The Obscene Publication Act 1959 at: <https://www.cps.gov.uk/legal-guidance/obscene-publications> (Last consultation on September 5, 2024).

ensorship laws and the widespread corruption that enabled the trade to flourish. Granting broad enforcement powers to the vice unit inevitably led to corruption and abuse of authority. Section 1(1) of the Obscene Publications Act 1959, introduced a legal test for obscenity, defining prohibited material as anything likely to “deprave and corrupt persons who, having regard to all relevant circumstances, read, see or hear the matter contained or embodied in it” (Bleakley 2019, 29). The lack of clear guidelines in the law regarding which materials were explicitly prohibited left the police vulnerable to bribery, particularly from Soho pornographers seeking favourable treatment. Within the Obscene Publications Squad, this protection was rationalised as a method of containment, where the sex trade was permitted to operate within a controlled area, under the supervision of providers who were accountable to the police (Bleakley 2019, 20).

By the early 1970s, Britain’s legal landscape around pornography was characterised by a mix of moral conservatism, emerging liberal attitudes, and the challenge of enforcing laws that struggled to keep pace with changing societal norms. As Clarissa Smith evidences in her article “A Perfectly British Business”:

Whereas producers in the States and Europe have been able to mobilise important and popular political sentiment behind their causes of “free speech” and “sexual liberation,” British pornographers have fought their battles with the judiciary on their own.” The famous obscenity trials of the 1960s and 1970s were mainly concerned with works of literary origin, not those emerging from the offices of self-identified porn publishers, but they were important precisely because they delineated the territory of defence on the basis of artistic merit or some form of social or therapeutic benefit (2005a, 154-155).

Between 1960 and 1970, several high-profile obscenity trials shaped British legal and cultural landscapes.⁵⁸ One notable case was the ‘Oz Magazine Trial’ of 1971, which challenged the limits of obscenity and free speech in the UK. *Oz* magazine, known for its countercultural and provocative content, published the controversial “Schoolkids Issue”

⁵⁸ “Prosecutions, at least the most high-profile ones, were not aimed at porn publishers per se; in fact, many of the cause célèbres of the 1960s and 1970s featured works of literary merit, or at least that was the defence offered in court” (Smith 2005a, 150). For example, D.H. Lawrence’s novel *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*, published in 1928, was deemed obscene for its explicit descriptions of sex and use of language. The *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* trial (1960) was brought against Penguin Books when they attempted to publish an unexpurgated version of the novel in the UK.

in 1970, featuring sexually explicit material and artwork by teenagers. The magazine's editors —Richard Neville, Felix Dennis, and Jim Anderson— were charged under the Obscene Publications Act 1959 with conspiring to corrupt public morals. The trial drew significant public attention and underscored the clash between legal standards and the countercultural movement of the 1960s.⁵⁹ Although initially convicted, the editors' sentences were later overturned on appeal, marking a key moment in the UK's ongoing debate over free expression and censorship. These trials collectively reflect the gradual liberalisation of British society in terms of sexual content and free expression, as well as the shifting role of obscenity laws in public life.

The 1980s marked a significant shift with the advent of home video technology, which allowed consumers to access pornographic content in the privacy of their homes. This era saw the rise of 'video nasties' (Petley, 2012, 37) —a term used for horror and pornographic films distributed on videotape that were deemed too extreme for public consumption.⁶⁰ In response to growing concerns about the availability of explicit content, the UK government passed the Video Recordings Act of 1984. This law required all commercial video recordings, including pornography, to be classified by the British Board of Film Classification (BBFC). Unclassified or banned videos were illegal to distribute, leading to a crackdown on many pornographic titles. Despite legal restrictions, pornographic videos thrived, both in the underground market and in more mainstream, regulated forms. The 1990s and 2000s brought the Internet, revolutionising the accessibility of pornography. Online platforms allowed for the distribution of pornographic content on a global scale, bypassing many of the traditional gatekeepers like publishers and video distributors. Websites offering free or paid access to explicit content proliferated, with millions of users accessing pornographic material at unprecedented levels. Porn has long been a divisive subject. While the United States and Europe made hardcore material legal in the 1970s, the United Kingdom held back until 2000. Extreme pornography is defined as that which has been produced:

⁵⁹ "Rupert bare: how the Oz obscenity trial inspired a generation of protest art" at *The Guardian*: <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2021/aug/04/how-the-oz-obscenity-trial-inspired-protest-art> (Last consultation on September 4, 2024).

⁶⁰ Complete list of the seventy-two banned titles in the UK from 1980 at: <https://www.imdb.com/list/ls051364249/> (Last consultation on September 4, 2024).

Solely or principally for the purpose of generating sexual arousal and is seriously offensive, disgusting, or obscene and depicts in an explicit and realistic manner any of the following acts: a. an act that endangers the life of a person, b. an act the result of which is to cause, or nearly cause, serious injury to a person's anus, breasts, or genitals, c. an act involving sexual interference with a human corpse, d. a person having sex with animals.(*)⁶¹

A campaign to restrict the availability of 'violent' pornography on the Internet was launched in 2004 following the assassination of Jane Longhurst by Graham Coutts, a man who had predominantly viewed strangulation fetish porn websites, as was noted and emphasised by the media.⁶² A campaign by the United Kingdom Government and Liz Longhurst —mother of the victim— collected a petition of over 50,000 signatures calling for a ban on extreme Internet sites promoting violence against women in the name of sexual satisfaction. On August 30th, 2006, the United Kingdom government announced that it intended to legislate to criminalise the possession of extreme pornography.⁶³ Some academics have criticised this type of measure, in Nair's words, "the prohibition of private consumption of extreme pornography could threaten the right to respect for private life, as well as the right to freedom of expression, which includes the right to receive information" (2019, 143).

In 2013, the British government negotiated with mobile phone companies and Internet service providers to implement a new voluntary filtering system (Valero 2022 175-176). In 2014, an amendment was made to the law regulating pornography in the United Kingdom that sought to prohibit citizens from accessing websites that contained 'unconventional sexual practices', like for example: spanking, caning, aggressive whipping, penetration by any object 'associated with violence', physical or verbal abuse (consensual or otherwise), role-playing as non-adults, physical restraint, humiliation, strangulation, acts that involve urination (urolognia or 'water sports') or menstruation, female ejaculation or squirting (the male ejaculation was allowed), face-sitting (placing

⁶¹ Criminal Justice and Immigration Act, Sec. 63. (Valero 2022, 94).

⁶² See: <https://www.theargus.co.uk/news/17529852.jane-longhurst-murder-graham-coutts-gets-prison-switch/> (Last consultation on April 27, 2021).

⁶³ On the intention to criminalise the possession of extreme pornography in the United Kingdom at *The Guardian*: <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2006/aug/30/immigrationpolicy.ukcrime> (Last consultation on April 27, 2021).

the pubis on the face of a partner) and inserting more than four fingers in the vagina or anus (fisting). Porn film producers and activists protested against measures that were discriminating, censored lawful practices, and interfered in the sexual lives of adults. For many activists, this law was specifically targeting acts associated with feminist and fetish porn. As Itziar Bilbao (2014) points out, “they have been cataloguing sexual practices and those that cannot be shown are above all gay, queer and female domination sexuality”.(*)⁶⁴

In 2014, porn director Pandora/Blake, organised a protest outside Parliament against the Digital Economy Bill that was intended to prohibit various ‘unconventional’ sexual practices. Dozens of women participated in the protest practicing face-sitting (with clothes) to stress the ridiculousness of UK sex laws. As Clara Serra evidences, “only a paternalistic State that treats its citizens as children can undertake the task of protecting us from fictions, whatever they may be”(*).⁶⁵ Blake criticised the promotion or defence of patriarchal sexuality through the censoring of a disproportionate number of feminist women filmmakers, pointing out that these laws are still an attempt to control women’s sexuality and limit people to only ‘approved’ heteronormative sex, as a representation of the ‘correct’ sex.⁶⁶

The rise of online pornography brought new challenges, including concerns over age verification, consent, and the potential for exploitation. The UK government responded with laws like the Digital Economy Act (DEA)⁶⁷, which introduced age verification requirements for accessing online pornography, though its implementation

⁶⁴ Full interview: https://elpais.com/cultura/2014/12/11/actualidad/1418332661_285514.html (Last consultation on April 27, 2021).

⁶⁵ For Serra’s opinion of pornography and sex education see: <https://elpais.com/babelia/2022-07-16/educacion-sexual-para-saber-que-el-porno-es-ficcion.html> (Last consultation on July 17, 2022).

⁶⁶ About the protests on *the Guardian* website: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/nov/23/niche-porn-sites-sex-spanking-website-videos-pornography> (Last consultation on August 18, 2023).

⁶⁷ The Digital Economy Act 2017 would force X-rated websites to require proof of age from viewers attempting to view sexually explicit content. Rather than simply being asked to tick a box confirming that they are over age of 18, users should have to provide proof that they are adults. Methods could have included using a bank card, driver’s licence, or passport to confirm their age. Other ideas included buying a ‘porn pass’ card from a shop, which would have a code that users would have had to enter on a website. On regard the progress of the Act at: <https://lordslibrary.parliament.uk/digital-economy-act-2017-commencement-of-part-3-bill-hl/> (Last consultation on September 5, 2024).

has faced delays and challenges. The British Board of Film Classification (BBFC) was tasked with enforcing this legislation. A major concern, however, was the risk to privacy, as the system required individuals to submit personal data and identification information directly to commercial pornography providers. Other objections made to the Digital Economy Act (DEA) were that it was only intended to apply to commercial pornography, which implied excluding social networking platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter or Snapchat, and some video sharing platforms such as YouTube, that are also intermediaries of pornographic content. Furthermore, the law only applied to Internet users whose IP addresses report accessing the network in the United Kingdom, so it was very easy for provider companies to evade its application. After a series of setbacks, the planned scheme was eventually abandoned in 2019.

In the 21st century, streaming services and on-demand access have become the norm. Platforms like Pornhub, OnlyFans, and other sites have democratised the production and distribution of pornographic content, allowing creators to reach global audiences directly. The UK continues to grapple with regulating online pornography, balancing concerns about protecting minors and vulnerable individuals with issues of censorship and freedom of expression. Recent discussions have focused on the role of social media in distributing explicit content. The omnipresence of online porn has led to ongoing debates about its effects on society. Critics argue that it can perpetuate harmful stereotypes and unrealistic sexual expectations, while supporters claim it provides a valuable outlet for sexual expression and education. The feminist and ethical porn movements continue to push for content that is inclusive, consensual, and representative of diverse sexual experiences.

The development of a legitimate UK pornography industry has been significantly curtailed by legislation (Smith 2005a, 156). The laws play a crucial role in shaping the legal landscape surrounding pornography in the UK. Their importance lies in defining the boundaries of what is considered legal or illegal in the production, distribution, and consumption of pornographic content. While they aim to protect the public and uphold societal norms, they also pose challenges for feminist and post-porn creators. These seek to create content that emphasises consent, diversity, and realistic portrayals of sexuality, often as a direct challenge to the perceived male-dominated and exploitative nature of mainstream porn. As Smith (2018b, 1.351) evidences:

Despite the proliferation of research which have emphasised the ways sexual representations and entertainment might challenge puritanical constructions of appropriate sexuality, the public narratives of pornography and other forms of mediated/monetised sex remain simplistically tied to notions of harm [...] and effects. Policy research remains narrowly focused on presenting evidence that confirms the need for legislation and increasingly, and quite worryingly, some avowedly feminist academics, advocates and policy makers appear ever more wedded to the idea of turning to law as the main means of addressing sexual inequalities through curtailing access to images.

The Internet has also contributed to a cultural shift in how pornography is perceived and consumed. Whereas earlier forms of porn were often stigmatised and consumed in private or secret, online pornography has become more normalised and integrated into popular culture. However, this shift has also sparked debates about the impact of widespread porn consumption on relationships, sexual expectations, and mental health. This tension can result in legal risks, self-censorship, and barriers to distribution, ultimately affecting the visibility and impact of feminist and post-pornographic movements.

2.1.1 Indie and alternative creations: new frontiers in sexual representation

The feminist porn movement, which first gained momentum in the 1980s in the United States, emerged as a direct challenge to the mainstream pornography industry by advocating for content that centred on female pleasure and addressed women's desires and concerns. Similar movements began to take root in the United Kingdom, where artists and activist groups sought to create an alternative form of pornography that rejected traditional beauty standards, gender stereotypes, and normative sexual practices. These movements aimed to provide a more inclusive and diverse representation of bodies, sexualities, and identities, offering an alternative to the male-dominated porn industry. Also, some of these pro-pornography collectives and movements arose in direct response to the restrictive legislative measures imposed by the government over the past fifty years, which sought to regulate and control the production of adult films. These groups not only resisted government censorship but also worked to carve out spaces for the ethical and artistic production of pornography that could empower both creators and viewers. The feminist porn movement in the UK became intertwined with broader issues of censorship,

sexual freedom, and the right to create content that reflects diverse sexual experiences, challenging both legal restrictions and cultural norms.

As discussed in Section 2.1 of this chapter, the UK has a long history of imposing strict regulations on pornography, beginning with the Obscene Publications Act and followed by subsequent laws that closely monitor the distribution and production of adult content. These legal frameworks have fostered a heavily censored environment, limiting the growth of more experimental or politically charged forms of pornography. The strict legal constraints have stifled the development of works that challenge conventional social norms and explore radical ideas about sexuality and identity, which are key components of post-pornography.⁶⁸ While the UK has seen the rise of alternative porn movements, these have largely remained niche and small-scale, focusing more on ethical and feminist porn rather than pushing the boundaries of explicit content for political critique. The post-porn ethos, which often combines art, activism, and sexual expression to question societal norms, has not gained significant traction in the UK, in part due to the restrictive legal environment that discourages such transgressive content from flourishing, and because the alternative pornographic movement in the UK did not aim to dismantle the sexual order but rather to offer a different option from traditional pornography by focusing on representing a variety of perspectives, such as female pleasure and sexual diversity. Creators in the UK concentrated on reforming the industry from within. Their main goal was to challenge stereotypes and conventions in traditional pornography by creating content that was more inclusive, ethical, and artistic, but without the intention of completely transforming the underlying sexual and social structures.

Two notable figures in the feminist and alternative porn scenes are Pandora/Blake and Petra Joy, each making significant contributions to the field. Pandora/Blake is a multi-award-winning producer and director for her work *Dreams of Spanking*.⁶⁹ They have been involved in the production of spanking films as a performer since 2006 and as a director

⁶⁸ Examined in subsections 2.2.2.1 and 2.2.2.2 of this chapter, in relation to the post-porn movement in Spain.

⁶⁹ *Dreams of Spanking* is a production studio which offers high-quality spanking films, photo galleries and audio stories. Their spanking films have been screened in over twelve countries and have won two 'Feminist Porn Awards' and 'Best Short Film' at the 'Porn Film Festival Berlin'.

since 2009.⁷⁰ Pandora/Blake is a prominent figure in feminist, kink, and BDSM⁷¹ pornography in the United Kingdom, their work not only challenges restrictive porn laws such as ‘Age Verification’ (DEA) but also includes conducting workshops on ethical and DIY (Do it Yourself) porn creation.

Petra Joy, another influential sex-positive feminist activist, has worked to reshape the portrayal of sex in pornography. Alongside figures like Candida Royalle, Annie Sprinkle, and Maria Beatty⁷², Joy is a pioneer in the ‘artcore’ porn movement. This genre emphasises portraying individuals as complex human beings with unique desires and boundaries. With nearly two decades in the industry, Joy has inspired a new generation of content creators who approach sex representation from a fresh perspective. She is renowned as one of the world’s leading erotic film directors and, as she evidences on her webpage “my erotic film production has always been a labour of love rather than a business. Porn is indeed political, and I immensely enjoyed subverting existing gender specific sex stereotypes and breaking the many existing ‘golden rules’ of mainstream porn”.⁷³ In 2004, Petra Joy founded her own erotic film label and has since produced seven erotic full-length features. She is the author of *How to Make Your Own Adult Video* (2006) and her autobiographical book *Female Fantasies* (2012). In 2009, ‘The Petra Joy Awards’ were created to support and recognise emerging female pornographic filmmakers. Additionally, in 2016, she launched Cinema Joy, an online platform dedicated to showcasing her films and those of other feminist directors.

In recent years, several self-managed pornography companies have emerged in the United Kingdom, each bringing a more artistic and theatrical approach to their work, as is the case of Four Chambers that emerged in 2013. This project, led by porn performer Vex Ashley, represents a collaborative effort with various directors and performers to

⁷⁰ “They are non-binary and use the pronouns they/them”. See: <https://www.openrightsgroup.org/advisory-council/pandora-blake/> (Last consultation on September 6, 2024).

⁷¹ Abbreviation for bondage, discipline (or domination), sadism (or submission), masochism: sexual activity that involves, for example, tying a partner up, games in which one partner controls another, or giving and receiving pain for pleasure. <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/bdsm> (Last consultation on May 31, 2024).

⁷² Venezuelan filmmaker whose movies cover various aspects of female sexuality, including BDSM and fetishism.

⁷³ On Joy’s ethical labour standards: <http://petrajoy.com/> (Last consultation on May 5, 2021).

explore the aesthetic and abstract potential of pornography as a medium. The initiative empathises DIY practices and delves into themes such as technology, mythology, symbolism, and alchemy, examining their connection to sexuality. Four Chambers is at the forefront of a movement away from mainstream porn practices, rejecting traditional labels for both films and performers. By creating content that straddles the line between art and pornography, the project challenges conventional norms and seeks to redefine the boundaries of erotic expression.⁷⁴

Another noteworthy example is Thousand Faces, led by director and porn performer Marcus Quillan. Drawing inspiration from indie, alternative, and experimental porn movements, as well as amateur theatre, Thousand Faces explores performance through the lens of sexuality. The project seeks to move beyond the male gaze⁷⁵ frequently associated with mainstream pornography and challenges restrictive binary discourses (such as male/female, hetero/homo, cis/trans). By rejecting these limiting categories, Thousand Faces aims to embrace a more nuanced and inclusive exploration of sexual identity and expression, recognising the diverse and multifaceted nature of human sexuality. On their website, they articulate their vision through the following manifesto:

We are committed to ethical production and business practices, which for us includes the serious responsibility of representing performers and characters in an ethical way, free of stereotype, stigma, and prioritising consent in all scenarios and acts. The politics of representation are complex, and we believe centring consent in our production practises is the key to navigating them. We believe that prioritising diversity and inclusion of as many different voices, sexualities, identities, and backgrounds as we can, will help us tell our stories as thoughtfully and respectfully as possible.⁷⁶

Other notable contributors in the field are Sluts 4 Sluts Collective and the porn company altSHIFT. Founded in 2006, Sluts 4 Sluts Collective is a London-based queer porn platform created by genderqueer sex workers, performers, and filmmakers DocoTitts/Andio Macario, Rooster, and Dion de Rossi. This collective focuses on

⁷⁴ For detailed information on Four Chambers see, Chapter 4, Section 4.2.

⁷⁵ See my reflections on the concept of male gaze in Chapter 1, Section 1.4.

⁷⁶ About Thousand Faces' ethical work standards at: <https://thousandfacesfilms.com/about/> (Last consultation on May 5, 2021) and Chapter 4, Section 4.3.

producing queer pornography and offers a platform for independent queer creators, striving to represent sex workers, people of colour, trans and non-binary individuals, as well as disabled and neurodiverse bodies. altSHIFT, an anonymous association of two filmmakers with over fifteen years' experience in film and television, began producing their own movies in 2018. They leverage their extensive industry knowledge to create alternative porn that challenges conventional practice. As stated on their website, "we care about LGBTQ+ stories, kink and BDSM, #MeToo, feminism, ethical non-monogamy, subverting traditional roles, gender, fluidity, and the orgasm gap to name a few. We want our porn to turn you on, but also to address the policing of our gender and sexuality".⁷⁷ Their films have featured in numerous porn film festivals from 2019 to 2024.⁷⁸

The evolution of pornography in the UK, shaped by the influence of 'porn for women' and feminist pornography movements from the USA, has focused on producing content that emphasises the representation of female pleasure, challenges traditional gender roles, and celebrates sexual diversity. Moreover, it seeks to incorporate artistic expression, making it a form of both sexual and creative liberation. Unlike mainstream porn, which is often critiqued for reinforcing stereotypes and prioritising male-centric narratives, feminist and alternative porn in the UK strives to provide a more inclusive, ethical vision of sexual representation. These movements aim not only to carve out a space within the broader industry but also to distinctly separate themselves from the conventions of mainstream pornography by offering content that is consensual, diverse, and reflective of a broader spectrum of sexual experiences. However, these efforts have often remained on the fringes, facing challenges due to restrictive legal frameworks and the dominance of mainstream porn.

⁷⁷ Further information on altSHIFT's ethical manifesto at: <http://www.altshiftxxx.com/home/4594651394> (Last consultation on May 5, 2021).

⁷⁸ They have more than forty official selections, some of them are: Winner of the People's Choice Award 'Nuit Raunch', Winnipeg, Canada (2019), Honourable Mention 'Seattle Erotic Cinema Society Festival' (2020), Winner Best Film Math Magazine People's Pleasure Awards (2021) and Official Selection 'Post-Porn Film Festival Warsaw' (2022). About their movies and awards at: <https://pinklabel.tv/on-demand/studio/altshift/> (Last consultation on January 19, 2024).

2.2 A historical frame: the evolution of pornography in Spain

According to the researcher Román Gubern (2005), the first references to pornographic cinema in Spain are a series of films from 1915 to 1925, shot in Barcelona (in the so called ‘Chinese’ neighbourhood or red-light district) and commissioned by the Count of Romanones, acting on behalf of King Alfonso XIII, who reigned from 1886 to 1931 and was an admirer of eroticism. The king had a private screening room in the Royal Palace, where he would screen ‘sycalyptic’ (today known as pornographic) films purchased abroad for himself and his inner circle. Some of these first pornographic Spanish films were shown in select cinemas and in the homes of the high bourgeoisie and, in the brothels frequented by members of this social class.

These creations were the starting point for pornographic cinema in Spain. Even so, they remained hidden for more than seven decades, until they were discovered in a Valencian convent during the 1990s. Once recovered, the Valencian Government ordered The Valencia Film Archives (La Filmoteca de València) to restore and preserve them. The Valencian Government restored three silent porn films: *El confesor*, *Consultorio de señoras* and *El ministro*, commissioned by the Count of Romanones and directed by the brothers Ricardo and Ramón de Baños, owners of the Barcelona production company Royal Films. According to his biographers, King Alfonso XIII himself guided the scripts, proposed the plots and even conducted the castings for the pornographic films directed by the Baños brothers.⁷⁹ Specialists such as Joan Francesc de Lasa (2004) and Román Gubern (2005), have observed that dozens of films may have been shot, though only the three mentioned above have been preserved, since in 1941, the monarch’s entire collection was ordered to be destroyed after his death.

The story in these three films addresses the issue of men, generally in high positions, using their power to abuse women. *El confesor* (1920) is seven minutes long telling the story of a priest who takes advantage of his power over his parishioners to sexually abuse them—the pornographic attraction of the film built through the perversion of the vow of celibacy and the sacrament of penance. *Consultorio de señoras* (1920) lasts one hour, and links different sexual scenes in a gynaecologist’s office, starring the gynaecologist, his wife, the butler and the maid. These characters are joined by a mother

⁷⁹ On regard the involvement of King Alfonso XIII in pornographic cinema at: <https://tv.apple.com/es/episode/los-borbones-y-las-mujeres/umc.cmc.2tqv7vfdpksohlapsjvxe3ntl> (Last consultation on April 11, 2024).

and her daughter who go there for gynaecological ‘treatment’. Finally, *El ministro* (1930) lasts seventeen minutes and tells the story of the husband of a high society woman, who is about to lose his job as a civil servant, and how his wife goes to the minister to offer her sexual favours to avoid her husband’s dismissal.⁸⁰ These summaries of the films’ contents suggest that these movies reflect situations of abuse of power, representing the characters (all from high society) interpreted and played by non-professional actresses and actors (from the streets of Barcelona: prostitutes and their pimps). There is a certain irony in this situation, since those who have explicit sex in these films are women and men from the lowest backgrounds, playing the part of members of the bourgeoisie and aristocrats.

In the late 1930s, with the arrival of Francisco Franco’s authoritarian regime, censorship was introduced and pornographic production decreased. In 1937, the Film Censorship Board was created with agencies in Seville and La Coruña —while the Civil War was still raging (1936-1939). On April 1st, 1939, the end of the war was declared, and the Francoist dictatorship began in Spain. During its first two decades, as Ramos demonstrates, censorship was mostly related to Church-State cooperation, especially on matters of morality. As a result, representations of pleasure and the body (and the female body in particular) were totally suppressed during those years (2017, 23). The Spanish cinema of the 1940s experienced unusual growth. In Madrid, seven film studios came into operation simultaneously —C.E.A., Roptence, Cinearte S.A., Sevilla Films, Ballesteros, Aranjuez and Boué— while in Barcelona another five appeared —Orphea Films, Trialla Orphea, Lepanto, Kinefón and Diagonal (Membra 2008, 281). In the 1980s, almost nine years after Franco’s death, Spanish cinema completed a long process of normalisation that had begun in the mid-1970s with the first appearance of nudity on screen (‘el destape’) during the period of transition from dictatorship to democracy. Some scholars consider the phase represented a form of women’s liberation (Ramos 2017, 16). Censorship had repressed any representation of a sexual nature and showed women on screen only through ideals of purity and submission. From 1978 to 1983, an exclusively Spanish classification, the ‘S’ rating, was increasingly used to classify films with high erotic content such as bloody violence that could hurt the ‘sensitivity’ of the viewer

⁸⁰ Further information on the reign of Alfonso XII and his interests in pornographic movies at: <https://www.nuevatribuna.es/articulo/sociedad/alfonso-xiii-negocio-porno-y-sexo/20150119191815111421.html> (Last consultation on July 7, 2023).

(Ardanaz 2018, 52). This marked a departure from the ‘X’ rated classification that was used throughout the world for films with explicit sex, and ‘S’ rated movies contributed to the normalisation of sex in post-Franco Spain.⁸¹ In 1984, Pilar Miró, general director of Cinematography, introduced the Miró Law, published in the BOE (Official Spanish Gazette) on January 12, 1984, to regulate production, distribution and exhibition in the Spanish film industry. The aim was to facilitate the production of ‘quality’ films with larger budgets and government subsidies, screened by new filmmakers so that an ‘authentic’ film industry could be created in Spain, giving the country greater visibility abroad.⁸² In relation to pornography, as Ramos (2017, 16) evidences, this law allowed (and restricted) the exhibition of pornography to porn cinemas, known as ‘Cines X’ (X cinemas). The Miró Law ended censorship, the ICAA (Institute of Cinematography and Audiovisual Arts) was created, and agreements were formalised with Spain’s state-owned television company TVE (Televisión Española).

Film censorship then is a part of the history of Spanish cinema and important for understanding how Spanish pornographic cinema began to create movies and distribute them. In 1983 pornographic films were finally regularised in Spain and became ‘X’ rated as they were in the rest of the world. As Gisbert (2020) points out in his blog *Historias del porno*, the first Spanish pornographic film classified with the letter ‘X’ was *Lilian, la virgen pervertida* (1984), directed by Jesús Franco Manera —also known as Jess Franco. The film was initially shot as an ‘S’ movie, but with the legalisation of pornographic cinema (‘X’) in Spain, the director was able to introduce a series of pornographic inserts to make the film ‘X’ rated.⁸³ Jesús Franco, together with his favourite actress Lina Romay (his wife), created more than a hundred films. These productions were low-budget, unscripted and improvised. They mixed thriller and horror with eroticism and sex and

⁸¹ Between 1978 and 1983, more than four hundred films were ‘S’ rated, and more than half of them could be seen in the two cinemas in Manacor (Balearic Islands) at the Cinema Goya and Sala Imperial. In that regard, see the work of Antoni Ferrer Vallespir. 2020. *Un muy pedagógico, ilustrativo y esclarecedor viaje a las entrañas del más desacomplejado y representativo cine clasificado S, o casi, que se pudo ver en los cines de Manacor entre 1977 y 1988*.

⁸² Additional information on the Miró Law at the following link: <https://www.elmundo.es/loc/famosos/2022/01/29/61f4095321efa00b4b8b45a0.html> (Last consultation on April 12, 2024).

⁸³ On the origins of porn in Spain see: <https://historiasdelporno.wordpress.com/2020/09/30/22-el-cine-x-llega-a-espana/> (Last consultation on January 31th, 2022).

included women's prisons, vampires, and mysterious countesses, among other characters and ideas. Lina Romay is the only woman to be credited as a film director of pornographic cinema during this period, with a total of thirteen movies, including feature films and short films (Greaves and Collins, 1996). Spain's contribution to pornographic or 'X' rated cinema includes works by directors such as Ismael González, Antonio Molino Rojo, Mariano Ozores, Manuel Mateos, Daniel Figueroa, Eloy de la Iglesia and José Ramón Larraz (Gisbert 2020). The first phase of Spanish pornographic cinema came to an end in 1987 —according to authors such as Gubern (1989), Gisbert and Valencia (2005) and Costa Villa (2006)— after the avalanche of American films and the feeble adaptation of the Spanish industry to the increasingly consolidated video market.

From 1993 onwards, Spanish porn began to make its mark, thanks to the work of key people such as José María Ponce and María Bianco with the film *Los vicios de María* (1993). In the same year, the FICEB (Festival Internacional de Cine Erótico de Barcelona) was held in the city later considered to be the capital of Spanish porn, Barcelona. In 2005, Madrid followed the Catalan capital by creating its own festival (XVI Festival Internacional de Cine Erótico de Barcelona en Madrid).⁸⁴ The number of directors and porn performers increased in the first decade of the 21st century, and some have gained relevance in the general media, like the actor Nacho Vidal and the directors Pablo and Ramiro Lapiedra. As porn found its place online, the Spanish market began to grow with mainstream porn companies like Cumlouder and FAKings. Cumlouder belongs to the company Techpump, which states on its website that they “are a leading company in the adult sector in Spain/Europe, with two hundred and seventy-five million users per month and more than nine million visitors per day, ranked in the top five most visited websites with adult content worldwide”.⁸⁵

Over the past decade, the Spanish indie porn scene has seen significant growth, featuring companies that emphasise ethical and feminist approaches. Notable examples include: Altporn4U, Tinelli Films and Intensidades Films. Atporn4U, founded by Irina

⁸⁴ See subsection 2.2.1 Barcelona, cradle of porn.

⁸⁵ Cumlouder specialises in heterosexual porn (but also includes lesbian films) and FAKings specialises in amateur heterosexual porn and webcam sessions. The website is known for its 'hidden cameras' and 'couples' themes. In these it is usually pretended that the people who appear in the videos do not know that they are being recorded. Their more popular websites are: Porn300, Cumlouder and Serviporno. More information about the company at the following link <https://www.techpump.com/> (Last consultation on December 7, 2021).

Vega, actress and porn director. This platform distinguishes itself by showcasing films that portray a range of sexual practices and diverse body types. Tinelli Films, led by Lara Tinelli, produces movies that highlight female sexuality (both heterosexual and lesbian) such as their Feminist Porn Award nominated *Bad Sometimes* (2014). Intensidades Films a Barcelona-based company established by María Lorente (Mar Nantas), Juno Álvarez, and Yaiza de Lamo, that according to Mantas is:

Like an audiovisual laboratory. We use it more to experiment and rethink erotic and pornographic images and, of course, to have a good time [...] Intensidades Films offers small pornographic and erotic productions intended to be designed for us, to make porn by us and for us [...] In our productions we not only discuss desire but also what has been standardised as erotic audiovisual language. Intensidades Films offers an alternative view of sexuality, as one among many.(*)⁸⁶

Additionally, Lust Productions has made significant strides in the mainstream porn market, gaining increased recognition and reach, a topic explored further in Chapter 5.

2.2.1 Barcelona, cradle of porn

How did Barcelona become the European capital of porn? The Sagrada Familia cathedral, the Raval district, the Ramblas avenue, the Plaza Cataluña square, the beaches of Barceloneta and Bogatell and the mountain of Montjuic, as well as areas just outside Barcelona such as Cornellà, Sant Cugat and Garraf have become the ideal settings for filming porn movies.⁸⁷ Barcelona has not always been a destination for making porn movies. The global centre for porn production in San Fernando Valley (Los Angeles) and Miami, but as these cities became excessively expensive, the industry moved to Europe, mainly recording in Prague and Budapest and eventually, in Barcelona. US production companies choose Barcelona as a destination to shoot their films for numerous reasons: the weather, the number of companies based in the city, the performers who live in the

⁸⁶ Intensidades Films at: <https://pinklabel.tv/on-demand/studio/intensidades-films/> (Last consultation on April 6, 2023).

⁸⁷ Kink, one of the largest producers and distributors of extreme porn, has recorded part of the scenes in their Public Disgrace collection on the streets of Barcelona. The Techpump startup, Cumlouder, one of the most important porn sites in Spain and Europe also began in Barcelona.

area, the views and architecture, the new airplane routes and the broadmindedness of the city's residents. The city's mayor, Ada Colau (2015 to 2023), with her support for the rights of sex workers, also contributed to Barcelona's becoming the world's new erotic centre.

A key symbol of porn in Barcelona is undoubtedly Sala Bagdad —the first place in Spain to hold live sex shows and which continues to offer a wide range of services such as bachelor parties, live shows, dinners with erotic shows, private strippers, camming, and so on. Sala Bagdad has also launched the careers of numerous artists of eroticism, porn performers, who have achieved international relevance, such as the performers Nacho Vidal,⁸⁸ Marco Banderas,⁸⁹ Sophie Evans,⁹⁰ Christina Bella,⁹¹ Elizabeth Maciel,⁹² Holly One,⁹³ Baby Pin- Up,⁹⁴ Rocco Siffredi,⁹⁵ Belladonna,⁹⁶ and Ilona Staller —better known as Cicciolina⁹⁷.

The Museu de l'Eròtica de Barcelona (Barcelona Museum of Erotica – referred to hereinafter by its Spanish acronym, MEB) is another important sexual space in Barcelona created with intentions to become a reference point in histories of eroticism and sex, its display of more than eight hundred items blends historical and cultural explorations with

⁸⁸ Nacho Vidal is a retired actor, director and producer of pornographic films and a Spanish businessman. In his career he has starred in more than six hundred films in addition to directing another one hundred forty between 1997 to 2019.

⁸⁹ Marco Banderas is an actor, director and producer of pornographic films and, also, a singer.

⁹⁰ Sophie Evans is a retired Hungarian porn actress who lives in Barcelona. She has appeared in a total of three hundred and eleven films between original films and compilations.

⁹¹ Christina Bella is a Hungarian porn actress and erotic model. She was a two-time winner of the 'Oscars for Porn' in Hungary in 2004 and 2011.

⁹² Ms. Maciel has worked with adult film studios and has starred in movies associated with at least seventeen porn categories. The range of categories includes double penetration, hardcore sex and anal gonzo.

⁹³ Holly One was a porn actor of Italian origin, characterised by his short stature. He is thought to be the shortest porn actor in the world.

⁹⁴ Baby Pin- Up, is a Spanish 'vaginal acrobat' and model.

⁹⁵ Rocco Siffredi is an Italian actor, director and producer of pornographic films. In the porn industry he is known as 'The Italian Stallion'.

⁹⁶ Belladonna is an ex-performer and producer of American pornographic films. In January 2011, she was inducted into the 'AVN Awards hall of fame'.

⁹⁷ Ilona Staller is a Hungarian-Italian former porn star and singer. She is famous for being the first adult film actress in the world to be elected deputy of the Italian Chamber of Deputies by the Radical Party.

entertainment and fun. Visitors can explore human sexuality's inspiration, explicitly and implicitly in paintings, photos, sculptures and the most surprising inventions. In addition to those spaces, the 'Salò Eròtic de Barcelona' ('SEB'), dedicated to the sex and porn industry, has been held annually since 1993 and was originally known as the 'Festival Internacional de Cine Eròtic de Barcelona' ('FICEB'). The festival aims to invigorate and normalise the sex industry in Spain and has become one of the most important sex and porn festivals in Europe.

Within the queer community, the post-porn movement in Barcelona has its origin in 2003, when Beatriz Preciado (Paul B. Preciado) invited a group of people to participate in the 'Maratón Posporno'⁹⁸ organised at Barcelona's Museum of Modern Art — MACBA (Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona). The group held an orgy that was videotaped and screened in the conference room in front of an audience of three hundred people attending the 'Porno-amigamia'⁹⁹ conference (Castrejón 2011, 66-67). The event provided opportunities for critical consideration of pornographic representation and is considered a milestone/catalyst of post-pornography in Spain. From this moment on, spaces for meeting and discussion multiplied where post-porn artistic practices could take place, at institutional, activist and self-managed levels. The interesting thing about these meetings is that they allowed national and international theorists, activists and artists to converge, leading to the formation of new groups and increasing the visibility of their work. Likewise, numerous events, talks, workshops and performances were organised in self-managed social centres. These self-managed events include the 'Muestra Marrana' ('Filthy Show',*), a post-porn festival coordinated by Diana J. Torres and Lucía Egaña Rojas which took place in 2008 in Barcelona, and whose main objective was to visibilise audiovisual productions of dissident sexualities and generate a space for debate on pornography, post-porn and the representation of sexuality.

These meeting spaces were facilitated by the appearance of a series of activists and collectives such as Medeak (2000), O.R.G.I.A (2001), Girlswholikeporno (2002), Post-Op (2003), Go Fist Foundation (2005), ExDones (2007), Diana J. Torres (2007) and Quimera Rosa (2008), among others, whose work began to shape what is known in Spain as the post-porn movement. They generated alliances with other people with shared interests: collaborative practices, friendship, sex and mutual support. A network of

⁹⁸ 'Post-porn Marathon' (*).

⁹⁹ 'Porn-friendship' (*).

physical alliances was created mainly in the city of Barcelona and expanded through various meetings to other cities, and also, later on, through blogs, forums, websites and social media (Rodrigo 2017, 82).

Helen Torres explained to María Castrejón why all these alliances were created in Barcelona, and the ins and outs of the post-porn movement:

Why Barcelona? Although we usually deny it, this city has allowed us to meet and act with enviable freedom at times, while oppressing us with terrible pressure in many situations [...] We improvise orgies in cloisters in the heart of the Raval one Saturday night, in a church in front of a Civil Guard station in one of the streets considered to be the most dangerous in the city, but they imprisoned two of our companions after an arbitrary arrest and a trial full of irregularities; we wander naked through seedy dens, maintaining a space of trust, but we have almost no meeting spaces... Almost all of us are migrants: from Madrid, Irún, Iruña, Chile, Turkey, Galicia, France, Israel, Argentina, cyberspace... We inhabit the margins and borders... We specify the warning that the map is not the territory: even though we reside in Barcelona, our territory extends beyond the geographical map of the city (*, 2011, 68).

Urban spaces are not simple architectural settings prior to social life, but rather political and ideological places where people coexist. Maria Llopis also talked about why so many collectives appeared in Barcelona working on the subject of post-porn:

Perhaps it has to do with the fact that Barcelona has a strong radical political movement. People come here from all over the world to carry out political anti-system struggles, based on squatting. Anti-capitalism, new feminisms, the fight against transphobia, queer political movements, immigration policies and DIY culture. Post-porn is the radical political struggle for an alternative sexuality (*, 2009, 141).

Barcelona has undergone many changes and transformations in recent years, some of which have been criticised by post-porn collectives who no longer feel that the city's streets are as welcoming of their improvised theatre for artistic and activist action as they once were. Nevertheless, these streets have been increasingly used, free of sanctions, by the larger pornography companies creating more conventional productions.

2.2.2.1 From Do It Yourself (DIY) to Do It With Others (DIWO)

The term ‘post-porn’ began to be used in Spain in 2003 by the philosopher and writer Paul B. Preciado in the ‘Maratón Posporno’ event, held at the MACBA.¹⁰⁰ As Itziar Ziga (feminist activist and journalist) explained in the blog *Periferias* in her article *Porno, posporno y feminismo. El lujurioso camino para desactivar el miedo al otro* (2018) there was an initiation night for her in 2003 when Joan Pujol (artist) and Helen Torres (sociologist, translator and educator) proposed to record their political, sexual and ‘degenerate’ group experiences with an orgy. Later on, the video was shown at MACBA and Itziar Ziga saw herself having sex on a big screen in front of the public. She writes that she “felt very comfortable with that, it did not matter whether she looked pretty, slim or choreographic in the video. At that moment, [Itziar Ziga] knew she had crossed a border that she had not even dared to dream of and that was a very promising beginning where she finally found her coven”.(*)¹⁰¹ During the event, participants discussed porn, new post-porn trends and the diverse aesthetics and politics of contemporary sexual representation through a series of conferences, discussions, lectures, performances, workshops and projections of porn and post-porn movies.¹⁰² As Marchante points out, “the seminar became one of the founding landmarks of the post-porn movement in the Spanish context and was the trigger for the emergence of many of the most representative groups in this genealogy”(*, 2015, 137). Before the ‘Maratón Posporno’ was held, other groups had been working on issues related to gender, sex, porn and feminism but this served as a convergence space to generate new alliances between existing groups and new groups that wanted to continue investigating DIY (Do It Yourself) and DIWO (Do It With Others) porn.

¹⁰⁰ The places that have contributed the most to generating a critical discourse regarding pornography and the representation of dissident sexualities and identities are MACBA in Barcelona, Centro de Arte Contemporáneo Arteleku in Donostia/Saint Sebastian and Universidad Internacional in Andalusia. And also Hangar (Barcelona), Labor. Centro de Arte y Creación Industrial (Gijón), Centro Cultural Montehermoso (Gasteiz/Vitoria), Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía (Madrid) and Museo de Arte Contemporáneo of Castile and Leon (Suárez 2017, 69).

¹⁰¹ See Ziga’s opinion on pornography and post-porn at: <https://www.periferias.org/porno-posporno-y-feminismo> (Last consultation on February 10, 2021).

¹⁰² MACBA website: <http://www.macba.cat/es/maraton-posporno> (Last consultation on February 10, 2021).

In 2000, Medeak emerged, a radical group of multiple ‘labels’ such as: dykes, feminists, transvestites, transsexuals, transgender, sex workers, blacks and queers. They did not vindicate themselves as artists, as they describe on their website, they saw themselves “as radical revolutionaries whose objective was to blow up the hetero-patriarchal-capitalist system”.(*)¹⁰³ Their participation in the seminars ‘Mutaciones del feminismo’ (2000) and ‘FeminismoPornoPunk’ (2008), drag king and BDSM performances carried out on the streets of Donostia and various drag king workshops such as those at the ‘Stonewall Contraataca’ conference (2009) in Barcelona made them one of the most active groups during that time in Spain (Marchante Hueso 2015, 133).¹⁰⁴ With all these actions they tried to carry out practices of civil disobedience as a critical strategy against capitalism and, also, to sexualise the feminist struggle, including the importance of pleasure as part of the feminist agenda. During those years, political reflection had also taken the same path: placing identity, violence and the regulation of bodies at the centre of the discourse, leading them towards ‘transfeminism’.

Transfeminism offers a more nuanced understanding of subjectivity, shifting from the notion of a singular subject to a broader, more inclusive concept. Instead of focusing solely on the oppression of cisgender women, transfeminism recognises the multiple forms of oppression that intersect, such as gender, race, social class, and sexuality. As Miriam Solá evidences in the book *Transfeminismos. Epistemes, fricciones y flujos*, “the context in which these discourses and practices emerged is strongly linked to a series of debates about the traditional way of understanding the sex/gender system and sexuality, which affect the political subject of feminism”(* 2013, 17). A key concern of dissident feminisms is the critique of the monolithic, universal female subject —a fictional and ideological construct that, while functional in mobilising women’s rights and access to the public sphere, ultimately oversimplifies diverse experiences. Transfeminism advocates for an open, fluid subjectivity that enables multiple feminisms to intersect and form alliances, fostering solidarity within the movement and, promoting an intersectional perspective that understands the various forms of violence and discrimination affecting individuals based on multiple axes of oppression.

¹⁰³ For further details on the Medeak collective: <http://www.medeak.blogspot.com> (Last consultation on February 10, 2021).

¹⁰⁴ ‘Mutations of Feminism’, ‘PornoPunkFeminism’ and ‘Stonewall Strikes Back’ (*).

In 2001, the artistic group O.R.G.I.A. was created by Tatiana Sentamans, Beatriz Higón and Carmen Muriana researching issues related to sex, sexuality and gender from a queer and feminist perspective and participating in numerous national exhibitions, seminars, conferences, workshops, cultural practices and projects.¹⁰⁵ The workshops given in 2005 ‘Bastos, copas, oros, espadas y dildos. Los reyes de la baraja española’ at the Petxina Centro Cultural in Valencia and at the Sala Matilde Salvador at the University of Valencia, and in 2013 ‘El drag como herramienta plástica para la creación política’ in Mexico City stand out among their projects.¹⁰⁶ They have also participated in conferences such as ‘Enredos y redes’ in ‘FeminismoPornoPunk’ in Arteleku, Donostia in 2008 and ‘REMAKE. Redes transfeministas y nuevas políticas de representación sexual en el Estado español (¿puede repetirme la pregunta?)’ at Hangar, Barcelona in 2013.¹⁰⁷ In addition, they have made various performances and videos, taken part in exhibitions in various cultural spaces. As one of the early post-porn groups in Spain, O.R.G.I.A.’s work laid the foundation for the country’s alternative pornographic scene. Their provocative and political approach inspired other artists and collectives to explore similar themes, contributing to the broader dialogue around the post-porn movement.

In 2002, Girlswholikeporno (GWLP) emerged in Barcelona, set up by Águeda Bañón and María Llopis, with the intention of offering a new vision of pornography and sexuality itself. They intended to destroy the tight corsets into which people fit their identities, their fantasies and their sexuality, revindicating the pleasure of creating and consuming pornography.¹⁰⁸ Throughout 2005 and 2006, they held various workshops on pornography, feminism and DIY strategies (Marchante Hueso 2015, 136) intended to reflect on porn from a feminist position and to prompt other women and queers to take the camera in order to make their own videos. In her book *El postporno era eso* (2009), María Llopis reflects on the need to take control over the creation of a new type of pornography, observing that:

¹⁰⁵ Further details about O.R.G.I.A available at: <http://www.orgiaprojects.org/bio/> (Last consultation on February 10, 2021).

¹⁰⁶ ‘Clubs, Cups, Golds, Swords, and Dildos. The Kings of the Spanish Deck’ and ‘Drag as a Plastic Tool for Political Creation’ (*).

¹⁰⁷ ‘Tangles and Networks’ and ‘REMAKE. Transfeminist Networks and New Sexual Representation Politics in the Spanish State (Can You Repeat the Question?)’ (*).

¹⁰⁸ In relation to Girlswholikeporno: <http://girlswholikeporno.com/> (Last consultation on February 10, 2021).

When people protest against the repetitiveness of porn, they are really referring to a gaze that is repeated, to the gaze of the heterosexual white man who controls the world and the porn business. There is an approach that is repeated, over and over again, that reduces our sexuality to intercourse, ridicules alternative sexualities, and is politically situated within the capitalist heterosexual system (*, 14, 2009).

GWLP believed in queer, feminist, post-pornographic theory and did not believe in femininity or in 'porn for women'. As María Llopis noted, "a porn for women is not possible [...] It is a concept invented by the industry that serves to cause a bit of cheap controversy in the media. It is usually associated with soft-core, with stories with a plot, sweetness and romance" (*, 2009, 12). The pornography that GWLP created moved away from that commercial idea of 'porn for women' and focused on post-porn, with post-porn defined by Llopis as:

Queer politics, post-feminist, punk, DIY, but also a more complex vision of sex that includes an analysis of the origin of our sexual fantasies. That is why post-porn is sometimes more of a type of meta-porn and focuses on questioning the porn industry and the way our sexuality is represented in the media today (*, 22, 2009).

In 2003, Elena Perez and Majo Pulido created the group Post-Op, as a result of their experiences of the 'Maratón Posporno'. Post-Op is a transfeminist collective that investigates gender and post-porn through performances.¹⁰⁹ Their project focuses on the re-sexualisation of public spaces and a critical rereading of normative discourse. Bodies, roles and morphologies appear as entities in transit that question the legitimating order and propose non-essentialising sexual practices and genres.¹¹⁰ They have carried out numerous video performance projects and a multitude of workshops on post-porn, eco-sex, BDSM, urban sex and functional diversity under the title "We are all pornstars" (Marchante Hueso 2015, 138).

Elena Urko described post-porn in the webinar 'Sexualidad en tiempos de coronavirus',¹¹¹ organised by Barcelona en Comú in 2020, as:

¹⁰⁹ The term 'post-op' is the term use by medical institutions to refer to transsexuals who have undergone sex reassignments.

¹¹⁰ About Post-Op: <http://postop-postporno.tumblr.com> (Last consultation on February 10, 2021).

¹¹¹ 'Sexuality in Times of Coronavirus' (*).

A reaction that comes from some feminist groups and from some groups linked to sexual dissidence, those of us who have a critical view towards dominant pornography [...] Post-porn is taking these same tools [those of mainstream pornography], and [...] generating another type of porn that talks about all those people that had been invisible until now or poorly represented, such as butch dykes, trans, non-binary, etc.(*)¹¹²

Post-Op created the magazine *Piratte* (2012), which proposed a series of photographs that highlighted the ridiculousness of the binary system: male/female, homo/hetero, as being a construction that society shows us as natural but that it is the result of a set of biopolitical technologies. Likewise, in this project they wanted to record the invalidity of such a classification system by showing the new practices of the post-porn and queer transfeminism environment. With this magazine they did not seek the viewer's approval, compassion or abjection through their portraits. They sought to shock and, at the same time, delight the viewer, questioning and destabilising identity categories in order to deconstruct the hierarchies of power.¹¹³ Post-Op has continued holding post-porn workshops, such as the one organised in Monte Hermoso in 2012, entitled 'Ecosex. Yes, we fuck'. In 2013, they held the first post-porn workshop for groups of people with functional diversity, framed within the *Yes, we fuck!* Project, and presented at the festival 'Muestra Marrana' in 2014.¹¹⁴

Another group that emerged in 2003 in Barcelona was Corpus Deleicti, with the intention of reflecting on the construction of gender and its visual and discursive representations, understanding it as a complex set of technologies that produce bodily constructions of femininity, masculinity and sexuality. Interrogating the Western regime of compulsory heterosexuality, they explored issues related to the practices of

¹¹² Complete webinar: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gwJmYVVfa8&t=11s> (Last consultation on November 2, 2023).

¹¹³ *Piratte* documentary available at: http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xybvun_revista-piratte_creation (Last consultation on February 10, 2021).

¹¹⁴ *Yes, we fuck!* (2015) is a documentary directed by Antonio Centeno and Raúl de la Morena, that addresses the sexuality of people with functional diversity. Beyond sex, the documentary wants to show not only what sexuality can do for people with functional diversity, but also what the reality of functional diversity can contribute to human sexuality. The diversity of sexuality, the broad sense of beauty and the struggle for personal independence are the focus of the stories in the documentary. More information available at: <http://www.yeswefuck.org/> (Last consultation on February 10, 2021).

embodiment, desire, post-identity politics and sexualisation of the public space.¹¹⁵ In 2005, the Go Fist Foundation appeared in the same city, rejecting capitalist pornography and the construction of gender and body stereotypes. Through different forms of expression —videos, performances and talks— they tried to create a debate about sexual diversity. Go Fist Foundation advocated for embracing pain as a means of transforming societal hatred imposed on individuals, while rejecting the capitalist, patriarchal regime that oppresses sexual and gender diversity.¹¹⁶

In 2005, the trans-cultural artistic group, Ideadestroyingmuros appeared in Venice, but they had also made performances and videos in Granada, Barcelona, Valencia, Paris and Palermo. The group aimed to disseminate artistic and social principles through research in the artistic, cultural, social, anthropological, historical, economic, and humanistic fields, based on several ‘border positions’ in relation to: gender, sexuality, nation, language and creation, using artistic resources and feminist research, performance, video, translation, drawing and writing to transform the social paradigm.¹¹⁷ The term ‘border position’ refers to the characteristics that shape a person, placing them on the margins of society, outside the established norms. As Gloria Anzaldúa reflects in her book *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (1987), the ‘border position’ describes the complex, often painful experience of living between multiple, conflicting cultures and identities. For Anzaldúa, the border position is a space of in-betweenness and hybridity, where traditional binaries and societal norms are challenged. While this border existence can create feelings of alienation, it also serves as a source of strength and creative potential, offering the possibility of new ways of thinking and being that transcend rigid categories.

Also in 2005, the international ‘Queeruption 8’ was held in an abandoned synthetic leather factory in Hospitalet, Barcelona. This type of event operates as a space for post-pornographic activation outside institutions (Egaña 2017, 367-368). Lucía Egaña suggests that although the ‘Maratón Posporno’ was the founding myth of post-porn in Barcelona, many people named ‘Queeruption 8’ as the beginning of their work, as a space of self-management, marginality and without institutionalisation. A DIY event,

¹¹⁵ On Corpus Delecti: <http://254corpusdelecti.blogspot.com.es> (Last consultation on February 10, 2021).

¹¹⁶ Information about Gofistfoundation available at: <http://gofistfoundation.pimienta.org/> (Last on consultation February 10, 2021).

¹¹⁷ See: <http://www.ideadestroyingmuros.info> (Last consultation on February 10, 2021).

‘Queeruption 8’ was held in an environment where differences were not just tolerated but also respected, supported and defended. Post-porn performances and workshops embraced DIY (Do It Yourself), anti-capitalist and anarchist values, valuing the performative energy of the collective and political sexual act emanating from actions in the workshops and the public space. Post-pornography is a critical adaptation of porn that expands to the images that are staged, to the modes of work and production, distribution and broadcasting. These practices stress the relationship between the collective and the individual, between the public and the private, transgressing the spaces traditionally allocated for sexual encounters and practices. In this sense, post-porn works intensely to re-politicise the private space and to consider the body, private life and sexuality as a space for political action (Egaña 2017, 365). Post-pornography disrupts what is traditionally considered beautiful, desirable and/or acceptable in a sexual context, operating as a collective mechanism, a precarious and self-managed network, outside the porn market and industrial logics forming the basis of mainstream pornography, and it contributes to the corporal and sexual sovereignty of people and groups considered abject.

Another initiative, PornoLab began its trajectory in Madrid in 2005 with David Rodriguez and Jordi Claramonte, who led various workshops on the mandatory nature of hair removal (mainly for women), self-production of erotic toys and the deconstruction of romantic love and new forms of lovemaking (Marchante Hueso 2015, 142). They claimed their own autonomy outside the ‘industry’, researching, analysing and discussing audiovisual, literary and theoretical materials produced in or for the field of pornography, with the manifest objective of questioning the validity of mainstream porn.¹¹⁸

One of the latest groups that emerged in Barcelona was Quimera Rosa —formed by Cecilia Puglia and Yan Rey— as a laboratory for experimentation and research on identities and technology, created in 2008.¹¹⁹ Quimera Rosa was inspired by the notion of cyborg developed by Donna Haraway and from a transfeminism and post-identity perspective.¹²⁰ Quimera Rosa is a platform for public intervention, with the aim of

¹¹⁸ PornoLab see: <http://www.sindominio.net/fiambrera/pornolab/> (Last consultation on February 10, 2021).

¹¹⁹ Regarding Quimera Rosa at: <http://galeriaquimerica.blogspot.com/> (Last consultation on February 10, 2021).

¹²⁰ According to Haraway, a cyborg is a “cybernetic organism, a hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction. [...] The cyborg is a matter of fiction and lived experience that changes what counts as women’s experience in the late twentieth century. This is a struggle

generating ruptures in the border between the public and the private sector. Conceiving sexuality as a creative and technological construction and seeking to experiment with hybrid identities that blur the oppositions between natural/artificial, normal/abnormal, hetero/homo, human/animal, animal/plant, art/politics, art/science, reality/fiction, among others. Most of their work is done collaboratively and is always free of patents and proprietary codes.

Preciado interprets all these sexual street performances and DIY creations of Girlswholikeporno (GWLP), Post-Op, Go Fist Foundation, Ideadestroyingmuros, Corpus Delecti and Quimera Rosa, the work of activists Helen Torres, Itziar Ziga and Diana Pornoterrorista as a response to the incapacity of anti-system movements to articulate a feminist and queer critique of the neoliberal management of the city of Barcelona (Preciado 2013, 273-277). These punk feminism porn actions were characterised by a dissident use of the body in the urban space, and the body and the public space are both spaces of collective creation. Post-porn attempts to re-signify the body, gender, sexuality and identity, questioning and disarticulating the hegemonic discourses on which the somatic and the identity are constituted. One of the main characteristics of post-porn is that its objective is not only to excite the audience, but to make it question pleasure and desire as constructions at the service of heteronormativity (Rodríguez Suárez 2017, 68-69). To achieve this, a series of performative practices are generated that turn the body into a space for experimentation, resistance and individual and collective transformation. Through all these performances all these collectives and individuals invited audiences to understand the corporeal and identity not as something given, but as areas about which there is still much to say, investigate and discover first hand.

Llopis describes the importance of post-porn in our sexuality as follows:

Porn influences us and creates references. [...] In the post-porn movement, the struggle consists of creating new references in our sexuality, and the images we film are just one more tool. It is about making our investigations public on a practical level. And the theory will come later. Conventional porn assumes all the worst of this society: sexism, racism, homophobia, dictatorship of the body, silicone, imposition of a sexual model of woman and man, etc. Post-porn seeks its

over life and death, but the boundary between science fiction and social reality is an optical illusion". More information: <https://www.sfu.ca/~decaste/OISE/page2/files/HarawayCyborg.pdf> (Last consultation on January 22, 2024).

own unique representation, because we need it, although in general the subject does not arouse massive interest [...] Post-porn is pure politics (*, 109, 2009).

As Llopis points out, it is important to acknowledge that pornography influences us and creates sexual references or patterns to follow. So, our sexuality is highly guided by these standards: heterosexual sex, young people, white bodies, women as an object, men as a subject, intercourse, generalisation, and male orgasm as the end of each sexual act. She also notes that perhaps, knowing how we are influenced by pornography, we can create a different type of sexuality, the goal of the post-porn movement: to establish new references for our sexuality. It is essential that feminism and other social movements advocating for the emancipation of subjects who suffer some type of oppression get involved in the production of porn as a subversive weapon. Porn is a form of representation, a discourse, an industry, an entertainment, even a necessity, with a growing audience always looking for new content. Mainstream porn represents a very specific type of androcentric sexual practices and does not express the desire of many other people. As Rodríguez Suárez notes, it is essential that at least a part of feminist porn is marketed in a mass way to reach the greatest number of people —those who consume mainly free porn in the ‘tubes’— since, post-porn is essential, but it only reaches precisely the people who work to deconstruct their own sexuality (2017, 184). Post-pornography can be understood as a form of sexual counter-discipline, as a specifically counter-sexual representational system, dedicated to the systemic deconstruction of the naturalisation of sexual practices and the gender system. This means that it offers a framework of reappropriation, redefinition, resistance and empowerment for all those bodies, identities and sexualities pathologized by the collective imagination and traditionally excluded from official narratives and representations.

Post-porn gained significant traction through various artistic and activist initiatives in Spain. Collectives and individuals involved in the movement used pornography as a medium to address issues of gender, sexuality, and power, often incorporating elements of performance art and avant-garde aesthetics. This approach was a reaction against conventional pornographic content, which the movement critiqued for its reinforcement of heteronormative and patriarchal ideals. While the post-porn movement was highly influential in Spain and contributed to broader discussions about sexuality and representation, its prominence has evolved over time. The initial wave of post-porn activism and production has given way to more integrated forms of feminist

and queer media. Many of the ideas and techniques from the post-porn movement have influenced contemporary independent and alternative pornography, contributing to ongoing debates about representation and ethics in the adult industry. Although the specific term ‘post-porn’ may not be as widely used today, the principles and critiques associated with the movement continue to resonate within the broader context of feminist activism. Some of these collectives have disappeared, while others relocated to different countries where they continued their post-porn activities. Many of the artists and activists involved have adapted their work to new platforms and contexts, demonstrating the ongoing relevance of the movement’s core ideas. These ideas continue to challenge traditional norms and expand the possibilities for erotic representation, reflecting the movement’s enduring impact on contemporary discussions about sexuality and artistic expression.

2.2.2.2 Diana J. Torres and ‘pornoterrorismo’

Diana J. Torres created ‘pornoterrorismo’ in 2006, as a series of political and artistic performances emerging from lesbian porn-poetry and essay readings with anti-striptease.¹²¹ She performed in queer bars, and soon started to give full-on sexually explicit performances where she masturbated, inserted objects inside herself, stuck needles all over her body and, practiced squirting. She used political activism, direct action and video as tools in her performances and, also, occupation practices in public spaces or ‘porn-assaults’. From there, she began to develop various performances and poetry shows alone or with supporting artists in theatres and art museums in other cultural capitals such as Madrid, Berlin, Paris, Rome, Vienna, London, Mexico City, Bogota and Los Angeles.¹²² She frequently collaborated with other artists, for example with Annie Sprinkle and Beth Stephens in their ‘Wedding to the Rocks’ (Silver Wedding) in 2011, being part of a series of lush performance art weddings,¹²³ and with Shu Lea Cheang in

¹²¹ Where instead of undressing during the performance she was dressing herself as a man.

¹²² In art museums like Reina Sofía (Madrid), CCCB, Fabra i Coats and Palau de la Virreina (Barcelona), Museo Universitario del Chopo and ExTeresa Current Art (Mexico DF) and Arteleku (Donosti).

¹²³ Since 2004 Annie Sprinkle and Beth Stephens have married the sky, moon, snow, sun, sea, coal, among other natural entities, as part of “Love Art Laboratory”. They have staged ceremonies all over the world with hundreds of guests. In 2008, Sprinkle and Stephens declared themselves to be ‘eco-sexuals’

2009 in her performance project *UKI* at Hangar, Barcelona.¹²⁴ In 2010, Virgine Despentès made the documentary *Mutantes* based on the work of the Barcelona post-porn scene and in 2011, and Lucía Egaña Rojas portrayed the post-porn movement of Barcelona in her documentary *Mi sexualidad es una creación artística*. Both these directors used Diana J. Torres as a reference in the post-porn movement in Spain.

In 2011, Diana J. Torre's first book *Pornoterrorismo* was published, a political and autobiographical essay that questions the very idea of gender, where she criticises the patriarchy, pointing out how sexual binarism serves to exclude sexual diversity. In 2015, she published her second book *Coño potens: Manual sobre su poder, su próstata y sus fluidos*, in which, in a didactic way, she narrates her own personal experience and research into the body and sexuality of women.¹²⁵ In 2017, she published *Vomitorium*, a text in which she addresses issues such as the way that society imposes constant dieting on women and the different ways to love and to have sex, among other topics.

As she explains in her book *Pornoterrorismo*, the first time she used the term 'pornoterrorismo' was with Pablo Raijenstein, with whom she formed the Shock Value collective, to name a performance carried out after the attacks on the Twin Towers in New York on September 11, 2001.¹²⁶ The term 'porn' indicates that the actions to be carried out have to do with an explicit sexuality. On the other hand, the word 'terrorism' indicates that these performances are going to be combative and violent —not a type of direct violence, related to death or material destruction, but rather they produce an unpleasant decontextualization effect that can become very violent because they make visible what is not supposed to be represented or heard (J. Torres 2011, 66).

and committed to treating the Earth as a lover in order to save it. More information at: <http://sexecology.org/ecosex-weddings/> (Last consultation on January 22, 2024).

¹²⁴ In 2009, Shu Lea Cheang, together with members of the post-porn movement and the transfeminist community of Barcelona, staged the collaborative performance *UKI*, a sequel to her pornographic science-fiction film *I.K.U.*, which explores dissident sexualities in relation to technology. (Last consultation January 22, 2024). See: https://toxiclesbian.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Caso_Shu_Lea_Cheang_estudio_UKI_Hangar-Barcelona.pdf (Last consultation on January 22, 2024).

¹²⁵ Diana J. Torres has given more than a hundred workshops on female ejaculation, which were held all over Europe and Mexico.

¹²⁶ In 1999, she started performing on stages for the first time. As Shock Value and with Pablo Raijenstein she performed for three years and, it was in 2001 that the term 'pornoterrorismo' appeared, applied to the last of the performances they did together.

‘Pornoterrorismo’ is a terrorism counterattack against the normative regulation of bodies and sexualities that proposes a type of destruction that claims to be constructive (Rodríguez Suárez 2017, 66-67). According to Torres, ‘pornoterrorismo’, is a “form of artistic and political expression that basically uses post-porn, queer practice, queer fight and transfeminism as pillars and, when the dialogue is over terrorism is an answer”(*).¹²⁷ In this way, it functions as a counter-biopolitical practice that aims to dynamite the prevailing discourses and knowledge that naturalise the idea that there are normal and correct bodies and sexualities, on the one hand, and, on the other, abnormal, deviant, criminal or pathological ones, generating powerful forms of violence on sexual minorities.

Post-pornography appears as an analytical tool, a cultural device, and a field in which the (re)creation of new identities and ways of representing desire is seen as possible. Its particular form is even presented as a questioning of classical narration and a series of strategies that are indispensable for cinema. Anti-narrative, postmodern and political, post-pornography represents a version of the critical exploitation of the resources of traditional pornography. Post-porn and ‘pornoterrorismo’ consider that the different mechanisms of power are inscribed in the subjectivities and materiality of bodies. For this reason, it is necessary to generate resistance strategies that start from the overflowing body in action; privileging the practice of performance as an artistic-political tool in which the activists’ own bodies become the main place of experimentation and communication with the audience.

During Chapter 2, we have examined the evolution of pornography in both the UK and Spain, highlighting their distinct trajectories and underlying differences. In the UK, ethical porn has emerged as a response to stringent censorship laws and to distinguish themselves from mainstream norms, producing pornographic content that emphasizes female pleasure, sexual diversity, and artistic expression. In contrast, Spain's post-porn movement, which gained traction in the 2000s, represents a more radical departure from conventional pornography. This movement, characterised by its use of experimental and provocative content, challenges societal norms and critiques neoliberal urban management. Spanish post-porn collectives and activists have utilised their work to

¹²⁷ From her interview in the online program *Y tú ké miras gilipollas!* in 2011 where she presented her book *Pornoterrorismo*. See: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m7MZUmsCT88> (Last consultation on January 20, 2021).

explore and expand the boundaries of erotic representation, often addressing themes of gender, sexuality, and political critique in ways that defy traditional classifications. Together, these movements reflect a broader shift towards a more inclusive and critically engaged approach to pornography.

CHAPTER 3: METHODS FOR EXAMINING FEMINIST, ETHICAL AND DISSIDENT PORNOGRAPHY

The previous chapter explored the emergence and evolution of various pornographic movements in the UK and Spain since the 2000s, highlighting the ways in which these movements responded to mainstream pornography and laid the groundwork for the development of feminist and ethical alternatives. This chapter outlines the methodology for researching feminist and ethical pornography in the United Kingdom and Spain, employing a range of qualitative methods to critically examine feminist, ethical, and dissident forms of pornography. I adopt an approach that is descriptive and informative, trying to eliminate a priori preconceptions of pornography. This thesis seeks to understand a phenomenon that is viewed both in private—at home and normally alone—and in a public space—at porn film festivals surrounded by strangers and maybe with friends—identifying and interpreting the perceptions of these realities in the viewer and in society itself. So, my analysis explores what are known as feminist and ethical pornographic films in the context of the normalisation of sex in our society, and the rejection of pornography, as evidenced by the debates and actions against this cinematographic genre.¹²⁸

The study focuses on paid-access platforms from specific feminist pornographic companies in these regions. Using tools like content analysis to explore the narrative structures, visual aesthetics, and representations of gender, sexuality, and consent within the films, and discourse analysis to investigate how feminist and dissident pornography challenges mainstream norms, creating alternative portrayals of desire, pleasure, and power. Central to this analysis is the use of semiotics, a tool for examining audiovisual texts, as well as feminist film theory as an academic reference in film studies. The semiotics of a text focuses especially on the ways in which the text manifests its content, studying not so much what a film says but rather the strategies used to manifest the content, that is, the images and sounds perceived by the viewer. Semiotics examines culture as a communication process, revealing the underlying systems that shape cultural practices. The dialectic between system and process highlights a similar relationship between code and message, where meaning is constructed through dynamic interactions rather than fixed rules. By viewing cinema as an open, dynamic system of codes that

¹²⁸ Information on the variety of opinions on pornography inside the feminist movement in Chapter 1, subsection 1.2.1.

evolve through practice, this methodology emphasises the fluidity and relational nature of film, where cultural processes are understood as a dialectic between code and message, system and process.

Cinema is a communication medium, therefore, the messages it expresses must be examined to find out how meanings are codified in the communication process of what a film wants to transmit to us. That is why it is not enough to simply watch a movie; it must be explored with a critical eye to train ourselves both in the understanding of cinema as a narrator, as a transmitter of values and a bearer of art and knowledge. As Colaizzi notes “cinema requires us to delve into reflection, impels us to overcome the anti-theoretical positions that have marked reflection on cinema in recent decades” (*, 2021b, 18). Films are products made by a specific industry, with specific economic and ideological interests, and are sold in a specific market. Consequently, the material conditions of presentation, distribution and consumption are those that arise and circulate within a socially accepted institution that includes a historiographical canon, a theory and a critique (Carmona 1991, 43). In this way, movies are like a mosaic of human behaviour, a simulated representation of social reality, an exhibition of messages that each person tries to interpret based on what they know or want to find. Cinema tells us about knowledge and emotions, feelings and passions, hopes and values; but above all it makes us reconsider and feel, observe and imagine, share and dream.

I aim to articulate an understanding of pornography through a qualitative approach, in order to study the social values and ideas that influence the thinking of the creators of feminist pornographic content, and how that content is received by audiences. Beyond the predominance of what is acceptable, of what is socially agreed, the intention of this thesis is to observe what directors and performers attempt to reflect with their creations when dealing with a subject that is still surrounded by stereotypes, moralisms and social norms. Society is increasingly immersed in the culture of the image. The cinematographic image is constituted as a genuine language made up of ideological frameworks, symbols and meanings that build an entire discursive system naturalised by people. In reference to sexuality, the pornographic image has historically been present in people’s privacy, becoming an industry and accessing the private sphere in an easily accessible way through the rise of new technologies and the development of the Internet. Ever since post-porn appeared in academic discussions and began to have a certain artistic positioning, critics and scholars have been able to re-analyse traditional porn by reinterpreting and questioning its classic concepts using the tools that post-porn offered.

This project, therefore, conducts a comparative analysis of the different messages that pornographic films present. One of the objectives of the research is to assess the pornographic genre from the inclusion of works that provide ethical, political and aesthetic diversity. Through the analysis of the different films, and by considering their technical, aesthetic and narrative compositions, it is possible to understand if and how porn discourses induce, construct or question sexuality. My research seeks to establish if a feminist pornography is possible and desirable at a conceptual and political level, exploring the position of those who think that the way to combat sexist pornography is through the production of a more diverse pornography. Moreover, the filmic study of the selected pornographic films, considered feminist from our standpoint, will help to determine if there are changes in representation that may lead to the construction of a cinematographic practice that breaks with the patriarchal schemes traditionally used in pornography.

3.1 Notes on the history of pornographic cinema

In the 19th Century, cinema was a powerful means of mobilising and shaping the social imaginary. As television developed and interacted with cinema since the mid-20th century, its presence in our daily lives has also become even more invasive (Colaizzi 2021b, 17). Cinematography was a step forward, with respect to photography, leading to the emergence of a new expression in which two different historical trajectories merged: instant photography and the principle of image projection. As Carmona points out “the film image was capable of reconstructing the unfolding of the world before the viewer’s eyes” (1991, 33)⁶. Cinema came to replace, in a certain way, the ludic aspect of popular shows, until then one of the few forms of social leisure widespread among the population.

The film historian, Diego Moldés, suggests the following chronology for the history of film: 1. Primitive cinema (1888-1902), 2. Silent cinema (1903-1927), 3. Classic cinema (1928-1958), 4. Modern cinema (1959-1999) and 5. Contemporary cinema (2000-2021 onwards).¹²⁹ The term classic cinema was coined in the 1960s in studies on film theory to refer to Hollywood industrial cinema from 1915 to the mid-1950s. This period of cinema full of reverie, glamour and excess, turned the North American film industry into a global icon. A time that many have idealised and boasted about over the years.

¹²⁹ About the different types of cinema see: <http://diegomoldes.com/cine-primitivo-cine-mudo-cine-clasico-cine-moderno-y-contemporaneo-201901> (Last consultation on October 28, 2022).

Classical cinematography can be described as seeking to convert any human experience or story into an audiovisual narrative spectacle, subject to the conventions established by the cinematographic tradition.

In relation to pornography, the earliest pornographic films, often referred to as ‘stag films’ or ‘blue movies’, emerged in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, coinciding with the invention of motion picture technology. These films were typically short, silent, and privately produced, catering to a clandestine audience. The emergence of this genre was facilitated by technological advancements, particularly Thomas Edison’s kinetoscope,¹³⁰ which allowed for the private viewing of short films. Shortly after the Lumières gave life to commercial cinema¹³¹, historians trace the origins of pornographic cinema with the film *Le Coucher de la mariée* (1896)—a short film produced by Eugène Pirou and directed by Albert Kirchner, who, under his pseudonym Léar, had already shot various erotic and religious films. Most of the action in this movie was a striptease, followed by the preliminary phase of sex (Mazo 2019, 9). The leading actress in the movie was Louise Willy, a cabaret dancer. As Sadoul mentions in his book *Histoire Du Cinéma Mondial* (1972), this film was “one of the rare primitive films that have been preserved”.¹³² Kirchner was not the only French director who thought that this type of film could create a profitable business, many other directors saw the opportunity to enrich themselves based on footage that included striptease scenes, which were the main storyline of the first pornographic films. Historian Patrick Robertson provides a detailed account of the earliest examples of stag films in his book *Film Facts* (2001), such as *A Free Ride* (1915)—also known as *A Grass Sandwich*¹³³—directed by A. Wise Guy and

¹³⁰ The kinetoscope was an early motion picture exhibition device, and the first to utilise sequential images printed on a strip of perforated, flexible, photographic film driven by sprockets and an intermittent movement. The kinetoscope’s name was coined from the Greek roots *kineto* (‘movement’) and *scopos* (‘to view’).

¹³¹ In 1888 George Eastman invented the Kodak roll of film. This 35mm photographic film represents a revolution for the beginnings of cinema and would be used by Edison in the United States and the Lumière brothers in Europe. The Lumière brothers created the cinematograph as a scientific machine capable of capturing movement or as Georges Sadoul pointed out a “machine to remake life” (1972, 18).

¹³² *Le Coucher de la mariée*: <https://www.cinematheque.fr/henri/film/149863-le-coucher-de-la-mariee-eugene-pirou-1896/> (Last consultation on September 10, 204).

¹³³ Full movie at: <https://archive.org/details/a-free-ride> (Last consultation on September 10, 204).

The Casting Couch (1924)¹³⁴—unknown director— examining how they were produced and circulated in secretive networks. Robertson’s work is crucial for understanding the technical and cultural conditions under which these films were made, as well as the legal challenges they faced.

As cinema became more popular, stag films found audiences among upper-class men in private male-only spaces, such as bachelor parties, fraternal organisations, brothels or small gatherings, where such films were screened illicitly.¹³⁵ These films were not intended for wide public consumption; instead, they catered to male audiences seeking taboo entertainment, reinforcing the gendered consumption of early pornography. In the United States, the stigma surrounding the creation, participation in, and consumption of pornography during the early 20th century was so pervasive that men often took extreme measures to conceal their identities. Fearing legal repercussions, social ostracism, and moral condemnation, participants in stag films frequently resorted to wearing disguises, such as false moustaches, masks, or other forms of facial cover, to avoid recognition. This behaviour highlights the intense societal disapproval of pornography at the time, in which moral and legal forces strictly policed sexual expression, leading those involved in the underground pornography industry to adopt covert methods for both production and consumption. These early productions were often short and crude in terms of technical quality, but they laid the groundwork for the later commercial pornography industry.

In the late 1960s, semi-underground productions of porn movies were regularly occurring on a small scale in United States. There was a so-called ‘Golden Age of Porn’ or ‘porno chic’. ‘Porno chic’ refers to the brief period during the 1970s when pornography moved from the shadows of underground stag films to the mainstream, becoming socially acceptable to view in cinemas alongside other movies. Films like *Blue Movie* (1969) directed by Andy Warhol¹³⁶, *Mona: The Virgin Nymph* (1970) directed by Michael

¹³⁴ About the film at: <http://www.silentera.com/PSFL/data/C/CastingCouch1924.html> (Last consultation on September 10, 204).

¹³⁵ In relation to the origins of stag movies at: <https://www.museumofsex.com/exhibitions/stag-the-illicit-origins-of-pornographic-film/> (Last consultation on September 10, 204).

¹³⁶ “The film was originally titled *Fuck* (alternately spelled *F,k*), but the name was changed prior to release for advertising and publicity purposes”. Detailed information at: <https://catalog.afi.com/Catalog/moviedetails/20575> (Last consultation on September 10, 204).

Benveniste and Howard Ziehm¹³⁷ and, *Boys in the Sand* (1971) by Wakefield Poole¹³⁸, were the first pornographic films to be shown in commercial cinemas. The production of porn films and their screening became a cultural phenomenon. During this era, pornographic films were no longer a ‘dirty secret’ but became fashionable, with audiences openly attending screenings in commercial theatres. The phenomenon was marked by the success of films like *Deep Throat* (1972) and *The Devil in Miss Jones* (1973), written and directed by Gerard Damiano, and *Behind the Green Door* (1972), produced and directed by Artie Mitchell and Jim Mitchell, which drew middle-class, mixed-gender audiences and even attracted attention from mainstream media, celebrities, and critics. Several scholars have studied this phenomenon. One of the most prominent is Linda Williams, whose book *Hard Core: Power, Pleasure, and the ‘Frenzy of the Visible’* (1989) is a key text for understanding how pornography transitioned into mainstream culture. Williams explores the social, cultural, and cinematic shifts that made ‘porno chic’ possible, analysing how films like *Deep Throat* gained public legitimacy and how this brief mainstreaming of pornography intersected with larger debates on censorship, sexual liberation, and visual culture.

These films marked an entire generation with their stories and productions but were prosecuted by the Supreme Court (*Miller v. California*). In 1973, the Supreme Court changed the definition of ‘obscenity’ from “having no social value” to absence of “literary, artistic, political or scientific value”. For this reason, the distribution of these films was prohibited. These films are a crucial part of the history of pornography, as they represent the first organised attempts to use motion pictures for explicit sexual display. As Paasonen and Saarenmaa explains:

Focused on questions of freedom of speech versus censorship, this debate has, since the early 1980s, tended to efface complexities, ambiguities and diversities within pornography. Division for or against remains evident in North American studies of pornography and is also influential on an international scale. Meanwhile, their specific context seems easily forgotten. North American debates and political battle lines tell little of porn histories or productions elsewhere, yet

¹³⁷ Full synopsis at: <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0066092/> (Last consultation on September 10, 204).

¹³⁸ On regard the film see: <https://www.americangenrefilm.com/theatrical-film-catalog/boys-in-the-sand/> (Last consultation on September 10, 204).

the American history has, through numerous acts of retelling, come to stand for the history of pornography with its mythical golden age of the 1970s (2007, 26).

After *Miller v. California*, pornographic films continued to be a very profitable business and prospered throughout the rest of the 1970s, leading to the concept of porn 'stars' gaining popularity. As Paasonen and Saarenmaa evidence, "porn historiography characterises the 1970s as an era of sexual, and even artistic, exploration unhinged by AIDS, and of adult film-making undisturbed by video technology or the economical dictates of the porn industry" (2007, 27). By the early 1980s, the rise of home video had led to the end of the era in which people went to cinemas to watch pornographic films, eventually culminating in the rise of the Internet in the 1990s and beyond, modifying the production, distribution and consumption of this type of films. In 1988, the California Supreme Court legalised the production of pornographic films by classifying performers as actors rather than prostitutes, thereby distinguishing their work as a form of entertainment rather than illegal activity (Wosick 2015, 416). The 'Golden Age' was a period of interactions between pornography and contemporary second wave feminism. Radical and cultural feminists, along with religious and conservative groups, attacked pornography, which they saw as a form of violence against women and morality, while other feminists in favour of pornography became known as the pro-sex or pro-pornography movement, pointing out that porn was part of the sexual revolution, the sexual emancipation of women and other minority groups. These brief reflections on the history of pornographic cinema, show that porn cinema is an industry, but it is also and, above all, an art conditioned by culture and public attention.

3.2 The intersection of Feminist Film Theory and pornographic discourse

In this thesis, the relationship between audiovisual discourses and gender is a focus of specific interest, since, depending on how they represent their subject matter, films can perpetuate or break away from the sex-gender system of the society in which we live. This section elucidates the emergence of feminist film theory and its significance in examining cinematic works. It explores feminist film theory and its critical approach to understanding gender representation in film. Additionally, it explores how these theoretical frameworks have been applied to the analysis of pornographic films, highlighting how feminist perspectives have contributed to a deeper understanding of gender, power, and representation within the pornographic genre. Feminists who have

been interested in cinema have refused to assume the possibility of a 'universal' and 'general' history of cinema. For this reason, as Colaizzi evidences, their works seek, first, to build a historiographical interpretation that shows plurality in the history, and, secondly, to question the epistemological presuppositions that support their own discourse, underlining the character of construction that characterises each history and theory in general, and the history and theory of cinema in particular (1995c, 21). These feminist film theories do not try to find an 'absolute truth' or point out the 'essence of the feminine', but rather seek to respond to concrete demands for political intervention and to make the invisible visible in a hetero-patriarchal society.

Feminist film theory emerged due to a combination of factors that occurred in the 1970s. First, the appearance of the third wave of feminism which fought for the construction of women's identity, and their cultural and social vindication; secondly, the proliferation of independent cinema, which included women filmmakers; and finally, the analysis of representation, which was an important tool for questioning the mode of representation that until then had been used in hegemonic cinema and its way of presenting female characters. As Colaizzi evidences in her book *Feminismo y Teoría Fílmica*, this process was developed from two positions, the first from a sociological point of view and the second from a theoretical approach (1995c, 4). The sociological approach is apparent in the text *Women Who Make Movies* (1975) by Sharon Smith, offering valuable information on the early years of the film industry and the surprisingly high number of women it mobilised. This theory focuses on the analysis of female stereotypes in Hollywood films. Authors such as Marjorie Rosen and Molly Haskell studied in depth the way in which female characters appeared in the most emblematic films of American cinema. For example, Molly Haskell analyses in her book *From Reverence to Rape* (1974) the stereotypes of women in films, noting that women were presented as inferiors and 'romantic slaves', willing to forget everything for a romantic dream of marital happiness (Colaizzi 1995c, 6).

The second group of feminist theorists articulate their discourse around the concepts of gaze and power. This second phase begins in England with the magazine *Screen*, and in the United States from 1976 with magazines such as *Camera Obscura*.¹³⁹

¹³⁹ *Screen* is an international journal of academic film and television studies that began in 1952, combining essays with reports and debates on conferences, along with book reviews. *Camera Obscura* is a journal of media studies, culture and feminism, which started with a semiotic and psychoanalytic approach

Different authors of feminist film theory began to study the power of the patriarchal imaginary using other theoretical and methodological tools, such as semiotics and psychoanalysis. As Colaizzi points out, “analyses of this second phase are developed from a critique that seeks to deconstruct: 1) the forms and ways of structuring the gaze as technology; 2) the filmic image and 3) the device that connects the viewer with the image on the screen, that is, the notion of cinema” (*, 1995c, 8).

Claire Johnston made the first semiotic critique of the construction of the ideal image of women by cinema, pointing out that the subject ‘woman’ appears as a myth, and that it must be analysed as a structure, code or convention. She attempts to offer a positive indication of feminist strategies for making film criticism, what she calls ‘counter-cinema’ with her book *Women’s Cinema as Counter-Cinema* (1973). In contrast, Laura Mulvey, with her book *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema* (1975), uses psychoanalysis as a way of understanding filmic texts, and this analytical model became the most widely used in film theory in this second phase (Ramos 2017, 26). Mulvey studies how men and women are differentially positioned by cinema. Men are subjects who identify with agents driving the film’s narrative, and women are objects for masculine desire and the fetishistic gaze. She uses Lacanian and Freudian psychoanalysis to substantiate her discourse on gendered subjectivity, desire, and visual pleasure, establishing a connection between the function of the gaze in hetero-patriarchal society and the hegemonic model of representation.¹⁴⁰ As Mulvey demonstrates in her essay “Diálogo intertextual y nueva teoría fílmica feminista” in the book *Cine, interculturalidad y políticas de género*, “the gaze has a gender, and the viewer, whether male or female, loses their identity by being trapped in the erotic dynamics of the way of looking that the film imposes” (*, 2021b, 54).

Although Mulvey’s primary focus is on narrative cinema, her theories have been widely applied to the study of pornography. Academics such as Linda Williams, Katrien Jacobs and Constance Penley, have used her ideas to critique how pornography often

and then in 1995 enlarged its scope to include analyses of race and ethnicity, queer and trans studies and genre, among other topics.

¹⁴⁰ The first wave of feminist film theory argued that the eroticised cinematic gaze was textually constructed. This way of looking should be understood as ‘masculine’. This ‘masculinisation of the gaze’ also responded to a ‘feminisation of the show’, a phenomenon that emerged with great force in mass entertainment and was transformed into something purely commercial in the 20th century. From the *Cine, interculturalidad y políticas de género*, Mulvey 2021b, 61.

replicates similar dynamics of male dominance and female objectification. Williams applies Mulvey's ideas to the genre of hardcore pornography in her seminal work *Hard Core: Power, Pleasure, and the 'Frenzy of the Visible'* (1989). While Mulvey focuses on the passivity of women in mainstream cinema, Williams explores how pornography amplifies this dynamic, making the female body even more central to visual pleasure, analysing the complexities of desire, pleasure, and power within pornography, questioning whether women are always passive objects of the gaze. Williams's work opened the door for feminist scholars to productively evaluate pornography as cinema and popular culture, as a genre and industry, from textual, historical, and sociological perspectives. Katrien Jacobs in *Netporn: DIY Web Culture and Sexual Politics* (2007), draws on Mulvey's theory to examine the male gaze within online pornography and user-generated sexual content. She investigates how Mulvey's framework remains relevant in the digital age, exploring whether new forms of pornographic media reinforce or subvert traditional gender dynamics. Constance Penley has made significant contributions to the study of pornography, particularly through the lens of feminist and psychoanalytic theory, often engaging with Laura Mulvey's concept of the male gaze. One of her key works in this area is *The Feminist Porn Book: The Politics of Producing Pleasure* (2013), which she co-edited with other scholars like Tristan Taormino. Penley's works often critically engage with Mulvey's framework to examine how gender and power are constructed in visual media, including pornography. By extending Mulvey's analysis, researchers have examined how the visual pleasure in pornography is frequently constructed to reinforce patriarchal structures, reducing women to objects of male desire. Mulvey's theoretical framework has become a crucial tool for feminist critiques of the pornographic industry and its visual representation of women.

Other prominent researchers in the field of Feminist Film Theory include Ann Kaplan, whose book *Women & Film: Both Sides of the Camera* (1983) critically examines how female characters are portrayed in cinema. Kaplan argues that dominant cinematic consistently present women, like men, in fixed, archetypal roles that have been perpetuated for decades, reinforcing the notion of an 'eternal' essence for both genders (Kaplan 1983, 17). Teresa de Lauretis, in her book *Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema* (1984) offers a nuanced critique of Laura Mulvey's concept of the male gaze. de Lauretis contends that Mulvey overlooks the fact that women may continue to engage with cinema because the viewing experience provides them with a unique form of pleasure. She attributes this pleasure to the "specific character of female subjectivity"

(Colaizzi 1995c, 13) which she describes as a complex, multiple, and discontinuous space, allowing women to derive meaning and enjoyment from cinema in ways that transcend traditional gender roles.

In 1974, the film journal *Jump Cut*, was an important platform for critical analyses of film, media, and culture, including extensive research on pornography from a sex-positive and anti-censorship perspective. Over the years, *Jump Cut* has published pioneering essays on pornography written by leading scholars such as Linda Williams, Chuck Kleinhans¹⁴¹, Richard Dyer¹⁴², and Laura Kipnis¹⁴³, among others. These professors have contributed to shifting the discourse around pornography, investigating it as a cultural product with complex social, political, and ideological implications. The journal has played a key role in facilitating serious academic debate on pornography and its place within media studies, offering critical perspectives that challenge censorship and support sex-positive feminist approaches. More recently, works like Drucilla Cornell's *Feminism and Pornography* (2000)¹⁴⁴, Linda Williams's *Porn Studies* (2004), and

¹⁴¹ Kleinhans has been involved in critical analyses of film and media, including discussions on how feminist perspectives can reshape the understanding of various cinematic genres. His research frequently explores how films, including pornography, reflect and reinforce societal power structures, and how feminist film theory can offer alternative readings and critiques of these representations. In relation his work at: <http://www.ejumpcut.org/gatewaypages/kleinhansfolder/kleinhans.html> (Last consultation on September 10, 2024).

¹⁴² In the context of pornography, Dyer's work contributes to understanding how sexual identities and practices are represented and constructed. His insights into media representation and queer theory provide a critical framework for analysing pornography's role in shaping and reflecting societal attitudes toward sex and sexuality. As an example, his article in the magazine *Jump Cut*, "Male gay porn Coming to terms" (1985): <https://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/onlinessays/JC30folder/GayPornDyer.html> (Last consultation on September 10, 2024).

¹⁴³ Laura Kipnis's *Bound and Gagged: Pornography and the Politics of Fantasy in America* (1996) presents a provocative analysis of the role of pornography in American culture. Kipnis challenges conventional feminist critiques of pornography, arguing that pornography is not merely an instrument of patriarchy but a complex cultural form that reflects and engages with broader fantasies and contradictions in American life. She contends that the boundaries between pornography and mainstream culture are fluid, with both sharing significant similarities in how they construct fantasy, pleasure, and power.

¹⁴⁴ In this pivotal text she examines the intersection of feminist theory and pornography. Cornell offers a nuanced exploration of how pornography can be both a site of feminist critique and a potential arena for feminist empowerment. She challenges the binary opposition between feminism and pornography, arguing that pornography's representation of sexuality and power can be reimagined to align with feminist principles.

Pamela Church Gibson's *More Dirty Looks: Gender, Pornography and Power* (2004)¹⁴⁵ have solidified the academic value of pornographic research by providing diverse and critical perspectives on the subject. They highlight the potential for pornography to be examined not only as a site of contention but also as a complex cultural phenomenon that intersects with broader issues of gender, power, and identity.

Feminist film studies generally adopt a broad, often sociological approach to examining female audiences and the roles of women within the film industry, including actresses, producers, technicians, and directors (Smelik 2016, 1). Over the past thirty years, the development of feminist film theory has been characterised as Colaizzi points out as, “a mode of representation, discourse and institution, and as an integral part of the cinematographic act” (*, 2001a, 7). As feminist theorists progressed, they increasingly focused on the social construction of the audience, challenging the notion that film texts have an inherent power to shape the subject positions of their viewers. Thus, various scholars have made significant and valuable contributions to Feminist Film Theory, particularly in relation to the study of pornography.

3.3 Decoding the cinematic language: connotation, denotation, and semiotic analysis

The cinematographic image is a strongly mediated image, given that the images that appear on the screen as a continuum have been previously viewed and selected by the camera eye. Those images then go through a second selection and cutting process in the editing and, finally, become part of a whole in the finished product. It is precisely this assembly work that builds the coherence of each sequence and of the final object. In the cinematographic image, presence immediately refers to an absence, as Colaizzi notes, “that is, the invisible eye of the camera and the cuts and discarded frames, as well as the lack of immediate visibility of the cultural codes contribute to the constitution of the image” (*, 1995c, 17). This points to the constructiveness of the filmic image, making us realise that “we can never choose to have a first original ‘authentic’ look, but rather we are witnesses to a constant and uninterrupted assembly operation” (*, Colaizzi 1995c, 18),

¹⁴⁵ In this collection, Gibson brings together essays that examine how pornography reflects and shapes societal attitudes toward gender and sexuality. The book explores the implications of pornographic representations for feminist theory and critiques traditional feminist approaches to pornography. Gibson's work contributes to a deeper understanding of how pornography functions within a broader socio-political context, and how it can both challenge and reinforce existing power structures.

since there is always someone first creating those images and selecting the final product that the viewer will consume. Hence, the relationship with the cinematographic image is articulated for the viewer under two aspects, as Carmona notes, the formal and the narrative continuity of the filmic space (1991, 35).

Cinema is a language that combines different types of signifiers —images, words, music, noise and texts— and different types of signs —symbols and icons (Casetti 1991, 73). A film is created from the interweaving of one (signifiers) and the other (symbols). The methodology of this project starts from a historical analysis of the discursive constructions of pornography and feminist approaches to sexuality combined with an examination of sex education and forms of feminist activism which engage with pornographic cultures. As Barker and Austin note, “a film analysis is valuable to the extent that it raises and clarifies questions, concepts, approaches, which indicate how that film might be researched in other wider contexts” (2023, 186). To carry out the research, the visual and textual exploration of various works will be analysed within a critical framework, exploring the ways in which they offer forms of ‘resistance’ to heteronormative, misogynist and/or conventional pornography. An emphasis will be maintained on the potentiality of the ‘performative’ that has been so important to post-porn and feminist forms of pornography, based on queer, feminist, artistic and countercultural politics.

Films communicate meaning denotatively and connotatively. What the audience sees and hears is indicative, so they do not have to make an effort to recognise it. At the same time, these sounds and images are connotative and the way the scene is shot is intended to evoke certain effects on the senses, such as feelings in the viewer. Connotation language generally involves emotional implications, objective interpretation, social values, and ideological assumptions.¹⁴⁶ All public communication systems represent the dominant ideology and, therefore, the encoding and decoding of messages depends on the processes of connotation and denotation. It is untenable to mention a single code to explain the multiple and complex mechanisms for generating meaning that take place, in general, in any text and, especially, in those that can be considered artistic. The artistic

¹⁴⁶ Connotative language is used in a symbolic or figurative way and not only communicates information but also sensations and feelings. Denotative language is objective language, according to reality; one that is used to say things as they are or are presented, clearly, with the aim of being understood by listeners, without using any type of symbology.

message is constituted as an essentially heterogeneous semiotic space, in which a multiplicity of elements of the sign are updated, constituted as such because they acquire their semantic value from various coding processes.

Film semiotics arrived at a possible way of delimiting the class of objects it studies, instead of theorising about the entirety of cinema with linguistic methods, it studied only the linguistic aspects of cinema (Casetti 1991, 101). The object of study was not only the object of immediate perception but also the result of semiotic modelling. Film semiotics also raised two questions about semiotic modelling in general: the question of the existence of the object, and the singularity or plurality of the object of study. This is how the metaphor of the language of cinema became a conceptual model for studying cinema. Theoretical frameworks drawing on critiques of ideology, semiotics, psychoanalysis, and deconstruction proved more productive for understanding how sexual difference is encoded in the visual and narrative structure of a film. From semiotics, feminist film theory drew the insight that Hollywood cinema veils its ideological construction by hiding its means of production. Cinema film passes off and constructs the sign 'woman' as natural or realistic, while it is in fact a structure, code, or convention carrying an ideological meaning. In the heteropatriarchal ideology the image of woman can only signify anything in relation to men. The sign 'woman' is thus negatively represented as 'not-man', which means that 'woman-as-woman' is absent from the film.

One of the main tools that will be used in the development of this thesis is the textual analysis of the filmic text, since textual analysis is, in Carmona's words, an instrument that "can help to understand the constructed historical logic of cinematographic language, as a rhetorical device which, rather than elucidating the truth, seeks to persuade" (*, 1991, 44). Analytic practice is clearly also about describing and interpreting (Casetti 1991, 23) the object of study. The analyst has the task of entering the foreground and showing their subjective engagement with the object of analysis. Films function as textual devices that can be deconstructed through analysis, as they derive their meaning from narrative or non-narrative structures, genre conventions, and visual and auditory elements. This analytical approach reveals how films establish a unique connection with viewers, who play a crucial role in interpreting and engaging with the audiovisual text. As Carmona points out, "there is no film without a spectator" (*, 1991, 44-45). Film analysis must therefore elucidate the understanding produced by

approaching the film from the perspective of a specific viewer in a specific situation. (Carmona 1991, 45).

Cinema, compared to other languages, seems to have two very precise characteristics. On the one hand, it presents, as we have previously mentioned, formulas, signs and procedures, quite different from each other and often extracted from other expressive and artistic areas, and which merge to create a particular language. On the other hand, it does not have the systematicity and compactness that allow the appearance of recurring and shared rules. As Casetti says, “more than a language, it seems like an always-open laboratory” (1991, 66). In other words, cinema is a language that changes and grows and uses different tools to transmit its multiple messages. This constantly changing language is read, viewed and scrutinised by the audience, as Barker and Austin note “films are a simply a different kind of storytelling. All proffer to audiences an invitation to play a role in activating their story” (2023, 47).

The complexity of this language also shows the importance of studying it transversally. Investigating communicative processes from the perspective of interculturality involves studying the discursive production, as Colaizzi has noted in reference to:

The specific political and ideological contexts and in the context of multinational neoliberal capitalism, which is what we currently inhabit. This makes it relevant to study cinema, television, advertising, and digital media, because they are not just media: they are practices of the image, of the audiovisual text and, at the same time, speeches, industries and institutions and are therefore capable of a particularly powerful impact, with evident effects (*, 2021b, 39).

The study of a film text covers multiple variables, and its evaluation and analysis cannot be impartial. We should never be passive consumers of films (regardless of the genre we watch), since each movie is marked with multiple messages, both explicit and implicit, that can significantly influence our perceptions and behaviours, often without our conscious awareness. As Wollen aptly notes, “unlike other languages that work with one sign or another, [cinema] puts all its meanings at stake” (2013, 580). This perspective is particularly pertinent when examining pornography, which often challenges and reinforces various cultural narratives about sex, power, and identity. Thus, as consumers and critics, it is essential to critically engage with and reflect on the products we view, understanding how they shape and reflect societal attitudes and personal beliefs.

3.3.1 Conventions of the pornographic genre

When people discuss pornography, they generally have in mind a series of elements that describe traditional pornography, that is, the representation of heterosexual or lesbian sex—from a male satisfaction approach— normally using young, white bodies that conform to the established beauty canons. Women’s bodies are the central images in these films, always showing the ‘ideal’ of slim women, with long hair, full body wax and wearing makeup as a sign of the ‘desired’ or ‘true’ femininity. Meanwhile, the male body often occupies a less central role in these movies, with emphasis primarily placed on the size of the man’s penis and his ability to maintain an erection. The men engage in standard sexual practices based on satisfying male sexual desire (through penetration) and culminating—and ending—with male ejaculation. Mainstream porn is usually understood as the ‘only universal description’ that categorises everything that is thought to be pornographic.

Hegemonic heterosexual pornography is both vast in quantity and monotonous in its variety. Over time, the bodies of porn actresses and porn actors have become more ‘sophisticated’ through interventions such as plastic surgery, resulting in a portrayal of enhanced bodies, recreating sexual acts that are seen by the beholder’s eye as ‘real’ and as ‘desired’ to be repeated. This shift has led to a discourse framing sexuality as biomechanical, characterised by a predictable sequence: fellatio (and occasionally cunnilingus) followed by vaginal or anal penetration—often depicted from angles that emphasize the woman’s penetration—and culminating with the male ejaculation inside or outside the woman’s body—but always being visible. The coital repertoire has become rigid, with contemporary pornographic movies frequently showcasing increased male dominance and a focus on the forceful dynamics of sexual penetration (whether it is deep fellatio, vaginal and anal penetration). The elements examined in this study have been chosen because of their repeated presence as evidenced in academic studies on mainstream pornography such as Tuck (2009), Romero (2009), Albury (2014), Voros (2014), Moreno (2017), Aravena (2018) and Iglesias and Zein (2018) among others:

- Narrative structure: in mainstream porn, sexual encounters typically start with the woman performing oral sex on the man. This is followed by a series of repetitive sequences of vaginal and/or anal penetration, ending with the male ejaculating, which is often directed onto the woman’s face or other parts of her body.

- Type of shot: predominance of male POV (Point of View). This type of shot helps the consumer (male audience) to identify with the protagonist (male performer), getting into the ‘virile man-sex machine’ role, as well as close-ups of the genitals and the woman’s face looking aroused as she satisfies the man, perpetuating the myth of the woman whose pleasure consists in being instrumentalised as a sexual object. As Carmona pointed out “spectators identify themselves as a pure act of perception, as transcendental subjects” (*, 1991, 38). There is also another identification element to consider, the viewer’s identification with a character in the cinematographic fiction. This identification is related to the fact that viewers find, at each moment in the story, their own place in the observed film (Carmona 1991, 39). In addition, the constant fixation on the close-up shot of the genitals establishes a bodily fragmentation, linking the erogenous zone of the genitals as the predominant means of achieving sexual pleasure. The ejaculation of the man on the woman is a constant in traditional hard-core pornographic films. This type of shot is known as ‘come-shot’, ‘cum shot’ or ‘money shot’, because it was the costliest film image to produce (Williams 1989b, 95). The viewer needs to be absolutely convinced of the physical veracity of the action. Hence the obsessive use of the meat shot (close-up of the genital action to confirm penetration) and money shot (as the confirmation of male pleasure and final orgasm).¹⁴⁷

- The space/scenario: the viewer is presented as a voyeur who bursts into a private intimate space. The sexual encounters take place in enclosed spaces and sometimes the lighting is not natural, which intensifies the effect of artificiality.¹⁴⁸ Sometimes there are scenes in outdoor spaces, to offer the curiosity of being caught during the sexual act.

- Construction of femininity: mainstream pornography presents a feminine aesthetic based on the ‘artificial’, with the beautifying aesthetic elements typical of the stereotype of femininity anchored in current culture (female object of desire with long, painted nails, make-up, shaved body, long hair, wearing lingerie, and/or heels, among

¹⁴⁷ The money shot (facial shot) is a term used in the pornographic industry to refer to a scene or a specific moment within a scene that is considered the most visually impactful or climactic. Traditionally, it often refers to the moment of the male ejaculation, particularly when it is aimed at or shown on the female performer’s face.

¹⁴⁸ Voyeurism consists of observing another person, or groups, during their sexual relationships. The term derives from the French word: *voyeur*, from the verb *voir* (‘to see’) which, together with the suffix *-eur*, means ‘who sees’. Full description at: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/voyeurism> (Last consultation on January 23, 2024).

other elements). The construction of femininity in pornography can be analysed from the voyeur experience, that is, from what the viewer wants to see, and consumers are mainly white, heterosexual, middle-class, young and male. In this way, we can see how traditional pornographic ‘tubes’ organise female bodies in different categories, emphasising their body attributes (brunette, tattooed women, small tits, etc.) and ethnicities (Italian, French, Japanese, among others).

- Construction of masculinity: masculinity appears almost exclusively in relation to its genital representation. Thus, the sexual act is ritualised around this symbol —the phallus— that builds the masculine stereotype around redefinitions that come from symbolic aspects based on genital vigour (size, power and its ability to remain erect). It is worth mentioning that currently the masculinity presented in pornographic cinema is more concerned with presenting an image of the aesthetic body, that is, a body which is young, muscular and shaved, an imprint of postmodern masculinity highly concerned with aesthetics and brought forth from the explosion of masculinities that occurred in the late 1990s and early 2000s.¹⁴⁹

- The orgasm: in mainstream pornography feminine desire is often positioned lower in the hierarchy compared to masculine desire. This genre typically prioritises the satisfaction of the male performer, reinforcing a narrative where male pleasure and orgasm are central to the sexual encounter. Consequently, the representation of female desire frequently takes a secondary role, with sexual acts often depicted as instruments to fulfil male gratification rather than mutual pleasure. This dynamic reflects broader societal attitudes that elevate male sexual satisfaction while marginalising female agency and desire within the pornographic context.

- Direction: in the vast majority of mainstream productions, the person who films and directs is a white cis-man with the intention of showing his films to a male audience. In this way, a certain ‘power’ is generated around being the director of the camera and being able to create pornographic stories under the male gaze.

The sexual discourse prevalent in mainstream pornography is characterised by the mechanisation of sexual relationships, reduced to repetitive acts centred on genitality and

¹⁴⁹ According to Merriam-Webster a metrosexual is “usually [an] urban heterosexual male given to enhancing his personal appearance by fastidious grooming, beauty treatments, and fashionable clothes”. More information about the metrosexual concept at: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/metrosexual> (Last consultation on April 25, 2022).

male satisfaction. To critically examine these dynamics, this study will probe several key aspects: the construction of narrative structures, the role of the camera as a tool for expressing desire, and the representation of women and men within these narratives. This research will explore how these elements differ in feminist, ethical, and post-pornographic productions. The investigation aims to highlight how feminist and ethical approaches challenge traditional pornographic paradigms and offer alternative portrayals of sexual relationships and gender dynamics.

3.3.2 Specific methodology for approaching the pornographic audiovisual text

This analytical study considers three fundamental elements for the textual analysis of pornographic audiovisual texts: the plot or storyline, sexual interactions and, the roles of male and female characters. By examining these components, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how narratives and character dynamics are constructed and how they contribute to the portrayal of gender and sexuality in pornographic films. The first element involves assessing whether the selected films feature a structured story or script, or if they are solely based on the sexual encounters of the performers. Typically, as discussed in the previous section (3.2.1), mainstream pornography often lacks a coherent narrative, with the focus primarily on sexual acts rather than character development or motivations. In contrast, ethical and feminist films frequently incorporate a narrative that challenges conventional stereotypes, depicting men not merely as ‘sex machines’ and women as passive ‘inflatable dolls’, instead, their sexual impulses are linked to a story that unfolds during the film, offering a more nuanced and dynamic representation of sexuality and relationships.¹⁵⁰

The second element involves examining the sexual interactions to determine whether they adhere to the conventional pattern seen in traditional pornography — typically featuring oral sex (usually performed on the male figure), followed by penetration and male orgasm. This analysis aims to reveal whether feminist and ethical pornography introduces a more diverse range of sexual interactions and how these interactions differ from traditional norms. The third element addresses the representation of gender roles in pornographic films. Mainstream pornography often perpetuates stereotypical portrayals, with women depicted as passive participants whose primary role

¹⁵⁰ In regard the storylines in feminist porn movies in Chapter 5, Section 5.1.

is to satisfy male desire, and men shown as constantly driven by an insatiable sexual appetite. This study will assess how feminist and ethical pornography contests or redefines these traditional stereotypes, providing alternative depictions of both women and men. It will examine how these representations offer a more complex perspective on gender and sexuality, moving beyond simplistic and entrenched views.

Each of the above variables will be subdivided into three plot elements in order to effectively break down the commentary analysis of the selected films: duration, narration and plot resources that take place in the films. In relation to the performers, I looked to the sexual representation (dynamics of the participants towards sex) and the character development (independent, codependent and/or not developed). These factors will be considered in relation to other fundamental elements of filmmaking, such as technical-audiovisual components, camera angles, cinematography, lighting, sound and music, set design, makeup, and overall aesthetics. This comprehensive approach will provide a deeper understanding of how these various elements contribute to the film's narrative and thematic structure.

My analysis in the following stories includes a brief description of the story, detailed examination of selected sexual sequences and the female and male roles of the active participants. According to Carmona:

We could say that a meaningful interpretation of a film would involve the viewer's application of a series of codes and subcodes that would allow them to decode it, making the received information equivalent to the output information. The viewers are not recipients but rather a kind of co-author, an active element in the process of constructing meaning (*, 1991, 52).

The audience model based on textual analysis does not consider the cultural influences and individual differences that shape the various ways in which viewers may interpret a film, thus limiting viewers' agency by assuming that all men and women understand texts according to their gender (Sider 2021, 23). Recognising the active role of audiences in constructing textual meanings does not mean ignoring the influences exerted by texts themselves. This analysis, therefore, moves towards the idea that the audience represents a multilayered exchange between text and viewer, and pornography can be understood as a diverse domain with rich potential for exploring various forms of human sexual expression.

3.3.3 Units of analysis: selected sample

The lack of studies and analyses of films considered feminist and/or alternative to conventional porn makes them an interesting area of study, especially from the perspective of their possible contribution to different sexual references as a counter balance to our hetero-patriarchal society.¹⁵¹ I selected films for analysis according to the following categories: 1. Political and critical dimension: responding to political interest or commitment through their stories and their rejection of the traditional way of making porn, that is, representing practices that go beyond what are called ‘hegemonic’ (mainstream discourse) in addition to vindicating the diversity and multiplicity of human beings; and 2. Social and ethical dimension: porn companies that follow ethical production standards and move away from traditional porn schemes.

After fulfilling the above categories, the films were selected with the following criteria:

1. They must have some recognition within the alternative pornographic field.
2. They must develop a story.
3. They must represent sexual practices beyond the hegemonic ones.
4. They must represent different bodies and sexual diversity.

These questions are important in the film selection since pornographic films that can be classed as ethically produced and have obtained some forms of recognition are the central object of this study. This approach will allow for an analysis of whether these films are accessible and appealing to a ‘standard’ audience, or if they cater primarily to viewers who typically consume pornographic content for free, regardless of the producer or the nature of the production. Demonstrating that a film develops a coherent story is crucial for our analysis, as we aim to examine films that offer more than just a series of sexual positions and have a longer duration than the brief clips typically found on free ‘tubes’. Regarding the diversity of bodies, practices, and sexual orientations, our goal is to determine whether so-called ethical or feminist pornographic films provide a genuinely diverse representation and, if so, how this compares to the superficial and stereotyped

¹⁵¹ The late arrival of these feminist groups and, perhaps, the lack of interest from scientific communities in this pornographic typology, have made it impossible to study these movements in depth for years. But it is something that is changing, and more studies are being carried out on this type of pornography, in addition to the appearance of magazines, conferences, courses and spaces where people can talk about pornography and sexual rights.

portrayals of ‘diversity’ found on mainstream pornographic sites, where variety is often reduced to a mere category.¹⁵²

The above approach is used to analyse eight pornographic films from the United Kingdom and Spain, as well as two performances discussed in subsequent chapters. Chapter 4 delves into two films from the ethical porn company Four Chambers and two from the theatrical pornographic company Thousand Faces Films, both of which represent British alternative pornography. Chapter 5 focuses on four films from the XConfessions project by Erika Lust—two directed by Lust herself and two by guest directors—as examples of ethical erotic content created in Spain. All ethical and/or feminist pornographic companies studied in this thesis show their products on their pay-to-view web platforms and at alternative pornographic film festivals and, in fact, refuse to collaborate closely with mainstream pornography web platforms. There are, therefore, no joint agreements or projects between companies to generate new films. Movies from the company Lust Cinema Films can, however, be found in free conventional porn *tubes*, because users upload content from different porn sites and the companies do not eliminate this stolen material, where piracy and content theft is a common practice in this sector (consult Chapter 4, Section 4.3 for comprehensive details). Chapter 6 examines two performances, one from Diana J. Torres and videoarmsidea and the other by the Post-Op collective, all key figures in Barcelona’s post-porn scene.

These companies were selected for their significant impact and prominence within the ethical and/or alternative pornographic sectors. Four Chambers and Thousand Faces Films are noted for their artistic approach to pornography, often intertwined with political statements and social commentary. Erika Lust’s XConfessions project has achieved considerable recognition within the pornographic community, known for its extensive filmography over the past decade and its innovative approach of involving guest directors, particularly supporting female directors in a predominantly male-dominated industry. Additionally, XConfessions invites public participation by incorporating viewers’

¹⁵² For example, Pornhub is categorised by attributes (feet, blonde, big tits, big dick, big ass, muscular men, etc.) and ethnic groups (Ebony, Russian, Asian, Interracial, etc.) generating tags that describe what type of body or origin of the performers the user will find in the movies. The webpage has around 10 categories—ethnicity, scenario, partners, LGBTIQA+, actions, attributes, language spoken, age and production—organised by multiple subcategories such as: hentai, amateur, mature, pornstar, public, babysitter, massage, orgy, lesbian, anal, bondage, among others. (Last consultation about categories and subcategories on June 23, 2023).

confessions and fantasies into its films. In the post-porn sphere, the selected collectives—Diana J. Torres and videoarmsidea, and the Post-Op—are pivotal figures in Barcelona’s post-porn movement. They have been influential in pioneering performances both on the street and in public institutions such as museums and universities, contributing to the movement’s visibility and impact in Spain.

Investigating films considered feminist and/or alternative to conventional porn is crucial, as they have been relatively underexplored and under analysed. It is important to assess whether these films have a comparable impact to mainstream cinema in terms of their narratives and whether they offer alternative sexual references that challenge our hetero-patriarchal society. Categorising each pornographic expression as a distinct style governed by its own principles is misleading. Feminist porn should not be viewed merely as another subgenre of pornography but as a product rooted in political values that address critical, social, and ethical dimensions. As demonstrated in Chapter 2, which covers feminist and transfeminist movements engaged with issues related to porn ‘for women’, post-porn, and feminist/ethical porn, feminist porn uses sexually explicit imagery to challenge and deconstruct dominant representations of gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, social status, ability, age, body type, and other aspects of identity. It examines concepts such as desire, power, beauty, and pleasure with the aim of dismantling barriers of inequality, questioning traditional gender roles, and challenging heteronormativity and homonormativity.

Additionally, feminist porn seeks to redefine conventional notions of sex, expanding the sexual language to encompass erotic activity, identity expression, power dynamics, cultural comfort, and even political activism. This study examines distinct forms of pornographic production inside what is called feminist and ethical pornography and post-porn, to provide a comprehensive understanding of contemporary approaches within the genre. It explores artistic and politically engaged pornography by Four Chambers and Thousand Faces, and ethical erotic content represented at the Lust’s XConfessions. Finally, the study delves into the post-porn movement, focusing on the performances of key players in the Barcelona post-porn scene. By analysing these varied forms of films and performances, the study aims to highlight their unique contributions to the evolving landscape of pornography and their impact on the representation of sexuality and gender.

CHAPTER 4: INDIE AND ALTERNATIVE PORN MOVIES IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

This chapter delves into the evolution of pornography regulations in the United Kingdom, focusing on legislative actions taken since the 1970s, as well as the most recent measures that have sparked significant debate, particularly regarding privacy concerns. It examines how successive UK governments, influenced by a range of advocacy groups—including religious organisations and feminist movements—have called for stricter legal control over the production, distribution, and consumption of pornographic material. Despite these legal constraints, ethical and feminist porn companies in the UK have persisted in producing content that is not only sexual but also politically and socially aware for over three decades.

The chapter highlights how this niche sector of the pornographic industry has navigated the legal landscape to thrive in the face of censorship and regulatory pressures. In particular, two prominent British indie pornographic companies, Four Chambers and Thousand Faces Films, are examined for their contributions to ethical and feminist porn. These companies, both recognised for their distinct creative approaches, have garnered critical acclaim and awards. Their films have been featured in major international pornographic film festivals, such as the ‘Pornfilmfestival Berlin’, ‘London Porn Film Festival’, and ‘San Francisco PornFilmFestival’.

The analysis in this chapter focuses on four selected films from these companies, scrutinising the narrative techniques, visual aesthetics, and musical elements that distinguish their work. Special attention is given to how these films challenge conventional pornographic tropes, emphasising themes of consent, diversity, and empowerment. By examining the intersection of artistic expression and political ideology in these films, this chapter sheds light on the broader significance of ethical and feminist pornography in contemporary cultural and legal contexts.

4.1 Censorship and resistance: the rise of alternative porn in the United Kingdom

For a long time, English obscenity law reflected uncertainties about what could be said in a changing society. The law changed as modern literature and popular culture took shape. Supporters and opponents of censorship alike tried to remake the law as they recognised the changes in sexuality and culture that began in the 1960s. The United Kingdom has a markedly different tradition of pornography regulation than that found in most other Western countries, which legalised hardcore pornography during the 1960s

and 1970s (Hilliard, 2021). In contrast, the United Kingdom was almost the only liberal democracy that did not do so, and UK obscenity laws, such as the Obscene Publications Act 1959 (in England and Wales), remained strict by European standards. Other Acts of Parliament, such as the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982 and the Video Recordings Act 1984, were combined with the Obscene Publications Act to set out criteria for the types of material that could be publicly accessed and distributed in any form in the United Kingdom.¹⁵³

In the 2000s, the rise of the Internet made a vast array of pornography from around the world easily accessible, far beyond what could be legally published in the UK. Governments showed their concern about the situation and began to consider possible forms of Internet censorship. Thus, the ‘Byron Review’ (2008) —named “Safer Children in a Digital World” focussed on children’s use of Internet and video games— and the ‘Bailey Review’ (2011) —titled “Letting Children Be Children” an inquiry into the commercialisation and sexualisation of childhood— were commissioned by two successive governments to investigate concerns about access by under-18s to pornography on the Internet.¹⁵⁴

Pornography is claimed to be one of the most profitable industries in the world. In 2005, the Adult Industry Trade Association noted that “in the UK alone it is estimated to be worth £1bn”.¹⁵⁵ Pornography is widely available on the Internet, but it is important to be aware of what is ‘acceptable’ and what is not in the eyes of the law. United Kingdom pornography law is designed to protect the public, particularly those who do not consent or are unable to consent, such as children. Pornography offences cover a huge range of areas, including indecent images (for example possession of inappropriate images of children) or so-called ‘extreme’ pornography. Porn laws overlap with other criminal infractions designed to prevent harm and protect the most vulnerable. In recent years, the

¹⁵³ British Board of Film Classification (BBFC): <https://www.bbfc.co.uk/education/university-students/legislation/the-video-recordings-act> (Last consultation on June 26, 2024).

¹⁵⁴ The Annual Report details how non-UK porn services which allow children to access hardcore pornography could be disrupted by a block on payments from the UK: <https://web.archive.org/web/20130924090614/http://www.atvod.co.uk/news-consultations/news-consultationsnews/atvod-acts-to-protect-children-from-hardcore-porn-on-uk-vod-services-and-proposes-block-on-payments-to-non-uk-porn-services> (Last consultation on June 26, 2024).

¹⁵⁵ Global porn industry worth £30bn according to *Forbes* magazine in 2005. See: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/magazine/4305257.stm> (Last consultation on June 7, 2024).

government have also tried to strengthen pornography laws, such as introducing a specific law for revenge porn. This law describes it as sharing a private sexual photographs or film without the consent of the person in it.¹⁵⁶

In 2017, an attempt was made to introduce an age verification law on pornographic websites (The Digital Economy Act 2017), but this decree has been suspended several times, following objections over data protection and practical difficulties in enforcing it.¹⁵⁷ According to an article on *BBC* news on June 30, 2023, the British government still wants to establish the Online Safety Bill to protect minors and prevent them from accessing pornographic websites. The methods that they want to implement include: users having to share a selfie, verifying official IDs, bank statements or voice recognition technology. Digital rights advocates are not convinced that people's privacy will be protected, evidencing in the *BBC* news article that "there is a lack of transparency around the tools and how they collect people's data"¹⁵⁸, furthermore, the legislation could mean that vital sexual health education content could be blocked, not just porn. Another important fact is that until it left the European Union on January 1, 2021, the United Kingdom was the only EU Member State to ban private importations of pornography by consumers from other Member States.¹⁵⁹

In response to all the more recent laws and measures to restrict access to online pornography (Section 63 of the Criminal Justice and Immigration Act 2008, Web Blocking 2013, Audiovisual Media Services Regulations 2014 and the Digital Economy Act 2017)¹⁶⁰, feminist porn appeared on the scene seeking to change the male-dominated

¹⁵⁶ Revenge porn has been a sexual crime since 2015 and carries a sentence of up to two years' incarceration. See: <https://www.lawtonslaw.co.uk/resources/what-is-the-revenge-porn-law-in-england/> (Last consultation on July 15, 2022).

¹⁵⁷ About the Digital Economy Act 2017 at Chapter 2, Section 2.1.

¹⁵⁸ Full article at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/technology-66065600> (Last consultation on August 18, 2023).

¹⁵⁹ *HM Revenue & Customs Annual Report 2004-05 and Autumn Performance Report 2005*: <https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20140109143644/http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/about/hmrc-report2005.pdf> (Last consultation on June 26, 2024).

¹⁶⁰ The Criminal Justice and Immigration Act (2008) was the result of different petitions from citizens and the British government's aim to close violent pornography sites for adults since 2003 after the murder of Jane Longhurst. In relation to the web blocking measure (2013), Internet filtering systems used by Internet Service Providers (ISPs) were used to block pornographic content in the United Kingdom.

culture that surrounds pornography, with directors such as Anna Arrowsmith (known as Anna Span, who began her career as a porn director in 1999 and made over 250 movies focusing on female pleasure)¹⁶¹, Vex Ashley (creator of the Four Chambers porn site), Pandora/Blake (queer activist, filmmaker and educator), and companies like JoyBear Pictures (advocating for gender equality, feminism and above all for ethical porn with its films since 2004), Frolicme (founded by Anna Richards in 2015 as an independent erotic platform for women and couples looking to explore ethical porn), among others. Feminist discourses on pornography in the United Kingdom are undergoing a significant paradigm shift, increasingly centred on notions of harm. This shift moves away from earlier debates focused primarily on censorship and legal restrictions, towards more complex discussions that critically examine the impact of pornography on visual representation, sexual practices, and societal norms. Rather than advocating for censorship, contemporary feminist critiques explore how pornography can perpetuate harmful gender stereotypes, objectification, and exploitation, particularly of women. This approach emphasises the need for ethical considerations in production and consumption, addressing concerns such as consent, power dynamics, and the commodification of bodies in a way that balances sexual freedom with a critical understanding of harm.

4.2 Exploring the aesthetic and conceptual potential of pornography: A Four Chambered Heart

As noted above, censorship of pornography in the United Kingdom has been a subject of intense controversy and debate over the years. British authorities have attempted to regulate and restrict the distribution of pornographic material, citing moral and social concerns. However, these measures have been constantly challenged and reevaluated, especially with the emergence of pro-sex feminist movements from the 1980s and 1990s onwards. These pro-sex feminist movements have criticised censorship, advocating for a

Finally, the Audiovisual Media Services Regulation (2014) required online video streaming (video on demand or VOD) in the UK to comply with BBFC R18 certificate standards.

¹⁶¹ Anna Span saw herself as part of the mainstream in the sense that she wanted to make her films widely accessible, both to challenge stereotypes and broaden the audience's view of what pornography could be. However, she remained critical of much of the mainstream industry's objectification of women. Her feminist approach did not always align with industry norms, but her work was still acknowledged and respected, indicating that she carved out a niche for herself within the broader framework of mainstream adult entertainment.

view of sexuality that recognises and celebrates women’s sexual autonomy, as well as their right to produce and consume consensual pornography. This dialectic between censorship and sexual freedom reflects a broader struggle over control, morality, and individual rights in contemporary British society.

In what follows, I explore the work of two pornographic companies who create ethical pornography and follow feminist principles in the making of their films. Four Chambers (or A Four Chambered Heart) was born in 2013 with the idea of being a cooperative art project, involving primarily just two people: Vex Ashley —British adult filmmaker and performer— and her partner (who remains anonymous), based in the North of England. All filming, editing, camera work, photography, graphic design, merchandising design, writing, and maintenance are provided by Vex Ashley and her partner. She also created the site which Matt Hooks built and maintains.¹⁶² They also rely on the help of an assistant, Rachael, who helps them with social media, emails and merchandising orders one day a week.¹⁶³ Music for the films is sourced from sites like Soundcloud and Bandcamp¹⁶⁴, supporting new musicians and little-known independent artists.

One of the main goals of their project is to prioritise transparency, in the ways they make their films and how they treat their performers and crew. Performer pay is a priority for them. As Vex Ashley points out on the Four Chambers website “porn performers take on the most risk in a society that unfairly stigmatises putting sex on screen”. They have always paid a flat rate to all performers regardless of gender, physical characteristics, ‘fame’, experience or acts undertaken. Their rate for a full scene is currently \$1,100 per shoot. Performers are informed of the shooting, the scenes and who will be their scene partner(s) before the shooting date; and they can provide a list of what they want and do not want to happen on camera and their likes and dislikes for filming sex, and the physical limitations they may have. They can also specify the level of protection (or not) that they wish to use in a film before the shooting date and on the day. All performers —even if performing with a regular sexual partner— must report to set

¹⁶² See: <https://www.instagram.com/matthooks/?hl=es> (Last consultation on September 16, 2024).

¹⁶³ On their website they do not give more information on the identity of their assistant. About the members of the project at: <https://afourchamberedheart.com/about> (Last consultation on November 24, 2022).

¹⁶⁴ Soundcloud streams music online for free and Bandcamp is an online music store, as well as a release and promotion platform for musicians, singers and bands.

with an STI (Sexually Transmitted Infections) test within two weeks of the date of the shoot.

Another important issue for this company is that there is no obligation on actors to have an orgasm during filming (whether real or fake), nor are there any required sex positions or acts, unless directly negotiated beforehand with them in accordance with the concept of the film. They try to ‘script’ the sex as little as possible and welcome input from performers, in order to produce a more ‘realistic’ result. That is, to exhibit sex in a natural way, relying on actresses and actors who develop situations in contexts that are often without scripts, requests or expectations. As they state on their website, everything is up for negotiation. Performers get the chance to review their film before it is released and have the opportunity to veto any clips or shots, they might be unhappy with for any reason and have them swapped out or changed.

The search engines of most porn ‘tubes’ define content through types and keywords. Four Chambers seeks to move away from this, rejecting explicit narratives or roles and not labelling their performers and films with the common markers of gender, sexuality, race, and body type. In this way, they hope to leave space for their viewers to experience outside of what they normally seek —creating a space where the spectator is allowed to explore from their own perspective— and, furthermore, for the performers themselves to exist in a space less restricted by established categories. Such ambiguity is important because it hopefully encourages the audience to use their imagination instead of passively watching the same usual content.

Four Chambers do not publicly use tags or many descriptors for their movies, but they try to include information about the films with references and notes on their website. Looking at the Four Chambers body of work, videos cannot be searched based on a single parameter. There is no real description that makes one video different from another. As Vex Ashley points out in an interview for *VICE* magazine in 2015:

We are not defined by a single sexuality or level of explicitness. We do not refer to our performers as anything other than their name. With Four Chambers, we wanted to create a space outside of descriptions where the viewer does not clearly know before clicking play what they are going to see, meaning they do not get a

chance to instantly dismiss it because it shows a particular body or idea or sexuality that they do not think they enjoy.¹⁶⁵

By being consciously ‘vague’, they hope that their project becomes a place where performers are not identified by their physicality. Four Chambers stands out for its focus on the ethical and aesthetic representation of sexuality, moving away from the conventional standards of the porn industry and offering an alternative perspective that emphasizes diversity and creativity. The next few pages present an analysis of two films from this company. Four Chambers has been nominated and won awards at various pornographic film festivals including in 2014 the ‘Best Cinematography’ award for their film *Primavera* at the East Bay Express Short Erotic Film Fest (BRIEFS). The following pages present an analysis of two films:

Table 1: Four Chambers movie selection

Film	Year	Duration	Performers
<i>Abjecting</i>	2019	6 minutes	Sloan Cox
<i>Archetype</i>	2019	12 minutes	Devorah Reine and Kinsey Pink

4.2.1 Reappropriating repulsion: *Abjecting* (Four Chambers, 2019)

Women’s hair has historically been significant in various cultures and societies, not only as an aesthetic attribute but also as a symbol of identity, femininity, and social status. In many cultures, long, well-groomed hair has been associated with beauty and youth, while changes in hair style and colour can reflect cultural and personal trends. Additionally, hair can play a role in self-expression and asserting individual and cultural identity, as well as in constructing a woman’s public and professional image. Hair acts as a gender differentiator and it seems that, when women decide to alter this social order, they become a threat. Long hair in women is attributed with the adjectives of beauty, health and youth,

¹⁶⁵ Vex Ashley’s perspective on labels concerning pornography and performers at: <https://www.vice.com/en/article/nkk47/feminist-porn-awards-asks-the-existential-question-is-there-feminist-porn> (Last consultation on June 28, 2024).

while if a woman wears it too short, she may receive comments that question her beauty and ‘femininity’. The image of a woman with shaved hair is commonly linked with illness or punishment. Elsewhere short hair is associated with older women —as Bel Olid observes in *A contrapel: O por qué trencar el cercle de depilació, submissió i autoodi* (2020), long hair in women is a sign of femininity, “cutting our hair is a way of giving up our femininity. This idea resides in our long hair, where it is attractive and feminine; short hair is not. And socially it is not desirable” (2020, 37)¹⁶⁶.

Body hair is also under the control of the patriarchal gaze: it is one of the factors used to categorise, dominate and control women’s bodies. The patriarchal system uses hair to determine the gender and class position of individuals and their conformity to the imposed gender.¹⁶⁷ Hair is the visibility of something deeper and has become a means of expression and political demands. Historically, mainstream porn has tended to value hairlessness in women, aligning with patriarchal beauty standards that prioritise smooth, youthful appearances. This preference reinforces the objectification of women’s bodies, reducing them to idealised forms that cater to male fantasies. However, contemporary shifts in porn and feminist critiques challenge these norms by embracing body hair as a form of empowerment and self-expression. Films and content that feature body hair reject the narrow standards of beauty imposed by the patriarchy, presenting hair as a natural, unaltered aspect of the body. This move towards inclusivity in adult content reflects a broader cultural shift towards valuing authenticity and diversity, aiming to dismantle the objectifying gaze and promote a more nuanced understanding of beauty and sexuality.

With the film *Abjecting* (2019), Four Chambers aims to explore the intersection between desire and disgust. For this reason, they use hair (female hair) as a key element in the movie, trying to show how hair has a similar duality, as they point out on their website:

[Hair] is simultaneously an object of desire and signifier of ultimate feminine beauty when it is long, flowing, neat and attached to the head. But when removed from that context it becomes immediately disgusting; pulling a long hair from your food, collected in a wad in the plug hole or pulled in clumps from a brush.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁶ Own translation from Catalan.

¹⁶⁷ History of female hair at: <https://www.rachaelghair.com/the-hair-historian> (Last consultation on October 12, 2023).

¹⁶⁸ See: <https://afourchamberedheart.com/cinema/abjecting> (Last consultation on July 28, 2022).

Abjecting (2019) directly references the concept of ‘abjection’ —the notion in critical theory of becoming discarded and detached from patterns and regulations, particularly in relation to society and morals. This term has been studied in post-structuralism as that which essentially disturbs traditional identity and cultural theories. Julia Kristeva explored the concept in her book *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (1980), where abject refers to the human reaction to a vulnerable collapse in meaning caused by the loss of the distinction between subject and object or between self and other (see more at Chapter 5, subsection 5.2.1). Using the work of Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan, Kristeva described the abject as that which does not respect borders, positions, conventions and disturbs identity, structure and order. Abjection arouses different feelings, in the field of ethics and regulations, between good/bad, healthy/sick, normal/abnormal, legal/illegal. In the aesthetic field, between the beautiful and the ugly, and in the field of emotions, the abject basically runs between disgust and indignation. Disgust is the primary human reaction to the abject. Disgust represents the feeling that qualifies the separation of borders between people and the world, between subject and object, between interior and exterior. As Vex Ashley reflects on her website in relation to the movie *Abjecting*:

Things that are abject exist on that border, hair, menstrual blood, shit, fur, skins and ultimately, corpses. Demarcating what is alive and what is not. These abject things repulse us because they remind us of our mortality and essential baseness, but we are also drawn to them [...] Porn in lots of ways explores and reclaims the abject corporeality of our bodies. Sex is not just transcendent, sublime, and it is more than just abject. It is somewhere between.¹⁶⁹

A primary example of abjection is the corpse (as a traumatic reminder of our own materiality and the last phase of human life: death); however, other elements can cause similar reactions, such as an open wound, sewage, even the skin that forms on the surface of warm milk, nail clippings, waste, and so on. The ‘abject’ exists, therefore, somewhere between the concept of object and the concept of subject. Kristeva claims that within the limits of what one describes as subject (a part of oneself) and object (something that exists

¹⁶⁹ In relation to the movie: <https://afourchamberedheart.com/cinema/abjecting> (Last consultation on July 28, 2022) and: <https://afourchamberedheart.com/members/read/a-b-j-e-c-t-i-n-g> (Last consultation on June 28, 2024).

independently of oneself) reside elements that were once categorised as a part of oneself or one's identity that has since been rejected (the abject).

Abjection has been used to describe the status of often marginalised groups, such as women, single mothers, sex workers, poor people, racialised people, non-normative bodies. Kristeva also declares that sex and violence form the primordial intersection of humanity, and women are the victims of the symbolic order. For example, the mother or the pregnant woman associated with breastfeeding, hair loss due to hormonal processes and bodily waste are rendered abject and therefore no longer considered as objects of desire. Kristeva was also the first to use the abject in cultural analysis, expressing this idea to examine antisemitism and xenophobia. In that context, abjection manifests in the construction of negative narratives and stereotypes about minority groups, attributing them with dehumanising and dangerous characteristics. Kristeva argues that these processes not only perpetuate exclusion and discrimination, but also reinforce social and political divisions within communities. Imogen Tyler has also studied the concept of abjection in her book *Revolt Subjects: Social Abjection and Resistance in Neoliberal Britain* (2013) where she explores social abjection as a lived and socially constructed phenomenon. Her work examines how groups are marginalised and excluded within the neoliberal context of Britain, analysing both those who are abjected and those who perpetuate such abjection. Tyler challenges dominant representations of power and privilege by highlighting the ways in which abject subjects resist and mobilise against these structures of oppression.

In *Abjecting*, the narrative delves into the concept of abjection. Sloan Cox's¹⁷⁰ hair serves as a central element, transforming from a mere accessory into an active participant in her sexual expression and self-satisfaction. Through striking, visually aesthetically rich scenes, the film pushes boundaries by confronting viewers with intense and often uncomfortable representations of the female body, aiming to evoke both fascination and repulsion. Like much of Four Chambers' work, it challenges traditional notions of pornography by combining art, philosophy, and sexuality into a cohesive, thought-provoking piece. The film features scenes of vaginal masturbation (minute 1:13),

¹⁷⁰ Canadian porn performer and camgirl. She has participated in two films for Four Chambers, *Human Botany* (2018) and *Abjecting* (2019). Sloan Cox embodies what is considered attractive and young. In *Abjecting*, what stands out is not so much her appearance, but rather how her hair becomes a central element, enveloping her throughout the entire movie.

cunnilingus (at 3:18) and fellatio (at 4:52 and 5:10). While fellatio is depicted, the male performer remains unseen—his face is not seen, nor his voice heard at any time. In some scenes, the two performers do interact: they kiss (at 2:44), he masturbates her (notably at 1:53, 2:07 and 4:11), she spits on his mouth (at 2:43 and 2:48) and he grips her neck while continuing masturbate her (at 3:28 and 4:31). The focus of the film is largely on giving pleasure to Sloan Cox, primarily through masturbation and oral sex. Her breathing and moans are audible throughout, layered over the soundtrack. The soundtrack by the Californian band Foie Gras with the song *Devotee* is an essential element in the film, helping to immerse the audience in each frame with its dark melodies.¹⁷¹ The film offers a variety of visual styles, from very detailed shots of her face and different parts of her body, showing the viscosity of her hair captured by the camera lens. The film features a variety of shots with camera focus changes, overlapping shots, and reverse scenes.

Abjecting opens with an image of tangled black hair, beneath which the blurred, reddish-toned body of the performer Sloan Cox gradually comes into view, accompanied by the sound of her moans. At the 14-second mark, a series of close-ups (Figs. 1, 2 and 3) focus on Cox's face, chest, vulva, and legs, all partially obscured by her long black hair.¹⁷² She engages with her hair throughout these shots—pulling, biting, and tousling it, using it to tease her nipples and vagina. The camera alternates between extreme close-ups and wider shots of her body entangled in the black hair, creating a sensual and chaotic interplay. Hair is traditionally associated with femininity and passivity. Cox subverts these associations by using her hair as a tool of agency and pleasure. By incorporating it into her sexual encounter, she asserts control over her body and its desires. Her hair becomes an extension of her erotic autonomy, blurring the line between object and subject.

¹⁷¹ Song from Foie Gras at Bandcamp: <https://foie.bandcamp.com/album/devotee> (Last consultation on June 28, 2024)

¹⁷² For the film they decided to add hair extensions to the performer to appear even longer and lusher and to keep the hair viscous and moist, they sprayed it with water and oil during the recording.

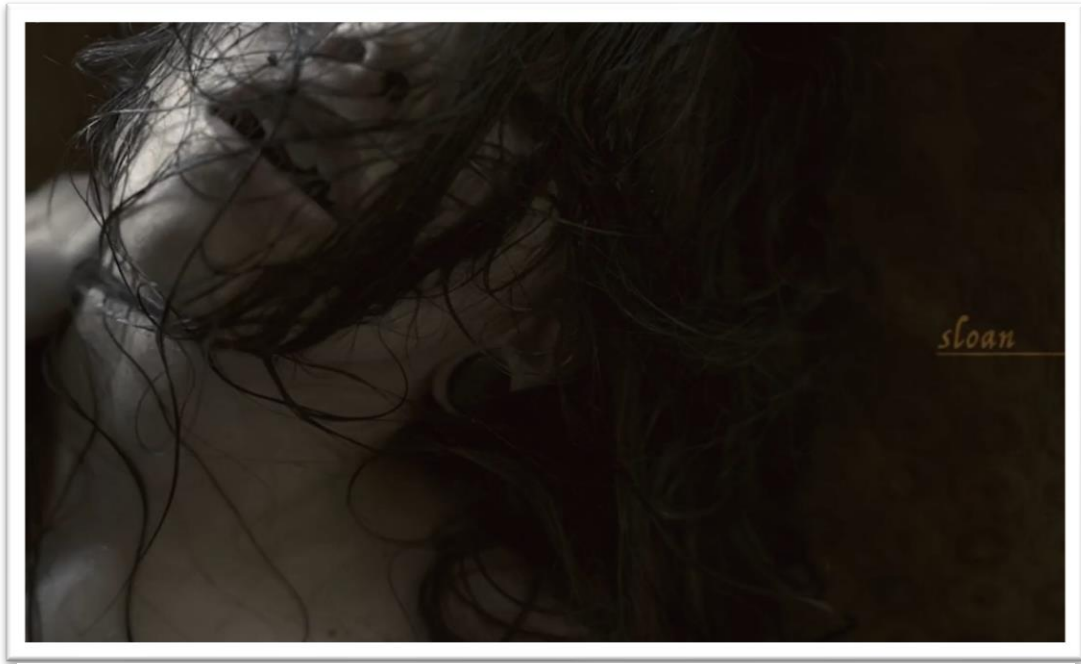


Figure 1 - Sloan covers her face with her hair and pulls it around her neck

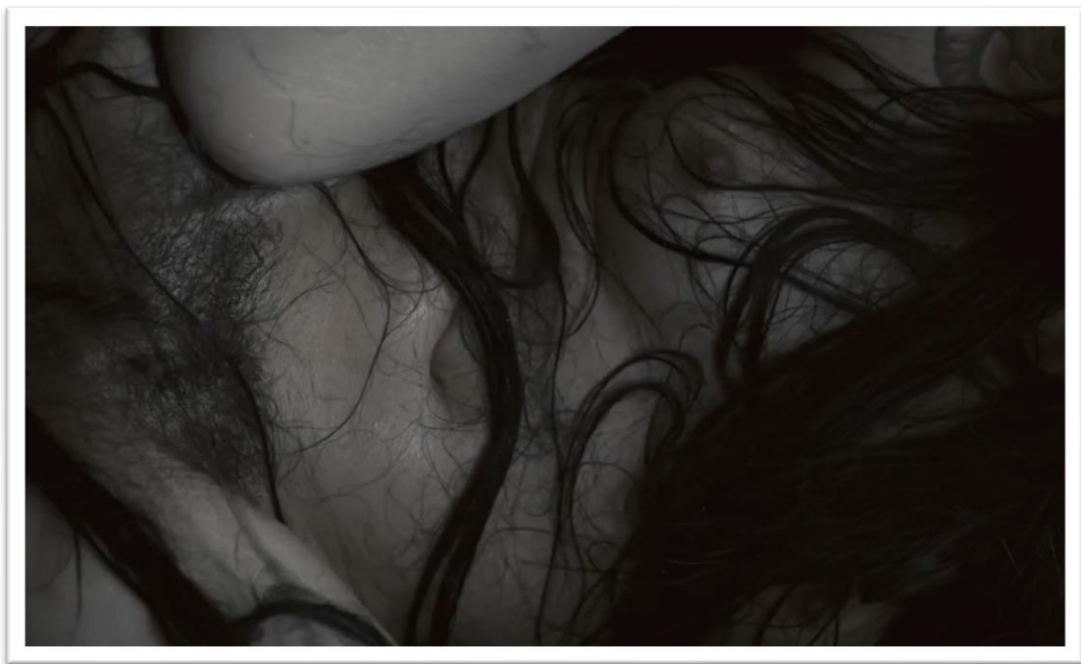


Figure 2 - Sloan's body tangled in her own hair

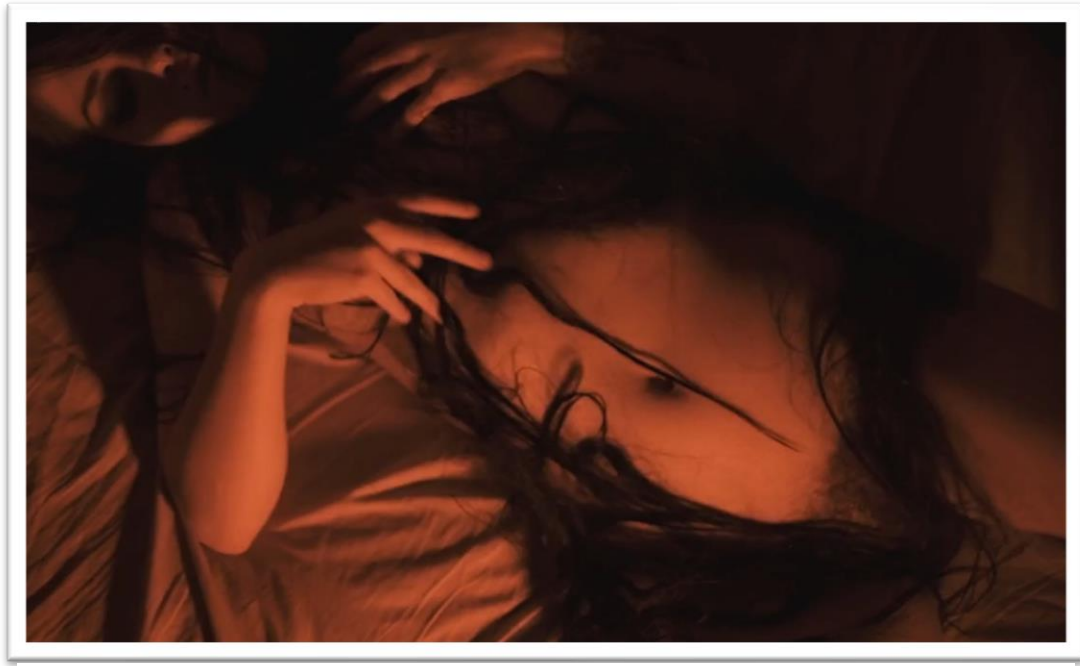


Figure 3 - Lying on a bed playing with her hair

In a distinctive editing style, ‘inverted’ or ‘reverse’ scenes are introduced, where sequences appear out of chronological order, creating a dynamic optical effect that adds intensity to the film. For instance, between seconds 14 to 20, Cox’s face is initially hidden behind her hair (Fig. 1), but as she runs her hand across her face, she reveals her features, looking into the camera. During these moments, she manipulates her body, pulling her hair, stretching, and contorting herself into various poses (Figs. 2 and 3). The pace quickens, with shots intercut rapidly, showing her leaning against an armchair at various points (0:50, 1:18, 1:32, 1:40, and 2:00). In these scenes, she rests her head on the armrest, exposing her face and bottom, while her hair cascades down her back and is placed between her bottom and vagina. In sum, *Abjecting* uses hair not just as a visual motif but as a dynamic and intimate participant in sexual experience, symbolising empowerment, redefining sensuality, and broadening the scope of eroticism in ways that challenge traditional representations.

Various compositional and aesthetic elements are employed to enhance the visual and emotional narrative. Reverse scenes add a layer of dislocated temporality, creating an intriguing atmosphere. Lighting varies significantly: warmer, reddish tones are used when Sloan Cox is with the man, suggesting passion and desire, while clearer, brighter tones highlight when she is alone playing with her hair over all her body. Additionally, the overlapping of scenes and the rapid transitions between them in a matter of seconds

contribute to a sense of fragmentation and dynamism. Music builds atmosphere and tone as the song *Devotee* by Foie Gras, with its sinister and immersive sound, complements the visual and aesthetic elements, reinforcing the themes of abjection and desire that the film explores. The music not only intensifies the viewer's sensory experience but also adds a layer of emotional depth, underscoring the duality of attraction and repulsion that characterises the narrative of the film.

The main element in the film is her hair and how she uses it to satisfy herself, introducing it into the sexual encounter with herself and with the other person. The use of long hair as an abject element in this film reveals an intriguing intersection between erotic aesthetics and Julia Kristeva's theory of abjection. Using hair to cover the performer's body and face challenges traditional conventions of sexual representation by introducing a dynamic of concealment and revelation that evokes simultaneous feelings of repulsion and fascination. This visual and symbolic device not only invites reflection on prevailing bodily and sexual norms but also delves into the complexities of desire and identity within the context of contemporary erotic cinema. *Abjecting* offers a compelling exploration of sexuality through its innovative use of hair as a central element in both self-pleasure and intimate interactions. Here, hair is elevated to a central role, offering a more nuanced and artistic portrayal of sexual expression. By emphasising the sensual and symbolic potential of hair, the film challenges conventional erotic norms and highlights the complexity of sexual expression. Its artistic approach not only subverts traditional pornography but also invites viewers to rethink their perceptions of pleasure, intimacy, and bodily autonomy.

4.2.2 VHS, leather and fight play retro dream: *Archetype* (Four Chambers, 2019)

The 'leather' community is a subculture within BDSM that initially emerged in the gay male community in the 1940s and 1950s in the United States, but over time has included people of all sexual orientations and genders, including lesbians. The leather aesthetic is characterised by the use of leather clothing and accessories, and by practices that emphasise domination and submission, as well as other aspects of BDSM. The dress code of the BDSM community includes the use of latex, leather and vinyl (PVC) clothing, generally black. Sexologist Valérie Tasso suggests in her book *El otro lado del sexo: Una investigación* (2010) that these three fabrics fit and resemble bare skin, so when they are worn it is a kind of sophisticated representation of nudity. The lesbian leather subculture

began to gain visibility in the 1980s, with organisations like Samois that sought to provide a supportive community where these practices could be explored and discussed openly within a feminist framework. Lesbian women involved in the leather scene often encountered difficulties not only within the male-dominated leather community but also from anti-porn feminists and those concerned about BDSM perpetuating power imbalances and violence. Additionally, within the lesbian community itself, there was sometimes scepticism towards BDSM practices. Samois's efforts to reconcile BDSM with feminist values sparked important debates about sexuality, consent, and empowerment (see Chapter 1, subsection 1.2.1).

Archetype (2019) stars Devorah Reine¹⁷³ and Kinsey Pink¹⁷⁴, as noted on the Four Chambers website, this film “is exploring classic porn stereotypes, archetypes, aesthetics and cliches and how we can explore, subvert or expand them”. The movie delves into some classic porn conventions in the homoerotic subculture, like wrestling, play fighting, spanking and leather fetishes, through a film with an aesthetic familiar from the VHS (Video Home System) format of the ‘old’ movies for adults before the digitisation of the Internet. Using the VHS aesthetic enabled Four Chambers to address the issue of privacy, and the taboo associated with that format. Before the advent of the Internet, individuals could make their own pornography using VHS, on cassette tapes which could be copied and circulated within their community. This was particularly important for communities subverting the heteronormative status. *Archetype* is a tribute to the era of leather bars and VHS tapes.

Both protagonists exude an androgynous aesthetic, reminiscent of leather and BDSM communities, with tattoos covering their bodies, facial piercings and, short, undercut hairstyles (Fig. 9). Devorah Reine wears a white tank top, black jockstrap, high socks, and black shoes, while Kinsey Pink wears a dark sports top that compresses her chest, along with a black jockstrap and black shoes. In other scenes, they are fully clothed in tight-fitting black leather pants, jackets, and caps. Fragmented shots show the performers alone, interacting with each other, and the space where the encounter unfolds. Set in a dimly lit warehouse with light brick walls and greyish floors, the space seems cold and lifeless; the only warmth emanating from the performers themselves.

¹⁷³ Independent kinky escort and performer from the San Francisco Bay Area.

¹⁷⁴ Performer, fetish lover and dominant companion.

Throughout the film, the screen frequently splits into two parts: a central rectangle where the main scenes unfold, and varying borders surrounding this rectangle, depending on the scene. In some instances, a dynamic image of black leather in motion appears as the main image (Fig. 8), creating the effect of a rippling wave that sways in sync with the dark, mysterious soundtrack. In other split-screen sequences, where one image is layered in the foreground and another in the background, a fragmented visual effect with vertical stripes emerges (Fig. 9). This choppy, distorted image evokes the aesthetic of VHS recordings, incorporating visuals like tracking errors, colour bleed, and static to replicate the nostalgic look commonly found in video tapes. Interspersed throughout are abstract shots of black leather in motion and visual distortions, like tracking errors from a VHS tape, that fill the entire screen. The film has a raw unpolished quality that evokes the spirit of independent and experimental filmmakers who often worked with limited resources, but also intentionally imitates the grainy texture, low-resolution and imperfect quality characteristic of VHS tapes, enhancing its nostalgic and avant-garde tone.

The beginning and end carry particular significance. The opening scene presents a close-up of various items arranged on the floor: gels, a small medical glass bottle, needles and alcohol-moistened tissues. A performer opens a package containing a needle (Fig. 4) and inserts it into the glass bottle bearing the word “testosterone”, accompanied by the naturalistic sounds of her handling and interacting with the objects. The tactile soundtrack emphasises the intimacy of her movements as she prepares the injection. At second 38, the camera shifts to a woman lying face down, focusing on her exposed buttocks. The second performer swabs the bum area with an alcohol wipe before injecting the testosterone (Fig. 5). Vex Ashley claims that her favourite aspect of creating films is the collaborative process with the performers, because “the artists took [their] seed of an idea and expanded it beyond [their] perspective”. Apparently, the performers suggested the idea of injecting testosterone. While Ashley admits injections make her uncomfortable, she finds them quite fascinating due to their inherent connection to sex in her view “the ritualistic preparation, the phallic sharp point and the penetration of the skin, slow depression of the plunger, leaving liquid inside. Incredibly visceral and clinical at the same time”.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷⁵ Quotation from: <https://afourchamberedheart.com/members/read/archetype> (Last consultation on November 11, 2022).

In the final scene (from 11:20 to 12), Devorah Reine opens a packet of testosterone gel (Fig. 6) and massages it into Kinsey Pink's chest (Fig. 7). These two instances of testosterone use—injection and gel application—references Preciado's observation that testosterone can be used as a political weapon, since injecting testosterone could be a resistance technique for bodies that have been assigned as bio-women, challenging traditional gender assignments.¹⁷⁶ Testosterone, though primarily associated with male physiology, plays a critical role in female sexual function, particularly in influencing libido, although this hormone occurs in much smaller quantities in women. The use of testosterone treatments in women remains controversial, although there are studies that indicate how it can increase sexual desire in some women after menopause.¹⁷⁷ In *Archetype*, testosterone's role may extend beyond boosting sexual desire and energy, but it could also be a way to explore themes of gender identity, gender fluidity, and bodily transformations. Set within an artistic and experimental framework, where the performers' bodies and identities are treated as flexible, testosterone use becomes a means to question and broaden traditional views of gender, sexuality, and the body, rather than simply a tool for physical modification.

Regarding the use of leather in this movie as a driving element of the plot, Vex Ashley points out she was greatly influenced by the work of the painter and tattoo artist Tamara Santibañez and her 'leatherscape' paintings—her work is titled *Landscape*—to make the pulsating leather backgrounds in the film (Fig. 8).¹⁷⁸ Thus, leather is seen as a sensual material, being a hard, flexible and soft element at the same time. Leather subculture denotes practices and styles of dress organised around sexual activities that involve leather clothing, such as: jackets, vests, boots, chaps, harnesses, and other items.

¹⁷⁶ *Texto Yonki: Sexo, drogas y biopolíticas* (2008), according to Preciado's account, is not a self-fiction book but "a body test, a protocol of voluntary intoxication based on synthetic testosterone".(*)

¹⁷⁷ Alice Scott and Louise Newson (2020) *British Journal of General Practice*: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7098532/> (Last consultation on September 14, 2023).

¹⁷⁸ "In the United States, communities around leather, BDSM, and other non-normative sex practices sprang up in the fifties and sixties in urban centres as a reaction to social repression. Moreover, queer women who formed their own communities were rejected by the gay leather scene and by factions of feminism who accused BDSM of replicating structures of oppression. Santibañez's attention to these subcultures is located in their capacity to undermine oppressive power structures and in doing so, open up new avenues of empowerment and agency". Regarding her work at: <http://tamarasantibanez.com/news/2019/2/14/landscapes-at-jtt-gallery> (Last consultation on November 24, 2022).

Wearing leather garments is one way that participants in this culture self-consciously distinguish themselves from other mainstream sexual cultures. Many participants associate leather culture with BDSM practices and its many sex subcultures. For some, black leather clothing is an erotic fashion that expresses heightened masculinity or the appropriation of sexual power and/or engagement in sexual kinks or leather fetishism.

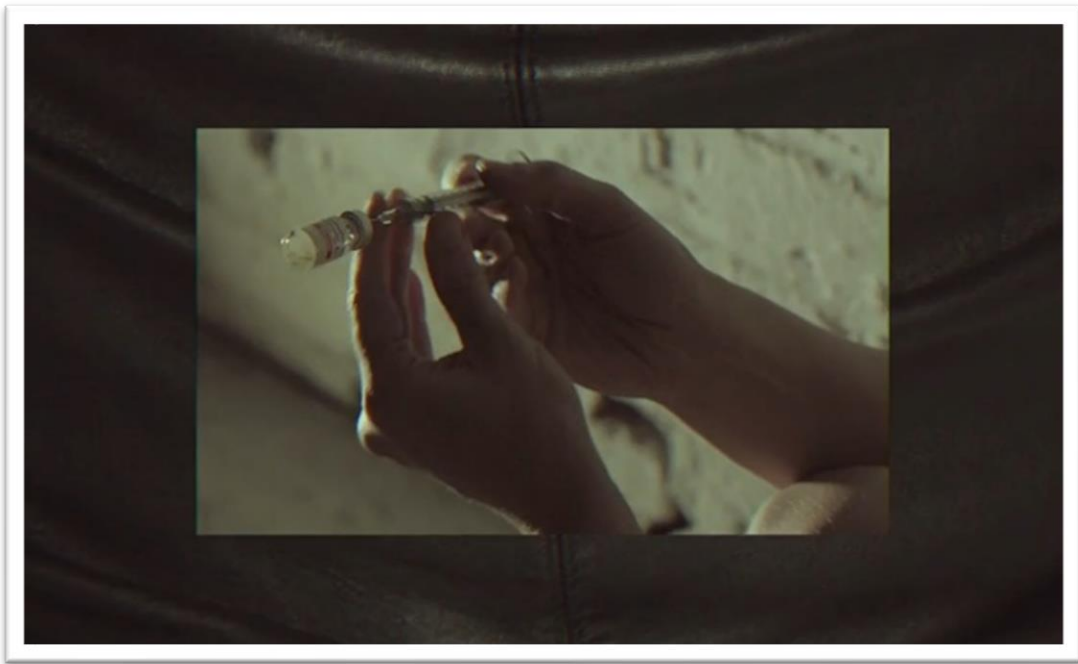


Figure 4 - Filling a needle with testosterone

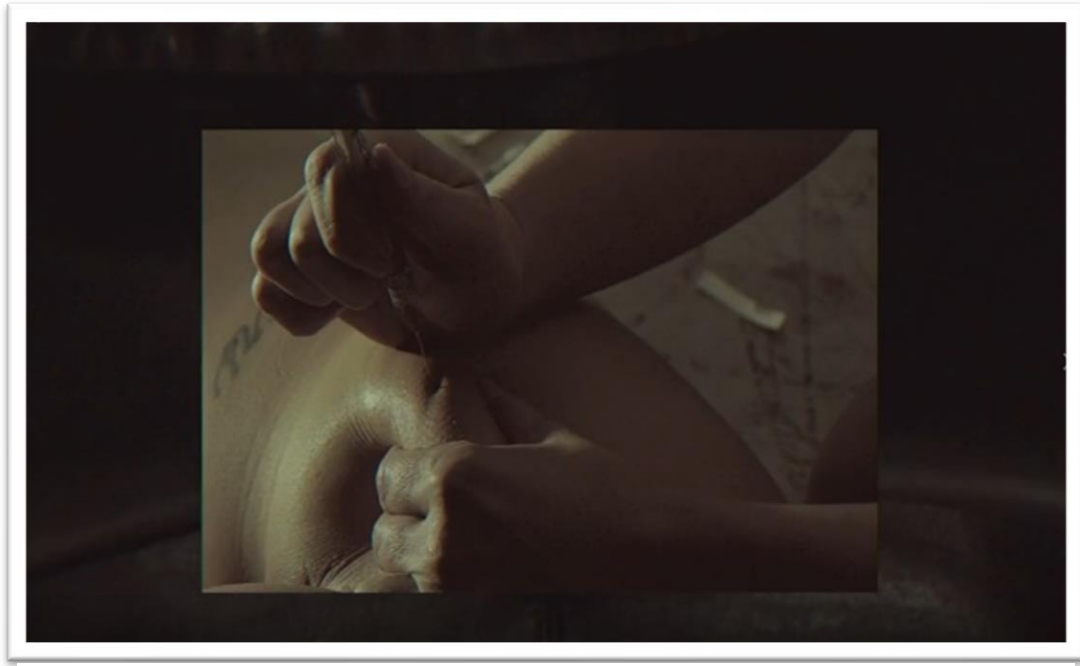


Figure 5 - Injecting testosterone into the buttocks

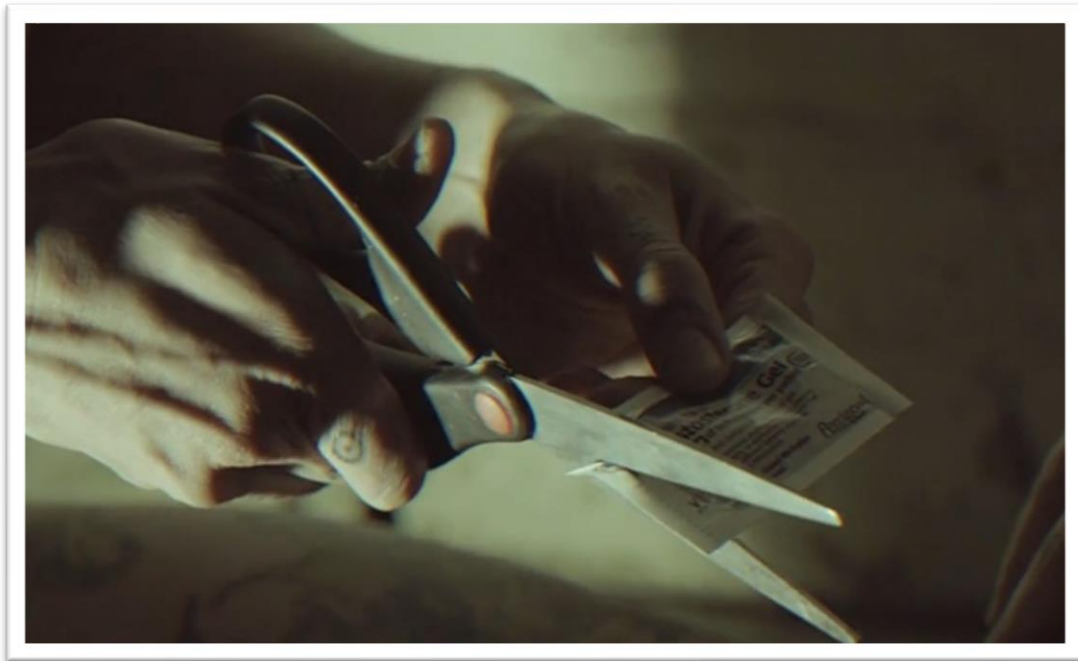


Figure 6 - Opening a testosterone packet

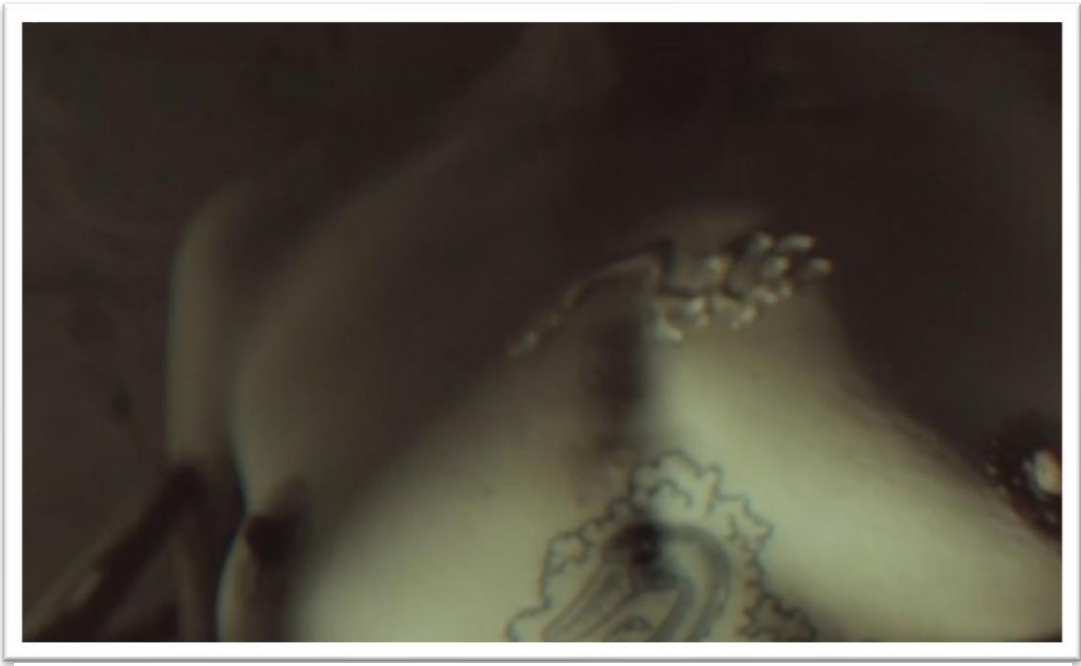


Figure 7 - Applying testosterone gel to the chest



Figure 8 - Detail shot of a leather fabric

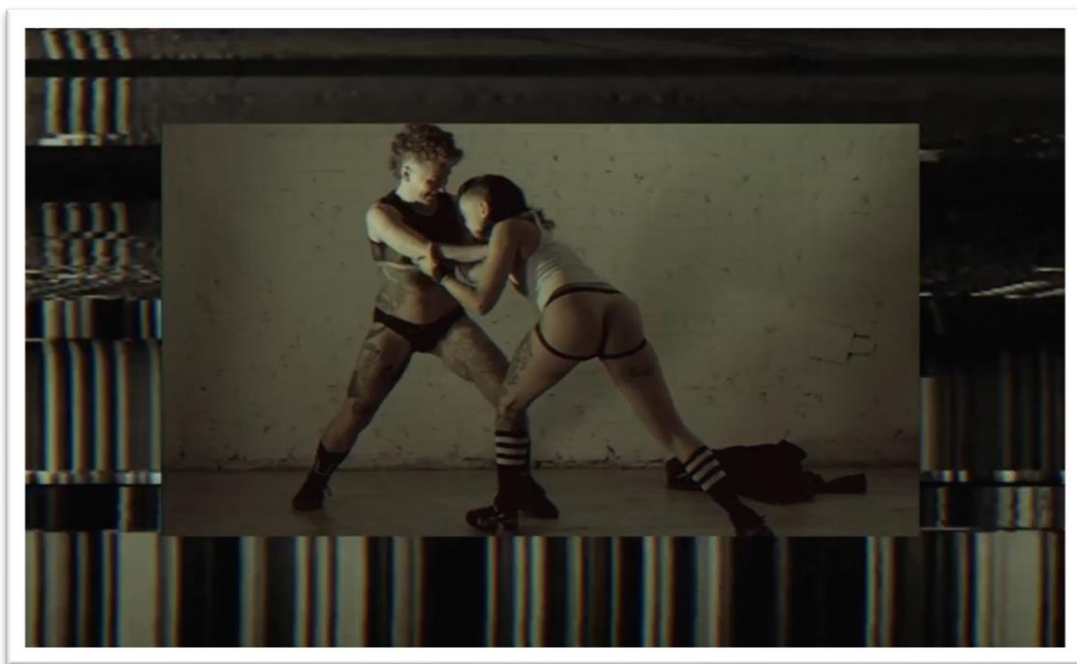


Figure 9 - Performers wrestling



Figure 10 - Penetration using a strap-on with a dildo

The primary sexual interactions between the performers include cunnilingus, masturbation, and spanking. Two key sexual scenes have been selected for analysis: those involving the dynamics of fighting/wrestling and a scene featuring penetration using a strap-on dildo. Various shots of fighting and wrestling (Fig. 9) depict the performers

pushing each other against the wall and the floor, interspersed with moments of caressing and kissing. The wrestling is an integral part of the sexual encounter, creating a dynamic game of power and control between them. Fighting here serves as a narrative device for the sexual action, echoing the approach of pornographic companies like Evolved Fights Lez, which feature wrestling as a central element in their films. Evolved Fights Lez, as highlighted on their website, showcase ‘real girl on girl wrestling’¹⁷⁹, where women in bikinis battle in a ring, with the winner’s prize being the opportunity to ‘subdue’ the loser through rough sex. In *Archetype*, the fight is woven into the sexual encounter, with the performers using force to both join and separate their bodies. However, the interaction does not follow the typical ‘winner has sex with the loser’ often depicted in such scenarios. Instead, the scenes alternate, between moments of aggression and intimacy, where the performers are seen caressing the leather of their clothing, gripping the suspenders attached to their pants, and drawing closer to one another. Wrestling as part of a sexual encounter, as shown in *Archetype*, also has strong ties to BDSM and fetish culture. The act of physically struggling —pushing, pulling, grappling— is an expression of power play and can serve as a prelude to sexual dominance and submission. In BDSM, wrestling is sometimes used to build sexual tension, exploring the themes of resistance, control, and surrender, all while maintaining consensual boundaries. The film draws on visual and thematic elements associated with leather culture, wrestling, and lesbian sex. The fighting serves as a form of power play between the performers, adding intensity to their sexual interactions, while the leather attire and wrestling sequences evoke the aesthetics and atmosphere of the BDSM and fetish scenes. The result is a unique fusion of eroticism, physicality, and artistic exploration.

The other sexual scene chosen for analysis focuses on strap-on penetration using with black dildos, spanning from 7:52 to 11:15. In lesbian sex, the use of strap-ons, often referred to as ‘pegging’¹⁸⁰ when used in a penetrative role, allows partners to explore various forms of penetration, mirroring the dynamics of heterosexual intercourse but in a way that is rooted in queer identities and sexual expressions. For many lesbian individuals, strap-ons are a tool for pleasure, intimacy, and role exploration, offering both

¹⁷⁹ See: <https://evolvedfightslez.com/> (Last consultation on July 6, 2024).

¹⁸⁰ Pegging is a sexual act usually practiced by a woman and man in which she penetrates him anally with the help of a strap-on dildo. The term is now used more broadly but has usually been defined as a heterosexual practice.

physical sensation and a way to embody sexual dominance, submission, or equality, depending on the dynamic between the partners. In *Archetype*, the performers begin by lubricating the dildos and licking them vigorously while they are on their knees, establishing an intimate and tactile connection to the objects. They then proceed to penetrate each other in various positions: for example, standing and leaning against the wall, one on top of the other while one is lying on the ground, on all fours (Fig. 10) and in a standing position.

The scene is a dynamic portrayal of shifting power and intimacy, with the performers alternating roles throughout. When incorporated into sexual encounters, as seen in *Archetype*, strap-ons often symbolise a fluidity of gender roles, where traditional notions of masculine and feminine are blurred. In BDSM contexts, strap-on play can also be linked to power dynamics, with the wearer assuming a dominant role, while the receiving partner may experience submission, depending on the agreed-upon dynamic. This interplay of dominance and submission can be heightened by the psychological aspect of control and the giving or receiving of penetration. The sexual action is synchronised with their moans and the rhythmic soundtrack, creating a cohesive sensory experience. The performers' pleasure is palpable, expressed through their facial expressions, bodily contractions, and movements as the penetration unfolds. The pace begins slowly, building anticipation, before accelerating in intensity. The gradual escalation enhances the raw physicality of the scene, heightening the emotional and sexual energy shared between the two. The combination of body language, sound, and motion creates an immersive atmosphere that conveys both the intensity of the act and the pleasure it evokes.

Archetype stands out due to its careful combination of cinematic techniques, impactful visual elements, and evocative soundtrack with the sinister and mystical song *Lesser Man* by the Berlin band Boy Harsher.¹⁸¹ The split screen, Boy Harsher's music, the use of leather, and BDSM aesthetics combine to create a visually and emotionally rich experience that challenges and seduces the viewer; combined with the VHS look it creates a unique fusion of retro and avant-garde styles, enriching the visual and thematic layers of the film. The integration of wrestling and strap-on play in the sexual encounter draws on BDSM's focus on power exchange, bodily control, and sensory engagement. Leather

¹⁸¹ Lesser Man (extended version) by Boy Harsher: <https://boyharsher.bandcamp.com/album/lesser-man-extended-version> (Last consultation on July 7, 2024).

culture, often associated with BDSM, also embraces these elements, celebrating the visual aesthetics of dominance and submission, which can be reinforced by the use of leather gear, restraints, and wrestling as a form of erotic play. Together, strap-on penetration and wrestling allow for an embodied exploration of power dynamics, blending physical force with intimate connection, making the experience more intense and multifaceted. The dynamics of sexual combat and BDSM practices are used to explore intricate themes of power, desire, and identity. Through carefully crafted scenes, the film delves into the essence of dominance and submission, highlighting the consensual and empowering aspects of BDSM. These elements not only heighten the film’s visual and emotional appeal but also contribute to a deeper, more meaningful narrative that resonates with viewers familiar with the BDSM community and those new to its practices.

4.3 ‘There is no such thing as free porn’: Thousand Faces Films

Thousand Faces Films is a porn company created in 2017 by Marcus Quillan —actor, porn performer, model and musician. Inspired by alternative, indie, and experimental porn movements UK producer/performers such as Pandora/Blake and Petra Joy (who is German but has been living in the UK since 1990) and international ethical porn companies from the USA such Pink Label TV, Kate Sinclare from Canada, Bright Desire from Australia and Blue Artichoke Films from Holland. As he states on his website, Quillan uses “original music, stunning visuals, quirky themes, and marginalised narratives [...] With Thousand Faces, [he wants] to explore the many facets of performance through a sexually explicit lens. [Wanting] to show that no one style or genre of porn, or performance, is inherently more ‘real’, valuable, or valid than any other”.¹⁸² Thousand Faces Films is dedicated to promoting consensual representations of sexuality, standing out for its commitment to inclusion and the representation of diverse identities and sexual orientations.

Quillan’s website presents a series of opinions regarding feminist and ethical porn, racism, sexism and violence in pornography and the need to pay for pornographic creations. There is no such thing as free porn —of course, there are the short videos that we can consume on our computers, tablets and mobile phones and are just one click away on the porn ‘tubes’¹⁸³ but the cameras, performers, sets, edition and scenery come with

¹⁸² See: <https://thousandfacesfilms.com/about/> (Last consultation on January 25, 2024).

¹⁸³ I discuss free ‘tubes’ at Chapter 1, Section 1.3.

costs, and someone eventually pays. Irina Vega, porn film director and producer and founder of the Spanish porn portal Altporn4U, observes in an interview with the online magazine *Esquire* that “if something is free, it is because [we] are the product, these companies continue to earn on advertising that generates all the traffic that goes to the websites [‘tubes’] where they post their content”.(*)¹⁸⁴ Without a doubt, the Internet has changed the rules of porn. There is greater quantity, and it is more accessible, but the professionals are less well paid compared with previously. There is more variety and less transparency. Mainstream websites are immersed in secrecy and illegality (stealing material from other porn websites and not paying royalties). Maybe, there is no interest in forcing ‘tubes’ to follow the law, for two main reasons: the difficulty of going against a large multi-million-dollar conglomerate and the public’s own prejudice towards pornography. Marcus Quillan points out on the Thousand Faces Films website how essential it is to pay for our porn as much as possible, because it is a way of helping directors to create more diverse, ethical and feminist content and to support sex workers.

The feminist adult film industry emphasises the principle of paying for pornography primarily due to ethical reasons and economic sustainability. Paying for pornography ensures that performers, directors, and everyone involved in production receive fair compensation for their work. Promoting payment for pornography also contributes to shifting the cultural perception of consuming adult content. Instead of viewing pornography as a free, disposable product, paying for porn encourages people to see it as a legitimate form of art and labour deserving recognition and financial support. Paying for feminist adult films not only ensures fair compensation and ethical treatment of workers but also supports sustainability and diversity of content. It is a fundamental principle driving a more just, inclusive, and respectful industry.

Regarding feminist and/or ethical porn, Thousand Faces Films understands that sometimes the term ‘feminist’, ‘ethical’ or ‘artistic’ can be used as a marketing label or as a way to differentiate certain creators from others, but these labels can also be

¹⁸⁴ As Vega points out “I think that there are very few people who value the real work behind the production of adult content [...] I see that the most elaborate, well-thought out porn is the one with the fewest viewers, whereas simpler, ‘industrialised’ porn is what most people watch”(*). In reference on the topic of paying for pornography at: <https://www.esquire.com/es/sexo/a27569029/porno-pago/> (Last consultation on November 24, 2022).

problematic and further stigmatise those who do not fit certain criteria.¹⁸⁵ As Evangeline Plumb (Cliterally The Best) states: “it is becoming a little too black and white, by labelling indie porn as the only ‘good’ porn and everything else [as] ‘bad’, but it is not that simple. Ethical porn simply [...] sticks to workers’ rights. The performer’s pay, safety & treatment is put first and is fair. Consent, sexual health, credit etc are paramount.¹⁸⁶ Nevertheless, Thousand Faces Films strives for ethical practices in everything it does, aiming to produce a product that is manufactured and paid for in the most ethical way possible.¹⁸⁷ This includes ensuring the physical and emotional well-being of performers, advocating for fair compensation, and promoting a culture of mutual respect and consent. As one of their objectives is ethical production, it is their responsibility to show the performers free from stereotypes and stigmas. Prioritising diversity and including so many different voices, sexualities, identities, and backgrounds helps them to tell their stories in the most thoughtful and respectful way possible. Involving performers and directors in the creative process, the company values their input and experiences, leading to more genuine and empowering representations of sexuality. Thousand Faces Films stands at the forefront of a new era in adult cinema, where erotic content is celebrated not just for its explicitness but for its ability to convey deeper human truths. By prioritising diversity, ethics, and artistic innovation, Thousand Faces Films is not just creating adult films; it is redefining the landscape of erotic art serving as a catalyst for broader industry reform and societal acceptance of diverse sexual expressions.

The following pages present an analysis of two films: *A Sex Worker’s Story*, which has garnered multiple accolades, including Official Selections at prominent festivals. These include the ‘London Porn Film Festival’ (2019), ‘Porn Film Festival Vienna’ (2020) ‘Satyrs and Maenads: the Athens Porn Film Festival’ (2020); And *Sunlight*, which was selected for ‘Nuit Raunch’ (2020) and ‘CineKink’ (2020) and at the ‘Porn Film Festival Vienna’ and ‘Satyrs and Maenads festivals’ in 2020. These recognitions highlight the films’ appeal across diverse platforms within the indie and adult film circuit.

¹⁸⁵ Marcus Quillan spoke about feminist porn and mainstream porn in our interview included in Annex, Interview 2.

¹⁸⁶ See: <https://www.cliterallythebest.co.uk/pages/where-can-i-watch-ethical-porn> (Last consultation on August 11, 2023).

¹⁸⁷ Performers rights: <https://thousandfacesfilms.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/ThouFace-Performer-Bill-of-Rights.pdf> (Last consultation on November 24, 2022).

Table 2: Thousand Faces Films movie selection

Film	Year	Duration	Performerss
<i>A Sexworker's Story</i>	2019	17 minutes	Viktoria Vaar and Rooster
<i>Sunlight</i>	2019	12 minutes	Eyrin Rose and Marcus Quillan

4.3.1 Removing the stigma: *A Sex Worker's Story* (Marcus Quillan, 2019)

Stigma surrounding sex work is a complex and deeply ingrained societal issue that affects individuals involved in the industry in various ways. Sex work often carries significant social stigma, resulting in discrimination, marginalisation, and prejudice against those who engage in it. This stigma stems from cultural and moral judgments about sexuality, gender roles, and societal norms. *A Sex Worker's Story* (2019) follows the life of Viktoria Vaar¹⁸⁸, a young sex worker, and Rooster¹⁸⁹, a first-time client with her. Other actors appearing in the film are Mark Kaye and Marcus Quillan, as customers. The narrative unfolds through Vaar's perspective, offering a deeply personal insight into her motivations, struggles, and empowerment within the context of sex work. During our one-on-one interview via Skype on January 24, 2022, Quillan said that he came up with the structure of this film and Vaar helped shape the writing of the script through her personal knowledge and experience.¹⁹⁰ Vaar improvised many of her lines making the interaction with the other performers/characters more natural. The film tells the story of Viktoria Vaar, from a fictional perspective, trying to show sex workers as more than merely objects of stigma or as victims, as they are generally represented.

¹⁸⁸ She is an established performer and sex worker living in Barcelona, with a prolific career as porn performer for European filmmakers such as Erika Lust and the feminist porn company Ersties.

¹⁸⁹ An award-winning non-binary performer, cinematographer and activist.

¹⁹⁰ Regarding the movie: <https://thousandfacesfilms.com/films/a-sexworkers-story/> (Last consultation on December 1, 2022).

Erika Lust has also created two films related to the rights of sex workers called *Sex Work is Work*,¹⁹¹ the first, *Sex Work is Work: Part 1* (2018) is an explicit documentary from the XConfessions project, where Lust aimed to put the voices of sex workers centre stage. Maria Riot —porn performer and sex worker— hired Dante Dionys as an escort. For him it is the first time he is escorting a woman, for her, it is the first time that she has hired an escort. The second, *Sex Work is Work: Part 2* (2018) sees Maria Riot back for another first-time experience, this time in the world of camming. The real-life couple Moth and Rust —two web cammers from the United States— perform a live sex cam show for her. Films like *Sex Worker's Story* and sex documentaries such as *Sex Work is Work* are important because they attempt to show another side of sex work, moving away from the traditional victimisation. As Candida Royalle states “even women with the best mental health will face some downsides from this work. Our culture consumes porn at record numbers, but the women who perform are still judged harshly”.¹⁹² These film companies have dedicated themselves to exploring complex issues with sensitivity and integrity and, by offering a platform for marginalised voices and narratives, contribute to a more inclusive cultural landscape, encouraging dialogue and advocacy for the rights and dignity of all people, regardless of their occupation.

The opening scenes of *A Sex Worker's Story* feature Viktoria Vaar, fresh from a relaxing bath, engaging in a phone conversation about her workweek. In a voice-over, Vaar reflects on her clients, during the week, candidly sharing her frustrations with two clients for not respecting her boundaries. She explains that she had to remind them of her rules: they must always have a shower before the sexual encounter, and payment must be made upfront. This recounting of her experiences not only humanises her but also draws viewers deeper into the emotional layers of her story, highlighting both the challenges and the everyday realities of her profession. Beginning at minute 3:30, Vaar narrates her final encounter of the week, expressing satisfaction with this particular client. She notes that the sex was exceptional, saying “we had amazing sex” at 3:49, but also appreciates his punctuality, immediate payment (Fig. 11), and proactive request to shower before their session. He was polite and respectful, and after a long working week, Vaar

¹⁹¹ “In Conversation with Sex Workers” (2020). YouTube compilation of videos: <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL1uSgnyi7YIFcZcmyKmrgeQBiDPCaj3t0> (Last consultation on December 15, 2022).

¹⁹² Full interview at: <https://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2012/11/11/does-pornography-deserve-its-bad-rap/pornography-can-be-good-for-consumers> (Last consultation on January 31, 2022).

relished not having to remind him of the basic standards for their interaction. As she speaks, scenes of her various encounters with individual clients unfold, with the voice-providing valuable context and Vaar's personal reflections. This narrative device enhances the film's authenticity, her character grounded in real-life experiences, making her journey relatable and emotionally resonant.



Figure 11 - Meeting with Rooster

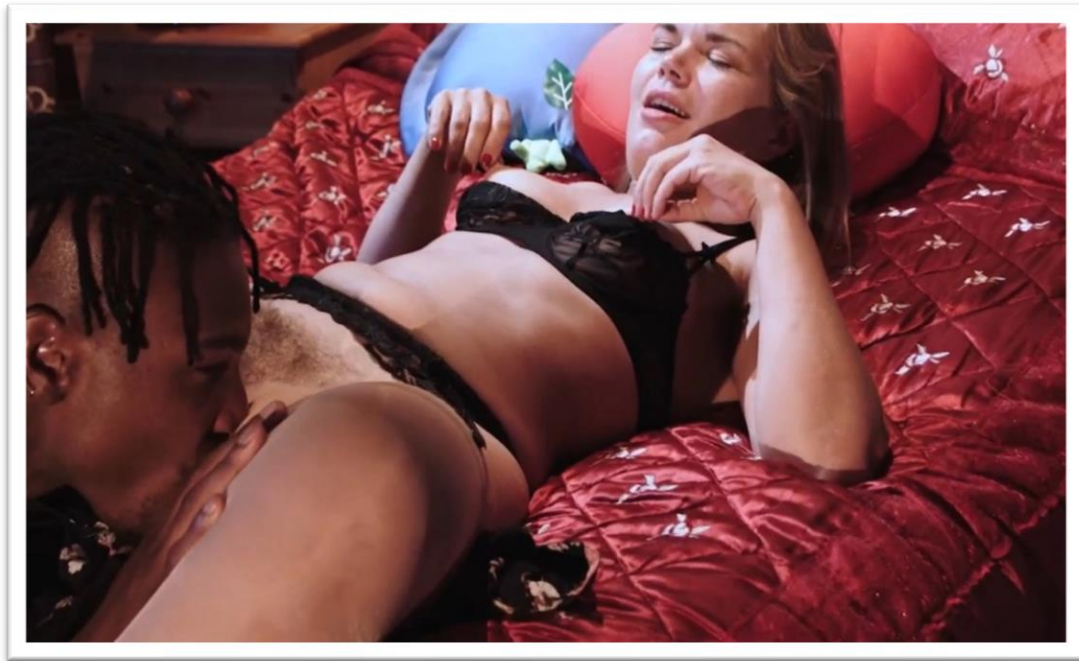


Figure 12 - Oral sex towards Viktoria Vaar



Figure 13 - Both lying on the bed after sex

Viktoria Vaar's final client of the week is Rooster, and their encounter forms the substance of the film. After Rooster returns from his shower, they have a brief discussion about what he can expect from the sexual encounter and how they should let each other know whether they are comfortable or not during their session. The sexual acts that follow

include oral sex performed on Vaar —she lies on the bed while Rooster is positioned between her legs. At minute 7:20, she stimulates her nipples (Fig. 12) as he continues, and then she presses his head firmly against her vulva at 7:51, asserting her control. The film explores various forms of pleasure, not just centred on the genitals, such as toe licking (at 9:33), where Vaar licks Rooster’s toes. The film also features masturbation, where both maintain intense eye contact while pleasuring themselves (at 10:50). Penetration follows, with Vaar using her mouth to put a condom on Rooster (at 11:50). The sequence is captured through different camera angles: a close-up of Vaar on top of Rooster (at 12:05), a medium shot revealing their synchronised movements (at 12:30), and a wide shot (at 12:40) showing Rooster’s expression of joy as she rides him.

Both reach orgasm during the encounter, Vaar climaxes through penetration with her legs raised on Rooster’s chest (at 13:50), while Rooster masturbates himself to completion (at 14:34) while practicing oral sex on her (face sitting). The scene concludes on an intimate note at minute 15:23, as Vaar hands Rooster a towel to clean up. They then lie on the bed, embracing and laughing, reflecting on their experience with affection and warmth (Fig. 13). In terms of the performers’ appearances, Victoria Vaar is striking, with a curvy and natural body. She confidently embraces her body hair, featuring noticeable hair in her armpits and pubic area, while her long. Rooster is equally appealing, showcasing a toned and slightly muscular physique. The film accentuates the intimacy and connection between the two individuals, focusing on their shared experience rather than their racial identities. This approach allows viewers to appreciate the raw and genuine nature of their interaction, free from the constraints of fetishisation.

Several key conclusions can be drawn from the film by analysing these scenes. Throughout the sexual encounter, Viktoria Vaar and Rooster share numerous kisses and caresses, showcasing a palpable sense of complicity and mutual affection between them. The film has an intimate, almost amateur-like quality, as evidenced by elements like the sound of bed springs and a minimalist piano soundtrack that adds to the authenticity. Communication between the two is a consistent theme, as they laugh, talk, and express their pleasure verbally. For instance, during oral sex and masturbation, Vaar expresses her satisfaction with phrases like “Oh, that is really nice” (at 7:37) and “Oh yeah, use your fingers. I love it” (at 8:44), while Rooster shares his contentment, saying “I really enjoy it” (at 16:36) when they embrace and reflect after the session. The film employs a mix of close-ups and extreme close-ups that focus on facial expressions and body language, enhancing the sense of intimacy and emphasising the pleasure experienced during the

sexual acts. These detailed shots of their interactions, especially the close-ups of their faces and bodies, help create a deeply personal connection between the characters and the audience.

The film concludes with Vaars' voiceover, as she recounts her satisfaction with the encounter, saying, "I could not wish for a better way to finish my week" (at 16:53 to 16:58). She further elaborates on why the session was so fulfilling, noting that Rooster was "charming, educated, polite" and that they shared "really, really good chemistry" (minutes 17:10 to 17:16). Through this narrative, Vaar acknowledges both the challenges and the rewarding aspects of her work, especially when she encounters respectful and kind clients. Ultimately, *A Sex Worker's Story* offers a nuanced portrayal of sex work, challenging stereotypes by presenting a sex worker's experience with dignity and respect. Vaar's account highlights the complexity of her profession, highlighting moments of genuine connection and human appreciation amidst the difficulties, encouraging viewers to reconsider their assumptions about sex work.

A Sex Worker's Story offers a nuanced exploration of identity, relationships, and empowerment within the realm of sex work. Through the story of Viktoria Vaar's character, the film encourages dialogue about the rights, dignity, and societal perceptions of sex workers, shedding light on the complexity of their experiences. The film exemplifies a commitment to ethical storytelling by advocating for the visibility of and respect for sex workers, while challenging conventional depictions often found in mainstream media. Blurring the lines between documentary and narrative cinema, the film presents itself as a fictionalised documentary of a sex worker's potential experiences. This approach bridges personal narrative with social commentary, making the story relatable and impactful for audiences. It presents a version of sex work where the protagonist sets her own rules, communicates them with clients, and ensures their compliance, offering viewers a glimpse into the autonomy that sex workers can exercise in their profession. Rather than victimising the sex worker or framing her decisions as exploitative, the movie humanises her work, portraying her with agency and dignity. By doing so, *A Sex Worker's Story* challenges stereotypes, dismantles stigma, and invites audiences to view sex work through a compassionate lens that emphasises empowerment, consent, and respect.

4.3.2 What is eco-porn? *Sunlight* (Marcus Quillan, 2019)

Eco-porn is a relatively new concept that combines elements of environmental activism with the adult entertainment industry. Eco-porn is the result of the rise of eco-sexuality and ‘sexecology’, a term coined by sex educators Dr. Elizabeth Stephens and Dr. Annie Sprinkle, according to their website, “a new field of research exploring the places sexology and ecology intersect”. Meanwhile ‘eco-sexuality’ is “a new approach to current thinking about global ecological crises, eco-art and environmental activist strategies”. The couple created the Ecosex Manifesto¹⁹³ and in 2008 they ‘married’ the earth, in one of their marriages/performances with different natural elements.¹⁹⁴ They state that the aim of eco-porn is “to entice people to develop a more mutual, pleasurable, sustainable, and less destructive relationship with the environment”.¹⁹⁵ Sprinkle explains that eco-sexuality seeks to put fun, joy, vitality, and enthusiasm into environmentalism and tries to bring people into environmental activism and eco-conscious behaviour through happiness. As she points out in an interview with the digital magazine *Dazed*, “we are trying to make the environmentalist movement more sexy, fun, and diverse, and tap into unexplored audiences”.¹⁹⁶

At its core, eco-porn uses pornography to promote ecological awareness and action, integrating environmental messages into erotic content. The idea is to capture people’s attention through adult entertainment while simultaneously conveying messages about the importance of conservation, sustainability, and respect for nature. The creators of eco-porn are usually individuals or collectives interested in both environmental advocacy and adult content production. Some of the early and most well-known creators are Cindy Gallop, founder of the platform “MakeLoveNotPorn” which promotes a more realistic and consensual approach to sex, with an interest in eco-porn as a way to combine

¹⁹³ Ecosex Manifesto. <https://theecosexuals.ucsc.edu/ecosexualmanifesto/> (Last consultation on December 15, 2022).

¹⁹⁴ Annie Sprinkle is discussed at Chapter 1, subsection 1.4.2 and about the series of wedding performances at Chapter 2, subsection 2.2.2.2.

¹⁹⁵ About their project see: <https://theecosexuals.ucsc.edu/> (Last consultation on December 15, 2022).

¹⁹⁶ Full interview with respect ‘ecosex’ at: <https://www.dazeddigital.com/life-culture/article/44391/1/ecosexuals-eco-porn-sex-environmentalism-elizabeth-stephens-annie-sprinkle> (Last consultation on December 15, 2022).

social and environmental activism with sex education¹⁹⁷, and the *Collectivo Le Ragazze del Porno*, an Italian collective of female directors of adult films who explore social and environmental themes in their work, seeking to change the traditional narrative of pornography and use it as a tool for raising awareness.¹⁹⁸ Eco-porn is a manifestation of how people are looking for new and creative ways to address global issues like climate change and environmental degradation, using unconventional means to reach diverse audiences and promote positive societal change.

The film *Sunlight* (2019) stars Eyrin Rose¹⁹⁹ and Marcus Quillan. The film is one of two in the *Taste&Flow* film series, the second one being *Moondark* (2019). Described by Quillan as “a smorgasbord of Vegan Eco Food-Porn, it showcases lust, flowery sex, and splashes of juices, fruits, and smoothies, as well as the pleasures of non-penetrative sex”. In our personal interview via Skype, Quillan stated that the idea behind the film was to use nature and the environment as the main element of the story, and in particular, fruits, food and various liquids, in order to create a film with a visually interesting aesthetic. He also told me that he had heard about the term eco-porn and wanted to create something in this style. Both performers are young, slender, and visibly attractive. In this case, the film’s significance lies in its narrative element, showcasing both characters in harmony with nature, using their bodies to seek pleasure.

Sunlight is set in an outdoor garden, immersing the performers in a natural location surrounded by trees, plants, and flowers on a sunlit day. The film seamlessly transitions between scenes, capturing the serene beauty of nature. The viewer can witness intimate moments in which the performers delicately touch the petals of the flowers (at 2:42) and feel the coolness of the wet grass under their feet (at 1:33). Throughout these scenes, tranquil positive piano music and the chirping sound of birds accompanies their interactions, whether they are together or in solitary communion with the natural world. At minute 4:14 the music shifts to a more upbeat tempo as the performers engage playfully with an assortment of fruits: raspberries, blueberries, grapefruits, grapes,

¹⁹⁷ Website: <https://makelovenotporn.tv/> (Last consultation on July 8, 2024).

¹⁹⁸ In reference to the collective at: <http://www.arabeschi.it/63-il-collettivo-de-le-ragazze-del-porno/> (Last consultation on July 8, 2024).

¹⁹⁹ Eyrin Rose is a performer with a background in theatre, costume design, art, fetish, and erotic modelling. She is also the founding member of @2ndSelfEnsemble, a group of artists specialising in exploring social issues sidelined by mainstream culture. She starred in the films *Unbridled*, *Sunlight* and *Moondark* from Thousand Faces Films.

apricots, apples, cherries and strawberries. Close-ups capture the fruit's juiciness as they bite (at 4:34, where Rose bites a piece of watermelon) and lick it (at 5:14, where Rose licks grapes), with juices running down their faces and necks. Eyrin Rose uses a piece of watermelon to stimulate her nipples (at 4:54 and 5:05) and the performers feed each other strawberries (minute 5:00), cherries (at 5:10) and watermelon (at 6:20). Naked and seated on the grass, they kiss and share fruit, embodying a sensuous connection with each other and the natural world around them.

The practices observed in *Sunlight* align with the food-play sexual fetish, commonly referred to as 'splashing' or 'wet and messy fetish' (WAM).²⁰⁰ This fetish involves the incorporation of food into erotic contexts, often focusing on the sensory experiences food can evoke. Splashing can include a wide variety of activities, from smearing or pouring food on the body to using it in more intimate forms of play. These practices are primarily driven by the visual, tactile, olfactory, and gustatory sensations that food provides during sexual encounters. The appeal may stem from the contrast between the messy, indulgent nature of food and the structured physicality of the body, creating an intersection of pleasure, play, and sensory overload. Additionally, the act of involving food in sexual contexts can serve as a form of role reversal or power dynamic, where traditional uses of food are subverted into intimate, boundary-pushing experiences. This type of fetishistic play also taps into the element of taboo, which can heighten the erotic charge of the experience.

At minute 5:20 the music shifts to a slower, more serene tempo, accompanying scenes where the performer's bodies are stained with fruits and juices. They throw fruits and juice on their buttocks (at 6:44, Fig. 18), as well as syrup and yogurt on their chests (minute 7:22, Fig. 17). The film uses slow motion effects to enhance these moments, a sequence where blueberries cascade over Rose's body, and another where the fruit that had fallen rises back up, ending in her hands. The performers are shown standing or lying on the grass, kissing and caressing each other while spreading fruit on their bodies (Fig. 14). Quillan passionately licks Rose's breasts and nipples, causing her to arch her back in pleasure. He performs oral sex on her and she masturbates him, all while they continue touching and staining each other's bodies. In these sequences, oral sex and female masturbation are subtly simulated, such as when Rose caresses and inserts her finger into

²⁰⁰ On food-play, 'splashing' and 'WAM' at: <https://www.popsugar.com/sex/splashing-meaning-49359901> (Last consultation on July 14, 2024).

a grapefruit positioned between her legs (Fig. 15, minutes 5:58 and 8:14) and, at minute 4:28, she inserts her tongue into the grapefruit (Fig. 16), further blending sensuality with the playful use of fruit.

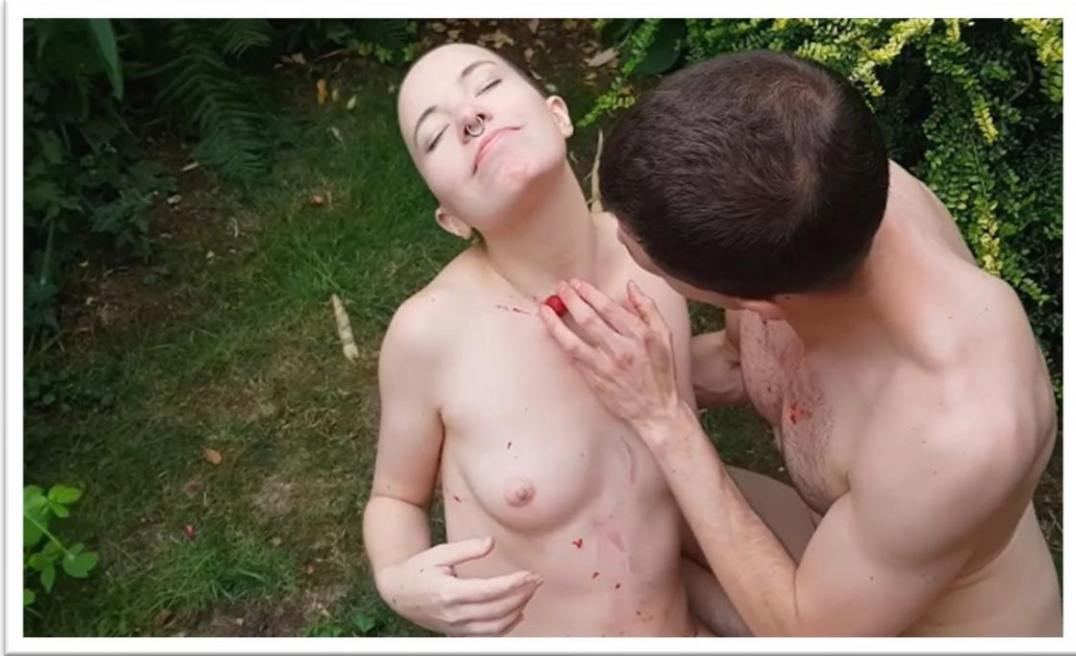


Figure 14 - Playing with raspberries against their naked bodies



Figure 15 - Fingering a grapefruit located on Rose's vulva

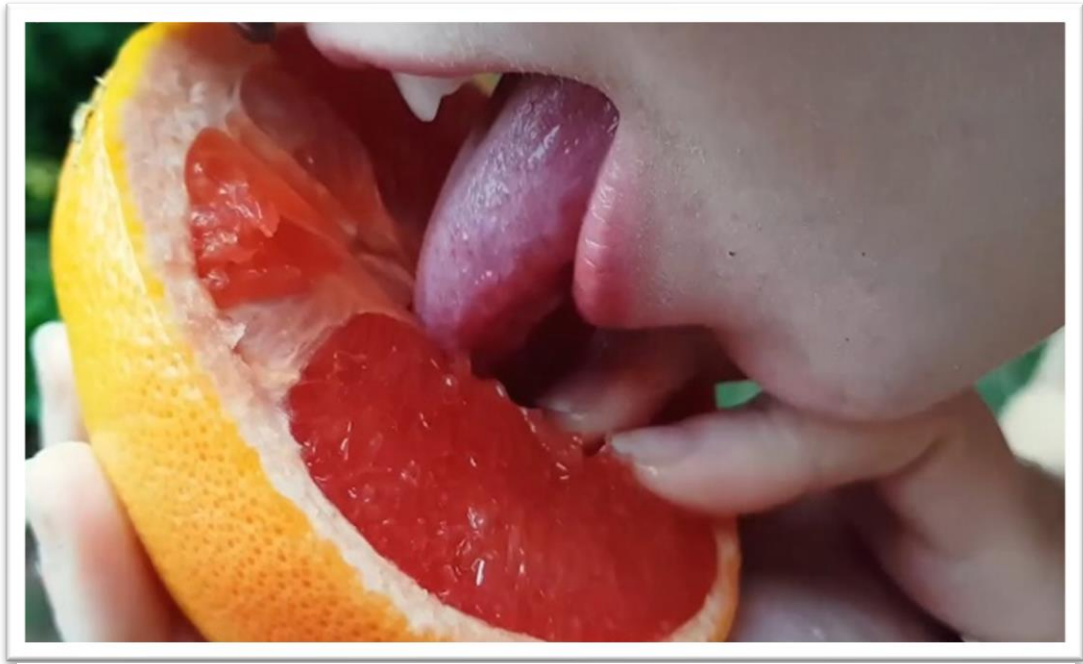


Figure 16 - Liking a grapefruit



Figure 17 - Throwing yogurt and syrup on Quillan's chest



Figure 18 - Throwing juice on Rose's back

Set in a natural environment, *Sunlight* integrates eco-porn principles, which advocate for harmony between human sexuality and nature. By incorporating natural elements, the film celebrates the beauty and tranquillity of the natural world. The use of nature contributes to its unique aesthetic, blending sensual pleasure with environmental and artistic considerations. As observed, the film explores the sensual use of food—primarily fruits, juices, yogurts, and syrups—to enhance the sexual experience. This approach allows the performers to explore textures, temperatures, and flavours in a way that enriches their interactions. Food play adds a layer of tactile and visual stimulation, which can heighten the sensuality of the encounter. The vibrant colours and varied consistencies of the food create a visually stimulating experience, while the act of applying these foods to the body introduces a playful and intimate dynamic. By integrating fruits and natural elements into the performers' interactions, the film creates a rich tapestry of sensory experiences that elevate the traditional boundaries of erotic cinema. The film emphasises non-penetrative sexual activities, including mutual masturbation and oral sex. By focusing on these practices, *Sunlight* highlights alternative forms of sexual expression that do not centre on penetration. This approach broadens the scope of sexual pleasure and intimacy and emotional resonance of their interactions, accentuating the importance of diverse sexual practices and the value of non-penetrative experiences in sexual fulfilment.

4.4 Ethical pornography in the UK: outcomes and implications

In recent years, the United Kingdom has seen the rise of alternative, ethical pornography. This movement has focused on creating content that prioritises consent, diversity, and the well-being of performers. By challenging traditional norms and stereotypes, these filmmakers have crafted visually compelling and narrative-rich productions. Their innovative approach has garnered significant recognition at international pornographic film festivals, celebrating their contribution to a more inclusive and respectful representation of sexuality. This chapter analyses four films from British companies that define themselves as feminist, ethical and alternative, two from the Four Chambers company —*Abjecting* and *Archetype*— and two from Thousand Faces Films —*A Sex Worker's Story* and *Sunlight*. Both pornographic companies are known for their unique, avant-garde approaches to adult cinema, distinguishing themselves from mainstream pornography through their emphasis on artistry, ethics, and inclusivity. Their focus on narrative depth, visual aesthetics, and performer well-being sets them apart, making them influential players in the evolving landscape of adult film.

Four Chambers is renowned for its high-quality, visually striking cinematography. The films often feature intricate lighting, innovative camera angles, and meticulous framing, creating a distinct and captivating visual style. They are committed to ethical production practices, ensuring that all participants are fully consenting and involved in the creative process. This approach fosters a respectful and empowering environment for performers. The films *Abjecting* and *Archetype* by Four Chambers represent a distinctive approach within experimental and erotic art cinema. These films not only challenge the conventions of traditional pornography but also invite deep reflection on themes of representation of the body and the limits of erotic representation. Diverging from conventional erotic normativity by presenting sexual acts in contexts that challenge preconceived notions of beauty, desire, and erotica. This approach allows for a more inclusive and diverse exploration of human sexuality.

Abjecting and *Archetype*, explore the human body and sexuality in ways that challenge societal norms, yet do so through distinct approaches. Both films confront traditional representations of the body, but while *Abjecting* focuses on Julia Kristeva's concept of abjection, particularly using female hair to question cultural perceptions of beauty and the 'undesirable' aspects of women's bodies, *Archetype* delves into themes of BDSM, lesbianism, and power dynamics, using testosterone injections and leather

aesthetics to amplify a raw, physical portrayal of control and resistance. A key similarity lies in how both films use the body as a site of challenge and transformation, pushing back against conventional standards of desire and beauty. However, *Abjecting* takes a more introspective and symbolic route, emphasising the coexistence of beauty and abjection, while *Archetype* uses physical interaction, wrestling, and non-verbal communication to explore power, pleasure, and queer sexuality in a more direct, primal manner. Both films ultimately aim to subvert societal expectations but do so with distinct aesthetic and thematic tools.

Thousand Faces Films focuses on producing a smaller number of high-quality films rather than a large volume of content.²⁰¹ This ensures that each production is carefully crafted and well-produced. The films are known for their aesthetic appeal, with attention to detail in set design, costume, and overall visual presentation. Thousand Faces Films often tackles thought-provoking and socially relevant themes, encouraging viewers to reflect on broader issues related to sexuality, identity, and human relationships. The films *A Sex Worker's Story* and *Sunlight*, focus on marginalised communities giving voice to individuals in the sex work industry, and *Sunlight* intertwining eroticism with ecological consciousness. Both movies significantly contribute to social discourse by addressing underrepresented issues with sensitivity and depth. They encourage viewers to question preconceived notions and foster a more nuanced understanding of the subjects they portray. The films exemplify how cinema can be used as a powerful tool for activism. While *A Sex Worker's Story* advocates for the rights and recognition of sex workers, *Sunlight* promotes environmental awareness and action. Their innovative approaches demonstrate that activism in cinema can be both artistic and impactful, engaging audiences in meaningful ways. The films humanise their subjects and encourage empathy and understanding from the audience. Both films employ innovative narrative and aesthetic techniques. *A Sex Worker's Story* uses a documentary-style approach to bring authenticity and rawness to the narrative, while *Sunlight* utilises visually striking imagery and symbolism to convey its environmental message. These techniques enhance the films' impact, making the viewer's experience both engaging and thought-provoking.

The alternative and ethical pornography scene in the United Kingdom is currently pushing boundaries and redefining the landscape of adult entertainment, with filmmakers

²⁰¹ They have produced twenty-two films: <https://thousandfacesfilms.com/films/> (Last consultation on July 12, 2024).

that are challenging conventional norms and creating content that is both visually and emotionally compelling. Looking ahead, this movement has the potential to further transform the perception of pornography, promoting a more inclusive and respectful approach to sexual representation. As these filmmakers continue to innovate and advocate for ethical practices, they may pave the way for mainstream acceptance and influence broader cultural attitudes towards sex and sexuality. The future holds promise for even greater impact, fostering a more open, honest, and diverse portrayal of human sexuality in media. The films analysed in this chapter demonstrate that there is significant space for experimental pornographic cinema that challenges norms and explores new forms of storytelling and representation. This suggests a promising future for the genre, where creativity and critical reflection can coexist to offer profound and transformative cinematic experiences.

CHAPTER 5: FEMINIST AND ETHICAL PORN MOVIES IN SPAIN

This chapter delves into the work of Erika Lust, a Swedish independent adult filmmaker based in Barcelona since 2000, focusing specifically on the distinctive characteristics and production processes of her award-winning crowdsourced ethical porn project XConfessions, through an analysis of four films —two directed by Lust and two by female guest directors between 2016 and 2019— the chapter explores how XConfessions tackles topics often considered taboo, such as sex during menstruation, challenging gender roles, and female ejaculation. Lust and her guest directors are committed to portraying sexual practices that extend beyond the ‘hegemonic’ norms, shifting the focus away from conventional depictions of intercourse and the penis as central to sexual experience. Instead, their work celebrates the diversity and multiplicity of human sexuality, representing a range of desires, identities, and practices.

The concept of confession will also be examined, particularly in relation to its role within the branding of the XConfessions project. The act of confession, often seen as a private revelation of personal desires or fantasies, is strategically used as a narrative device. By inviting audiences to submit their own confessions, the project not only engages viewers on a personal level but also blurs the line between creator and consumer. This participatory approach serves as both a creative inspiration for the films and a branding strategy that emphasises audience involvement, authenticity, and the democratisation of erotic storytelling.

This chapter also emphasises the ways in which ethical and feminist pornography from the XConfessions project carefully considers all aspects of film production to engage the audience on multiple levels. Particular attention is given to the use of visual elements such as camera angles, lighting, set design, and decor, alongside the performances and interactions between the characters. These elements work together to create a narrative that is not only emotionally and politically resonant but also sexually arousing. By thoughtfully crafting the visual and auditory dimensions of the films, Lust and her collaborators offer an immersive experience that encourages viewers to connect with the stories being told on screen. This approach exemplifies the project’s dedication to reshaping the portrayal of sexuality in a way that is inclusive, diverse, and respectful of the complexities of human desire.

5.1 Erika Lust: championing ethics in the adult industry

Erika Hallqvist, better known as Erika Lust, is a Swedish independent adult filmmaker, director, producer and screenwriter. Lust has been instrumental in promoting the aims of the feminist and ethical porn movement in Spain and Europe since the 2000s. She has written several books about pornography, safe sex, eroticism and pleasure —her book *Porn for Women* was published in 2008. In an interview in 2014 with the erotic portal Pasionis, Lust noted that she chose to call the book *Porn for Women*, “to provoke, to show that pornography was a completely male gender. With that title I never wanted to say that I believe that there is a pornography exclusively for women”.²⁰² Many directors and creators of pornographic content used the label ‘for women’ to show that there are also women creating porn and consuming it. This label worked to make pornographic content created by women visible, but perhaps nowadays, this marker falls short since it limits us to a way of understanding that all women like a type of representation of sexuality or that there is a ‘female gaze’.²⁰³

Erika Lust shot her first film in 2004, *The Good Girl*. It was released for free on the Internet and downloaded over two million times in the first month. The film was shown at the ‘Salò Eròtic de Barcelona’ (SEB) the next year and she won a ‘Ninfa Award’ for the movie. In 2005, she founded her video production company Lust Films. Lust Films is part of the wave of ethical adult cinema production, challenging mass-produced mainstream pornography. The company has produced erotic short films and compilations steadily from then on. In 2010, Lust opened an online erotic cinema called Lust Cinema, exhibiting her own films and those of other ethical and feminist directors.²⁰⁴ Lust Cinema has an extensive catalogue of pornographic films that capture the pleasure of sex with storylines, cinematic quality and a sexual positivity approach, and has films from various sex-positive companies: Joy Bear (a British film production company producing erotic films since 2003. Their goal is to change the perception of the adult entertainment business), Viv Thomas (erotic lesbian films), Adam & Eve (adult toy superstore and porn

²⁰² Full interview at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cgFAIG8Fx38> (Last consultation on February 10, 2021).

²⁰³ A pornography created from a ‘female gaze’ would try to honour female sexuality in all its forms without objectifying and stereotyping women. The female gaze is also understood to mean the participation of women in management positions in pornographic creation, not only in the role of performers.

²⁰⁴ Lust Cinema: <https://lustcinema.com/> (Last consultation on February 10, 2021).

movie producer), New Sensations (adult film production committed to creating and producing high-end erotic content in a variety of genres), Sex Art (erotic cinema for adults), Erotica X (celebrating passion, lust and desire in intimate sex scenes filmed in splendid locations), among others. Also, they provide information about their performers and the directors who work with them, with a brief summary about themselves and a video-interview where they talk about how they started performing, how they started creating porn movies and their inspirations.²⁰⁵

According to a statement on the Lust Cinema website “[they] challenge the porn industry standards by promoting the cinematic possibilities of the medium, high-quality storytelling and a realistic representation of human sexuality and sex [...] releas[ing] four brand new films every month. Unlike many others adult sites, you will never see the same story, character or location twice”.²⁰⁶ Lust Cinema works according to ethical standards, and that means that they follow a list of sex-positive principles: Women’s pleasure and diversity is central to creating new cinema, fair payments to everyone, and filming in a safe sex environment (where every part of the shoot is discussed and agreed beforehand with all performers) with multiple breaks, food and a welcoming, relaxed atmosphere.²⁰⁷ Erika Lust uses her platform to promote sex education, offering resources and discussions on topics related to sexual health, consent, and positive sexual experiences.²⁰⁸ She is vocal about issues like sex worker rights, sexual consent, and the need for ethical practices in the adult industry.

In 2013, Erika Lust started the first crowd-sourced project in the history of adult cinema, called XConfessions. The XConfessions project consists in creating movies using audience submitted fantasies, establishing an important interconnection between the audience, who provides the story/fantasy, and the creators, who provide the movie/final product. The framing of this series is a direct dialogue with the viewer. It provides validation for consumers who are positioned as the initial spark of erotic and sexual

²⁰⁵ Most mainstream porn websites do not provide this type of information. Erika Lust’s projects are recognised for their transparency and for wanting to make visible to the audience the person on the other side of the camera, what their interests are and why they make pornographic films.

²⁰⁶ Lust Cinema: <https://lustcinema.com/about> (Last consultation on January 19, 2024).

²⁰⁷ Values: <https://erikalust.com/about/values> (Last consultation on February 10, 2021) and in: <https://web.archive.org/web/20201030093316/https://erikalust.com/values/> (Last consultation on July 25, 2024).

²⁰⁸ *Lustzine*: <https://erikalust.com/lustzine> (Last consultation on September 18, 2024).

inspiration that ignites Lust's creativity to shape that private fantasy, adapting it to the cinematographic medium to transform it into a collective sexual fantasy. Each XConfessions, far from being an isolated/private sexual scene, constitutes a small narrative thread in which sex makes an appearance (Martín Sanz 2018, 352).

Erika Lust offers her support and funding to directors participating in XConfessions who want to change porn with their short films.²⁰⁹ She frequently asserts how important it is to have women behind the camera in all key positions, and the importance of the 'female gaze' in a male-dominated porn industry. Guest directors have to source their own cast and crew, locations and script but they have creative control with the support of the XConfessions team, especially in terms of legal aspects, documentation, information about working in adult cinema and finding appropriate performers. In 2017, together with a group of sexologists, Lust created the non-profit project 'The Porn Conversation', a platform for parents and educators that provides a variety of tools for discussing pornography with children and teenagers.²¹⁰ In 2020, a new porn website, Else Cinema was launched, a soft erotica range of Lust's own films and films by guest directors. Each movie explores soft erotica with cinematic stories.

Erika Lust's films are characterised by carefully cast performers and high standards of production in adult film. Lust believes that explicit films can be both pleasurable and an educational tool and can help people better understand their sexuality. She considers pornography to be the most important discourse on gender and sexuality. For Erika Lust, mainstream porn is always repetitive and there are too many stereotypes where the female experience is never considered, likewise with the experiences of transgender people, black people, dissident corporalities, and the elderly, among others.

Lust stresses the importance of improving narrative skills in her interview with Shannon "Boody" Boodram (intimacy expert and relationship educator) in 2018:

I feel so many times that when we look at mainstream pornography [...] it is just into showing sex, but it is nothing about understanding sex or how sex feels and that is kind of what I want to show in my films. I want to present to you characters [...] and situations that you can relate to [...] I want to take you on

²⁰⁹ In 2016, Erika Lust launched a worldwide open call for guest directors for the XConfessions project. Open call: <https://erikalust.com/about/open-call> (Last consultation on July 25, 2024).

²¹⁰ Full TEDx Talk: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PnK9Y7yuGWg>. Website of the project: <https://theconversation.org/about> (Last consultation on April 25, 2023).

this emotional sexual journey together with them and also I love the possibility of [...] challenging people to go outside their comfort zone.²¹¹

Lust likes to describe her work as feminist, artistic and ethical. Through her films, she promotes sex-positive feminism by highlighting female, as well as male, pleasure and autonomy, taking different tastes into account as far as possible. The definition of feminist porn has been widely debated and it is a complicated concept for many people. In an interview for Ruby Cup (an online menstrual products store) in 2017, Lust pointed out:

Because people have this idea that in the word ‘feminist’ there is somehow, something anti-men. That feminists hate men, and they want to get rid of them and take the power. And when it comes to pornography, people have this idea that porn somehow is anti-female. That pornography is bad for women, that it is hurting women in a lot of ways. And the truth is that a lot of the mainstream pornography that is out there today is hurtful for a lot of women. Because it is not about showing the pleasure of sex, it is a lot about punish-fucking women, and that is really sad and really hurtful and, that is one of the reasons why I believe that feminist porn is absolutely necessary. Because it can really help us change the way we look upon sex. I think that it can make us understand that men and women are equal human beings and that they can have a really good time together having sex, and that it is really about the pleasure for both.²¹²

Feminist porn is pornography filmed, edited and distributed from the theoretical and practical framework of feminism. It is a pornography in which men and women are subjects of desire and agents of pleasure. Feminist pornography also includes a variety of bodies, identities, orientations and abilities, but does not categorise or stereotype the diversity. As Lust evidenced in an interview for *Rewire* magazine in 2018, “the more diversity there is in pornography, the more perspectives, the more the viewer can see there are other realities and open their minds to the huge range of different sexualities and identities out there”.²¹³ Lust also likes to frame her work within ethical pornography

²¹¹ Full interview: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ICO0pb04DaE> (Last consultation on February 10, 2021).

²¹² See: <https://rubycup.com/blogs/articles/how-feminism-and-porn-go-together-a-conversation-with-erika-lust-about-periods-porn-and-ruby-cup> (Last consultation on February 10, 2021).

²¹³ On this topic: <https://rewirenewsgroup.com/2017/12/07/feminist-porn-traversing-mainstream/> (Last consultation on November 2, 2023).

because she considers it is important to ensure respect for all the rights of everyone working on the film, prioritising safety and a culture of consent on set. Ethical pornography is based on the values of feminism and therefore tries to promote a positive attitude towards sex, trying to represent human diversity in a respectful way.

Lina Bembe (porn performer) points out in an article in *Jezebel* by Tracy Clark-Flory in 2018, that the crucial question to consider is what true ethical practices should look like, rather than using ethics merely as a marketing strategy.²¹⁴ Simply labelling something as ‘feminist porn’ does not inherently ensure it adheres to ethical standards. Marit Östberg (independent porn director), points out in the same article that, when feminism becomes a marketing tool, it often results in diluted values that cater to ‘feel-good’ marketing and consumption, rather than honest commitment to feminist principles. This dilution of values can be particularly problematical in the realm of porn, where the outcomes are likely to have a significant impact on sex workers, who already face considerable humiliation and marginalisation due to anti-porn attitudes. Thus, it is essential to critically examine and define ethical practices in porn to ensure they truly support and protect the well-being of sex workers and uphold genuine feminist values.

Mention must be made, in relation to ethical values on a porn set, to an incident that occurred during the filming of *Don’t Call Me a Dick* (2017) by guest director Olympe de G. and the performer Rooster, within the XConfessions project. Rooster made some allegations of “unethical behaviour” on Olympe de G. shoots. The accusations against Olympe de G. involve “sexual assault, gross negligence of an employer and breach of contract”.²¹⁵ On May 18, 2018, Erika Lust published a blog entry titled, “We Care” in which she admitted that her company had experienced “unwanted situations” on several of its film shoots.²¹⁶ The post mentioned issues during the production of seven different films, with most of these incidents occurring under the direction of guest directors. Lust told *Jezebel* magazine that the Lust project is, “responsible for making sure we hire guest directors, who also hire a crew, who have the personal skills and empathy to work with

²¹⁴ *Jezebel* site: <https://www.jezebel.com/is-feminist-porn-getting-its-metoo-moment-1828173419> (Last consultation on July 26, 2024)

²¹⁵ “Erika Lust Responds to Hello Rooster’s ‘Unethical Sets’ Allegations”. Full article: <https://www.xbiz.com/news/246319/erika-lust-responds-to-hello-roosters-unethical-sets-allegations> (Last consultation on July 26, 2024).

²¹⁶ We Care: <https://web.archive.org/web/20190822222421/https://erikalust.com/we-care/> (Last consultation on July 25, 2024)

sex workers, understand what they need, listen to them and accommodate to that” and that the company will be “prioritising work with directors who have positive feedback from performers”²¹⁷. The issue between Erika Lust Films and the performer Hello Rooster has been resolved, as noted on the Lust website “the conflict between Erika Lust Films and performer Hello Rooster has been peacefully resolved; both parties now hope to build a better relationship and move forward from this together”.²¹⁸

As mentioned in the statement on Erika Lust’s own website, Hello Rooster (who also works as an intimacy coordination consultant)²¹⁹ assisted in the development of Erika Lust’s the new *Guidelines to shoot for Erika Lust Films for guest directors*²²⁰ and the *Performer’s Bill of Rights*.²²¹ These initiatives aim to enhance the safety of everyone on set. All of this goes to show that even in a feminist and ethical pornographic film company, issues can arise on set, such as unwanted situations or breaches of guidelines. These challenges highlight the importance of having clear, enforced protocols and a commitment to continuously improving safety and ethical standards for all performers and crew members. Ensuring transparency, accountability, and support within the production process is essential to uphold the values of feminist and ethical porn.

Lust has established a distinctive and influential brand within the adult film industry, characterised by a focus on ethical production, feminist values, and high-quality content, distinguishing her work from mainstream pornography. As she points out in an interview with the web newspaper *El Salto* in June 2024, “porn is just porn, it is explicit sex, and you can do it with your values, whatever they may be: if you have sexist, racist and homophobic values, you are going to do that kind of porn, but if you consider yourself a feminist your pornography will have feminist values”(*).²²² By emphasising ethics,

²¹⁷ *Jezebel* site: <https://www.jezebel.com/is-feminist-porn-getting-its-metoo-moment-1828173419> (Last consultation on July 26, 2024).

²¹⁸ Joint statement by Erika Lust Films & Hello Rooster: <https://erikalust.com/joint-statement> (Last consultation on July 25, 2024).

²¹⁹ About Rufai Ajala at: <https://intimacyconsultancy.com/about> (Last consultation on July 29, 2024).

²²⁰ Guidelines for Guest Directors: <https://img.erikalust.com/static/erika-lust/EL2021-GuidelinesShot.pdf> (Last consultation on August 2, 2024).

²²¹ Performer’s Bill of Rights: <https://img.erikalust.com/static/erika-lust/EL2020-PerformersRights.pdf> (Last consultation on July 25, 2024).

²²² Full interview at: <https://www.elsaltodiario.com/cine/erika-lust-pornografia-es-politica> (Last consultation on July 26, 2024)

consent, and female pleasure, Lust appeals to an audience seeking more respectful and realistic portrayals of sex. Lust's films offer more than just erotic content; they provide meaningful stories that resonate with viewers. This storytelling approach deepens audience engagement and loyalty. By being transparent about her production practices and advocating for ethical standards, Lust builds trust with her audience. Collaborating with diverse artists, filmmakers, and sex educators, she continually innovates and expands her brand's reach. These collaborations infuse fresh perspectives and creativity into her work, keeping the trademark dynamic and relevant. Lust has built a company that not only entertains but also educates and empowers, making a significant impact both within and beyond the adult entertainment industry.

5.2 Directors and audiences converge to create porn: XConfessions (Erika Lust, 2016 - 2018)

XConfessions is one of Erika Lust's most notable projects. Some of the key aspects of the project are user-generated content, diversity and inclusion, and high production standards. As mentioned before, the project relies on real-life confessions submitted by people from around the world. These confessions serve as the inspiration for the films, allowing users to see their fantasies brought to life. By involving the audience in the creative process, XConfessions fosters a sense of community and encourages open discussions about sexuality and desire. As well, the project showcases a wide range of sexualities, body types, and genders. This inclusivity is a deliberate effort to represent the varied experiences of human sexuality. By embracing diversity, Lust's brand appeals to a wider audience, including those who feel underrepresented or marginalised by mainstream adult entertainment. There is some variety of bodies and ethnicities, though Erika Lust accepts that she may possibly do better in this area, as she points out in an interview on the *Jezebel* website. Many of the couples are girl-on-boy, however there are plenty of scenes featuring group sex, female couples and nonbinary performers.²²³ The films are known for their high production values, artistic cinematography, and narrative depth, distinguishing them from typical adult films, making them appealing not just as erotic content but also as short films with artistic value. The production values in her work

²²³ Erika Lust's work at: <https://www.jezebel.com/erika-lust-says-she-has-an-ethical-alternative-to-mass-1824090251> (Last consultation on July 25, 2024).

reflect a commitment to professionalism, with meticulous attention to detail in aspects like lighting, sound, and editing.

Confession is a deeply rooted concept with historical, religious, psychological, and social significance. Confession can be defined as the admission or declaration of facts, feelings, thoughts, or actions that are generally kept hidden.²²⁴ In religion, especially in Catholicism, confession, also known as the sacrament of penance or reconciliation, is a rite in which believers confess their sins to a priest to receive absolution. This act has profound spiritual significance, as it is considered a necessary step for divine forgiveness and the purification of the soul. The concept of confession is intimately linked to the notion of taboo, as it often involves the revelation of prohibited or socially unacceptable thoughts or actions.

Michel Foucault in *The History of Sexuality* (1976) argues that confession is a technique of power that regulates behaviour, where the individual submits to the authority receiving the confession.²²⁵ Serving as a disciplinary mechanism, where individuals subject themselves to the scrutiny and judgment of authority figures, and reinforcing power structures. Foucault argues that instead of repressing sexuality, modern Western societies have produced an abundance of discourse about it. Through the act of confession, individuals come to understand and define their sexual identities. The confessional practice contributes to the normalisation of sexuality by establishing standards of what is considered normal or abnormal, healthy or pathological. The relationship between confession and sex is complex and multifaceted. Sexual confessions are often laden with guilt and seek redemption. In many cultures, sexual practices outside accepted norms are seen as sinful, and confession serves as a means to relieve the associated emotional and moral burden. In a more contemporary and less religious

²²⁴ According to Cambridge Dictionary a confession can be “the act of admitting that you have done something wrong or illegal”. See: <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/confession> (Last consultation on July 26, 2024).

²²⁵ *The History of Sexuality* is a four-volume study of sexuality in the Western world, a foundational text in understanding the relationship between power, knowledge, and sexuality. Foucault’s work explores how sexuality is not merely a natural biological drive, but a complex social construct shaped by historical and cultural forces. *The History of Sexuality* provides a profound analysis of how sexuality is intertwined with power and knowledge through practices like confession. By compelling individuals to speak about their sexual experiences, confession acts as a tool for regulating and producing discourses on sexuality. Foucault’s insights reveal the complex dynamics of how power operates in the intimate aspects of human life, challenging us to rethink the ways in which sexuality is understood and governed.

context, confessing sexual desires and experiences can be a way to explore sexual identity and free oneself from social restrictions. Confession can facilitate an open conversation about sexuality, promoting greater understanding and acceptance of sexual diversity.

The use of confessions or secrets in pornography has evolved significantly from the 1970s to the present. These confessions were often explicit and direct, frequently presented in the context of magazines and erotic stories where readers shared their sexual experiences and fantasies. Publications like *Penthouse Forum*²²⁶ and *Hustler Letters*²²⁷ began including letters from readers describing their sexual experiences, noting that “every word is true”²²⁸. Readers often shared detailed accounts of their sexual fantasies, ranging from the conventional to the highly imaginative and taboo. These fantasies were sometimes written in a storytelling format, blending elements of erotica with personal confessions. By making all these private stories and confessions public, these magazines provide a forum for open and often explicit discussion of sexuality.

This period also saw the publication of Nancy Friday’s groundbreaking books, such as *My Secret Garden* (1973), *Forbidden Flowers* (1975), and *Women on Top* (1991), which explore women’s sexual fantasies and gave women a voice to express their desires and fantasies, challenging the social taboos surrounding female sexuality. Friday’s work highlighted the complexity and diversity of women’s sexual thoughts, contributing to a broader understanding and acceptance of female desire. Her work paved the way for more open discussions about women’s sexual autonomy and agency, which are central themes in feminist discourse. By bringing women’s fantasies into the public sphere, Friday challenged the patriarchal norms that often silence or shame women’s sexual expression.

During the 1980s and 1990s, sexual confessions began to be used as narrative devices to develop more complex characters and plots. Confessions were used to reveal hidden desires, internal conflicts, and personal transformations, as exemplified by *Red*

²²⁶ *Penthouse Forum* was published in 1968 in the UK with articles on social relationships, health and medical psychology. The first American version of the magazine was released in 1971. Official site: <https://penthouse.com/> (Last consultation on July 26, 2024).

²²⁷ *Hustler* magazine was founded by Larry Flynt in 1974. The magazine’s ‘Letters to the Editor’ section, often simply referred to as *Hustler Letters*, was a staple feature from its early years. Website: <https://hustlermagazine.com/magazines/> and collection of magazines from 1986 to 1989 at: https://magazine-empire.com/HUSTLET_1989.htm (Last consultation on July 26, 2024).

²²⁸ Quote from *Letters to Penthouse VI*. Available at Boston Public Library: <https://bpl.overdrive.com/media/196102> (Last consultation on July 26, 2024).

Shoe Diaries (1992 to 1997), an erotic drama series created by Zalman King. The concept was also adapted by Playboy Entertainment, continuing the legacy of the original series. Each episode featured a standalone story framed by the confessional device of a letter sent to the protagonist, Jake Winters (played by David Duchovny), who read these letters to understand human desire and heartbreak after losing his fiancée.²²⁹ The series became well-known for its sensual storytelling, artistic cinematography, and its use of confessions as a central narrative device.

The advent of the Internet transformed how sexual confessions were shared and consumed. Online forums, blogs, and user-generated content platforms allowed people to share their secrets and fantasies anonymously and on a large scale. Pornography began incorporating interactive elements, where viewers could influence the stories or even create their own content based on confessions. Sites like *MyDirtyHobby* (launched in 2006) focused on sharing sexual experiences and fantasies.²³⁰ Many users upload videos or write posts that include personal confessions about their sexual desires, experiences, and fantasies. These confessions add a layer of intimacy and authenticity, making the content feel more genuine and relatable. Filmmakers like Erika Lust have taken the idea of confession to new heights with projects like Xconfessions, in this case, the sexual fantasies become a creative and empowering act for exploring human sexuality. Here, confession does not seek absolution but rather the validation and artistic expression of intimate desires. Sexual confessions in modern pornography are used to explore and validate a wide range of sexual identities and orientations. This has led to greater diversity and representation in the industry.

Within the vast content of online pornography, we can find directors who advocate for the creation of porn with feminist principles, who produce content free of stereotypes, show different bodies, sexual practices and ways of having sex. In the Spanish context, an outstanding example of this is the XConfessions project, led by director Erika Lust. The following sections in this chapter provide an in-depth analysis of two movies from this project, volumes 8 and 14, directed by Erika Lust —*Can*

²²⁹ About the series at: <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0103522/> (Last consultation on July 26, 2024).

²³⁰ *MyDirtyHobby* (MDH) focuses on content where users can upload their own videos, photos, and stories, often accompanied by personal narratives, secrets and confessions. Official site: <https://www.mydirtyhobby.com/> (Last consultation on July 26, 2024).

Vampires Smell My Period? and *Gender Bender*.²³¹ With this project, Lust and the guest directors try to show an alternative discourse to conventional porn and create a pornographic cinema that has the power to liberate society's desires.

Table 3: Selection of movies directed by Erika Lust in the XConfessions series

Film	Year	Duration	Performers
<i>Can Vampires Smell My Period?</i>	2016 (Volume 8)	8 minutes	Misha Cross and Parker Marx
<i>Gender Bender</i>	2018 (Volume 14)	13 minutes	Kali Sudhra and Dante Dionys

5.2.1 Challenging sexual taboos: *Can Vampires Smell My Period?* (Erika Lust, 2016)

Menstrual blood is effectively banned in pornographic films seeking certificated distribution. We might think that we do not see menstrual blood in porn because people do not demand this type of content. There may be some truth to this statement as society still stigmatises menstruation generally while the desire for sex during the bleeding phase is often positioned as at best unhygienic and at worst fetishistic. But there is another reason why we do not see menstrual blood in pornographic movies as Erika Lust observed in the explicit magazine *Lustzine*:

The real reason behind the lack of representation of period sex in porn is the sexist guidelines and preferences of credit card processors. The distribution websites of porn producers are labelled as a 'high risk' sites, and then, companies as Visa, MasterCard and PayPal do not process payments from high-risk sites. For that, producers have to go to smaller third-party companies to be able to process payments from customers. These smaller third-party companies have strict guidelines in their user agreements that ban porn which depicts excessive violence, incest, and bodily fluids—including menstrual blood. While we can all

²³¹ About the selections of films see Chapter 3, subsection 3.3.3.

agree that we need to keep the Internet and porn sites as safe as possible and free of illegal content, how exactly is showing period blood a danger to society?²³²

Many adult content distribution platforms have strict policies on what can and cannot be shown. These policies are designed to comply with legal regulations, protect users, and maintain a level of ethical standards. These guidelines often prohibit the depiction of menstruation due to the perception that it could be considered extreme or graphic content. As mentioned above, payment providers like Mastercard and Visa play a crucial role in shaping the policies of adult content websites. Their guidelines and restrictions can influence what types of content are allowed, how payment processing is managed, and how content moderation is conducted. As these financial institutions enforce their policies, they have a significant impact on the broader adult entertainment industry, driving changes in content regulation and website operations. In recent years, Visa and Mastercard have taken steps to increase scrutiny on adult content websites. For example, in 2020, they temporarily suspended processing for Pornhub due to concerns about the platform's content moderation and compliance with legal standards. This action led to a widespread reevaluation of content policies by various adult content providers.²³³

The prohibition or restriction of the production and distribution of pornographic videos featuring menstruation is due to a combination of cultural, legal, and market factors. Menstruation remains a taboo subject in many cultures. This stigmatisation translates into a general aversion to openly showing or discussing menstruation, especially in sexual contexts. Historically, menstruation has been seen as something impure in many cultures. This perception affects how menstruation is viewed in the sexual domain, where the body is typically celebrated for its beauty and attractiveness. Laws and regulations regarding pornography vary widely across different countries and regions. In some places, there are specific restrictions on the depiction of blood in sexually explicit material due to health and safety concerns. For example, in the UK, the British Board of Film Classification (BBFC)²³⁴ has been known to classify menstrual blood in

²³² About credit card processors at: <https://erikalust.com/lustzine/sex/lust-guide-xconfessions-app-period-sex> (Last consultation on May 26, 2022).

²³³ See: <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/12/04/opinion/sunday/pornhub-rape-trafficking.html?action=click&module=Opinion&pgtype=Homepage> (Last consultation on July 29, 2024).

²³⁴ BBFC Timelines: <https://www.bbfc.co.uk/education/timelines> (Last consultation on July 29, 2024).

pornographic content as potentially obscene or extreme, leading to restrictions on its distribution. The Digital Economy Act 2017²³⁵ further tightens regulations on online pornography, and while it primarily focuses on age verification, it also encompasses content that may be considered harmful or extreme, including the depiction of blood.

This censorship reinforces the idea that sex during menstruation is ‘unsafe’ or ‘filthy’. Having access to sexually explicit material, eroticising menstruation, can help those who struggle with feelings of shame and discomfort towards it. Making periods link to eroticism has the potential to help many people be more at peace with their own bodies and period cycles, and even find more fun ways to combine sexual pleasure and menstruation. Lust indicates in *Lustzine* that sex during menstruation is a great opportunity to celebrate the period instead of stigmatising it, claiming different benefits to having sex during a period: 1. As a way to relieve pain, 2. Using blood as a natural lubricant, 3. Many women experience higher levels of arousal when menstruating and, most importantly, 4. To break stereotypes related to the period and sex.²³⁶ Sadie Lune — sex educator and porn performer— in a collaboration between The Lust Ed and Sex School Hub²³⁷, also addresses the topic of sex during menstruation, noting that “unless you do not enjoy having sex during your period, there’s really no reason to avoid sexual activity during the bleeding phase”²³⁸. Sadie Lune and porn performer Lina Bembe talk about sex during menstruation and perform an explicit demonstration, where they show that having sex during menstruation can be a very sexy and intimate experience.

As part of the *XConfessions* series, *Can Vampires Smell My Period?* (2016) touches on menstrual blood —a subject often considered taboo in mainstream

²³⁵ Digital Economy Act 2017: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2017/30/2024-02-08> (Last consultation on July 29, 2024).

²³⁶ About period sex at: <https://erikalust.com/lustzine/sex/lust-guide-xconfessions-app-period-sex> (Last consultation on November 26, 2021). Full video interview with Erika Lust at Ruby Cup YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IR83vbuX4t4> (Last consultation on November 26, 2021).

²³⁷ Lust Ed is part of Lust’s blog *Lustzine*, which provides free explicit sex educational videos and Sex School Hub offers explicit sex education films that enact real life sexual situations, created by porn performers, sex workers and sexologists.

²³⁸ On de-stigmatising period sex and practical tips on how to do it at *Lustzine*: <https://erikalust.com/lustzine/sex/the-lust-ed-period-sex-sadie-lune-lina-bembe> (Last consultation on November 26, 2021).

pornography.²³⁹ Lust uses this theme to challenge conventional norms and offer a more inclusive and open representation of sexuality. By incorporating menstruation into an erotic fantasy narrative, Lust addresses the taboo surrounding bodily functions and aims to normalise and celebrate aspects of female sexuality that are frequently hidden or stigmatised, trying to turn this biological phenomenon into an object of desire, not repugnance.

As mentioned above (see more at this chapter, Section 5.2), the XConfessions project is based on confessions/revelations from the public, who send their ideas, desires and fantasies to Erika Lust, who turns those stories into sexually explicit movies. Figure 19 shows the confession that inspired the story for this film by ‘elise-11’.²⁴⁰

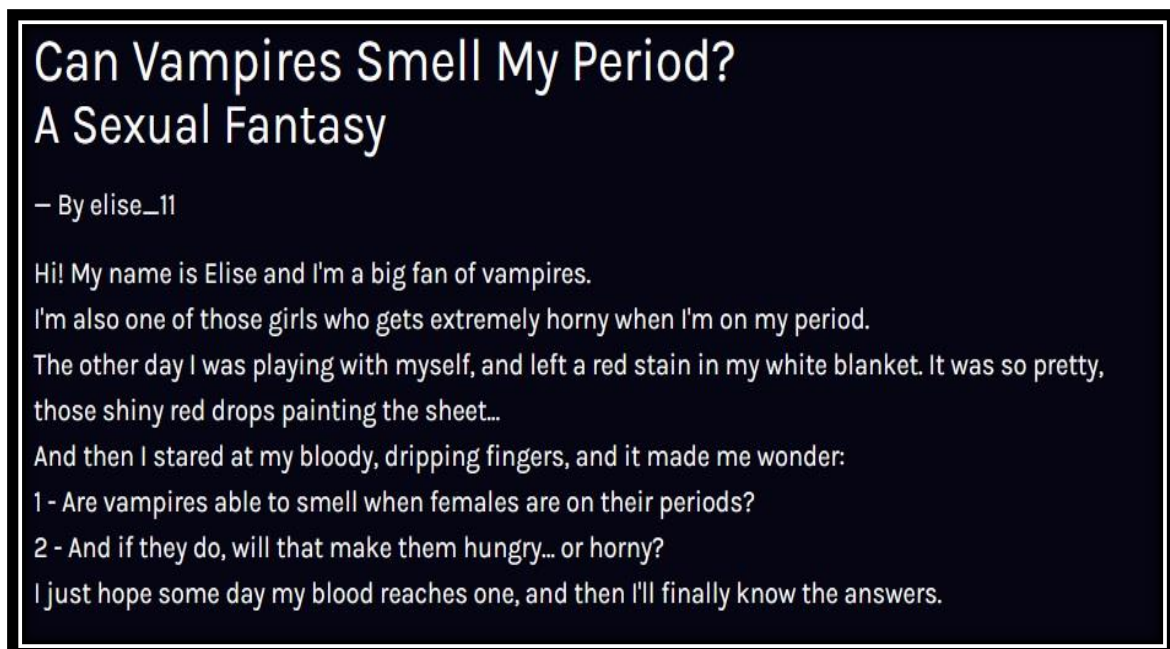


Figure 19 - Sexual confession that inspired the creation of *Can Vampires Smell My Period?*

Vampires and sex have been inextricably linked in popular culture, with the portrayal of vampires often emphasising themes of seduction, desire, and taboo. Vampire fiction has its roots in gothic literature, where vampires were portrayed from a perspective based on fear, longing and sadomasochism, linked with erotica at the same time. This

²³⁹ Trailer of the movie: <https://xconfessions.com/es/film/can-vampires-smell-my-period/watch/trailer/279> (Last consultation on November 26, 2021).

²⁴⁰ All screenshots included in this chapter—in sections 5.2 and 5.3—were taken by myself from the originals available on XConfessions.

connection can be traced back to the earliest vampire stories and has evolved over time to reflect changing societal attitudes towards sexuality. One of the earliest vampire stories, *Carmilla* (1872) by Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu, features a female vampire who seduces young women, blending themes of predatory danger with forbidden sexual desire and blurring the lines between predator and lover, reflecting Victorian anxieties about female sexuality and lesbian desire. The story's subtle homoerotic undertones highlighted the transgressive nature of both the vampire and her seduction.²⁴¹ Another well-known literary story is Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897), where the protagonist, Count Dracula embodies a combination of aristocratic charm and monstrous predation. His interactions with female characters, such as Mina Harker and Lucy Westenra, are loaded with sexual subtext. The figure of the vampire continues to be a resource used in the current narrative, with a growing fandom demanding more audiovisual and literary products with these immortal and sexy creatures always hungry for blood.²⁴²

The portrayal of vampires as seductive and sexually charged figures reflects deep-seated cultural fascinations with power, control, and forbidden desire. Vampires often possess the ability to hypnotise or control their victims, adding an element of power dynamics to their seduction. This ability symbolises the loss of control and the surrender to darker desires. Vampires also embody the allure of the forbidden, breaking societal taboos surrounding sex and death. Their ability to seduce across gender and social boundaries challenges conventional morality. Whether as symbols of transgression or as romantic antiheroes, vampires' connection to sex and seduction remains a central and enduring aspect of their mythos. *Can Vampires Smell My Period?* narrates the sexual encounter between a woman who is on her period (Misha Cross) and a vampire (Parker Marx).²⁴³ The central element of the film is the menstrual blood and explores how a

²⁴¹ About the book at: <https://americanliterature.com/author/joseph-sheridan-le-fanu/book/carmilla/summary> (Last consultation on August 2, 2024).

²⁴² Vampires continue in the contemporary imagination with novels such as the vampire saga *Twilight* (2005), *New Moon* (2006), *Eclipse* (2007) and *Breaking Dawn* (2008), series like *True Blood* (2008-2014) and movies like *Night Teeth* (2021).

²⁴³ Misha Cross is a Warsaw actress who has been working in Europe and the United States since 2013 as a porn performer. She stars in five XConfession project films, such as for example: *The Couchsurfer* (2014), and *Horny Beasts* (2016). In 2015, she won the XBIZ Award for "Best Foreign Artist" and in 2016 and 2017 the AVN Award for "Best Foreign Female Artist of the Year". Parker Marx is a European-based British performer who has appeared in a variety of high-end porn films in the XConfession project since 2016, such as *Carne* (2016) and *Music in Mi* (2019).

vampire might react to it: Would he be tempted to feed on it? Would it evoke arousal? Both performers are white, young, and conventionally attractive: Misha Cross is slim and has long brown hair, a shaved body with only pubic hair, and light makeup. Parker Marx, in contrast, remains fully dressed throughout the film, creating a striking contrast with Cross's pale skin.

The soft, 'dark' music guides and enhances the film's actions, which unfold across four main scenes: introduction to the characters (a fleeting, unidentifiable figure flashes past outside the woman's house, sparking audience speculation. Inside her dimly lit bathroom, she prepares to have a bath. A close-up reveals a trickle of blood running down her left thigh (Fig. 20) and falling into the water, creating a swirling stain of menstrual blood (Fig. 21). This scene is pivotal as it reveals the protagonist is menstruating, which is a key element in the film's narrative. While the protagonist is submerged in the bathtub, a pale, haggard man suddenly appears at the ceiling window and quickly vanishes when noticed), solo sex of the female character (she playfully opens her bedroom window, inviting both the viewer and the mysterious man who had been spying on her into her private space.²⁴⁴ The first sex scene shows her masturbating on the bed, with the camera focusing on her legs, vulva, and fingers, which are covered in blood, as are the bed sheets. This scene might suggest that her masturbation was related to an arousal for her period, to relieve menstrual cramps, or for the earlier encounter with the mysterious man), a sexual encounter between the woman and the vampire (cunnilingus, explored in detail in the following pages) and conclusion (as daylight streams through the window, she is shown sleeping on blood-stained sheets. Upon waking, she discovers a note on her pillow with the message "See you in 28 days" written in red ink resembling blood. She smiles as she reads it, indicating that the prospect of the vampire's return pleases her).

²⁴⁴ A wide shot from outside the window reveals the room's décor, which includes a bed, a bedside table with a skull and butterfly frame, posters, paintings, and dried roses (Fig 22). Erika Lust emphasises the aesthetic and realistic details in her films, using these elements to enhance the viewer's experience.



Figure 20 - Blood running down Misha Cross's leg



Figure 21 - Menstrual blood falls into the bath water

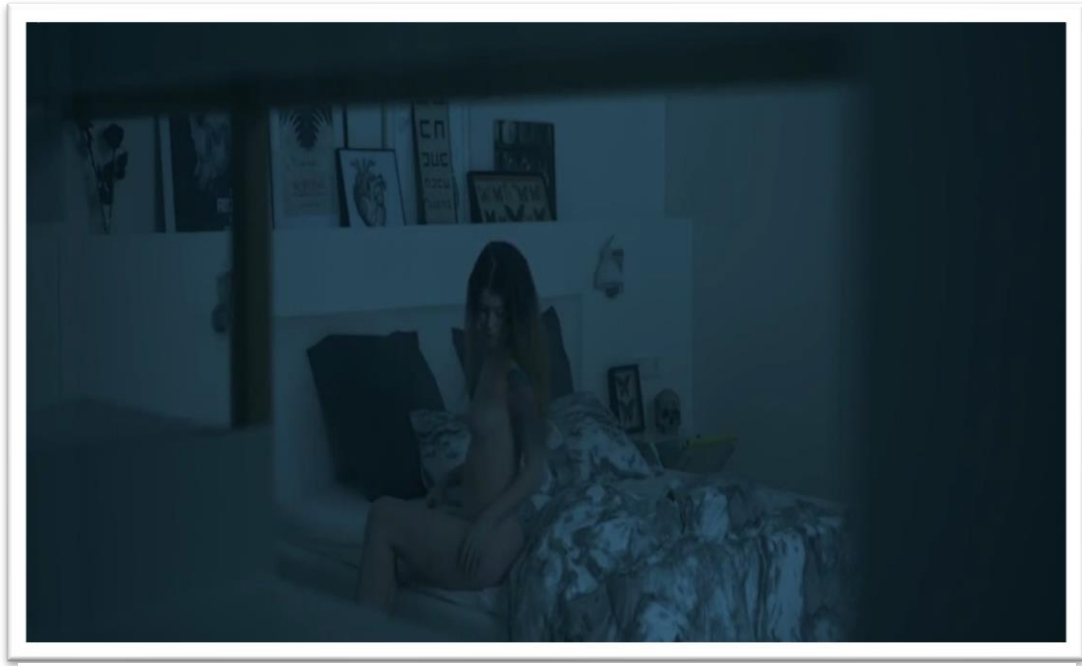


Figure 22 - Bedroom interior

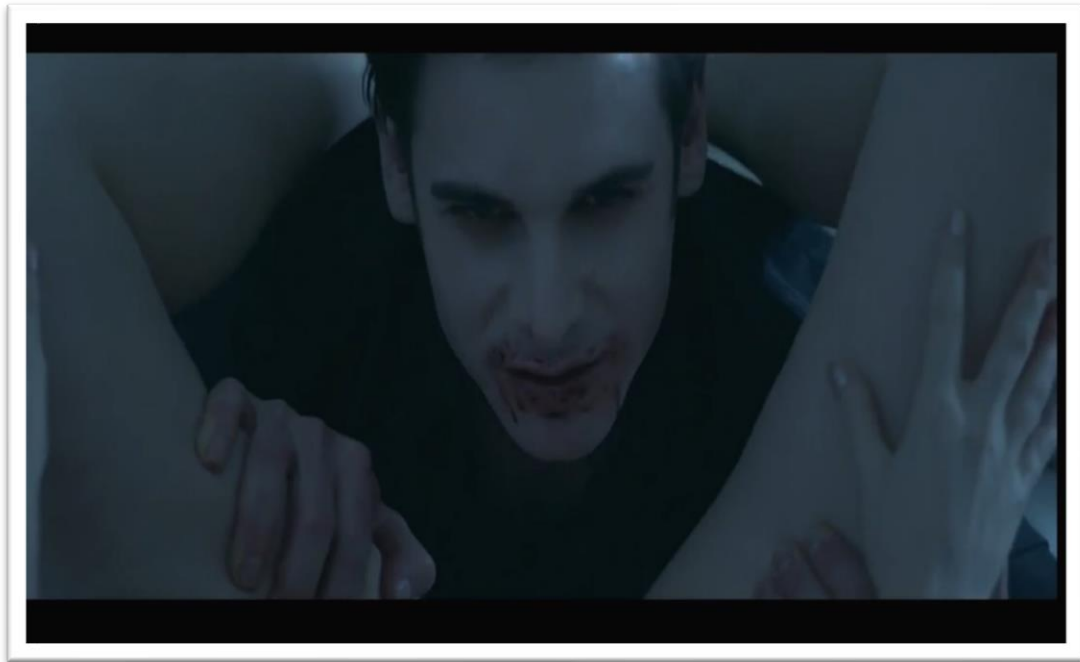


Figure 23 - The vampire's face (Parker Marx) covered in menstrual blood

The following pages analyse the meeting between both characters in the film. The camera swiftly moves toward the female character (Misha Cross), creating a blurry effect that suggests the presence of something moving unnaturally fast in the room. She turns to calmly face a man (Parker Max) and after a brief exchange of glances, she turns back

and slides her hand around her neck, seemingly ‘offering’ herself to him, hinting that she suspects he might be a vampire. The vampire approaches, sniffing her neck, shoulder, and then moving between her legs. At minute 4:40, he inserts his fingers into her vagina, retrieves them covered in menstrual blood, examines them, and licks them with evident pleasure and hunger. The woman, though surprised, remains calm as the vampire chooses to feed on her menstrual blood rather than her neck, a more typical feeding method for vampires. Although the vampire needs for blood for its survival, it also plays to the themes of seduction and power often depicted in vampire lore.²⁴⁵ Vampire seduction often emphasises the physical aspects of intimacy, such as the act of biting, which can be both painful and pleasurable. This duality reflects the complex interplay of pleasure and pain in erotic experiences. The act of a vampire biting a victim’s neck (serving as an erogenous zone) is a parallel to sexual penetration. The penetration of the skin by fangs mimics the intimacy and invasion of sexual intercourse, emphasising vulnerability and the mingling of bodily fluids (penetrate the skin and the blood provides lubrication).

After tasting the menstrual blood, the vampire begins to perform oral sex on her, liking her vulva and savouring the blood while pleasuring her. As he continues, the music stops, leaving only the sound of her soft moans and the eager movements of the vampire’s tongue. She grabs his head, pressing him closer. The camera shifts to a shot of her blood-stained vulva and the sheets as the vampire ‘feeds’ on her, alternating with close-ups of his blood-smearred face and her expressions of pleasure. Nearing orgasm, she grips his hair, pushing him towards her vulva, while stimulating her clitoris with the other hand. At minute 7:10, the camera captures her face as she orgasms, showing her eyes rolling back and her head falling. This scene ends with the vampire’s blood-covered face between her legs, looking at her seductively (Fig. 23), both satisfied and aroused.

This scene offers a subversive take on the traditional dynamics often seen in pornography, particularly when compared to the common bukkake²⁴⁶ or money shot (facial ejaculation). In this instance, the male character, a vampire, is depicted with his

²⁴⁵ Movies such as: *The Hunger* (1983), *The Lost Boys* (1987), *Bram Stoker’s Dracula* (1992), *Interview with The Vampire* (1994) and more recent ones, *Only Lovers Left Alive* (2013), describe the desire and lust characteristic of vampires. In many vampire narratives, the erotic, dangerous nature of the bite signifies a loss of innocence or purity. The victim, often portrayed as young and virtuous, is ‘corrupted’ by the vampire’s bite, reflecting societal fears about sexual corruption and moral degradation.

²⁴⁶ Bukkake is a sexual act in which one individual is ejaculated on by multiple participants, typically involving several men ejaculating onto a single woman.

face covered in menstrual blood, after performing oral sex on the female protagonist. This visual reversal, where the male is stained by the woman's blood rather than ejaculating onto her, shifts the power dynamic and symbolism that usually accompanies such scenes. In contrast to the often-degrading implications of the money shot, this scene conveys a sense of mutual pleasure and even empowerment for the female character. The camera focuses on her pleasure and her control over the vampire, as she guides his head and stimulates herself. Instead of the man achieving satisfaction through ejaculation, his gratification is tied to pleasuring and 'feeding' from her, offering a fresh perspective on the dynamic between the two characters. In this scene, the blood on the vampire's face is a result of his hunger and desire for the woman, positioning her body and blood as something he craves and is drawn to, rather than something to be conquered. These artistic reimagining challenges the often-rigid tropes of traditional pornography by transforming what could be considered a moment of exploitation into one of mutual desire and exploration of bodily fluids, subverting conventional expectations.

Linda Williams argues that pornography often functions as a spectacle that both challenges and reinforces taboos related to sexuality in her book *Hard Core: Power, Pleasure, and the 'Frenzy of the Visible'* (1999). The depiction of menstruation in pornography can elicit varying cultural and social reactions. On the one hand, it can challenge traditional taboos and contribute to a broader acceptance of natural bodily functions. On the other hand, it can also be met with discomfort or censorship, reflecting ongoing societal struggles with the visibility of menstruation. By depicting extreme sexual acts and bodily fluids, pornography pushes the limits of cultural acceptability, engaging viewers in a visual frenzy that provokes intense reactions and reshapes perceptions of sexuality.

The portrayal of menstruation in conventional cinema is often surrounded by secrecy and negative stereotypes, despite being a natural, common occurrence. Historically, films and series have avoided including menstruation in female narratives, and when represented, it has often been viewed pejoratively depicting menstrual blood as dirty, smelly, or problematic.²⁴⁷ This contrasts with how other types of blood, like that

²⁴⁷ On this topic see *Periods in Pop Culture: Menstruation in Film and Television* (2012) by Lauren Rosewarne where she "covers a range of topics including menstrual taboos, stigmas and fears, as well as the inextricable link between periods and femininity, sexuality, ageing, and identity" The book "highlights that the treatment of menstruation in the media remains an area of persistent gender inequality". Website: <https://laurenrosewarne.com/books/periods-pop-culture/> (Last consultation on December 1, 2023).

from wounds in violent films, are more accepted and visible. Menstrual blood, in particular, has been hidden or replaced by euphemisms, such as the blue liquid used in feminine hygiene ads, which reinforces its negative connotations and aligns it with abjection. According to feminist theorist Julia Kristeva, bodily fluids like menstrual blood are considered abject because they blur the line between the self and the external world, leading to their rejection by society.²⁴⁸ Kristeva notes that many cultures view menstruating women as impure or inadequate, often treating them as if they should be excluded, concealed, or erased. The female body, in particular, is considered abject because it disrupts socially constructed boundaries and norms. This can be seen in the use of euphemisms like “that time of the month” —phrases that obscure the reality of menstruation and reinforce secrecy and shame. The reluctance to name menstruation reflects society’s discomfort around the taboo and view of the female body as abject.

The taboo surrounding menstruation persists, with women often feeling shame and secrecy during their periods. However, recent works by female creators, such as the series *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend* (2015-2019) and the movie *Fair Play* (2023), are normalising menstruation by portraying it as a natural part of life, including in sexual contexts.²⁴⁹ These new depictions challenge old stigmas and pave the way for more open discussions about menstruation. Films like *Can Vampires Smell My Period?* contribute to this shift by portraying sex during menstruation as desirable, erotic, and normal. This helps break down stereotypes and presents a more realistic and positive view of menstruation in cinema. By transforming a user’s confession into a film that challenges taboos surrounding sex during menstruation, *Lust* places great importance on female satisfaction. Every sexual act in the film is centred on the woman’s pleasure, normalising and celebrating sex during menstruation. The film also underscores that penetration is not essential for a fulfilling sexual encounter, nor is male ejaculation necessary as the climax of the act or the conclusion of the narrative. The film ends with the promise of another encounter during her next menstrual cycle, further reinforcing the prioritisation of female pleasure.

²⁴⁸ More on abjection at Chapter 4, subsection 4.2.1.

²⁴⁹ *Elle* magazine site: <https://www.elle.com/es/living/ocio-cultura/a34781671/menstruacion-regla-cine-series-television/> (Last consultation on December 1, 2023) and in *El País*: <https://elpais.com/smoda/bienestar/2024-01-19/hacerlo-con-sangre-como-el-cine-esta-derribando-el-tabu-del-sexo-durante-la-menstruacion.html> (Last consultation on April 19, 2024).

5.2.2 Pleasure in transgression: *Gender Bender* (Erika Lust, 2018)

A gender bender is an individual who actively challenges or subverts traditional gender norms and roles.²⁵⁰ This term can apply to various contexts, including fashion, behaviour, identity, and expression. Many gender benders embrace gender fluidity, meaning they do not strictly identify as male or female, instead, they may move between genders or identify as a blend of both. By defying gender norms, gender benders challenge societal expectations and promote a broader understanding of gender diversity. Their actions can raise awareness and foster acceptance of non-binary and gender non-conforming identities. While gender bending can be empowering, it also comes with challenges. Gender benders may face misunderstanding, discrimination, or social stigma.

Gender Bender (2018) is shot in black and white and explores and celebrates the diversity of gender identity and gender expression. The film shows the story of a couple (Kali Sudhra and Dante Dionys)²⁵¹ exploring the malleability of gender and the deep eroticism of abandoning sexuality marked by gender norms.²⁵² Both protagonists possess an attractive, natural physicality, free from cosmetic alterations, celebrating the inherent beauty of their bodies. By portraying characters who step outside conventional gender norms, the film challenges the audience's preconceptions about masculinity, femininity, and sexual roles. In sexual contexts, gender bending can enhance erotic experiences by

²⁵⁰ The slang term gender bender describes (according to the Merriam-Webster dictionary) a person who dresses and behaves like a member of the 'opposite sex'. Gender bending can be a form of social activism undertaken in response to assumptions or over-generalisations about genders. Some gender benders identify with the gender assigned them at birth but challenge the norms of that gender through androgynous behaviour and atypical gender roles. Gender benders may self-identify as transgender or genderqueer, feeling that the gender assigned to them at birth is an inaccurate or incomplete description of themselves; some are transsexual and want to change their physical sex through hormone therapy or sex reassignment surgery, while others were born intersexual. More information at: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/gender%20bender> (Last consultation on November 23, 2021).

²⁵¹ Kali Sudhra, sex worker, writer and educator born in Tkaronto (Canada), has performed in several XConfessions indie adult short films such as *Hongry* (2017), the sexual documentary *Female Pleasure Circle* (2019) and in 2020, she co-directed her first movie *Ritual: An Intimate Portrait of Kali Sudhra* with Aleix Rodón. Dante Dionys, a porn actor and sex worker based in Berlin, starred in the XConfession movies *Sex Work is Work Part 1* (2018), *Moist* (2018) and *The Bike Club* (2018), among others.

²⁵² Trailer at the XConfessions site: <https://xconfessions.com/film/gender-bender> (Last consultation on November 26, 2021).

incorporating elements of fantasy and novelty. Couples may find it exciting to explore power dynamics, dominance, and submission in ways that defy traditional gender roles. Judith Butler's work, particularly in *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990), is foundational for understanding gender as a performance. Butler argues that gender is not a fixed identity but a series of performances that can be subverted or redefined, which is central to the concept of gender bending. According to Butler, gender identity is created through the repetitive enactment of gender norms and roles, rather than being an expression of an underlying essence. This concept suggests that gender is fluid and dynamic, constructed through actions and behaviours that conform to societal expectations. The repetition of these acts solidifies and reinforces the perceived identity of gender.

Figure 24 shows the full confession that inspired the story for this film by 'Iaiamtoshine'.

Gender Bender

A Sexual Fantasy

– By iaimtoshine

My boyfriend and I are both bisexual, somewhat androgynous looking, and are discovering our gender identity more thoroughly as we grow up in a world where that's suddenly more okay to do. I'm strongly feminist, but my boyfriend is still trying to understand what that means to me, and what he thinks about it. Because of this, our sex life is very pg-13 and traditional. But still beautiful and intimate in its own way.

Sometimes I imagine us as freer people who are more comfortable in our skin and more expressive about the many facets of who we are.

I imagine we go back home to our respective apartments, and we dress as each other's genders. I imagine binding my breasts, removing my make-up, slicking back my pixie cut, sneaking away a strap on into my noticeably baggier pants, and leaving as dapper as can be.

Not too far away, my boyfriend is shaving his legs and face in the shower, coming out clean as a whistle, he is trying on my most delicately lacy bras, slipping into my favorite dress. He swipes mascara over his long blond eyelashes and blushes his cheeks. He slips a bobby pin into his shaggy hair to neaten it as he leaves the house.

We meet at a bar. I buy him a glass of my favorite wine and he gifts me with his favorite whiskey. We talk, we discover each other, we fall in love all over again with this new face on a familiar body. We get friendlier. I'm slipping my fingertips under his skirt as he whispers something coy in my ear. We pay each other's bills and leave the bar.

Cut to us laughing uncontrollably as we burst through the door of my apartment. I can't help myself, I'm pressing him to the wall and sucking hard on his neck as he moans with delight. Letting him feel my silicone arousal against his smooth thighs. I remove my dress from him in

hurry, run my hands over his porcelain stomach and under the wires and lace of the bra. I gently toss him to the bed in the middle of my tiny studio apartment, his skin glows golden now in the dimmer light. He lands all fours. He's begging me to enter him.

Figure 24 - Sexual confession that inspired the creation of *Gender Bender*

The confession that inspired the story revolves around the desire to explore sexuality through the lens of gender fluidity and role reversal. The expansion of the sexual imaginary, beyond what is established, through the possibility of reinvesting and modifying the imposed sex/gender binominal: man/woman and masculine/feminine. Iaimtoshine wants to expand her sexuality with her partner, going beyond traditional so-

called 'vanilla' sex (understood as soft, traditional or conventional within the slang of the BDSM subculture) or 'Pg-13' sex (also meaning normal or standard sex). She wants to multiply the sexual possibilities with her partner, to let go of social mandates and be free. The movie is divided into three parts: presentation of the characters (transgression of gender norms), sexual encounter between the performers (where a series of sexual practices are carried out: cunnilingus, fellatio, masturbation, the use of erotic toys for vaginal penetration such as a glass dildo, penetrative sex and pegging by Sudhra to Dionys using a strap-on) and ending. The following pages explore the characters' transformations, a crucial aspect of the film's narrative, along with the sexual practices of Dionys performing fellatio on Sudhra's dildo and the act of pegging.

The scene opens with soft piano music as the two main characters are introduced through medium-close shots, giving viewers the sensation of observing them (camera that records/eyes that observe) as if they were looking in a mirror (Figs. 25 and 26). This technique draws the audience into the characters' intimate transformation from traditional gender expressions to new appearances that defy conventional norms. The scene is filled with subtle sound effects like the rustle of underwear and zippers, adding materiality to the visuals. Both performers are attractive and young, conforming to beauty standards while challenging gender norms. Kali Sudhra is shown removing her makeup, styling her hair more 'masculinely', and dressing in a white shirt, bow tie, black jacket, pants, and heels. She flattens her chest with a chest binder (Fig. 27) and inserts a dildo into her underwear to simulate a penis. Meanwhile, Dante Dionys shaves his beard and applies makeup (Fig. 28), donning hoop earrings and tight white pants that conceal his penis.²⁵³ He completes his look with a frilly shirt and a BDSM choker (often worn by submissives), giving him a 'feminine' aesthetic. The transformation culminates in a final shot of both characters, Sudhra adopting a masculine appearance, and Dionys a feminine one.

This opening sequence presents a couple eager to explore both their sexuality and gender by subverting the gender roles imposed by our heteropatriarchal society. Each character adopts a different gender expression opposite from the one typically associated with their biological sex (based on genitalia), but their transformation transcends the

²⁵³ Meanwhile he undresses, a close-up shows his non-erect penis, an uncommon sight in pornographic films where the penis is typically shown erect and ready for penetration. This depiction of a nude male body, with genitals in a resting state, is unusual for the genre, which rarely portrays the male body in such a natural, non-sexualised way.

masculine/feminine binary. Both characters present themselves in an androgynous manner, rejecting the conventional woman=feminine/man=masculine, framework and hinting at desires that extend beyond heteronormative boundaries. Narratively, this scene marks a pivotal moment of transgression, breaking with socially constructed gender and opening to a freer expression of self. The role play dynamic here serves as a powerful vehicle for self-exploration, allowing the characters to experiment with different aspects of their gender identity in a safe and consensual space. It highlights the complexity and diversity of desire, suggesting that gender and sexual expression are not rigid, but fluid and deeply personal.²⁵⁴



Figure 25 - Close-up of Kali Sudhra's face

²⁵⁴ Role playing is a practical application in which participants put themselves in the shoes of other people and play a role in a previously posed imaginary situation. Other forms of role play in sex, commonly involves participants adopting and acting out specific roles or scenarios to enhance sexual pleasure and intimacy. These roles can range from common fantasies such as doctor-patient, teacher-student, or dominant-submissive, to more unique or personal scenarios.



Figure 26 - Close-up of Dante Dionys's face

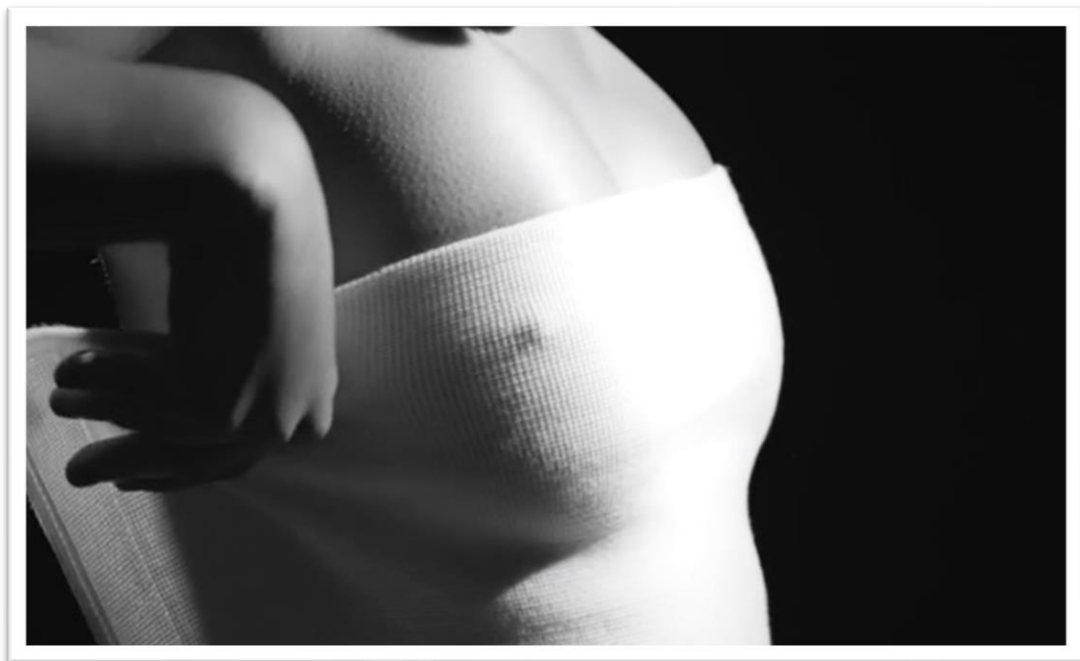


Figure 27 - Sudhra wearing a chest binder

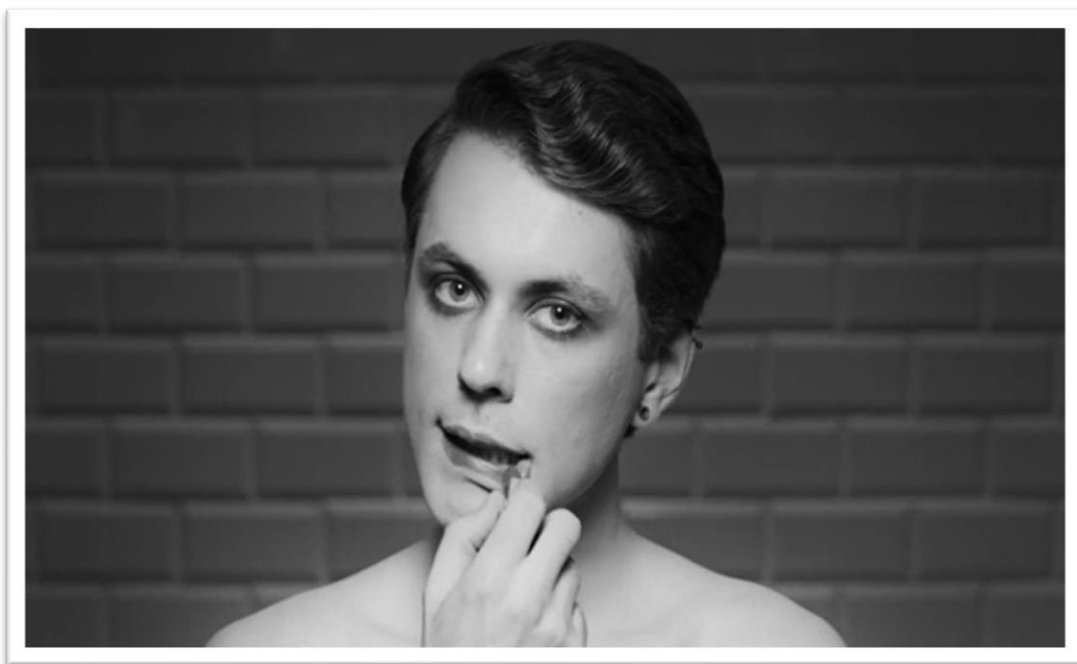


Figure 28 - Dante Dionys putting on makeup

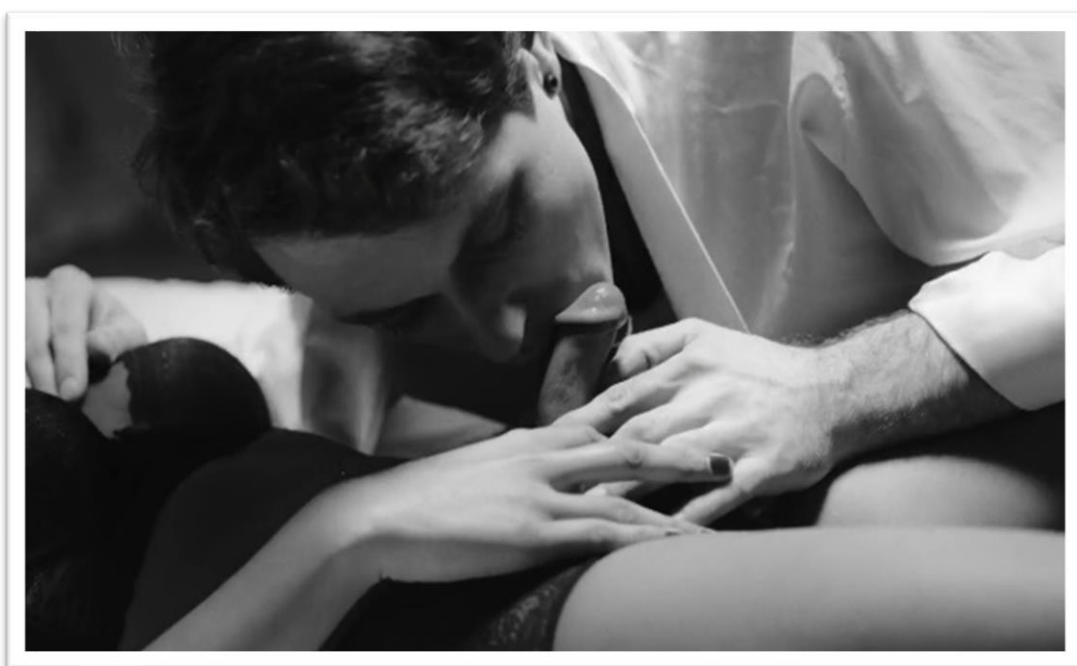


Figure 29 - Kali Sudhra wearing a dildo and Dante Dionys licking it



Figure 30 - Anal stimulation of Dante Dionys

In a more intimate setting (after following the characters through the streets of Barcelona, a bar and the subway)²⁵⁵, Dionys helps Sudhra to remove her chest binder. The moment unfolds into a sensual exchange characterised by intimate touches, culminating in a close-up of them caressing a dildo in Sudhra's underwear, which symbolises a stimulated penis. Dante Dionys reaches for the dildo in Sudhra's underwear, gently pulling it out before beginning to lick it for about thirty seconds (Fig. 29). As he continues, Sudhra lets out soft moans, responding to the sensations as he explores the dildo positioned near her genital area. This scene has significant implications regarding gender roles and sexual dynamics. The act challenges traditional gender roles by blurring the lines between masculinity and femininity. It allows for a fluid, deeper exploration of identity and desire, suggesting that pleasure is not confined to conventional roles. This scene can be interpreted as a celebration of sexual fluidity and an invitation to question and redefine conventional notions of gender and pleasure. The intimacy of the moment fosters a deep emotional connection, highlighting trust and vulnerability. Additionally, it reflects sexual experiences outside conventional heterosexual boundaries, embracing a more inclusive view of desire and relationships. In *Gender Bender*, these themes of transgression and fluidity are central, illustrating how sexual encounters can transcend

²⁵⁵ The Girona metro stop appears at minute 3:35, revealing which city they are in, Barcelona.

traditional categorisations and celebrate a spectrum of identities and experiences. Through this lens, the scene becomes a powerful commentary on the evolving landscape of sexuality and gender.

The other sexual practices chosen for exploration focus on the satisfaction of the male performer, Dante Dionys, through anal stimulation, particularly in the film's final sequences. A series of activities centred on his pleasure unfolds, with Sudhra as an active participant. She begins by whipping his buttocks with a black whip (minute 9:55), then engages in anal masturbation with her fingers while wearing a latex glove²⁵⁶ for safety (Fig. 30). Whipping, often associated with BDSM, can heighten arousal by introducing elements of pain and pleasure, allowing for a dynamic interplay between dominance and submission. This practice fosters a sense of trust and communication, as partners negotiate boundaries and consent. Ultimately, she penetrates him with a strap-on dildo (minute 10:40), a practice known as pegging. Sudhra skilfully controls the pace and depth of penetration —initially thrusting faster while pulling his hair to bring him closer, then slowing down to kiss his back and neck. The camera captures Dante's visible joy throughout these interactions; he bites his lips and moans continuously as she penetrates him. Anal sex remains a taboo for many, often stigmatised by cultural beliefs that equate being penetrated with passivity and weakness, suggesting that men who enjoy it lack masculinity. However, this scene challenges those notions, demonstrating that pleasure in anal sex is attainable for any man, whether gay, straight, or pansexual. The dynamic of Sudhra's penetration, typically seen as the 'dominant' role, makes Dante's pleasure in his perceived 'passivity' all the more subversive, redefining the boundaries of desire and masculinity in a provocative manner. In this context, these practices become powerful tools for self-exploration and affirmation, enriching the sexual experience and challenging societal norms surrounding sex and desire.

The use of strap-ons by women in sexual contexts with men, represents a significant shift in sexual dynamics, challenging traditional gender roles and expectations.

²⁵⁶ At the start of each film, it is mentioned that "all XConfessions performers are consenting adults who are tested regularly and use condoms according to their preference". While the films promote a higher prevalence of condom use and other barrier methods to protect against STDs, this practice is not strictly mandated. The company prioritizes safe sex, requiring performers to undergo routine testing for sexually transmitted infections (STIs) to ensure a safer working environment. This commitment to health reflects a broader dedication to ethical production standards, aiming to foster a culture of consent and safety within the adult film industry.

For many women, using a strap-on can be an empowering experience, allowing them to assume a dominant role and explore their desires freely. This shift not only fosters a sense of agency but also encourages men to engage with pleasure in ways that challenge societal norms around masculinity. By embracing anal penetration, men can redefine their understanding of masculinity to include vulnerability and receptivity, which can lead to greater sexual satisfaction for both partners. Despite the lingering stigma surrounding anal sex, the normalisation of strap-on use helps deconstruct these taboos, allowing for broader conversations about sexuality that include diverse expressions of pleasure. *Gender Bender* plays a necessary role in promoting acceptance of such practices, showcasing the joy and connection that can arise from them. Overall, the use of strap-ons by women towards men not only empowers individuals but also encourages a more inclusive and liberated understanding of sexuality.

This film illustrates that sexual encounters between a couple—a man and a woman—can diverge significantly from the conventions of traditional heterosexual porn, which typically follow a formula of blowjob, penetration, and male orgasm. Instead, it showcases a broader range of sexual practices and reorders their presentation. For instance, the film features male anal stimulation through fingers (with a glove) and a strap-on dildo, emphasising the male actor’s face and body rather than focusing solely on his penis as the main narrative device. This approach contrasts sharply with conventional pornography, often characterised by fragmented bodies and close-ups of genitals, such as oral sex, vaginal and anal penetration, and the climactic imagery of semen (coming out of the vagina or anus—known as a ‘creampie’—or placed in another part of the female performer’s body), which is typically framed with the female face as a symbol of joy, often gazing at the camera from a high angle to engage the male audience.²⁵⁷ By depicting practices like pegging and anal stimulation, *Gender Bender* challenges societal norms surrounding masculinity and femininity, inviting viewers to reconsider rigid definitions of pleasure and desire.

Erika Lust stresses the importance of showcasing all participants through medium, close, and wide shots, creating a more holistic view of the encounter. While her films do

²⁵⁷ It should be remembered that in the high angle shot the camera is positioned above the character or object, showing a view of it from above. Normally, this represents a psychically weak, dominated or inferior character, and specifically in pornography it is a very common shot in scenes of a woman performing fellatio and/or masturbating a man.

include genital shots, they are used judiciously, avoiding the overemphasis found in much free pornographic ‘tubes’. Kali Sudhra’s body is cohesively presented, with different parts highlighted as integral to the narrative, positioning her as an active character who seeks both her own pleasure and that of her partner. She controls the pace of their sexual interactions, further accentuating her agency. The active participation of both characters, particularly the female lead, underscores themes of empowerment and mutual satisfaction, allowing for a reimagining of sexual encounters. Additionally, Sudhra’s voice-over at the beginning of the film sets the stage for their fantasy, articulating the desires of both characters before any sexual action occurs, enhancing the emotional depth of the story. With *Gender Bender*, Lust aims to showcase the fluidity of gender and explore the profound eroticism that comes from transcending rigid gender roles, ultimately embracing raw, carnal desire.

5.3 Bringing the viewer’s fantasies to life: XConfessions by guest directors

XConfessions intends to provide opportunities for more women, BIPOC, and LGBTIQA+ people to produce pornography as directors of their own movies.²⁵⁸ To that end, the company offers support and funding for new directors who want to create a porn film but perhaps do not have enough money or the equipment to do so. Adding guest directors has allowed the project to grow and expand the representations of different groups’ experiences, making it more intersectional, varied and broad. Currently, the XConfessions team has more than seventy guest directors —sixty of whom are women— from different countries like Spain, United Kingdom, France, Australia, Venezuela, Italy, United States, China, Germany, Poland, Finland, Canada, Netherlands, Cuba and Sweden, among others. Around 60 photographers are also part of the team and more than 270 porn performers who want to break away from traditional adult cinema.²⁵⁹ In the next sections I analyse two films volumes 7 and 20, by Spanish female directors invited to the XConfessions project Paulita Pappel and Montiel (Fig 5.15) —*Female Ejaculation* and *F*ck, Kill, Marry*.

²⁵⁸ Lust team video about the guest directors: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=khBPg2lqJIs> (Last consultation on November 26, 2021).

²⁵⁹ More information about the contributors —performers, couples, directors, guest stars, photographers and artists— at: <https://xconfessions.com/collaborators> (Last consultation on January 19, 2023).

Table 4: Selection of movies directed by Paulita Pappel and Montiel in the XConfessions series

Film	Year	Duration	Performers
<i>Female Ejaculation</i>	2016 (Volume 7)	12 minutes	Sadie Lune and Jesse Stryder
<i>F*ck, Kill, Marry</i>	2019 (Volume 20)	34 minutes	Bishop Black, Poppy Cox, Sadie Lune, Dante Dionys and Yumie Volupté

5.3.1 Questioning clichés: Female Ejaculation (Paulita Pappel, 2016)

What seems like a porn myth and fetish has been proven: female ejaculation is real and it involves vaginal expulsion of a fluid similar to that which men ejaculate, although obviously, female fluids do not contain any substance that is related to fertility.²⁶⁰ Squirting, also known as female ejaculation, involves the release of a significant amount of fluid from the urethra, which some research suggests is associated with sexual arousal or orgasm. The exact nature and origin of this fluid are subjects of ongoing scientific debate, with studies indicating that it may include a combination of fluids from the Skene’s glands, which are sometimes referred to as the female prostate. Official medicine has been an obstacle to understanding women’s bodies and sexuality, which have been reduced to mere tools for reproduction. The only truth that appears on this subject for now is that it is surrounded by ignorance and even certain prejudices. As Diana J. Torres explains in her book *Coño Potens. Manual sobre su poder, su próstata y sus fluidos* (2015), “I dare to say that not being able to ejaculate is not missing something particularly pleasurable [...] The pleasure of ejaculating is a political pleasure and the mere fact of knowing that this possibility exists is already a pleasant victory”(*). Pointing out in this

²⁶⁰ Women have a female prostate called Skene’s gland, which when stimulated and/or pressed generate the liquid that will be expelled during ejaculation as a result of orgasmic contractions. The fluid expelled during squirting can vary in terms of volume, consistency, and appearance. It is often clear or slightly cloudy and may contain traces of urine. More information at: <https://www.webmd.com/sex/what-is-squirting-orgasm> (Last consultation on May 11, 2024).

way how female ejaculation can become a political act because it breaks with the schemes of Western culture about sexuality and the ‘innate’ character of women. Telling women that sex should be subtle, clean, beautiful, inappreciable, and above all, sensitive and interior (9, 2015a).

In the context of pornography, squirting is often portrayed as a dramatic and visually striking element. Pornographic scenes featuring squirting frequently use camera angles and editing techniques to highlight the fluid release, enhancing its visual impact for viewers. This portrayal often aims to create a sense of heightened sexual excitement and spectacle. *Female Ejaculation* (2016) directed by Paulita Pappel is the third guest short film in Xconfessions.²⁶¹ Pappel is a performer and an independent director and founder of Lustery (an amateur porn website) and HARDWERK (an independent production company based in Germany). She is also one of the curators of the ‘Berlin Pornfilmfestival’. Performers Sadie Lune and Jesse Stryder star in the film, and both have participated in other movies in the XConfessions project.²⁶² The music in the film is by the Spanish feminist and generational garage rock band Las Odio with the song *Vitaminas*.²⁶³ Paulita Pappel decided to direct a film celebrating female ejaculation with the purpose of delving into the so-called ‘porn clichés’ and turn them around on the axis

²⁶¹ Trailer: <https://xconfessions.com/es/film/female-ejaculation/watch/trailer/242> (Last consultation on November 26, 2021).

²⁶² Sadie Lune is a multimedia artist, performer and sex worker who has also participated in XConfessions as a performer and as a director with the movie *The MILF Next Door* (2019) and Jesse Stryder also starred in *Olympe de. G We are the Fucking World* (2017), a pansexual orgy featuring nine performers that raised 5,000 euros for Amnesty International.

²⁶³ The film opens with an unintelligible conversation between the characters, followed by the first verses of *Vitaminas* that sets a powerful tone. The lyrics describe a relatable situation: “While you are having coffee your boss is talking to you. You have a bad face. Tired face! Make that face happy, are you not feeling well? That does not matter, just make it seem that way”(*). This underscores the societal pressure to always appear happy and composed, even when it is far from reality. The song’s message aligns with the film’s theme, addressing the feminist critique of the expectations placed on women to appear ‘perfect’ and in control in all aspects of life —whether at home, work, with family, or maintaining their appearance. This combination of music and narrative highlights the pressure on women to constantly ‘pretend’ and perform, rather than being allowed to express their true selves. Las Odio’s songs are full of humor with accurate criticism of sexism, job insecurity, among other topics. More information about the band at: <http://maasaimagazine.com/las-odio/> (Last consultation on May 11, 2024) and full lyrics at: <https://lasodio.bandcamp.com/track/vitaminas> (Last consultation on November 16, 2023).

of gender.²⁶⁴ Traditionally, in normative or mainstream heterosexual scripts the climax of the sexual action is set on the cumshot of a penis, so Pappel decided to take a similar narrative but placed the climax on the ejaculation of a vulva. She notes that “we can use films to create new scripts that can be inspiring and can expand our horizons and possibilities when having sex” and with this movie she wanted to honour female pleasure as a symbol against sexism.²⁶⁵

Figure 31 shows the full confession that inspired the story for this film. In this instance, the fantasy originates from the film’s director, offering a personal and unique exploration of this erotic theme.

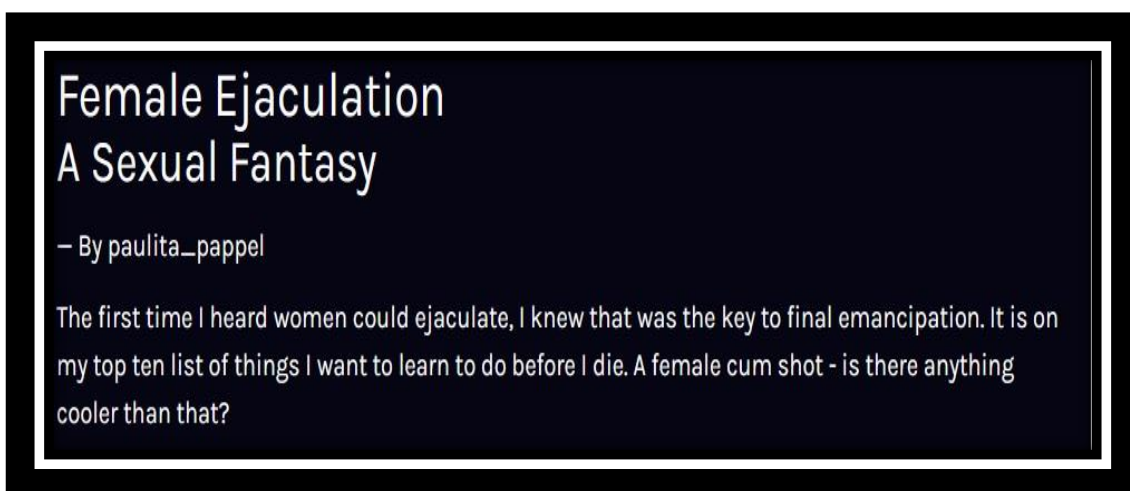


Figure 31 - Sexual confession that inspired the creation of *Female Ejaculation*

The movie opens, as with all films in the XConfessions project, by presenting the fantasy that serves as the film’s central theme. Here, only the final phrase of the confession is shown: “A female cum-shot - is there anything cooler than that?” The confession driving this film is straightforward, centring on the desire to depict female ejaculation. The film is divided into main two parts: introduction of the characters (main and secondary) and development of the plot through different sexual practices that end with Sadie Lune’s squirt orgasm, which will be analysed in the following pages.

The plot unfolds through a conversation between friends, where a woman (Cherriosity) shares her recent sexual experience with another woman (her secretary) and

²⁶⁴ About conventions of the pornographic genre see Chapter 3, subsection 3.3.1.

²⁶⁵ Full interview: <https://vamosfalardesexualidadblog.wordpress.com/2017/12/28/interview-with-paulita-pappel/> (Last consultation on June 9, 2022).

discusses female ejaculation. The two men in the room (Gizmo Wolf and CrisToni Florido Acosta) are taken aback, particularly by the mention of female ejaculation, responding with surprise: “Ejaculated?” and “Women can ejaculate?” Their ignorance frustrates their host, Lune, who becomes visibly angry at their scepticism —highlighting how they would not question male ejaculation in the same way. Upset, Sadie Lune leaves the room to prepare a cocktail in the kitchen. Jesse Stryder, the only man who supported the women’s claims about female ejaculation, follows her to check on her. In the kitchen, he directly tells her that he would like her to ejaculate on his face, she is surprised, but in this brief interaction their mutual the desire and chemistry between them is palpable. This opening scene is crucial, as it sets the tone of the film by addressing lesbian sex and female ejaculation directly, paving the way for the subsequent sexual encounter between Sadie Lune and Jesse Stryder. Through this brief dialogue, director Paulita Pappel challenges prejudices and dispels ignorance surrounding the topic, creating a frank and open discussion from the outset.

During their sexual encounter, Lune and Stryder kiss passionately in the kitchen, showcasing their natural and beautiful bodies —Lune with visible body hair in her armpits and vaginal area, embracing body hair as part of her authentic appeal, and Stryder showcasing a lean, muscular physique. Lune takes the lead in the initial part, performing various sexual actions on Stryder, including licking his chest, biting his neck, and stimulating him through masturbation and oral sex. Before oral sex, she applies lubricant and unrolls a condom onto his penis using her mouth. Stryder, visibly aroused (Fig. 33), expresses his desire with words, “I want you so bad”. Their intense eye contact, moans, and physical connection reflect their mutual sexual arousal and satisfaction (Fig. 32). The couple then engages in penetrative sex from minutes 7:42 to 9:05, with the scene alternating between wide and close-up shots of penetration and shots of their faces, hands, and bodies moving with pleasure. They explore various positions: Lune lies on a table with her legs on his shoulders, they stand with her back against his chest, and she lies face down on the table, controlling the pace of penetration. Before this, she applies lubricant to her vulva and during the penetration she stimulates her clitoris with her fingers. Throughout, there is strong chemistry and communication, with verbal expressions like “Fuck, that feels good” (at 9:05) and mutual moans, underscoring their pleasure and connection.

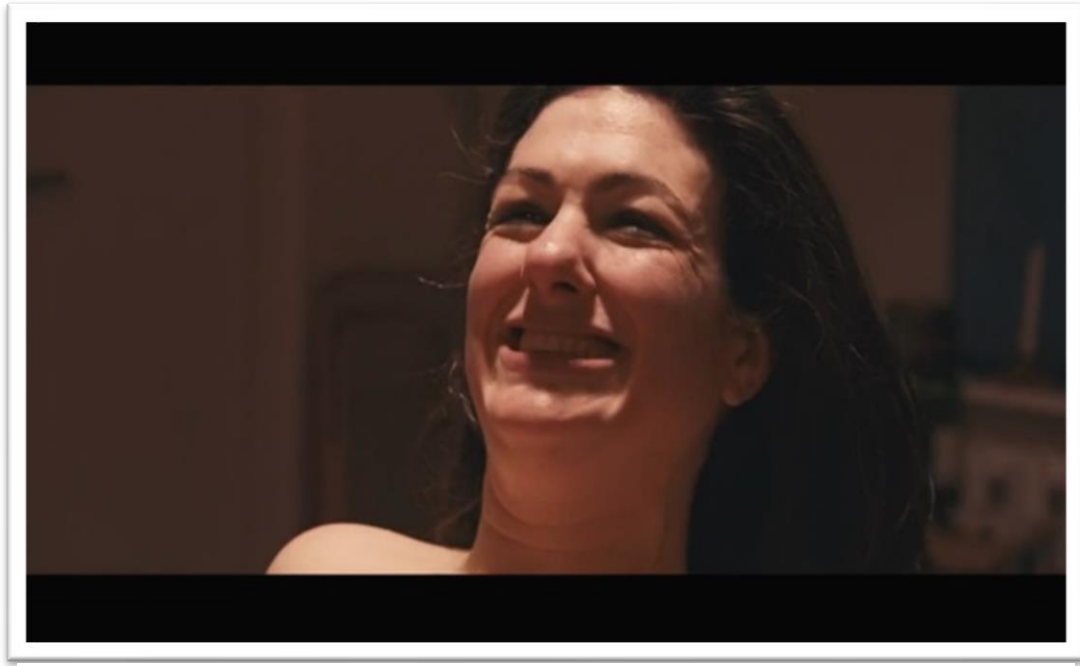


Figure 32 - Sadie Lune smiling during sexual encounter

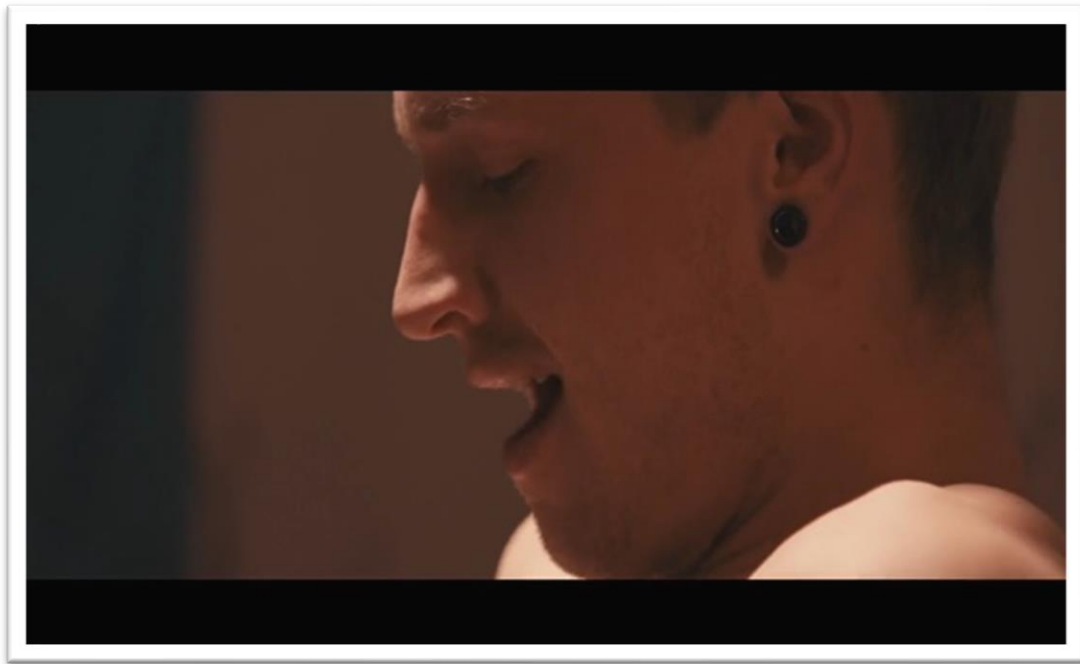


Figure 33 - Jesse Stryder opening his mouth with joy

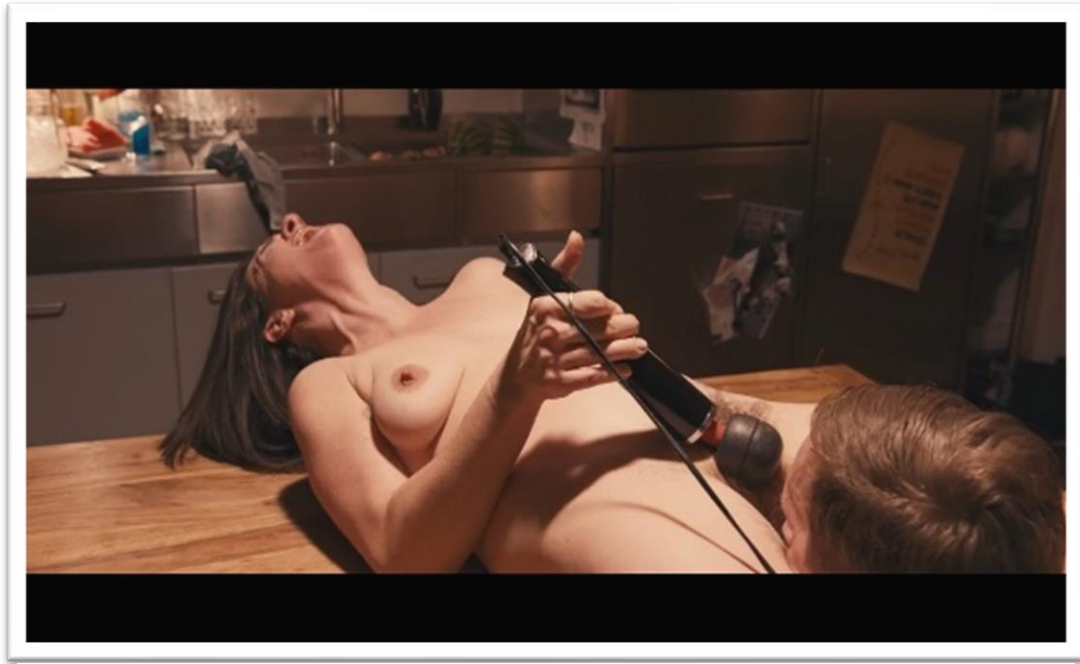


Figure 34 - Sadie Lune uses a vibrator while Jesse Stryder performs oral sex on her

Stryder ejaculates on Lune's belly and chest as she lies on the kitchen table. Before climaxing, he asks for her consent, and she agrees. As he moans in pleasure, Lune laughs and jokes, "Who knew men could ejaculate too?" (at 9:29), to which he replies, laughing, "Surprise, surprise". This playful exchange ties back to their earlier conversation with friends, where two of their male friends were shocked by the idea of female ejaculation. They mock that disbelief by humorously highlighting male ejaculation. The final sexual scene features Stryder performing oral sex on Lune. Throughout the act, he maintains eye contact and verbally checks in to ensure she is enjoying it. Lune moans loudly, indicating she is close to orgasm. She uses a microphone-style vibrator to stimulate her clitoris while holding her breasts with her other hand. Stryder masturbates her quickly (minute 11:51) as she uses the vibrator.²⁶⁶ The scene is filled with Lune's moans, Stryder's heavy breathing, and the sound of the vibrator. Close-up shots capture the masturbation (minute 11:59) and Lune's face as she reaches orgasm, which she announces with the words "I am going to cum" (minute 12:02), followed by a loud moan and scream (Fig. 34). The

²⁶⁶ The film highlights the use of sexual toys and lubricant, particularly the vibrator, emphasising the importance of clitoral stimulation during sexual encounters. It illustrates that even in penetrative vaginal sex, the clitoris remains a crucial erogenous zone that plays a significant role in female pleasure. By showcasing this aspect, the film underscores the necessity of prioritising clitoral stimulation to enhance sexual satisfaction for women.

camera then focuses on her vulva as she ejaculates on Stryder's mouth, who continues to lick her vagina, labia, and swallows her ejaculation. Lune's satisfaction is further underscored by her comments, such as "You are so good" (minute 12:22), after reaching orgasm. This, combined with the visual evidence of both male and female ejaculation in the shots, highlights the intensity of their pleasure and connection.

In Paulita Pappel's film *Female Ejaculation*, female ejaculation is presented as a central theme that challenges traditional norms in pornography. Through the exploration of squirting, the film not only celebrates female sexuality but also emphasises the importance of visibility and normalisation of this phenomenon. However, squirting often faces censorship in the adult film industry, as mentioned in Chapter 2, Section 2.1, page X, where female bodily fluids are treated differently to male fluids, such as semen. This disparity highlights a range of legal regulations that govern the representation of bodily fluids in pornography, often rooted in cultural biases and stigmas surrounding female sexuality. By addressing this topic, Pappel invites a critical reflection on the portrayal of female pleasure and the persistent taboos in society.

While in mainstream pornography, the money shot, typically featuring male ejaculation aimed at or shown on the female performer's face, has become a normalised and expected climax, often presented in a celebratory manner. It reflects the industry's focus on heightened, often sensationalised depictions of sexuality that cater to specific viewer expectations. Therefore, such shots are designed to be the most explicit and visually striking part of the film, aiming to provide a definitive climax that is both memorable and impactful, as a key element in creating a powerful visual experience to engage viewers. In contrast, squirting or female ejaculation, while increasingly featured in more films, is still represented differently and often carries a stigma. Despite some progress in showcasing female pleasure, squirting is frequently treated with a mix of fascination and disbelief, rather than being celebrated as a natural expression of sexual arousal. This discrepancy reflects broader societal attitudes toward female sexuality, where female ejaculation can be sensationalised or minimised compared to its male counterpart. Both phenomena serve to enhance the erotic spectacle of pornography, but they do so through different expressions of sexual climax and pleasure.

With this film, Pappel redefines the narrative surrounding male ejaculation, which is typically viewed in conventional pornographic films as the climax and conclusion of the sexual act. Instead, she presents female ejaculation as the legitimate and powerful concluding moment. This shift not only challenges traditional portrayals of sexual

pleasure but also emphasises the importance of visibility for female ejaculation amid ongoing debates about the phenomenon. Question such as “What is female ejaculation?”, “What is its composition?”, “Can all women ejaculate?”, “Where does it come from?” and “Is it urine?” continue to provoke inquiry.²⁶⁷ The science has yet to reach a consensus on these questions, largely due to varying definitions and methodologies in research. As knowledge about female anatomy evolves, so does the understanding of these processes, highlighting the complexities of female sexuality. By addressing these themes, Pappel not only contributes to a more nuanced representation of sexual experiences but also encourages viewers to question and rethink the stigmas surrounding female pleasure. This film serves as a crucial step towards discussions about female ejaculation, ultimately fostering a more inclusive and informed discourse on female sexuality.

5.3.1 Friendship and desire: *F*ck, Kill, Marry* (Montiel, 2019)

*F*ck, Kill, Marry* (2019) draws on the concept of the popular social answer game (also known as ‘Kiss, Marry, Kill’ or ‘Bang, Marry, Kill’) where people are asked to pair the names of three people (usually people they know personally or names of celebrities) with the three actions, who they would have sex with, who they would marry and who they would kill. Directed by Montiel²⁶⁸, *F*ck, Kill, Marry* tells the story of a group of five friends that meet to celebrate a last dinner together, as the evening progresses their complicities, secrets and desires are revealed. During the evening, the friends pair up to have sex with each other in a film that explores the fragility of friendship, sex and love.²⁶⁹

²⁶⁷ While many experts differentiate between female ejaculation and squirting —pointing out that female ejaculation involves secretions from the Skene’s glands (often referred to as the female prostate), whereas squirting originates from the urethra— both remain contentious subjects. The scientific community continues to investigate, but no consensus has been reached as yet, partly due to differences in definitions and the way studies are conducted. See: <https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/es/326486> (Last consultation on May 11, 2024).

²⁶⁸ Spanish filmmaker with her own production company, Amor y lujo. Montiel likes to explore themes like fetishes, obsessions and the psychological mechanisms of desire in her movies. She also directed *Amateur Tapes* (2018), *Into the Flesh* (2018), *F*ck, Kill, Marry* (2019), *Let Me Sit on Thy Face* (2020) and *Cane Honey* (2021) for the Xconfessions project.

²⁶⁹ Trailer: <https://xconfessions.com/film/fck-kill-marry> (Last consultation on November 26, 2021).

Starring Sadie Lune, Poppy Cox, Yumie Volupté, Bishop Black and Dante Dionys.²⁷⁰ The film features a diverse cast that emphasises a sense of naturalness and authenticity often absent in conventional pornography, which typically prioritises a more plastic and standardised idea of beauty. In traditional porn, elements like hair extensions, false eyelashes, and heavy makeup, are commonplace, as discussed in Chapter 3, subsection 3.3.1. In contrast, this film showcases performers with features that defy these norms: for instance, the actresses exhibit body hair, including hairy armpits and vulvas, and Emma Cox has a curvy figure that challenges typical beauty standards. Skin ‘imperfections’ like stretch marks and pimples are left unretouched, contributing to a more realistic portrayal of bodies. Additionally, one of the actresses, Sadie Lune, is pregnant, yet this fact is treated as a normal aspect of her character rather than a focal point, further reinforcing the film’s commitment to authenticity and diversity in representation.²⁷¹ Her body, like those of the other characters, is portrayed naturally, without objectification or emphasis on physical traits as something to be ogled or fetishised. Rather than presenting these bodies as objects of curiosity or as categories to be labelled, the movie reflects the real variety of human bodies that exist in the world.

²⁷⁰ Poppy Cox (Anne Marina Fiddler) is a multidisciplinary artist and performer, she participated in several XConfessions movies such *Man Men Porn* (2015), *A Talk Too Dirty* (2015) and *Birthday Surprise* (2016), among others. Yumie Volupté is a French performer who also participated in the movie *The Night We Met* (2020) and Bishop Black is a porn performer who has appeared in numerous movies directed by Erika Lust and other guest directors, his first movie in the XConfession project was *Dominate Me* (2016), and since then he has been in more films such the sexual dance movie *Mud Dance* (2018). Full information about the performers at: <https://xconfessions.com/film/fck-kill-marry> (Last consultation on May 12, 2024).

²⁷¹ On the XConfessions page there are four films that show pregnant women. According to the site “Erika Lust’s unwavering commitment to unravelling societal constructs and advocating for the recognition of pregnant individuals as fully sexual beings underscores the importance of fostering inclusive conversations and eradicating the stigma surrounding sex during pregnancy. Her work ignites a crucial dialogue, promoting understanding, acceptance, and empowerment for individuals navigating the intertwined realms of sexuality and pregnancy”. By avoiding the fetishisation of pregnancy, *F*ck, Kill, Marry*, redefines how different bodies are presented on screen, fostering an environment where everybody is seen as valid and attractive in its natural state. It sends a powerful message about body positivity, encouraging viewers to appreciate authentic beauty in all its forms rather than conforming to narrow, often unrealistic, standards. See: <https://xconfessions.com/categories/pregnancy> (Last consultation on May 10, 2024).

Figure 35 shows the full confession that inspired the story for this film by ‘Dragon-Fly’.

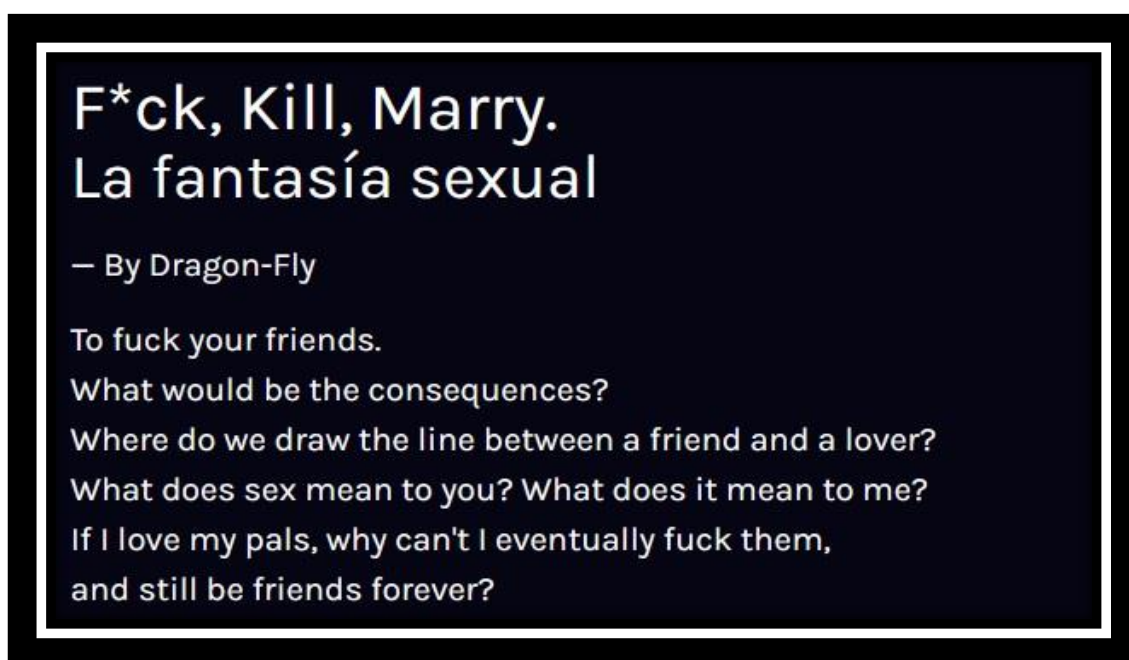


Figure 35 - Sexual confession that inspired the creation of *F*ck, Kill, Marry*

Dragon-Fly’s confession seeks to explore friendship on a new level, by having sex with friends, and testing a number of questions that have been posed by researchers and academics, including Wais A. Affi and Sandra Faulkner (2000)²⁷², Kristen McGinty, David Knox and Mart E. Zusman (2007)²⁷³ and, Justin J. Lehmillier, Laura E. VanderDrift and Janie R. Kelly (2011)²⁷⁴, among others. In 2000, Professor Heidi M. Reede conducted a study on attraction in heterosexual cross-sex friendships, interviewing forty participants to uncover four types of attraction that occur in cross-sex friendships: subjective physical/sexual attraction, objective physical/sexual attraction, romantic attraction, and

²⁷² On Being ‘Just Friends’: The Frequency and Impact of Sexual Activity in Cross-sex Friendships. Article at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0265407500172003> (Last consultation on May 9, 2024).

²⁷³ *Friends with benefits: women want “friends”, men want “benefits”*. Paper at: <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ816839> (Last consultation on May 9, 2024).

²⁷⁴ Sex Differences in Approaching Friends with Benefits Relationships. Study at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00224491003721694> (Last consultation on May 9, 2024).

friendship attraction.²⁷⁵ The confession that gave rise to this film is born from the idea of wanting to have sex with friends and how such encounters will affect the friendships.

Judy's (Sadie Lune) voiceover begins, and she points out the day is November 1st, the Day of the Dead, and she contemplates, "Are we dead?" She walks through a dark hallway, holding a lamp, and introduces her friends: Emma (Poppy Cox), Stela (Yumie Volupté), Brooke (Dante Dionys) and Charlie (Bishop Black). As Judy observes them, she reflects on the fragility of their friendships, noting that Emma is moving abroad for work, Stela is drifting towards another group of friends, and Brooke and Charlie are struggling with shyness and social interactions. Meanwhile, each friend prepares for a party, donning extravagant costumes and bold makeup, for that last evening together. Judy (Sadie Lune) serves as a vital narrator, introducing her friends and their individual circumstances while sharing her perspective on friendship, love, and vulnerability. She emphasises the significance of Emma, Stela, Brooke and Charlie in her life, saying "I look at them and I think you are the most beautiful people I ever met. I look at them and I think I will follow you to end of the world" (minute 2:10 to 2:25). The friends gather in a spacious living room for a toast, during which Judy quotes Epicurus, stating, "Of all the means to ensure happiness throughout the whole life, by far the most important is the acquisition of friends". This highlights the deep affection she has for her friends, even as their bond faces challenges and tests.

The friends enjoy dinner, wines, and then they play the game 'Fuck, Kill, Marry' that gives the film its title. Initially, they suggest famous historical and fictional figures as options, before turning their attention to each other, asking increasingly intimate questions that uncover hidden secrets within the group. This six-minute scene effectively sets a playful and relaxed atmosphere, allowing the friends to share confidences and reveal their desires, deepening the dynamics of their relationships. The sexual scenes unfold in two distinct areas: the kitchen and the dining room. Initially, the group splits into two: Judy, Stela, and Brooke remain in the dining room, while Emma and Charlie are in the kitchen. At first, these encounters happen separately, but around minute 16:25, all the characters come together in the dining room for a group sexual interaction. The orgy involves a variety of sexual acts, including oral sex (cunnilingus and fellatio), vaginal and clitoral masturbation (using protective gloves), vaginal penetration with

²⁷⁵ "I Like you... as a Friend": The Role of Attraction in Cross-Sex Friendship. Full article at the following link: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0265407500173002> (Last consultation on May 9, 2024).

condoms, and anal stimulation (minute 22:45) of Charlie by Judy —also with gloves and lubricant.²⁷⁶ The film also portrays other sexual practices such as, foot licking, a common fetish where individuals derive sexual arousal from feet. Brooke and Judy repeatedly kiss and lick Stela's feet throughout the orgy, emphasising this erotic preference. As well, Emma licks and gently bits Judy's big toe, further showcasing the sensuality of this fetish. In addition to foot play, spanking is featured as a form of sexual stimulation. Brooke spanks Charlie (minute 19:35) and Emma (minute 22:55) with his hands, heightening the erotic intensity, incorporating elements of impact play to add diversity to the sexual experiences depicted. These practices highlight the exploration of different fetishes and forms of pleasure, contributing to the film's broader depiction of sexual fluidity and non-conventional eroticism.

The shots used during the orgy are a combination of full and close-up shots, capturing the entirety of the participants as they engage in various sexual acts. Full-body shots reveal the fluid dynamics of the group, while close-ups focus on intimate details — performers' faces expressing pleasure and excitement, with open mouths gasping, tense facial expressions, and hands covering mouths to stifle moans. The camera also highlights tactile moments, focusing on hands touching and caressing bodies, as well as the subtle and rhythmic movements of the different sexual actions, enhancing the sensual and emotional connection of the scene.

²⁷⁶ Throughout these scenes, there is careful attention to hygiene, with gloves being changed each time a different person is stimulated. Furthermore, sequences show used condoms and gloves on the floor, emphasising the importance of safe practices.



Figure 36 - Vaginal masturbation using a lit candle

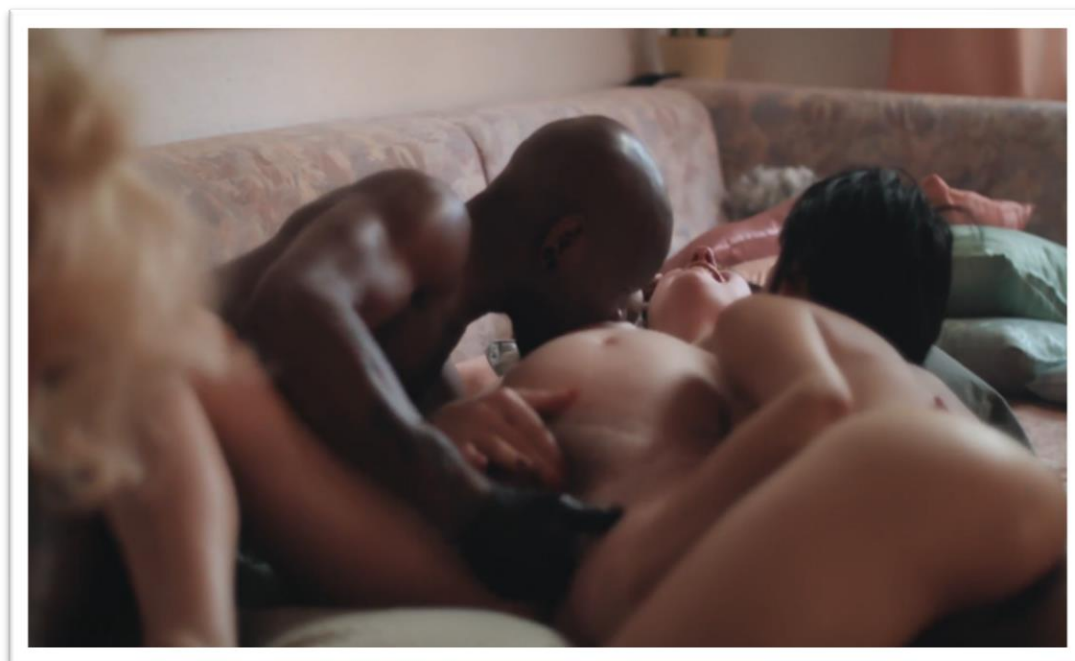


Figure 37 - Vaginal masturbation using fingers (wearing gloves)

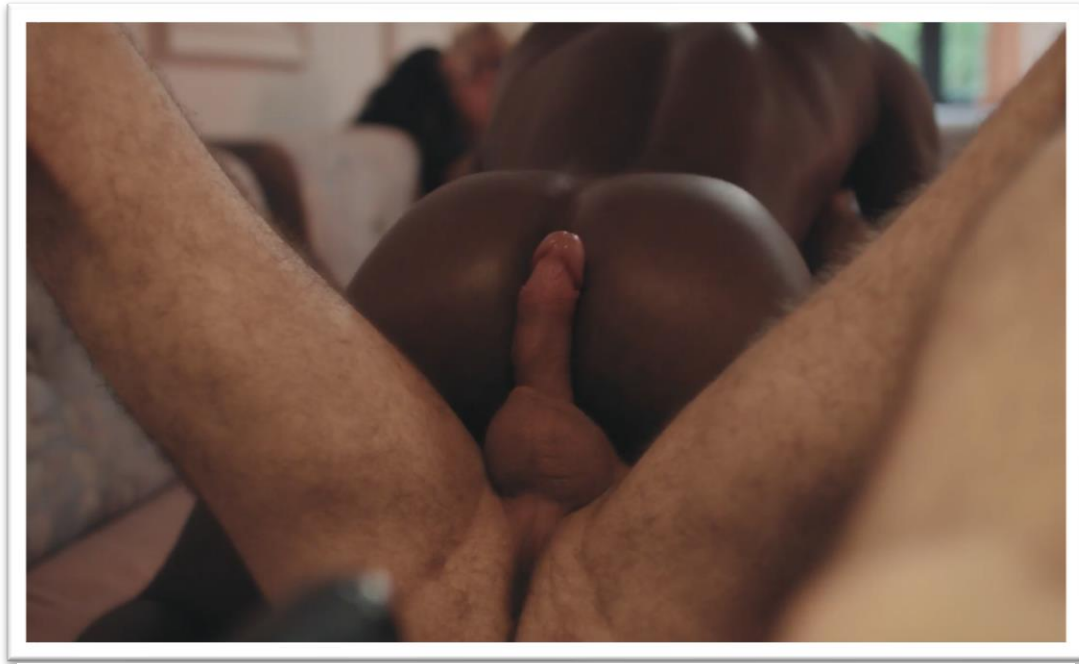


Figure 38 - Penis stimulation by rubbing the buttocks

The sexual encounters in the film are not limited to an individual man with one or more women. Instead, the participants interact fluidly, both individually and in groups, without any clear hierarchies or dominant roles (Fig. 37). This fluidity allows the desires of all participants to be explored and fulfilled equally, placing equal emphasis on satisfying the sexual needs of both men and women. Among the films analysed from the XConfessions project in this thesis, this one stands out as the first to depict both lesbian and homosexual scenes.²⁷⁷ A notable scene occurs between Judy (Sadie Lune) and Emma (Poppy Cox) from minutes 19:25 to 22:15, where Lune uses a lit candle to masturbate Cox (see Fig. 36). This moment highlights the creative use of unconventional objects in sexual encounters, showing that pleasure can come from elements other than traditional sex toys. While using the candle, Lune also stimulates Cox's clitoris with her gloved hand and licks her breasts until Cox reaches orgasm (minute 22:15), illustrating a multi-sensory and exploratory approach to sexual pleasure. This scene diverges from traditional lesbian porn, which often caters to the male gaze and underlines highly choreographed performances that do not necessarily reflect real lesbian experiences. In contrast, Montiel's depiction is grounded in mutual pleasure, respect, and authentic connection

²⁷⁷ Within the XConfessions project there are films where people of the same sex are shown having sex, they can be seen in the 'lesbian', 'gay', 'LGBTQ+' categories, among others. Categories: <https://xconfessions.com/categories> (Last consultation on May 10, 2024).

between the two women. The use of the candle is an example of how the film embraces a more experimental and open approach to sex, encouraging viewers to see sexual encounters as diverse and creative, rather than confined to the typical tools or dynamics seen in mainstream films.

The homosexual encounter between Charlie (Bishop Black) and Brooke (Dante Dionys) takes place from minutes 28:40 to 31:25, featuring the two men engaging in oral sex, kissing, and mutual masturbation (Fig. 38). What stands out in this scene is that it is an interracial encounter between two men, but no particular emphasis is placed on this fact. The scene unfolds without drawing attention to the fact that it features two men of different races, focusing instead on the intimacy between the characters. This contrasts sharply with mainstream porn, where interracial encounters—especially between black and white performers—are often highly marketed and labelled as ‘interracial’ to add an extra layer of taboo or intrigue.²⁷⁸ Historically, these scenes have frequently been framed with titles and keywords that exoticize and sensationalise the racial differences between performers. Common representations emphasise racial stereotypes—black men are often depicted as hypersexual and aggressive, while black women are frequently oversexualised or objectified.²⁷⁹ In mainstream porn, this racialised approach tends to

²⁷⁸ Lust avoids using traditional gender-based keywords to organise her content. Instead, the XConfessions website categorises films by performer rather than scenario. Scenes featuring people of different races and body types are not categorised as ‘interracial’ or ‘BBW’. She challenges the sexist and racist language commonly found in titles and keywords on mainstream platforms, especially on ‘tube’ sites like Pornhub, questioning the biases these labels perpetuate. As Lust makes clear “we are all of us fetishised and divided into small groups—it is ‘Latina,’ it is ‘ebony,’ it is ‘MILFs’”. Full article at *Jezebel* magazine: <https://www.jezebel.com/erika-lust-says-she-has-an-ethical-alternative-to-mass-1824090251> (Last consultation on August 2, 2024).

²⁷⁹ Chitra Nagarajan created an exhaustive list of how Black, Latino and Asian people are portrayed in pornography, as well as the white people who interact with them in the scenes. She notes the following characters: 1. The buck: the black man who is a bit aggressive and is always interested in (young/vulnerable) white women, 2. The mandingo: the black man who is valuable solely because of the size of his penis and whose face is never the focal point. He is interested in hurting the women in the scene, 3. The ‘dumb blond’: the white woman who plays up just how young or naive she is. She is always in the wrong place at the wrong time, 4. The white man next door: he is just a prop and thus a representation of white male privilege and power, 5. The nymph: she can be of African ancestry, white, or Latina. She says all sorts of wild and outlandish things during the sex act, and is up for anything, 6. The jezebel: the black woman who has a ‘ghetto booty’ (that is a woman with an extremely large sized bottom), loves black men and white men, and shows us how hot and sexy she is, 7. The oriental scene: the black woman of Asian ancestry, either the

draw on longstanding societal prejudices, presenting interracial encounters as taboo or ‘forbidden’. These depictions often reduce people of colour to their race, reinforcing harmful racial tropes rather than presenting them as multidimensional individuals.

Both scenes explore queer desire in a way that feels authentic and natural, stressing the emotional and physical connection between the characters, accentuating mutual pleasure and fluidity in their sexual dynamics. By including these moments, the film normalises queer relationships within the broader narrative, treating them with the same depth and respect as heterosexual encounters. *F*ck, Kill, Marry* delves into the complexities of human relationships, particularly friendships. The narrative explores how friendships evolve, sometimes growing stronger or drifting apart, influenced by the individual aspirations and life experiences of each person. Also, about the possibility of sexual desire between friends, and how these emotions can shift the dynamic, leading to deeper (and more intimate) connections. Judy’s (Sadie Lune) voice-over provides a poignant conclusion to the film. She reflects on the fragility of relationships (at 32:20), stating, “We choose to live surrounded by people who constantly remind us of our own fragility. It hurts. But there is no other way we can choose to live. I knew I was witnessing the memory of the last time for all of us together”. The film ultimately conveys a message about the impermanence of relationships, love, and desire, reminding viewers of the delicate balance between intimacy and life’s transitions.

5.4 General insights: the XConfessions project in review

I selected the XConfessions project for several reasons: first, it is widely recognised within the alternative, feminist and ethical pornography movements; second, each chosen film goes beyond merely depicting sexual encounters, offering a narrative depth that enriches the story; and third, the films showcase the project’s dedication to representing a broad spectrum of human body types, identities, sexualities, and diverse sexual practices. Furthermore, XConfessions was chosen for its strong commitment to ethical

timid Asian woman who is docile and has a frightened look in her eyes, or a young girl who is into BDSM, also the woman of mystery who lures you in with her secrets, and the East Asian trans woman who is depicted as having no physical integrity or boundaries, and, finally, 8. The bisexual woman/lesbian: it is either her ‘first time’ or she is experienced and taking advantage of someone much younger. They are into each other, but they are mostly into the man (imagined or there) who is watching them, their acts of pleasure are for his enjoyment. See: <https://chitrasudhanagarajan.wordpress.com/2013/03/10/the-cult-of-pornography-a-black-feminist-perspective/> (Last consultation on October 19, 2021).

production standards, including ensuring good working conditions for performers, prioritising consent as a fundamental work ethic, and employing professionals such as intimacy coordinators on set. These principles are integral to the project's manifesto and contribute to its status as a leader in ethical adult cinema.

Part of the success of Erika Lust's strategy is that one of her goals is to create films (within the projects and companies she has: XConfessions, Lust Cinema and Else Cinema) where the script is important, placing strong emphasis on creating stories that resonate with viewers. As she points out on the XConfessions site:

Each ethical porn film at XConfessions tells a story about what sex and desire feel like, and how we communicate and interact intimately with each other. Each film is visually arresting and goes beyond traditional gender roles and tired stereotypes, pushing the boundaries of fetish, lust, desire, and intimacy. It caters to a diverse audience, offering a perspective often absent in traditional porn and focusing on creating inclusive erotic content for all genders.²⁸⁰

Feminist porn often emerges from a diverse set of claims regarding women's pleasures and experiences, accentuating women's sexuality as distinct and multifaceted. This perspective suggests that women typically require narrative context and emotional connection to fully embrace and enjoy sexual pleasure. Unlike traditional porn, which often presents sex as a purely physical act, feminist porn strives to create an environment where sexual encounters are embedded in meaningful stories, allowing viewers to engage more deeply with the characters and their emotions. The need for context might suggest that women cannot experience sexual pleasure in a more straightforward, physical manner, thereby reinforcing certain stereotypes about female sexuality as criticised by the post-porn movement, often noting that such narratives can inadvertently perpetuate the notion that women's pleasure must be justified through emotional connection or romantic scenarios, rather than being recognised as valid in its own right (Llopis 2009, 12).²⁸¹

In XConfessions, the concept of storyline/confession, plays a dual role. On the one hand, it provides narrative context —a window into the inner lives, desires, and fantasies of women (and men). By foregrounding confessions, Lust reframes sex as something deeply personal and subjective, positioning the sexual encounter within the

²⁸⁰ More information at: <https://xconfessions.com/about> (Last consultation on December 15, 2023).

²⁸¹ See more at Chapter 2, subsection 2.2.2.1.

larger scope of human experience —desire, vulnerability, fantasy, and intimacy. On the other hand, the confession operates as a marketing tool. By framing sexual experiences within a broader narrative, feminist porn not only aims to validate women's desires but also positions the genre as a space where sexual pleasure is intertwined with intimacy and connection. This perspective is supported by scholars like Jane Juffer (1998), who argue that narratives in feminist porn can empower women by offering them a platform to explore their desires and fantasies without the constraints of objectification. Similarly, the structure of XConfessions plays into a narrative of personal revelation that feels intimate and relatable. The viewer is not just watching a performance of desire but is invited to see it as a shared secret, a form of participatory voyeurism that lends authenticity to the experience. This sense of 'realness' becomes a key selling point in the market for feminist and ethical porn. By positioning XConfessions as a platform for authentic sexual expression and confessions, Lust taps into feminist porn's broader goals of reshaping how women's desires are seen and validated. In this sense, the confessional format is both an artistic and a strategic choice, simultaneously providing emotional depth and drawing audiences into a product that feels more ethical, participatory, and real.

Erika Lust seeks to create a form of pornography grounded in ethics and feminist principles. She confronts the porn 'cliques' that dominate traditional adult films, and frequently reinforce unrealistic and misleading portrayals of sexuality. Lust's work points out equality between the sexes and focuses on thoughtful visual representation, aiming to present a more inclusive view of human sexuality. Her films intentionally refrain from using close-ups of penetrations or explicit shots decontextualised and extracted from their context. Her focus is on capturing the erotic nature of sexual encounters through the passion and desire expressed in the performers' faces, their sounds, and the emotional connection they share, which extend beyond mere genitalia. Lust does not rely on explicit content to drive viewer excitement; rather, she trusts that her material is suggestive enough to evoke sexual arousal without resorting to typical close-up shots like meat shots and cum shots. Her movies incorporate elements that confirm her status as a maker of 'porn made by women, for women': feature wider frames allowing for a more holistic view of the scene, while also paying attention to aesthetic elements such as set design, soundtracks, and narratives. However, as Álvaro Martín (2018, 365) evidences:

This pursuit of creating a beautiful product above all else undermines the primary goal of representing a truthful reality. Instead, due to its polished finishes, it offers

a fantasy-like vision that, on many levels, does not end up differing much from the unrealistic portrayals found in the traditional heteronormative pornography it aims to surpass. (*)

Lust Cinema's productions are distinguished by their high cinematographic standards, accenting the creation of aesthetically refined content produced under ethical conditions. Their films prioritise representing a broad spectrum of sexual experiences. However, XConfessions, while novel in its approach, lacks the transgressive nature of post-porn productions. It does not aim to dismantle traditional notions of sexuality or critically examine the origins of our sexual fantasies. Post-porn, in contrast, seeks to question the porn industry's portrayal of sexuality and challenge how it is represented in the media today. However, XConfessions still delivers a visually innovative product in an industry saturated by thousands of pornographic videos uploaded daily on pornographic 'tubes'. The films featured explore diverse and often stigmatised themes, such as menstruation, gender norm transgressions, female ejaculation, pegging, and interracial encounters, all without resorting to stereotypical or fetishised depictions. By critically engaging with these themes, Lust's work opens a dialogue about the complexities of female pleasure, the importance of authentic representation, and the need for inclusive narratives in the realm of adult cinema. Using stories sourced from audience confessions, XConfessions engages viewers in a collaborative exploration of sexual practices, fostering a more inclusive conversation around sexuality. By addressing topics often ignored, the films contribute to broader discussions on sexual empowerment and inclusivity. This innovative framework encourages both performers and viewers to embrace a more authentic, diverse, and liberated understanding of sexuality.

Regarding the diversity of bodies represented in her films, even Erika Lust acknowledges that more emphasis is needed on this aspect (see Section 5.2). While her project increasingly showcases a wider range of body types, the predominant standard still features young, fit, and conventionally attractive individuals, although she consciously avoids portraying 'fake' female bodies, such as those enhanced with silicone or the excessively muscular male physiques often portrayed in mainstream porn. Lust's approach starkly contrasts with conventional heteronormative pornography, which often objectifies individuals, reducing them to mere sexual objects. Instead, Lust emphasises the nature of pleasure for all participants, portraying them as active agents in their own sexual experiences. This focus on agency not only reclaims the narrative of pleasure but

also moves towards a more inclusive and empowering representation of sexuality.

In conclusion, the XConfessions project maintains high cinematographic standards, emphasising ethical production and a commitment to visually appealing content. Striving to represent a broader spectrum of sexual experiences and challenge mainstream porn's stereotypical depictions, XConfessions particularly excels in exploring taboo and underrepresented themes, through the confessions shared by their audience. However, despite these innovations, there is room for improvement in the portrayal of diverse body types. While strides have been made towards diversity, the emphasis on conventionally attractive bodies still limits the project's potential to fully reflect the broad range of human physicality and experiences. Yet, what distinguishes Lust's work is its emphasis on personal agency and genuine expressions of pleasure, promoting a more inclusive, sophisticated, and empowering portrayal of human sexuality.

CHAPTER 6: THE SPANISH POST-PORN MOVEMENT: PERFORMANCES, SEX AND DESIRE

Post-porn differs from conventional pornography by embracing the punk ethos of “Do It Yourself” (or “Do It With Others”), that is, self-management and criticism of the hetero-patriarchal system, often through low-budget productions. Post-porn groups appropriate public spaces with their performances and use platforms such as Vimeo to circulate their works. Due to the inherently political nature of their creations, and their disruptive use of public and online spaces, these performances aim to subvert mainstream networks. Above all, post-porn is a performative, sexual and political practice. Its political value lies in the experiential and subversive nature of its actions, using pornography to deconstruct hegemonic discourses, or in other words, to rethink sexuality, desire, bodies, abjection, identity, and more.

In post-porn, women, sexual minorities, non-white bodies, transgender and transexual people, intersexuals, homosexuals, as well as those with non-normative physical abilities —and especially female performers, who are objectified in mainstream porn— become active agents in shaping their own self-representation. They challenge the aesthetic, political, and narrative codes that uphold coercive norms around gender, bodies and sexualities.

This chapter examines two performances from the Barcelona post-porn scene (from 2006 and 2009) as examples of alternative, dissident porn in Spain. Both videos capture performances at queer/feminist events —‘Stonewall Contraataca’ and ‘Taller Pornografía y Feminismo’. These performances were designed to arouse viewers while also prompting reflection on diverse sexual practices, particularly those deemed ‘marginal’ and to assert women’s active role in the exploration and representation of their own sexuality.

6.1 Breaking with pornographic conventions: Spanish post-porn

The concept of post-pornography emerged during the sex-positive, anti-censorship and queer/feminist movements in the United States in the 1980s and 1990s. Since then, it has been embraced by a diverse group of artists, activists, and scholars to describe practices that both engage with and seek to transcend traditional pornography (as discussed in Chapter 2, subsections 2.2.2.1 and 2.2.2.2). Post-porn cannot be understood without acknowledging the discourse that precedes it: it directly confronts mainstream, normative, and heterosexist pornography by launching a discursive counterattack. In doing so, post-porn opens space for alternative imaginations and embraces a wider range of bodies and

sexual practices that defy the restrictive, binarist frameworks of the dominant sex-gender system.

The term post-porn was coined by the Dutch artist Wink van Kempen in the 1980s to describe a series of photographs with an ostensibly explicit content. However, it was Annie Sprinkle who expanded the term's cultural and political significance through her groundbreaking work, 'The Public Announcement of the Cervix' (see more at Chapter 1, subsection 1.4.2). The post-porn movement emerged during a period of intense politicisation of the body and pleasure in the late 1980s, amidst the AIDS crisis, which was marked by a resurgence of homophobia and the introduction of new state measures aimed at regulating sexuality. Post-porn arose as a reaction to these increasing forms of control. In Spain, the term post-porn gained prominence through Paul B. Preciado, particularly after the seminar 'Pornografía, Postpornografía: Estéticas y Políticas de Representación Sexual' during the 2003 'Maratón Postporno' at the MACBA.²⁸²

Post-porn refers to a range of initiatives that critique dominant pornography. Rather than rejecting the depiction of sexuality, post-porn creates dissident representations of non-normative sexualities. It does not rely on large infrastructures or significant productions budgets, as is common in commercial porn and some feminist porn productions. Operating outside the mainstream industry, post-porn embraces DIY (Do It Yourself) and DIWO (Do It With Others) anti-capitalist principles, allowing marginalised and precarious individuals to express their sexualities on their own terms (Rodríguez Suarez 2017, 69). Post-pornography is a critical reflection on pornographic discourse, as María Llopis evidences in her book *El postporno era eso*:

These creations are made by those of us who until now had not been represented by mainstream pornography or had been represented by others. But now we are the ones who, camera in hand, document and record, increasing the imaginary and creating a pornography that is closer to our bodies, our practices and our interests. It is now when the subject previously shown as the other, the monstrous and the abject, is represented as desirable, and proud (*, 2010, 38).

Therefore, women and minorities have reclaimed pornography, along with the technologies of production, representation, and pleasure, to challenge the dominant gaze.

²⁸² Full interview with Paul B. Preciado in *Parole de Queer*, pages: 15-21. https://www.scribd.com/fullscreen/80232942?access_key=key-316k81whbmxollpnsyk (Last consultation on June 2, 2024).

This gives rise to a form of subversive pornography that questions traditional models of masculinity, femininity, race, sexuality, and body types, among others. As outlined in the summary, the following pages will explore the phenomenon of Spanish post-porn through an analysis of two performances, a medium these groups use to convey their political messages and explore dissident sexualities. The selected post-porn performances question gender identity and heteronormative sexual practices through a poetic and political critique of everything that constrains sexuality, eroticism, and the understanding of pleasure. The performance *Perras del Apocalipsis* took place during the ‘Stonewall Contraataca’ event in Barcelona in 2009. The video *IntroAkto* was produced during the ‘Taller Pornografia y Feminismo’ organised by GirlsWhoLikePorno (GWLP) in 2006. *IntroAkto* won first prize for ‘Best Post-porn video’ at the ‘Festival XXYZ Toulouse’ in 2007.

Table 5: Selection of DIY post-porn performances from Spain

Film	Year	Duration	Performers
<i>Perras del apocalipsis</i>	2009	5 minutes	Quimera Rosa, Post-Op, Klau Kinky and Diana Junyent Pornoterrorista
<i>IntroAkto</i>	2006	5 minutes	Elena Urko and Majo Pulido

6.1.1 Testing the ‘pharmacopornographic’ regime: *Perras del apocalipsis* (2009)

The Gay Liberation Front of Catalonia (El Front d’Alliberament Gai de Catalunya - FAGC)²⁸³ held a conference in June 2009 to commemorate the fortieth anniversary of the Stonewall revolt in New York. The Stonewall Revolt consisted of a series of spontaneous and violent demonstrations in protest at a police raid that took place on June 28, 1969, in a pub known as the Stonewall Inn, located in the New York neighbourhood of Greenwich

²⁸³ FAGC: <http://www.fagc.org/> (Last consultation on May 24, 2024).

Village. These riots are often cited as the first time, in USA history, that the LGBTIQA+ community fought against a system that persecuted non-normative people with the approval of the government. During the conference, held at the Cotxeres Civic Center in the Sants area of Barcelona on June 5th and 6th, a series of talks were given on topics such as: the African American movement and anti-colonial criticism, the transsexual and homosexual revolts of Stonewall, the fight for sexual freedoms in South America, the re-politicisation of HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) and AIDS (acquired immune deficiency syndrome) and the strategies between the queer movement, sex workers and feminism.²⁸⁴ Throughout the conference there were also workshops (on anal orgasm, female ejaculation and drag kings), screenings, round tables, photographic exhibitions, performances, among many other activities with the collaboration of important key players from Barcelona's post-porn movement such as Virgine Despentès, Itziar Ziga, Paul B. Preciado, Helen Torres, Sayak, among others.²⁸⁵



Figure 39 - 'Stonewall Contraataca' banner

The event banner (Fig. 39) displays “La Saga Continua Stonewall Contraataca” (“The Saga Continues: Stonewall Strikes Back”,*) in black capital letters on a purple background with lines and some flashes of light, referring to the film *Star Wars: Episode V - The Empire Strikes Back* (1980). On the right side of the banner, Darth Vader stands in a red dress with ruffles like the one worn by drag queen Divine in the film *Pink Flamingos* (1972) directed by John Waters. According to the event page, this banner is

²⁸⁴ Videos from the conference at: http://giss.tv/dmmdb/index.php?channel=stonewall_contraataca (Last consultation on November 19, 2021).

²⁸⁵ About the event see: <http://stonewallcontraataca.blogspot.com/> (Last consultation on November 19, 2021). The banner can be found on the Canal Stonewall Blog. It was created by Quimera Rosa, Ex-Dona, Klau Kinki, Zorra Suprema and FAGC.

“intergalactic propaganda. To announce the long-awaited event and make it reach all the Martians who populate our galaxies”.(*)

Perras del apocalipsis (2009) was a collective performance lasting seven minutes, with Diana Pornoterrorista (Diana J. Torres), videoarmsidea, Mistress Liar, HijaDePuto, Post-Op, Klau Kinki, DJ Dorotti and Quimera Rosa that took place during the “Stonewall Contraataca” in Barcelona. This performance attempted to question gender identity and heteronormative sexual practices, exploring people’s emotional responses towards violence, sadomasochism and deviant sexual practices. Post-porn performances want to provoke a reaction from the audience, with any response being valid —from disgust, fear, and shame, to arousal, excitement, nausea, or even tears.

During the performance, Mistress Liar led some people to the stage, each chained and crawling on all fours, mimicking dogs.²⁸⁶ Quimera Rosa and Post-Op joined the unfolding orgy, with the impromptu participation of Diana Pornoterrorista, HijaDePuto and Klau Kinki. Throughout the event, DJ Dorothy’s ‘apocalyptic’ provided the ominous soundtrack, while the voice of Diana J. Torres echoed in a voice-over, reciting her poem ‘Transfrontera’. These soundscapes were paired with striking visual projections from videoarmsidea.²⁸⁷ The participants wore black leather or black vinyl clothing, along with harnesses, suspenders, straps and bondage belt bras. Illuminated cables were draped over their bodies, further modifying their appearance with a futuristic, cybernetic aesthetic — that could be described as futuristic punk BDSM. The participants in the orgy displayed beautiful, yet non-normative bodies, intentionally challenging conventional beauty standards. They embraced unshaved armpits, legs, and genitals, while their hairstyles were reminiscent of punk stylings, with mohawks, shaved heads, and bold, striking dyes. This deliberate move away from hegemonic ideals of beauty highlighted the performance’s emphasis on defying gender norms and heteronormative expectations, pushing the boundaries of how bodies can be perceived and celebrated.

The video created during the performance has a DIY or DIWO style, very different from the previously analysed films of the XConfessions project with its beautiful cinematographic approaches and narrative plots. *Perras del apocalipsis* was a

²⁸⁶ Pet play is a sexual activity based on the role between owner and pet within BDSM culture.

²⁸⁷ The Marseillaise punk band Cavalcade musicalized the poem ‘Transfrontera’ by Diana J. Torres in 2015: <https://cavalcademarseille.bandcamp.com/track/transfrontera> (Last consultation on November 19, 2021).

performance created to be consumed and viewed while the conference was on, although a performative video was also produced. The video shows a chaotic encounter of bodies that occupy the stage with their dissident sexual practices. An uncontrolled orgy is observed, including vaginal fisting (using gloves), masturbation with a plastic plunger, squirting, suffocation using plastic cling film on the face, slapping and sadomasochist practices like the use of needles in the chest creating blood and perforation marks on the skin.

As Diana J. Torres explains in her book *Pornoterrorismo*, sadomasochism conspires against what is established, because it brings together pleasure and pain in the same binomial. Meanwhile, fisting, —the introduction of the fist in the vagina or in the anus— is an extreme practice, as well as “a perfect metaphor for sexual insurrection” (*, 2011b, 54).²⁸⁸ In the video resulting from the performance, none of the ‘typical’ sexual practices commonly represented in mainstream pornography —such as penetration (penis-vagina or penis-anus) or oral sex— are present. The performers move with a sense of natural fluidly engaging in spontaneous acts. While they may have considered their actions in advance, the performance unfolds more like an organic gathering of individuals on stage, exploring their bodies through various sexual practices in the moment. At the same time, they play with the audience’s reactions, blurring the line between spectacle and intimate experience.

The quality of the video is quite poor, so screenshots cannot correctly reflect the performance, but the following images (Figs. 40, 41 and 42) are by photographer Luis Pedro de Castro (also known as Strangel Freak) and were taken during the performance and the creation of the video. According to his blog, while studying photography in Barcelona, he dedicated himself “to the portrayal of gender fluid interpretations in post-porn theory and performance. He began manipulating his photographs using digital software to achieve an aesthetic inspired by Renaissance painting and to create visual consistency from photos taken with multiple cameras that he borrows from friends”.²⁸⁹

²⁸⁸ The subversive forms adopted by Diana J. Torres in her performances are mainly three: female ejaculation, fisting and sadomasochism (J. Torres 2011b, 95).

²⁸⁹ More photographs at: http://strangelfreak.blogspot.com/2009/07/stonewall-conference-cycle_18.html, http://strangelfreak.blogspot.com/2009/07/stonewall-conference-cycle_09.html and <http://strangelfreak.blogspot.com/2009/07/stonewall-conference-cycle.html> (Last consultation on May 24, 2024).

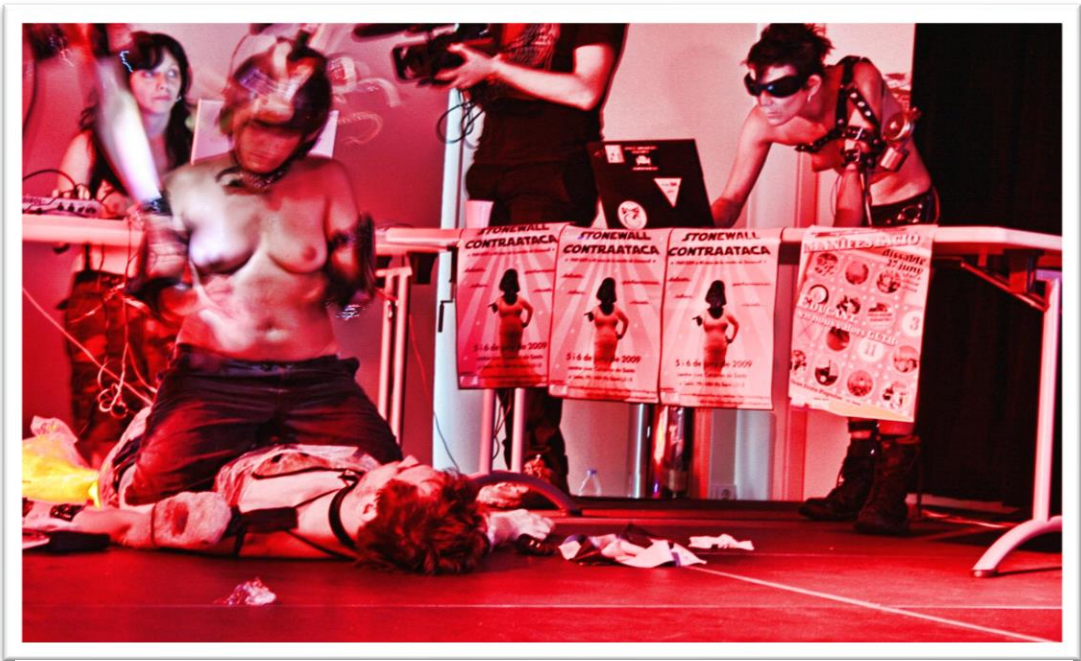


Figure 40 - Elena Urko atop Yan Rey, holding a camera case



Figure 41 - Performer in vinyl skirt with glowing blue cable tail



Figure 42 - Off-stage fisting and on-stage Rey is bound in stretch film

In the first image (Fig. 40), Elena Urko (Post-Op) is shown atop Yan Rey (Chimera Rosa), holding a case containing a camera. During the performance, the footage captured by her camera, along with the feeds from various stage cameras, is projected onto the screen. In her right hand, Urko holds a roll of plastic stretch film. In the second image (Fig. 41), another performer appears from behind, she is wearing a tight black vinyl skirt that has ridden up while she was crouching. A long cable with a blue light, resembling a tail, extends from the skirt. Rey remains on the ground, with Urko still positioned on top of him. To the left, another performer lies on the floor, recording the scene with a small camera. The final photograph (Fig. 42) captures both on-stage and off-stage action, including audience members. Off-stage, near the audience, a performer is being vaginally fisted, while on-stage, Rey sits sideways, his elbows, bottom, legs, and chest partially wrapped in transparent stretch film. All of the images feature videoarmsidea and DJ Dorothy, who are on stage, providing the music and visuals projected onto the screen during the performance.

During the performance, the voice-over of Diana J. Torres is heard reciting the poem ‘Transfrontera’ from her book *Pornoterrorismo* (2011b, 197) which is reproduced here:

Mi carne, mi sangre, mi piel, mi reino.
Donde yo mando, donde yo decido.

Salgo de una expectativa preferida,
camino sobre la tapia de vuestra frontera repugnante
y con paso de gigante entro en vuestras clínicas, vuestros
dispensarios, vuestras escuelas, vuestros quirófanos.

Entro en vuestras bibliotecas y engullo uno a uno
todos los manuales que utilizáis para darle nombre
a mis emociones.

Mi piel, mi carne, mi sangre, mi templo.
Donde oran las profanas, las desahuciadas de la fe,
las perversas y las anormales.

Atraco vuestras farmacias a punta de pistola
e ingiero vuestras soluciones para locos.
Lo que nunca sabréis es que esto que hago lo hago
sin creer en vuestro discurso,
sin confiar en el futuro que me deparan vuestras predicciones,
sin dejaros conocerme.

Mi coño, mi polla, mis orificios todos, mi orgasmo:
donde he construido un monumento al deseo que siempre
está lubricado.
Entreno hormonas como si fueran soldaditos,
los preparo para asaltar vuestros palacios del amor mojigato,
y rescatar a vuestros cachorros mutilados en nombre
del bienestar.

Soy una actriz de vuestro drama y lo he convertido
en comedia,
queríais que fuera caperucita y le cambié el guion al lobo,
que también estaba hasta la polla.

Atravieso las fronteras de vuestras propias neurosis,
y me instalo justo ahí donde quiero estar,
donde luzco como un molesto insecto mutante
al que no podréis matar.

Mi cuerpo, mi cuerpo, MI CUERPO/ Donde yo mando, ¡cabrones!²⁹⁰

²⁹⁰ 'Cross-border': My flesh, my blood, my skin, my kingdom. Where I command, where I decide. I come out from a preferred expectation, I walk over the wall of your disgusting border and with a giant step I enter your clinics, your dispensaries, your schools, your operating rooms. I walk into your libraries and gobble up one by one all the manuals you use to name my emotions. My skin, my flesh, my blood, my temple. Where the profane pray, the despairing faithful, the wicked and the abnormal. I rob your pharmacies at gunpoint, and I ingest your solutions for the insane. What you will never know is that what I do, I do without believing in your discourse, without any confidence in the future you predict for me, without letting

In the opening verses, Torres asserts that her body is her own domain, where she holds complete sovereignty. The poem begins with a bold declaration: despite living in a society that imposes restrictions and dictates what people should do (what is deemed good/bad, acceptable/unacceptable, moral/immoral, right/wrong), individuals ultimately have control over their own bodies, decisions, and lives. Regardless of the efforts of the state, government, church, or corporations to domesticate citizens, it is crucial to remember that we hold the power to shape our own paths. On stage, as the first verses are recited, the performers form a dynamic amalgamation of bodies adorned with various prostheses (cables, chains, etc.). They experience both pleasure and pain through a multiple range of sexual practices—including fisting, suffocation, and the use of needles—demonstrating that sexuality extends beyond the traditional framework of heterosexuality, penetration, and male orgasm. The performance explores how pleasure can be experienced in myriad ways and how pain, when engaged with in a safe and consensual environment, can be intimately connected to desire and joy.

In verses 5 to 9 and 13 to 18, Torres challenges the reductionist pathology scenario, declaring “I walk into your libraries and gobble up one by one all the manuals you use to name my emotions”. Here, Diana J. Torres references psychiatric texts such as the DSM (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders) published by the American Psychiatric Association, to establish the ‘pharmacopornographic’ system that regulate our lives based on definitions of what is deemed ‘normal’ or ‘pathological’. In *Texto Yonki* (2008), Paul B. Preciado shifts attention away from the disciplinary institutions Michel Foucault analysed—such as prisons, schools, and clinics (the ‘panopticon’ forms of control)—to focus on two key pillars of 20th-century biopolitical control: the pharmaceutical and pornographic industries. As Preciado notes:

During the 20th century, a period in which pharmacopornographic materialisation takes place, psychology, sexology, and endocrinology have established their material authority by transforming the concepts of psyche, libido, conscience,

you know me. My pussy, my cock, all my orifices, my orgasm: where I have built a monument to desire that is always lubricated. I train hormones like they’re little soldiers I prepare them to storm your palaces of prudish love and rescue your mutilated puppies in the name of well-being. I am an actress in your drama, and I have made it into a play, you wanted me to be Little Red Riding Hood, and I changed the script to the wolf, who was also fed up. I cross the borders of your own neuroses, and I settle right where I want to be, where I shine like an annoying mutant insect that you cannot kill. My body, my body, MY BODY/ Where I give the orders, you bastards! (*).

femininity, masculinity, heterosexuality and homosexuality into tangible realities, chemical substances, marketable molecules, bodies, human biotypes, exchange goods manageable by pharmaceutical multinationals. [...] Science is the new religion of modernity. Because it has the ability to create, and not simply describe reality (*, 2008, 32).

The ‘Pharmacopornographic Regime’, as described by Paul B. Preciado, parallels Michel Foucault’s concept of the Disciplinary Regime but operates in a fundamentally different way. In *Discipline and Punish. The Birth of the Prison*, (1975), Foucault demonstrates how disciplinary society enforces control through practices, discourses, and knowledge systems designed to create docile yet ostensibly free bodies, which internalise their identity and freedom in the process of subjectivation. Preciado argues that the old ‘panopticon’ model of external, architectural control, where the environment shapes the subject (as a cage shapes a rat or a city shapes its citizen), has been replaced by a new form of synthetic control. This new regime operates almost invisibly, from within the body, at a molecular level, directly altering the individual’s chemical composition. As Preciado explains “the success of contemporary technoscience is to transform our depression into Prozac, our masculinity into testosterone, our erection into Viagra, our fertility/sterility into a pill, our AIDS into tritherapy. [...] This auto-feedback production is typical of pharmacopornographic power” (*, 2008, 36). Preciado’s analysis reveals how various entities exert control over our bodies, manipulating us through drugs and social norms that regulate behaviour. These reflections are crucial, as they underscore the fact that, although individuals should have sovereignty over their own bodies, we are embedded in a society of control where deviations from the established ‘norm’ are swiftly classified, categorised, and labelled as abnormal or pathological. Furthermore, the State and other organisations use medicine as an additional tool for regulating and controlling human behaviour.

In verses 26 to 29, Torres proclaims: “I am an actress in your drama, and I have made it into a play, you wanted me to be Little Red Riding Hood, and I changed the script to the wolf, who was also fed up” —a satirical, parodic, and demystifying twist on tradition. This reinterpretation critiques the stories we have been told since childhood, which have long reinforced social norms about gender (masculine/feminine), dictating how we should behave to fit into society. The cultural products we consume from a young age —books, films, songs, magazines, and TV shows— are imbued with gender norms

that teach us to act in ways that align with our assigned gender at birth. From early on, both at school and in our homes, we are conditioned to adopt specific gender behaviours and beliefs. These norms, imposed upon us in childhood, follow us throughout life, continuously reinforced by the media we consume —whether it be music, cinema, advertising, literature, politics, or social media. Therefore, it is crucial to offer younger generations new narratives that celebrate diversity, enabling them to grow free from prejudice. Additionally, we must become more critical of the cultural products we consume, learning to analyse and rethink our preferences, beliefs, and values. By doing so, we can better recognise how these norms have been imposed upon us and begin to question the ways in which they shape our lives.

Torres confesses, in verses 30 to 31, “I cross the borders of your own neuroses, and I settle right where I want to be” announcing, as Eider Madeiros observes, a revitalised form of hysteria —queer and defiant. Here, she rebels against the symptoms of a broader societal crisis, exposing the vulnerable and obscene underbelly of postmodern norms (2020, 172-175). In verse 32, she continues, “where I shine like an annoying mutant insect that you cannot kill”, a powerful metaphor illustrating how the ‘abnormal’ have seized and reclaimed the very space that society has relegated to them. In this poem, Diana J. Torres embodies resistance to hegemonic and oppressive structures, using enjoyment and pleasure as forms of defiance. She highlights the liberation of a body that asserts itself as a territory open to both self-exploration and non-normative desire, challenging the constraints imposed by societal norms.

Perras del apocalipsis encapsulates the essence of Spain’s post-porn movement during the late 2000s: a punk, DIY/DIWO (Do It Yourself/ Do It With Others), queer, and feminist initiative aimed at provoking audiences through non-normative sexual practices. Unlike filmmakers like Erika Lust and other directors, who focused on creating polished, aesthetically driven feminist and ethical pornography, this movement was never concerned with producing conventional visual art. Instead, their performances and videos emerged from spaces of resistance —gatherings in squats, conferences, and even institutional settings like museums and universities— within a broader context of protest and commemoration of LGTBQA⁺ struggles, in this case, the legacy of the Stonewall revolts.

Their performances merged poetry, BDSM aesthetics, and unconventional sexual practices, crafting a deliberately raw and subversive spectacle designed to challenge viewers’ perceptions of sexuality, desire, and bodily autonomy. Rather than offering a

neatly packaged visual product, these performances were acts of defiance that blurred the lines between art, activism, and eroticism. They sought not only to shock or provoke but also to question, through a poetic-political-anatomical lens, the societal forces that coerce and regulate sexuality, eroticism, and the experience of pleasure.

Key to their approach was the rejection of aesthetic refinement in favour of an unfiltered engagement with the body—both their own and the audience's. The performers used their physical presence, sexual interactions, and the varied tools of pleasure and pain (such as BDSM elements and prosthetics) to explore the limits of sexual expression and push the boundaries of normative desires. In doing so, they highlighted how sexuality could be redefined beyond heteronormative frameworks, opening a space where pleasure, pain, and desire could be experienced freely and non-prescriptively. This radical, embodied critique of societal norms remains a testament to the movement's commitment to reclaiming sexual agency and dismantling oppressive structures surrounding eroticism and the body.

6.1.2 BDSM and rope play: *IntroAkto* (GWLP, 2006)

From April 24 to 28, 2006, the 'Taller Pornografía y Feminismo' was held at Hangar (Centre for visual arts production and research) in Barcelona undertaken by the collective Girlswholikeporno (GWLP) formed by Maria Llopis and Águeda Bañón. The workshop was intended to address the following points: 1. Origin of the term pornography, definitions and different conceptions, 2. Dichotomy between eroticism and pornography, 3. Prostitution, pornography and feminism, 4. Netporn, and how the Internet has subverted the flow of information and has affected the pornographic industry, 5. Women in porn from a feminist position, 6. Post-porn connections with the queer movement, 7. Gender as a performative act: Butch-femme and Drag king roles, 8. Pornography, sadomasochism and fascism, and 9. The objectification of women's bodies.

The primary objective of the pornography and feminism workshops was to critically examine and reflect on women's roles within pornography. Traditionally, women have been positioned in front of the camera as objects of the male gaze, but these workshops aimed to empower women to take on roles behind the camera as well, thereby reclaiming agency over the narratives and images that depict female sexuality. By doing so, they sought to subvert the stereotypical representations of women propagated by mainstream porn. The workshops aimed to produce pornographic content that challenges and destabilises entrenched sexist norms while also exploring and affirming women's

desires. Approaching pornography from a feminist and Do It Yourself (DIY) perspective, the participants engaged collaboratively to create a pornographic film during the ‘Taller Pornografía y Feminismo’ workshop, resulting in the production of *IntroAkto*.²⁹¹ This hands-on approach not only facilitated the exploration of female sexuality from a new vantage point but also fostered a sense of community and collective creativity among participants.

In the six-minute short film *IntroAkto*, Elena Urko and Majo Pulido from the Post-Op collective transform a simple red wool thread into powerful symbol of submission, pleasure, and domination. This DIY production features a dynamic interplay of open and closed frames that explore alternative representations of sexuality, serving as a form of political resistance against heteronormativity by showcasing dissident sexual practices.²⁹² The performers, embodying conventional standards of beauty with their slim, hairless bodies, present their dissident acts through a lens of sexuality that is inherently transgressive, as will be elaborated upon in subsequent pages. Their attire and accessories mix various signifiers: Elena Urko wears a bandage that covers and compresses her breasts, complemented by a hat, military boots, underpants, and elastic bands wrapped around her calves. In contrast, Majo Pulido wears a girdle adorned with dangling black dildos—a long, thick one positioned at her belly button, and a shorter, thinner one at her pelvis—paired with flesh-coloured stockings, high-heeled black sandals, and a black mask covering her eyes. Majo Pulido’s body is presented as an amorphous entity, disrupting conventional notions of the ‘normal’ body. The black dildos hanging from her belly button and pelvis challenge the passive role traditionally assigned to female bodies as mere recipients of penetration. Instead, they imbue her figure with an artificial, assertive presence. These dildos reshape the understanding of which objects or body parts can trigger pleasure, extending beyond the genitals or areas typically coded as erogenous.

In the scenes depicted (Figs. 43 and 44), both characters are seated on the floor. Elena Urko appears disinterested, while Majo Pulido looks at her intently in a medium close-up. Pulido tosses a ball of red wool to Urko, initiating a playful exchange between the two. This red wool becomes the key element through which their roles—submissive

²⁹¹ All the screenshots taken from the video *IntroAkto* authored by the Post-Op collective.

²⁹² The Post-Op audiovisual archive contains videos of collective performances such as *Las Ramblas*, their first performance in a public space where their characters parodied conventional porn personalities but with counter-sexual practices. More information about their performances at: <https://postop-postporno.tumblr.com/videos> (Last consultation on August 10, 2023).

and dominant— are established. After they finish passing the ball, Pulido keeps it, asserting her position as the dominant figure in the encounter. The red rope, now a symbol of desire, is used by Pulido to bind Urko, as she passes it under her armpits and her breasts (Fig. 45).²⁹³ Pulido controls the submissive’s movements, directing and restricting Urko at will. She pulls Urko to her knees or raises her using the rope, caressing her body, tightly grasping her hair, or pressing her dildo-adorned abdomen against Urko’s face as Urko tries to lick the dildos. Their interaction unfolds without verbal communication; instead, their physical movements tell the story, revealing their attitudes and desires through unspoken language. The experimental, electronic music creates an underlying tension, maintaining a constant tempo throughout the video, which reinforces seamless continuity of the narrative, suggesting that each part of their encounter carries equal weight and significance.

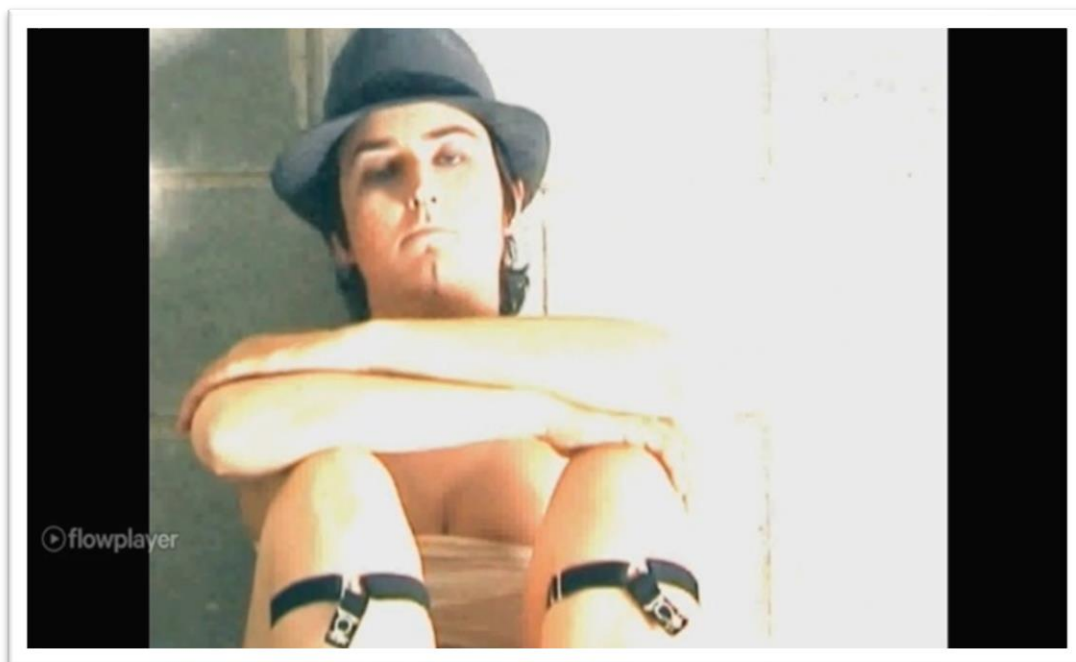


Figure 43 - Introducing Elena Urko

²⁹³ BDSM rope play is normally known as ‘shibari’ or ‘kinbaku’. The term ‘shibari’ means “tying” and ‘kinbaku’ means “tight binding”. Rope play involves tying someone up using ropes. Sometimes this can involve sex and, sometimes the amusement is based on the practice of tying itself. Formerly, ‘shibari’ was used as a form of meditation, relaxation, and reliance practice between two people. See: <https://mashable.com/article/what-is-shibari-kinbaku-bdsm> (Last consultation on October 6, 2023).



Figure 44 - Introducing Majo Pulido

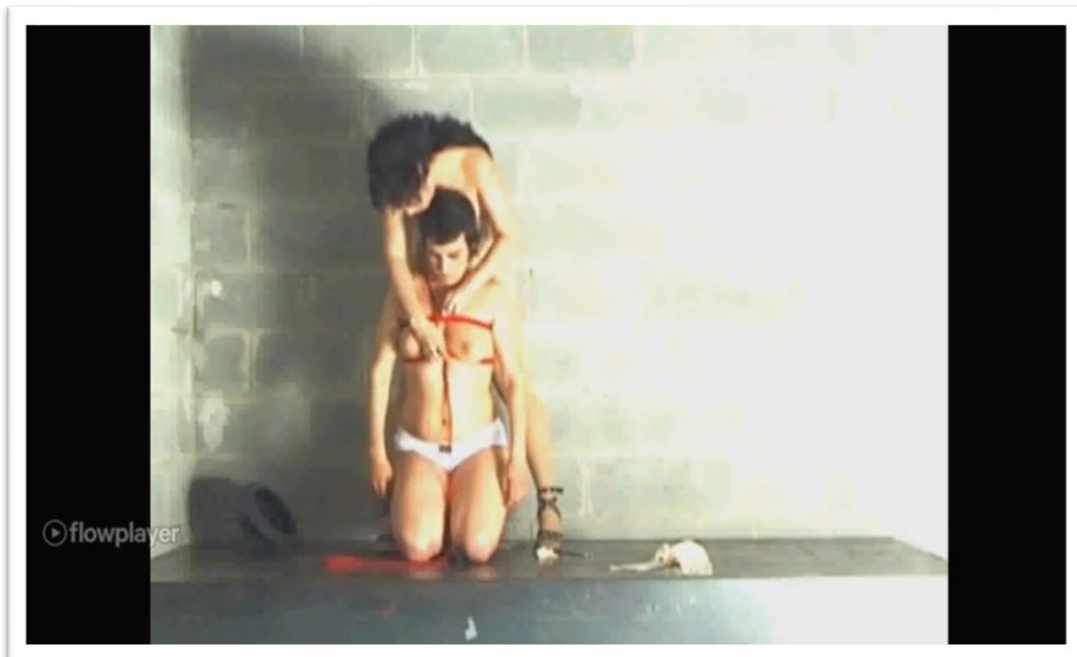


Figure 45 - Surrounding Elena Urko's breasts and torso with a red rope



Figure 46 - Pulido masturbates Urko



Figure 47 - Majo Pulido 'bleeding' red wool rope from her vagina

At minute 3:00, Pulido picks up a whip made of the same material as the red ball of wool and positions herself behind Urko, who is kneeling with her hands tied behind her back, her face pressed to the ground. Pulido strikes Urko's back and bottom with the

whip, highlighting the interplay between pleasure and pain in BDSM practice.²⁹⁴ This marks the beginning of their domination ceremony, where Pulido assumes control, and Urko, as the submissive, obeys the orders. The use of bondage techniques introduces the existence of other registers from which it is possible to relate sexually, illustrating how submission can evoke different forms of erotic engagement.²⁹⁵ Through the lens of sadomasochistic practice, the performance underscores that pleasure is not confined to specific bodily zones but can be found in the interplay of power, sensation, and submission. The performance emphasises that pleasure is not restricted to specific erogenous zones but emerges from the dynamics of power, sensation, and submission.

At minute 4:10, both performers are standing, Pulido dons long black latex gloves that extend to her elbows while Urko remains bound with her hands behind her back. Pulido retrieves a red wool rope from the floor, now elongated and shaped like a dildo, further asserting her control as she directs Urko to kneel again (Fig. 46). She gently caresses Urko's face and breasts with the red ball of wool, and at minute 4:35, she begins to rub it against Urko's genital area, first while seated on Urko's back and then kneeling beside her. The ball of wool becomes another pleasure-triggering element, subverting the conventional emphasis on penetration. The transformation of the red rope into a whip, a binding tool, and a 'dildo' —along with the varied scenarios of sadomasochistic interaction— demonstrates how any object, situation, or experience can be infused with sexual significance.

There is only one instance where Urko, as the submissive, takes control of her own pleasure. In the third sequence (minute 3:40), Elena Urko stands near the wall while Majo Pulido sits on the floor, observing her intently. Urko begins to masturbate vigorously with both hands. By minute 3:50, she is on the floor with her back against the wall, legs spread apart, continuing to masturbate. Pulido slowly crawls toward, briefly

²⁹⁴ Spanking and whipping can be given with different instruments such as whips, floggers, crops, paddles, slappers and canes on different parts of the body and with different intensities. On these kind of BDSM sexual tools: https://www.extremerestrains.com/sfw-floggers-and-whips?gclid=CjwKCAjw4P6oBhBsEiwAKYVvkq-If3ZVcTF7tLw56ZKU3GCiyUxpxdNC32Zc9_zfSzQQohTOn3zKkhoCdRcQAvD_BwE (Last consultation on October 6, 2023).

²⁹⁵ Bondage: the activity of tying parts of a person's body so that they cannot move in order to get or give sexual pleasure. <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/bondage> (Last consultation on May 31, 2024).

kissing her vagina before retreating. In this moment, the submissive takes agency over her pleasure through self-stimulation, while the dominant remains a calm observer, emphasising the complexity of power dynamics within their interaction.

To conclude, the camera captures a close-up of Majo Pulido's open legs, revealing a large amount of red wool seemingly sprouting from her vulva (minute 5:10). The scene transitions to a close-up of her expressionless face, followed by a wide shot of her sitting on the floor with her back against the wall, legs apart, fully exposed, as a large amount of red rope unravels between her legs. This imagery mirrors the opening sequence of the video, where the film's title is 'embroidered' letter by letter. The red wool, emerging as if from within her body, evokes the symbolism of blood (Fig. 47). Notably, the sexual encounter does not culminate in orgasm; suggesting that climax is not a necessary conclusion to the narrative.

Through their provocative clothing and the symbolic use of the red thread, Urko and Pulido challenge normative notions of sexuality and power dynamics, creating a visually compelling and politically charged narrative. The ball of wool serves as a key element in redefining sexual relationships, it suggests that any object or situation can be imbued with sexual meaning, thus subverting traditional boundaries of eroticism. The performative short video pushes the viewer to reconsider normative perceptions of sexual gratification and to embrace a broader understanding than conventional ideas of eroticism, demonstrating that intimacy, desire, and control can manifest in a multitude of forms, all of which deserve recognition and exploration. In this way, *IntroAkto* positions itself as a work of queer feminist resistance, advocating for a more inclusive and liberated vision of sexuality.

6.2 Analysis of the results: Spanish performances and post-porn

This chapter has examined two performances/videos as exemplars of the Spanish post-porn movement in the early 2000s, designed to challenge and reframe traditional understandings of gender, sex, body diversity, and role of feminism and women in pornographic cinema. These works are marked by their brevity—often less than ten minutes—lacking a traditional narrative arc or detailed backstory. Instead, they embrace a raw, unfiltered approach, where spontaneity and authenticity replace rehearsed or scripted scenes. Created in situ, they reject polished visual aesthetics, opting instead for a DIY sensibility that values the real, unmediated experiences of the body. These videos/performances capture the immediacy of the moment, blurring the lines between

performer and spectator, unlike mainstream pornographic films, which often rely on heavy editing, scripting, and aesthetic production. The post-porn approach disrupts normative depictions of sexuality, focusing on the fluidity of desire, the complexity of power dynamics, and the radical potential of non-normative sexual practices. Through this lens, the Spanish post-porn movement not only critiques mainstream porn but also offers a politically charged, feminist redefinition of sexual representation. Post-pornography not only consists of a certain aesthetic production of representations around sexuality, but at the same time the field is a space for tracing affective and political networks, alliances and collaborations, sites and modes of coexistence.

In both performances/videos, gender identity is presented in a fluid, non-binary manner, challenging traditional masculine/feminine classifications. This refusal to conform to the gender binary means that women in these performances do not inhabit the stereotypical space of the 'docile body', which has been internalised through hegemonic values of femininity and what it means to be a woman, particularly within the framework of traditional pornography. Instead, the performers' subjectivity emerges from a place of marginality: their bodies defy the normative expectations of gender and sexuality. These identities and performances find coherence and meaning within the frameworks of queer and post-feminist theory, which reject mainstream narratives of gender and sexuality.

By modifying their bodies with prostheses, cables, helmets, girdles with dildos, and other elements, the performers disfigure and expand the limits of body normativity. This deliberate destabilisation of bodily norms pushes the boundaries of representation, offering new, transgressive ways of depicting and understanding the human form. These alterations do more than disfigure; they enhance and complicate the bodies on display, emphasising the potential for transformation and subversion in performance art.

Perras del apocalipsis and *IntroAkto* further demonstrate the potential for pleasure beyond the genitals, as various parts of the body are explored in non-traditional ways. This subversion disavows the primacy of penetration (whether penis in vagina or penis in anus) as the central or sole means of achieving sexual pleasure. Additionally, both performances delve into BDSM practices, including spanking, fisting, rope bondage, needle play, as well as power dynamics between dominants and submissives. These practices foreground the potential for pleasure that intersects with pain, expanding the understanding of sexual enjoyment to encompass discomfort and surrender. The use of BDSM serves as a radical commentary on how power, pain, and control can intertwine with sexual pleasure, rejecting the simplistic narratives of intimacy and sensuality found

in more conventional depictions of sex. Through these practices, the performers present a more intricate exploration of sexual identity, embracing complexity and discomfort as integral aspects of the pursuit of pleasure.

Tools such as the DIY culture play a crucial role in democratising representations of sexuality, enabling artists to showcase diverse sexual practices through self-managed productions. This approach not only facilitates visibility but also empowers dissident subjects to liberate themselves through pleasure. Post-porn cinematographic initiatives take a politically charged stance, destabilising stereotypical portrayals of sexuality while interrogating the capitalist system on which they are based, as well as heteronormative binaries (such as penis/man/male and vagina/woman/feminine) that constrain social reality. The significance of post-porn becomes clear when marginalised subjects dismantle the dominant symbolic order, allowing them to experience newfound freedom and agency in their sexual expressions.

The post-porn phenomenon in Spain gained momentum in the early 2000s, emerging as a response to both the limitations of traditional pornography and the broader socio-political landscape, which was marked by a growing awareness of sexual diversity and feminist perspectives. This period witnessed an increasing challenge to normative sexual representations, alongside the rise of queer theory and feminist activism that propelled alternative narratives into the cultural mainstream. As an artistic movement, post-porn serves as a powerful political instrument that concentrates emerging subjectivities outside of hegemonic frameworks, ushering in a new paradigm that champions the mandate of enjoyment. The dissident form of pornography aims to subvert the conventional narratives surrounding sexuality presented in mainstream visual discourse. Pioneering collectives such as Post-Op, Quimera Rosa, Ex-dones, and Go Fist Foundation, among others, have worked to highlight diverse desires, bodies, and sexual practices by reimagining BDSM codes, revisiting butch-femme dynamics, recontextualising the dildo, and a parodic deconstruction of gender roles (see Chapter 2, subsections 2.2.2.1 and 2.2.2.2 for detailed information).

While the dynamic post-porn movement that thrived in Spain during the early 2000s has largely diminished, key figures such as Lucia Egaña²⁹⁶, Diana J. Torres²⁹⁷ (from Mexico), and Elena Urko²⁹⁸ (from Post-Op) remain actively engaged in promoting post-porn ideals. They conduct workshops and courses focused on pornography, post-porn aesthetics, and sexual education, continuing to challenge traditional notions of sexuality and empowerment. While the post-porn movement may not have the same visibility it once did, its legacy continues to influence contemporary discussions around sexuality, identity, and representation, as new generations of creators and activists emerge to carry the torch forward.

It is crucial for feminism and other social movements advocating for the emancipation of marginalised subjects to engage in the production of pornography as a subversive tool within a system that hierarchises individuals based on their sexuality. Mainstream pornography often reflects a narrow spectrum of androcentric sexual practices, failing to capture the diverse desires of many individuals. In contrast, post-porn feminism seeks to reclaim pornographic representation as a space for political action, empowering women and sexual minorities to redefine their bodies and explore new avenues of pleasure that challenge the normalisation of dominant pornography.

To expand the reach of feminist, ethical, and post-porn films, it is vital to consider how these works can be marketed to a broader audience. Currently, much of this content primarily resonates with those already attuned to alternative sexualities. How can we effectively communicate the importance of these narratives to those outside the feminist and post-porn ‘bubble’? What strategies can be employed to engage individuals who may be unaware of the limitations of mainstream porn? Can collaborations with established media platforms or social movements amplify these voices and broaden their impact? Furthermore, how might educational initiatives about sexual diversity and alternative representations of pleasure be integrated into mainstream discourse to foster a more

²⁹⁶ Lucia Egaña is an artist, writer and transfeminist. Her research intersects art with feminism, colonial and migratory processes, and post-pornography. About her projects at: <https://luciaegana.net/> (Last consultation on September 27, 2024).

²⁹⁷ Full interview to Diana J. Torres by LaCaderadeEva: <https://lacaderadeeva.com/actualidad/el-placer-es-un-arma-poderosissima-entrevista-a-diana-j-torres/7169> and her X public account: <https://x.com/Pornoterrorista?mx=2> (Last consultation on September 27, 2024).

²⁹⁸ Urko’s bio and information about her workshops at: <https://elenaurkopostop.com/> (Last consultation on September 27, 2024).

inclusive understanding of sexuality? Addressing these questions can help bridge the gap between marginalised pornographic representations and a wider audience, ultimately enriching the conversation around sexuality and pleasure. Moreover, elements of the post-porn ethos can still be observed at alternative pornographic film festivals, which serve as platforms for showcasing innovative and subversive works that challenge mainstream representations. These festivals not only celebrate diverse expressions of sexuality but also create spaces for dialogue and community-building among artists, activists, and audiences, as will be studied in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 7: THE PORN FILM FESTIVALS PHENOMENON

This chapter will explore the evolution of pornographic festivals over the past forty years, which have manifested in a diverse array of events. These range from erotic festivals featuring live sex shows to film festivals showcasing pornographic films in cinemas over several days. Such gatherings attract performers, directors, sex workers, researchers, journalists, and audiences who share an interest in these events, creating a communal space for dialogue and interaction. The global phenomenon of pornographic film festivals is expanding to cater to various niches of tastes, beliefs, values, and desires. As Leanne Dawson and Skadi Loist observe “film festivals are an integral part of cinephilia and belong to a film culture that favours alternative cinema over commercially driven mainstream film exhibition [and they are also] spaces where identity and representation politics and history as well as film history can be studied” (2018, 2).²⁹⁹

Although film festivals are generally associated with cultural activities, they often do not receive the same level of recognition as other types of festivals —such as literary or musical events— within the context of the cultural industries (Jurado and Cortés 2018b, 85). This disparity in status is partly due to the perception of film as a more commercial medium, which can overshadow its artistic and cultural contributions. Despite this, many cities have embraced film festivals as part of their tourism strategies and urban branding efforts, organising these events in tandem with initiatives to promote the city’s cultural identity (Jurado and Cortés 2018b, 92). Allowing cities to present themselves as hubs of tradition and contemporary trends, appealing to a wide range of visitors. By integrating the festival into the city’s cultural landscape, these events can foster a sense of cosmopolitanism and creativity, which can be attractive to tourists and locals alike.

Cities that host pornographic film festivals are often perceived as more progressive, open-minded, and accepting of sexual expression and its representation. Events such as the ‘Festival Internacional de Cine Erótico de Barcelona’ (‘FICEB’), the ‘PornFilmFestival Berlin’, and the ‘AVN Adult Entertainment Expo’ in Los Angeles suggest a broader cultural acceptance of sex and sexuality in these locations. These cities typically have a diverse and dynamic culture, with a population that values freedom of expression and artistic exploration, even in areas that are considered taboo elsewhere.

²⁹⁹ Cinephilia is the term used to refer to a deep interest in cinema, as well as in film theory and criticism.

However, the presence of such festivals does not mean that the entire population shares these progressive views on sex. Instead, it reflects the fact that a significant part of the community supports and values the open and artistic exploration of sexuality. In more conservative countries, anything sex-related is shrouded in secrecy or outright banned, as sexuality is regarded as a private matter, not to be openly discussed. Pornographic film festivals, in these contexts, can be powerful tools for challenging sexual norms and encouraging individuals to embrace their sexuality without fear of judgment. Despite this, such festivals are often seen as controversial and taboo by certain segments of society, as explore further in Section 7.4.

This chapter traces the emergence and evolution of pornographic film festivals across Europe since the 1990s, exploring their history, trajectory, and key objectives. It also incorporates a personal account of my experiences as both a spectator and researcher at various festivals attended between 2018 and 2021, both in person and online (due to the Covid-19 pandemic during 2020). A central focus is the essential role these festivals play in shaping the future of adult film entertainment by creating spaces where alternative content creators, performers, and audiences can interact, bringing pornography out of the private domain (home) and into public spaces like cinemas and theatres. In the case of pornography, consumption has historically been confined to private spaces, from magazines and DVDs to, more recently, online platforms. The advent of the Internet revolutionised the consumption, production, and distribution of pornography, giving rise to an array of free online content platforms. Despite this shift, public venues for porn consumption, such as sex shops, cinemas, and festivals, continue to exist, offering communal viewing experiences. The chapter also touches upon the social ritual aspect of cinema-going, which, until recently, involved collective participation in an otherwise individual experience (Zunzunegui Bilbao 2007, 52).

Finally, the chapter explores the sociological dimensions of this phenomenon through interviews with directors, organisers, volunteers, and attendees of pornographic film festivals. These interviews aim to deepen our understanding of the subject and provide insights into the broader social discourse surrounding adult films. The ultimate goal is to assess whether feminist porn is possible, necessary, and desirable. In doing so, this study seeks to demonstrate the existence of feminist pornography as a viable and transformative genre.

7.1 Porn film festivals: trajectory and goals

Film festivals can be generalist or inspired by a single genre. For example, it is common to find horror, fantasy and science fiction festivals all over the world. LGBT-themed cinema is usually well represented in many other events³⁰⁰, the same can be said of war cinema, and historical cinema. However, there is a genre that does not usually appear in this type of festival: porn. For this reason, the pornographic industry has been forced to create its own festivals. There are pornographic festivals with a broader erotic programme that includes live sex shows, workshops on sexuality and stands selling erotic toys, and, currently, an increasing number of pornographic film festivals are dedicated to showcasing a broader genre of porn films, where audiences can debate with directors and performers.

For years, the prevailing model of pornographic festivals diverged from what fans of traditional film festivals like ‘Cannes’ (France), ‘TriBeCa’ (New York), ‘Sundance’ (Utah), ‘Berlinale’ (Berlin) or ‘Sitges’ (Spain) would understand as a typical ‘film festival’. Erotic or porn festivals have historically been perceived more as ‘festive’ events, spaces where attendees could purchase sex-related items, interact with porn stars, and partake in live sex shows. In the early erotic festivals in Europe, cinema itself often played a secondary role, generating the least interest and revenue compared to the booths of distributors, production companies, sex toys, and live performances, which attracted the bulk of the public’s attention.

In contrast, film festivals serve multiple functions: they act as meeting grounds for industry professionals, the public and, the media; they provide an exhibition platform for films outside conventional distribution channels; and they award prizes that recognise outstanding professional achievements. Additionally, these festivals, along with related activities like workshops, panels, and parties often serve to promote the cities in which they take place (Jurado and Cortés 2018b, 95). Although new media and the Internet have revolutionised film consumption, festivals remain vital venues for experiencing cinema communally. Regardless of the individual festival’s structure, each event offers a chance to celebrate cinema and congregate around it. As Vivar Navas observes, “film festivals have rarely been studied as settings in which citizens ‘educate their gaze’ from a festive

³⁰⁰ Such are the cases of ‘SQUIFF’ (‘Scottish Queer International Film Festival’) held in Scotland since 2014 and the ‘Endimaris Sitges LGTBQ+ Film Festival’ held in Catalonia since 2021. See: <https://www.sqiff.org/> and <https://mostraendimarissitges.com/> (Last consultation on March 9, 2023).

relationship with cinema” (*, 2016, 5). This chapter aims to address this gap by examining the emergence of pornographic film festivals worldwide and exploring how these events are received by audiences. By analysing the convergence of festivity and cinema in these unique spaces, the chapter will offer insights into the cultural, social, and political implications of such festivals, as well as their impact on both the industry and public perceptions of pornography.

Since the early 1990s, several sex fairs have appeared across Europe, marking significant milestones in the adult entertainment industry. In 1992 the ‘Hot d’Or’ —a pornographic film award ceremony held in Cannes— debuted and continued until 2001.³⁰¹ That same year saw the launch of the ‘Salò Eròtic de Barcelona’ (‘SEB’), an annual Spanish festival featuring pornographic film awards, strip-tease, live sex shows, and a sex product fair.³⁰² In 1993, the ‘Brussels International Festival of Eroticism’ was founded, serving as a trade show for European adult entertainment and hosting the ‘European X Awards’ since 1995. Other notable events include ‘Erotica in London’ (held annually from 1997 until 2013) and ‘Erotica in Manchester’ (from 2003 to 2005).

However, starting in 2006, a new wave of pornographic festivals emerged with a distinct focus on feminist, ethical, and artistic content. These festivals began promoting visual products from independent pornographic companies and fostering alternative representations of sexuality. One of the most influential of these is the ‘Pornfilmfestival Berlin’ which has inspired numerous similar events across Europe and beyond. Other festivals include the ‘Rated X Amsterdam Alternative Erotica Film Festival’ (2007 to 2011), the ‘Paris Porn Film Festival’ (two editions from 2008), the ‘Fetisch Film Festival in Kiel’ (active since 2008), and the ‘Festival Independiente de Cine para-Adultos’ held in Madrid in 2009. The ‘PorYes Award!’ a feminist porn award, has been held annually since 2009. From the 2010s to the present, the number of pornographic festivals in Europe has multiplied, many following the example set by the ‘Pornfilmfestival Berlin’. These include ‘Hacker Porn’ (2017), the ‘Vienna Porn Film Festival’ (2018) and ‘Satyrs and Maenads: the Athens Porn Film Festival’ (2020), among others. This shift highlights the growing demand for alternative and progressive approaches to pornography, emphasising diversity, inclusivity, and a challenge to mainstream norms.

³⁰¹ The awards have been described as the porn equivalent of the ‘Palme d’Or’ or the ‘Academy Awards’. The analogous American honour is the ‘AVN Award’.

³⁰² See ‘Salò Eròtic de Barcelona’ (‘SEB’) in Chapter 2, subsection 2.2.1.

Between 1992 and 2023, forty-two pornographic festivals have appeared in Europe, there are currently sixteen alternative pornographic film festivals distributed among Germany (Berlin, Kiel, Munich and Stuttgart), Poland (Warsaw), Italy (Bologna and Rome), Belgium (Brussels), France (Paris), Greece (Athens), Austria (Vienna), United Kingdom (London), Spain (Barcelona) and Switzerland (Zürich and Lausanne). Some of these festivals have been operating since 2006, such as the ‘Berlin Pornfilmfestival’, and others have appeared in recent years, such as the ‘Brussels Porn Film Festival’ (2022), ‘POST PxRN Film Festival Warsaw’ (2022) and ‘Porn Film Festival Barcelona’ (2023).³⁰³

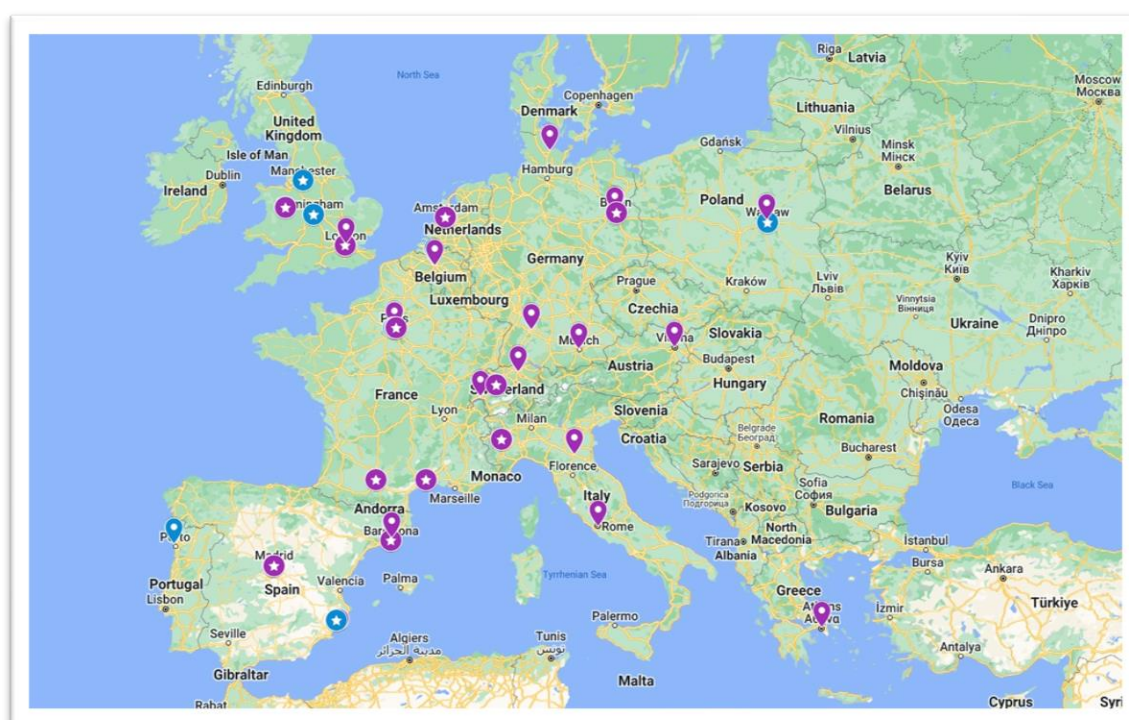


Figure 48 - Porn/erotic fairs, pornographic film festivals, and porn awards festivals between 1992 and 2023 in Europe

Outside Europe, post-porn audiovisual production companies began to establish their own dissemination platforms through feminist festivals in Latin America. One notable example is the ‘Muestra Marrana’, which originated in Spain as a small post-porn

³⁰³ Self-created map showing porn/erotic fairs, porn film festivals and porn awards festivals that have emerged between 1992 and 2023 in Europe. <https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/0/edit?mid=107sZQb-4M5RGh9vIBcUClATQnvRZXe8k&usp=sharing> (Last consultation on November 2, 2023).

festival in Barcelona in 2007, initiated by various social movements. It ran for six editions, held annually or biannually, before expanding internationally. In 2015, the festival took place in Mexico City, and in 2016, it was hosted in Quito, Ecuador.³⁰⁴ Other significant post-porn festivals in Latin America include the ‘Festival PorNo PorSi’; held in 2011 in Bogota and in Buenos Aires³⁰⁵, and the ‘PopPorn Festival Brazil’;³⁰⁶ which debuted in Sao Paolo in 2011, endorsed by ‘Pornfilmfestival Berlin’. More recently, the Chilean festival ‘Excentrico’, launched in 2020, has emerged as an international exhibition of critical pornography, further illustrating the growing movement in Latin America to create spaces for alternative sexual representations and discourse.

Several notable pornographic film festivals have been held in the United States and Canada from early 2000s to the present.³⁰⁷ Among them, ‘Cinekink’ was a standout, running from 2003 and 2019 in cities like New York, San Francisco, and Las Vegas, as well as other locations. This festival was known for promoting positive and inclusive representations of sexuality and kink in film and television. Its diverse programming featured documentaries, comedies, dramas, and pornography. Another significant U.S festival is ‘Hump!’, which began in 2005 and showcases five-minute or shorter amateur films made specifically for the event, touring various cities across the country.³⁰⁸

San Francisco hosts two prominent festivals: the ‘GoodVibes Quickies Festival’ (also known as ‘IXFF’), organised by the renowned Good Vibrations adult store since 2006, which screens erotic short films under seven minutes; and the ‘San Francisco

³⁰⁴ ‘MuestraMarrana’:

<https://web.archive.org/web/20190327025254/http://muestramarrana.org/acerca-de> (Last consultation on March 3, 2023).

³⁰⁵ Video of the closing party at the festival in 2011 at the following link: <https://vimeo.com/25615221> and about the project at: <https://proyectopornoporsi.wordpress.com/> (Last consultation on March 3, 2023).

³⁰⁶ ‘PopPorn Festival Brazil’ at: <https://filmmakers.festhome.com/festival/popporn-festival> (Last consultation on March 2, 2023).

³⁰⁷ PinkLabel.tv offers a calendar of international adult film events on its website. See: <https://pinklabel.tv/on-demand/international-adult-film-event-calendar/>. ‘SF Porn Film Festival’ has a list of festivals throughout the world on its website: <https://sfpff.pinklabel.tv/adult-film-festivals/>. ‘Berlin Pornfilmfestival’ also has a catalogue of porn film festivals on its site: <https://pornfilmfestivalberlin.de/en/pornfilmfestivals-around-the-world/> (Last consultation on March 9, 2023).

³⁰⁸ ‘Hump!’: <https://www.humpfilmfest.com/#dates> (Last consultation on March 9, 2023).

PornFilmFestival’, which highlights the work of feminist and ethical filmmakers from around the world.³⁰⁹ Another important event is Seattle’s ‘SECS Fest’ (‘Seattle Erotic Cinema Society’), an international film festival that ran from 2013 to 2017, celebrating the artistry of erotic cinema with a sex-positive, inclusive perspective. In Canada, the ‘Toronto International Porn festival’ (‘TIPF’), previously known as the ‘Feminist Porn Awards’, began in 2006, organised by the feminist sex shop Good For Her. ‘TIPF’ started in 2017 and continued until 2019, offering awards, workshops, and debates centred on diversity, inclusion, and ethical pornographic filmmaking.³¹⁰ Both the U.S. and Canadian festivals have contributed to the growing recognition of ethical, feminist, and inclusive pornographic content, blending education with artistic expression, and broadening the understanding of sexuality in mainstream culture.³¹¹

Since 2000, a growing number of pornographic festivals have placed greater emphasis on the cinematic dimension of adult entertainment. This shift has enabled directors and performers from diverse parts of the world to present their films live in public venues such as cinemas, creating spaces for communal viewing and discussion. These events have also expanded to include panel discussions and talks featuring directors, producers, performers, artists, and even organisations advocating for sexual rights and pleasure. One notable example is The Pleasure Project,³¹² which participated in the 3rd edition of the ‘London Porn Film Festival’ in 2019. Their talk addressed topics like sexual rights and sex education, with a focus on promoting pleasure as a key component of these conversations (see Section 7.4).

Pornographic film festivals offer extensive programmes, addressing a wide range of sexual themes, such as disability, ageism, sex work, trans rights, BDSM, fetishism, non-normative bodies, and the intersection of art and politics). They also provide a platform for showcasing the work of female directors. These festivals usually also have panels and talks about feminism and ethics in the porn industry, helping to amplify voices

³⁰⁹ More about the ‘San Francisco PFF’ at Chapter 7, subsection 7.5.2.

³¹⁰ On the festival see: <https://torontointernationalpornfestival.com/> (Last consultation on March 9, 2023).

³¹¹ The Sexy Short Films page offers an exhaustive file on erotic film festivals held globally, as well as those that are on hiatus or have stopped. They also provide a register of feminist and ethical pornographic films and sites. Full list on their website: <https://www.sexyshortfilms.com/erotic-film-festivals/> (Last consultation on March 9, 2023).

³¹² The Pleasure Project: <https://thepleasureproject.org/> (Last consultation on March 10, 2023).

that are often marginalised in the mainstream industry. Beyond film screenings, these festivals typically feature panels and discussions on topics like feminism and ethics in the porn industry, the importance of paying for ethically produced porn, and the role of sex education. They often include performances and art exhibitions, blending various forms of expression. By taking place in public spaces, these festivals foster a sense of community and create stigma-free environments where people can openly discuss sexuality, desire, consent, and ‘alternative’ sexual practices. These events provide a rare opportunity for individuals who are often isolated or marginalised due to the nature of their work or interests to connect, share, and learn within an accepting and inclusive setting.

7.2 Anthropological approach as a researcher and part of the audience

Since the early 2000s, pornographic film festivals have emerged, offering a platform to showcase and share cinematic creations from ethical, feminist, alternative, and political perspectives. Between 2018 and 2021, I attended eight of these festivals, both in person and online —due in part to the Covid-19 pandemic. I had the opportunity to experience the 2018 ‘Pornfilmfestival Berlin’ (13th edition), the ‘London Porn Film Festival’ 2019 (3rd edition), ‘Videokabine’ (2nd streamed edition), the inaugural ‘San Francisco PornFilmFestival’ 2020 (first online edition), the ‘Porn Film Festival Vienna’ 2020 (3rd edition, hybrid format), ‘Satyrs and Maenads: The Athens Porn Film Festival’ 2020 (first edition, online), and ‘Uncensored in lockdown’ 2020 (first edition, online).

In 2021, I volunteered at the ‘Porn Film Festival Vienna’ (4th edition), assisting with Covid-19 protocols over three days (for further details, see Section 7.7). At each festival, I had the opportunity to interact with performers, directors, festival organisers, and audience members. To deepen my understanding of the ‘Vienna Porn Film Festival’, I created an online questionnaire, which was completed by members of the organising team and volunteers. I selected these particular festivals because they celebrate the creativity and diversity of the pornographic genre, showcasing films from production companies dedicated to rethinking pornography, sex, and desire through a feminist lens.

Pornographic film festivals have the potential to foster a sense of community that extends beyond the typical ways we consume pornography —usually in private, at home, and often alone or with partners. These festivals provide a unique space where people can openly discuss, share, and connect with others on topics not generally covered in other

public forums, such as sex, education, pornography, kinks, and other important subjects. While these themes may be discussed in other settings, they are often approached with negativity or secrecy. As porn director and performer Vex Ashley noted in an interview for *Hunger* magazine:

Porn film festivals [...] act as a way to celebrate work and communities that are rejected or devalued by the mainstream. [...] It is about unity and community and proving that what we do does have value; [...] that we are not faceless or disposable [...] it gives us a rare place to exist without stigma [...] Festivals give people a place to watch work about sex in a community space, not hidden away on their phone. It brings it out in the open.³¹³

Pornographic film festivals provide a unique, stigma free environment, especially for individuals engaged in sex work, allowing them to share their experiences without the fear of negative judgment. These festivals often serve as inclusive spaces for members of the LGTBQIA+ community, BIPOC individuals, and their allies. The ultimate goal is to create a safe, welcoming environment for everyone who wishes to participate —whether by sharing content, such as films, performances, or seminars, or simply by attending as part of the audience. In late 2021, early 2022, I conducted a series of online interviews via Skype with two prominent porn directors, Lucio Massa and Marcus Quillan, in which I explored their idea of a ‘sense of community’ within these festival spaces. Marcus Quillan reflected on this, saying:

[Events like porn film festivals] are the only places I can feel that sense of community, people like me in terms of sex workers, pornographers, performers and kinky people. [...] The community aspect is a big part of it because it is very easy, as sex worker or a porn performer, [...] to feel lonely or just to be alone all the time because you work from home a lot or you just you go to work to different places, different shoots, different people every time.³¹⁴

Ashley and Quillan emphasise the importance of fostering community through shared identity, highlighting the innate human desire to belong to an affinity group.

³¹³ See: <https://www.hungertv.com/editorial/this-is-why-porn-film-festivals-are-so-important/> (Last consultation on March 10, 2023).

³¹⁴ See the Annexes, Pornographic festivals, the opinion of a director and porn performer: interview with Marcus Quillan.

Pornographic film festivals effectively cultivate this sense of connection among attendees, creating bonds that enhance the overall experience. In our private interview Lucio Massa noted that the primary goal of these events is to share films with the audience, with the hope that viewers will gain new insights —both sexual and emotional— from the diverse array of films presented. This exposure can expand their sexual imaginations and unveil the vast possibilities that exist within sexuality.³¹⁵ Film festivals —regardless of whether they are pornographic or not— provide an opportunity for individuals with shared interests to experience a sense of community and security, if only for a few days. As Jiz Lee observes, “Being part of that community is important: the people who attend porn film festivals are the filmmakers themselves. Because they are among the audience, you do not get disparaging, rude comments. It is a different viewership mentality” (2023, 190). In this environment, attendees can engage in meaningful conversations and explore topics that are often deemed taboo in other settings.

In my experience, I had never encountered pornography in such a communal setting —watching films in a cinema surrounded by strangers, with the opportunity to engage directly with performers, directors, festival organisers, and fellow audience members. Attending pornographic film festivals allowed me to conduct an ethnographic analysis, as I was able to exchange impressions with other viewers, participate in debates, attend exhibitions and parties, and administer questionnaires. This enabled me to gather more nuanced insights into the experience of attending a porn film festival. On a personal level, visiting these festivals has been immensely rewarding. I discovered a space where I could rethink and discuss non-hegemonic bodies, desire, and sexuality facilitated by the films we viewed and the panel discussions we attended. This immersive experience not only expanded my understanding of pornography but also cultivated a vibrant sense of community among like-minded individuals eager to collaboratively explore these often-taboo subjects.

7.3 ‘Pornfilmfestival Berlin’ 2018, 13th edition

In 2018, I attended my first pornographic film festival, the 13th edition of the ‘Pornfilmfestival Berlin’. This festival is notable for its reputation as a hub for alternative

³¹⁵ Annexes, Pornographic festivals, the opinion of a porn director: interview with Lucio Massa.

sexualities, genders, and bodies, as highlighted by Sarah Colvin (2015, 184).³¹⁶ Berlin is home to a variety of other pornographic festivals, such as the ‘PorYes Feminist Award!’ (held biennially since 2009), the ‘Porn Yourself Festival’ (from 2017 to 2019), and ‘Videokabine’ (which featured two online editions in 2020 in collaboration with the ‘Uncensored festival’). Germany also hosts other significant porn festivals, including the ‘Fetisch Film Festival’ in Kiel (since 2008) and the ‘Natural Instincts Porn Film Festival’ in Stuttgart (established in 2021). The ‘Pornfilmfestival Berlin’ has been addressing critical issues such as feminism, gender, and politics, since its inception in 2006.³¹⁷ Founded by producer and director Jürgen Brüning, the festival’s core team includes Manuela Kay (editor, journalist, and director), Paulita Pappel (performer, director, and founder of the porn sites *Ersties* and *Lustery*)³¹⁸, and Jochen Werner (film curator and editor). The festival takes place annually at the end of October at the *Movimiento* cinema, although some screenings, performances, and lectures are hosted at the *Spektrum* cinema. It showcases films from a diverse array of directors from all over the world and includes workshops, talks, exhibitions, and parties, creating a rich, multifaceted environment for attendees.

The 13th edition of the festival took place for five days, featuring a diverse array of movies from directors and pornographic companies across the globe, including the United Kingdom, Spain, United States, France, Netherlands, Germany, Greece, Mexico, Brazil, Argentina, Hong Kong, and Israel, among others. In addition to the film screenings, the festival organised workshops and panels, such as the one hosted by the

³¹⁶ See my reflection on the ‘Pornfilmfestival Berlin’ at the online magazine *Porn Studies*: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/23268743.2020.1720523> (Last consultation on March 16, 2023).

³¹⁷ ‘Pornfilmfestival Berlin’: <https://pornfilmfestivalberlin.de/en/about-the-festival/> (Last consultation on March 10, 2023).

³¹⁸ Paulita Pappel specified in relation to the feminist porn page *Lustery*: “It is documentary pornography, meaning it documents a sexual dialogue between real people instead of staging a performance with fictive characters. *Lustery* does not reproduce sexist imagery as it does not follow imposed standardised sexual scripts. [...] We always encourage the women to take control of the recording, thus promoting the female perspective”. Full interview at: <https://vamosfalardesexualidadeblog.wordpress.com/2017/12/28/interview-with-paulita-pappel/> (Last consultation on November 21, 2018). *Ersties* is a porn company that makes amateur pornographic videos directed by women, focused on the representation of feminine pleasure. See: <https://en.ersties.com/> (Last consultation on November 2, 2023).

German porn group Meow Meow Collective, which facilitated a self-reflective discussion on ethical porn practices.³¹⁹ To enhance the viewing experience, the festival implemented a categorisation and tagging system that organises films based on various criteria. These include themes and storylines (e.g. ‘fetish’, ‘sex work’, or ‘documentary’), sexual orientations and gender identities (such as ‘hetero’, ‘gay’, ‘lesbian’, and ‘transgender’), and types of sexual practices (distinguishing between ‘explicit sex scenes’ and ‘non explicit sex scenes’). The system also emphasises films created by women, ensuring a diverse and inclusive representation of voices within the pornographic genre.

During my time at the festival, I purchased three movie passes, granting me access to eight short films and one four-part feature film, totalling approximately four hours of adult cinema at the Movimiento cinema. One of the sessions I attended showcased a compilation of short films titled “Porn for Pay Shorts”, featuring five films from profit-oriented production companies. According to the festival program, these companies aim to “creat[e] a beautiful product under fair production standards”.³²⁰ The selected films included productions from several notable companies, such as the U.S companies AORTA and Spark Erotic —with the movies *Orgy #001* (2018) and *Heaven* (2018)—, the British companies Joybear Films and Four Chambers —with the films *Exposure: Episode 2 – Add Contact* (2017) and *Idolatry* (2017)— and representing Spanish pornography with the XConfessions project by Erika Lust —with the movie *Tinder Taxi* (2018).

Of all the films I watched during the festival, the “Porn for Pay Shorts” session was particularly engaging due to the diverse reactions from the audience. *Orgy #001*, *Idolatry* and *Tinder Taxi* received standing ovations, while the films from Spark Erotic and Joybear garnered a less enthusiastic response. Some audience members even laughed, likely because *Exposure: Episode 2 – Add Contact* and *Heaven* resembled mainstream pornographic content, showcasing more conventional sexual practices —such as oral sex,

³¹⁹ The Meow Meow Collective is formed by Doxytocine, The Meow, Candy Flip, and *Spir@lina*. They have been working for over eleven years in the creation of post-porn movies with a politically radical vision. In the panel discussion they talked about ethical porn, authenticity and the need to pay for porn. The discussion was recorded and uploaded to Vimeo: <https://vimeo.com/298301025?fbclid=IwAR1XXBLc2f-2-EU2vmJl6e-eVX6mA1-pdiY2INhtySxuUi8PCS77nyub4N4> (Last consultation on November 21, 2018).

³²⁰ Quote taken from the ‘Pornfilmfestival Berlin’ 2018 catalogue on pages 92-93. https://pornfilmfestivalberlin.de/archive/PFFB_2018_catalogue.pdf (Last consultation on March 16, 2023).

masturbation, and penetration— albeit with a focus on female pleasure. The performers in these films also conformed to what is typically regarded as ‘normative’ beauty standards. While companies like Spark Erotic, Joybear, and even XConfessions, aim to create audiovisual products that prioritise female pleasure, they often operate within more traditional frameworks. In contrast, AORTA adopts a queer and feminist perspective, challenging conventional notions of femininity, masculinity, and normative body types, as well as traditional sexual practices. This distinction highlights the varied approaches to adult filmmaking represented at the festival, fostering rich discussions around the nature of sexuality and representation in the industry.³²¹

In terms of sexual practices, most of the films screened at the festival went beyond a narrow focus on genitals, intercourse, penetration, and male orgasms. They showcased a rich tapestry of intimacy, including kisses, hugs, caresses, whips, laughter, aftercare, and food-play, among other diverse expressions of sexuality. Notably, there was a significant emphasis on sexual practices that prioritise female enjoyment, such as masturbation, fisting, cunnilingus, and penetration with dildos, illustrating that penetration can extend beyond the conventional narrative centred on the penis. The type of pornography presented at these festivals encourages viewers to reconsider their identities and sexual practices. It also opens the door to appreciating bodies that more closely resemble our own and recognising beauty in those that defy rigid beauty standards. This broader representation not only enriches the discourse around sexuality but also fosters a more inclusive understanding of pleasure and desire. Alternative and feminist pornography can offer a refreshing contrast to mainstream pornography which often presents a narrow view of sexuality through sites like Pornhub, Redtube and XHamster.³²²

This context underscores the significance of festivals like the ‘Pornfilmfestival Berlin’, which offers audiences the chance to engage with pornography created from alternative, ethical, and feminist perspectives. The 13th edition of the ‘Pornfilmfestival Berlin’ not only showcased a diverse array of films that challenged conventional notions

³²¹ Throughout the festival, I observed a wide range of audience reactions —laughter, applause, and even emotional responses to certain movies. For instance, *Fuck Against Fascism* (2018) by Courtney Trouble (queer filmmaker, artist, and sex worker) and Chelsea Poe (porn performer and webcammer), featuring four neon-lit experimental scenes, elicited strong reactions from viewers. More about the movie at the ‘PFFB’ catalogue, page 16: https://pornfilmfestivalberlin.de/archive/PFFB_2018_catalogue.pdf (Last consultation on November 16, 2023).

³²² More information about porn conventions in subsection 3.3.1.

of sexuality but also fostered an inclusive environment that encouraged dialogue and reflection among its attendees. By presenting works from various countries and perspectives, the festival illuminated the complexities of desire, identity, and sexual representation in a manner that contrasts sharply with mainstream pornographic offerings. Through workshops, panel discussions, and interactive sessions, participants had the opportunity to engage with filmmakers, performers, and fellow audience members, creating a communal space free from stigma. The festival highlighted the importance of alternative and feminist porn, demonstrating how it can expand viewers' understanding of sexuality and celebrate diverse bodies and experiences. In doing so, 'Pornfilmfestival Berlin' serves as a vital platform for education, empowerment, and community-building, inviting attendees to rethink their perspectives on pornography while reinforcing the significance of ethical and inclusive representation in the industry. As the festival continues to evolve, it remains a beacon for those seeking a richer, more nuanced understanding of sexuality through the medium of film.

7.4 'London Porn Film Festival' 2019, 3rd edition

The 'London Porn Film Festival' ('LPFF') was established in 2017, drawing inspiration from the 'Pornfilmfestival Berlin' and fuelled by the belief that UK porn law and increasing state surveillance were detrimental to the rights of sex workers, porn performers, and the queer community at large. Legislation such as the 2014 Audiovisual Media Services Regulation, the 2016 Investigatory Powers Act, and the Digital Economy Bill enacted in 2017³²³, reinforced this conviction. The festival was spearheaded by a dedicated team, including Rude Jude (film programmer), Ingo Cando (*creator of barwot, woteverworld*, queerfayre LGBTQIA+ Social Consultancy for queerbeefilm and producer for various LGBTQ+ events, venues & platforms), Max Disgrace (*filmmaker and programmer*) and Epiphyllum Oxypetalum. The 'LPFF' emerged as an annual celebration of queer, feminist, and experimental porn from around the world, intended to be a place where audiences could re-learn their perceptions of pornography and to explore the boundaries of filmmaking itself. As *Rude Jude emphasised in an interview with openDemocracy*:

³²³ See my considerations on the different regulations and laws against pornography in the United Kingdom at Chapter 2, Section 2.1.

The London Porn Film Festival has been established not only because we *like* queer porn but because we *care* about it. We care about the sex workers, porn performers and producers who make it. We believe that queer, radical porn is a fascinating form of expression that can provide huge political, theoretical and artistic insights that should be available in the blooming cultural scene in what should be a world-leading city of free speech.³²⁴

The 3rd edition of the ‘London Porn Film Festival’ faced significant challenges due to complaints by two radical feminist groups —Object and Women Against Pornography— who approached Camden City Council in an effort to halt the festival.³²⁵ In response to these concerns, the festival organisers were compelled to cancel the inaugural session of the programme for safety reasons and to relocate the venue on short notice from The Horse Hospital to The Flying Dutchman. Additionally, they hired a lawyer to review all the films showcased at the festival to ensure compliance with obscenity laws. As reported by *The Guardian* in its online edition on April 26, 2019:

Despite the festival’s progressive intentions, feminist organisations branded it demeaning. Janice Williams, chair of the activist group Object, said the films on show promoted “degradation and oppression”. Rude Jude, one of the festival’s organisers, disagreed. “This is the next step on from the moral panic and the rightwing conservative groups that protested this kind of thing before... Britain likes to think of itself as a place tolerant of queer people, but when queer people assert ourselves, we’re attacked [...] In a letter to Camden Council, Williams [...] claimed the festival was to show extreme pornographic images and pornography that is “likely to result in serious injury” to the performers.³²⁶

A few days after the festival, on May 1st, 2019, *Dazed Digital* published an article outlining the rationale behind the ‘London Porn Film Festival’ team’s decision to proceed with the event despite facing objections and censorship:

³²⁴ Full statement: <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/transformation/why-were-not-taking-new-porn-laws-lyin/> (Last consultation on March 16, 2023).

³²⁵ About Object’s letter to Camden City Council: <https://objectnow.org/2019-4-5-london-porn-film-festival/> (Last consultation on March 16, 2023).

³²⁶ In relation to the opinions of Object, Women Against Pornography and the organisers of ‘LPFF’ at the *Guardian* site: <https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2019/apr/26/london-porn-festival-protests> (Last consultation on June 1, 2019).

The London Porn Film Festival does not deny that violent, misogynistic, racist pornography exists -we just don't accept that all porn is inherently violent. Sexual literacy in this country is appalling, but you do not change that by shutting down the tiny DIY festival while ignoring the laws enabling and re-enforcing mainstream, heterosexist content. We showcase critical, queer, ethical, DIY porn. We disagree that feminist porn is an oxymoron.³²⁷

The festival spanned three days, with movies from a diverse array of countries including Spain, United Kingdom, France, Germany, Switzerland, Netherlands, Denmark, Italy, Sweden, Israel, United States, Taiwan, and Canada. It featured two insightful panel discussions on sex education and pornography. The first, titled “Sex Education: It Gets Better?” was curated by porn performers Lina Bembe and Rooster, alongside contributors from the Pleasure Project and Max Disgrace.³²⁸ The second panel, “Lina Bembe Curation”, was led by Bembe herself.³²⁹ Both discussions explored the role of pornography as a form of ‘pedagogy’, moving beyond traditional sex education topics like STD (Sexually Transmitted Disease) prevention and contraception —common themes often presented to children and teenagers. The panellists pointed out the importance of including various social issues such as stigma, consent culture, gender identity, sexuality, communication, unconventional relationship structures, body image, and sexual esteem. They also introduced the Sex School Hub project, a Berlin-based platform of explicit *sex* education films created in 2017 by porn performers Sadie Lune, Bishop Black, Parker Marx and Lina Bembe.

It is interesting to observe that pornographic performers, directors, and other individuals in the adult industry often show a greater concern for sex education for children, teenagers, and adults than many countries with political agendas that overlook its importance. While I do not believe that pornography should be the primary source

³²⁷ See: <https://www.dazeddigital.com/life-culture/article/44290/1/why-we-run-london-porn-film-festival-despite-protests-censorship-and-hate> (Last consultation on June 1, 2019).

³²⁸ The Pleasure Project is an organisation that has been providing education on sex and safer sex for women and men since 2004, with the emphasis on sex and focusing on the real reasons most people want to have sex: satisfaction, desire and pleasure. <https://thepleasureproject.org/> (Last consultation on March 16, 2023).

³²⁹ Lina Bembe is a porn performer, communicator, director and one of the members of the Sex School Hub. About her work and her opinions on pornography at TEDxStuggart: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v8cgzwaDqxI> (Last consultation on March 16, 2023).

education, it undeniably serves as an artistic expression that reflects the complexities of our world and our identities. Instead of opposing it, we should engage with this medium and strive to foster a more inclusive representation of diverse bodies, sexual orientations, ages, and practices. This is precisely what feminist and ethical porn creators are doing through their films and various sex education initiatives for both adults —such as the Sex School Hub— and younger audiences, exemplified by projects like *The Porn Conversation* by Erika Lust and Pablo Dobner.³³⁰

During the festival, I attended two film compilation programmes: “Fierce Femmes” and “Sex Work is Work”. The “Fierce Femmes” programme featured a selection of five short films directed by women, alongside the impactful documentary *No Democracy Here* (2018) by Liad Hussein Kantorowicz. These films showcased a wide variety of sexual practices, including sensory and food play, with a strong emphasis on female and queer desire and pleasure that transcended conventional notions of genitals and penetration. In contrast, *No Democracy Here* explored themes of democracy, economic justice, and human rights through the lens of BDSM practices, highlighting the topic of political domination.³³¹ The “Sex Work is Work” programme included three films and a DIY documentary, *Transsexworks* (2017) by Emy Fem, which focused on the experiences of transgender migrant sex workers in Berlin and the multifaceted discrimination they face.³³²

However, this programme faced criticism from Object and Women Against Pornography, who argued that the film *Piedad* (directed by Nata Theoutdoorcat) —part of the “Sex Work is Work” selection— glamorised sexual violence and extreme practices. Their concerns stemmed from one of the hashtags used by the festival organisers to describe the film: ‘necrophilia’. Even though other hashtags were also mentioned to define the program, such as ‘humour’, ‘satire’, ‘community’, and ‘activism’. *Piedad* narrates the story of two Latino sex workers, Rodolfa and Maria Antonieta, along with their friend Asunción, who, according to the movie synopsis, “try to satisfy the posthumous desires of a client. Love, friendship, sex in unthinkable ways, comedy,

³³⁰ See more information about the project in Chapter 5, Section 5.1.

³³¹ The other films in this programme were *Indulgence* (2016) by Lou Bessemer, *Tease Cake* (2019) by Poppy Sanchez (guest director in *XConfessions*), *Baby* (2018) by Evie Snax, *Midnight Snack* (2018) by AORTA films, and *Second Shutter* (2018) by Goodyn Green.

³³² The other movies in this programme were *Offuscate my pussy* (2018) by Rosario Gallardo and *A Sex Worker’s Story* (2019) by Marcus Quillan.

drama, music and unexpected burials”.³³³ Audience reactions during the screening were overwhelmingly positive, culminating in a standing ovation and laughter at the film’s tragicomic portrayal.

The ‘London Porn Film Festival’ team highlight on the *Dazed Digital* website that, “despite increased costs, an aggressive threat of prosecution, being forced to censor sections of our closing film, and a visit from the police, we had our best year. We received incredible community support and were steadfast in our determination to ensure the festival went ahead”.³³⁴ The atmosphere of solidarity I experienced during the festival was remarkable. The success of this third edition, in my opinion, was rooted in audience collaboration and community spirit, the valuable information provided by the organisation and, collective adaptability in the face of adversity. As Nimue Allem, porn performer and content maker, said to *The Guardian*, “the ‘London Porn Film Festival’ has proved an inspiration for performers. Festivals like this are so important to show that there are alternatives to the mainstream porn... Centring people of colour, trans performers, queer sex of all types —and allowing people to see themselves represented on screen”³³⁵. She also noted the isolating nature of creating adult content independently, stating, “I’m one person making porn from my bedroom, which can feel incredibly isolating without the ability to meet others with similar views at community events like this”³³⁶.

In conclusion, the third edition of the ‘LPFF’ was a resounding success because it united organisers, performers, directors, and the audience in a shared commitment to resisting censorship and challenging societal stigmas. By providing a platform for ethical, feminist, and queer pornography, the festival not only showcased diverse voices but also fostered a sense of community among those often marginalised in the industry. This communal effort not only celebrated the art of adult filmmaking but also supported the rights and visibility of sex workers, demonstrating that spaces for open dialogue and

³³³ Full synopsis at: <https://torontointernationalpornfestival.com/studio/meow-meow-films/> (Last consultation on March 17, 2023).

³³⁴ *Dazed Digital*: <https://www.dazeddigital.com/life-culture/article/44290/1/why-we-run-london-porn-film-festival-despite-protests-censorship-and-hate> (Last consultation on June 1, 2019).

³³⁵ *The Guardian*: <https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2019/apr/26/london-porn-festival-protests> (Last consultation on June 1, 2019).

³³⁶ Her movie *Fisting Fun* (2018) was shown as part of “Brazen Brits” at the ‘London Porn Film Festival’ in 2019.

representation are essential in advocating for change within the broader discourse surrounding sexuality and pornography.

7.5 Porn film festivals during the pandemic

During the Covid-19 pandemic, the notion of ‘virtual’ experience became the new norm reshaping daily life through virtual meetings with friends and family, remote work, visits to online museums, and attendance at conferences, round tables, concerts, and film festivals, among many other activities facilitated by social media. In 2020, film festivals had to reconsider their strategies, work practices and business models, with many facing cancellations, postponements to 2021, or transitions to online formats. Some festivals opted for virtual platforms, utilising streaming services like YouTube, Vimeo, and Netflix to reach their audiences. These online festivals allowed viewers to curate their own experiences, offering the flexibility to select specific films, pauses and restart content, and even rewatch entire programmes. On the one hand, these actions offered flexibility for viewers but, on the other, online film festivals individualise the experience of an event normally held in a shared space/time with other people (Strauven, 2020). As mentioned in Section 7.2, film festivals are celebratory film events that bring people with common interests to view films and participate in debates, exhibitions, and other activities, fostering a sense of community. During the Covid-19 health crisis, online festivals allowed participants to stay connected at a distance from different parts of the world and, as Wanda Strauven (2020) observes, “despite the remoteness and our different time zones, during these events there was a common sense of knowing that everyone was in the same predicament, experiencing together both the online spaces of the festivals and social distancing”. Ultimately, while the virtual format transformed the way festivals were experienced, it also highlighted the enduring human desire for connection, creativity, and shared experiences, even in the face of unprecedented challenges.

Porn film festivals faced significant challenges in promoting their films on mainstream social media platforms, which typically prohibit sexually explicit content. In response to this limitation, PinkLabel.tv, a platform founded by Shine Louise Houston³³⁷

³³⁷ Shine Louise Houston is the founding director of Pink and White Productions, an independent production company creating queer pornography in San Francisco. She makes feature-length pornographic films in addition to directing, producing and shooting movies for her queer porn membership site

in 2012, stepped in to offer support. Recognising the urgent need for a dedicated online festival platform that celebrates adult cinema and compensates artists, PinkLabel.tv provided its services free of charge to pornographic film festivals in 2020. This initiative aimed to create an accessible venue for international audiences. Throughout that year, PinkLabel.tv hosted several prominent European porn film festivals: ‘Berlin PornFilmFestival’, ‘Satyrs and Maenads: the Athens Porn Film Festival’ (first edition), ‘Uncensored in lockdown’, and a curated programme from the ‘Vienna Porn Film Festival’. From USA, the platform hosted the ‘Seattle Erotica Cinema Society Festival’, ‘CineKink’, and also, the ‘San Francisco PornFilmFestival’, which featured a showcase curated by the ‘London Porn Film Festival’, and a “Latin American shorts” programme already seen at the ‘Berlin Pornfilmfestival’ (Olson and Lee, 2021). This collaboration exemplifies how the adult film community adapted to unprecedented circumstances, leveraging alternative platforms to ensure the visibility and accessibility of their work.

The pandemic significantly impacted the content of adult films, with elements such as gloves, masks, and medical clothing becoming common accessories in these productions. Likewise, several adult films revolved around lockdowns and social distancing measures on a narrative level, reflecting the broader societal context. Also, the first wave of the virus created severe economic hardships for sex workers and adult businesses around the worldwide. As filming on set came to a halt for several months, performers were advised against shooting videos with anyone outside their household or ‘bubble’. In response to these challenges, performers sought innovative ways to continue producing content and earning income. Some turned to platforms like OnlyFans, which allows performers to share exclusive content with subscribing fans, while others engaged in webcam work, receiving tips from viewers. While many sex workers faced financial instability and heightened vulnerability, during this time, major pornographic sites like Pornhub saw a surge in traffic; the platform reported a 24.4% increase in video consumption after offering free premium content worldwide on March 25, 2020, as part of their effort to encourage people to stay indoors and practice social distancing.³³⁸ Throughout 2020, various collectives organised webinars and conferences to address the

CrashPadSeries. She is also the creator and curator of PinkLabel.tv and runs ‘The San Francisco PornFilmFestival’.

³³⁸ Pornhub Insights: <https://www.pornhub.com/insights/coronavirus-update-april-14> (Last consultation on November 20, 2023).

unique challenges posed by Covid-19 on adult performers and sex workers. Some also launched new audiovisual projects to raise funds for their communities. An example worth mentioning is *Moan Together* (2020) by Matt Lambert, an erotic and pornographic music video featuring more than fifty submissions from around the world, made in support of queer sex workers impacted by Covid-19. This initiative exemplifies the resilience and adaptability of the adult industry in navigating unprecedented circumstances.

7.5.1 ‘Videokabine 2020’, second stream edition

‘Videokabine’ is a live video show produced by Verboten Studios in collaboration with ‘Uncensored festival’. The second edition of ‘Videokabine’ was broadcast on June 13, 2020. As stated on their website, ‘Videokabine’ pays homage to those “shady back rooms, where nefarious pornographers presented the so-called ‘noodle films’ when porn was still banned in German cinemas. The movies were smuggled in from Scandinavia—in super8 format—and only seemed to be available to a small group of customers”.³³⁹

The show featured four captivating performances by MariaBasura (South American anarchist, multidisciplinary artist, and DIY activist)³⁴⁰, Winter James (London-based live music artist and performer)³⁴¹, Jorge the Obscene (also known as Jorge Benavides, a Chilean artist, therapist, filmmaker, and pornographic performer based in Berlin)³⁴² and Mouse (a performer renowned for her provocative body art)³⁴³. The event aimed to transport the audience into a private video booth experience. Throughout the

³³⁹ The first ‘Videokabine’ show was held on May 1st, 2020, and featured performances by Misha Mayfair (Pornhub award-nominated actress and artist specialising in fetish), Xenia Black (artist with a background in modelling, painting, photography and pole dancing), Kris Canavan (an artist who has been exploring the political landscape and its impact on the collective and individual body since 2001), and Slavina (porn activist). <https://uncensoredfest.com/videokabine/> (Last consultation on March 24, 2023).

³⁴⁰ MariaBasura is also the director and researcher behind the *Fuck the Fascism* project on porn, capitalism and colonisation; part of the Terrorismo Teatral Migrante anticolonial collective and the alternative porn group Minus is Válido.

³⁴¹ On Winter James see: <https://glassforbrains.com/> (Last consultation March 24, 2023).

³⁴² Jorge the Obscene is one of the producers of the short film series *Fuck the Fascism*. He also performs in the films *Piedad* (2018) and *Lemon Taste* (2018). *The MultiVerse in a MouthFuck* (2019) is his first film as a director.

³⁴³ About Mouse: <https://uncensoredfest.com/bands/mouse/> (Last consultation on March 24, 2023).

performances, a chat function was enabled, allowing viewers to share their real-time impressions with the artists, festival organisers, and fellow attendees—all from the comfort of their homes. This interactive element fostered a unique communal atmosphere, enriching the viewing experience. To conclude the show, the award-winning short film *The Operation* (1995) was screened. Directed by Jacob Pander and Marne Lucas, this infrared pornographic film won the title of ‘Best Experimental Film’ at the 1995 ‘NY Underground Film Festival’. The narrative unfolds in an operating room, where a surgeon clad in a Ty-Vek protective suit, goggles, and rubber gloves showcases his surgical skills on a patient in the presence of a group of observers, blending eroticism with an unsettling portrayal of medical practices.

The visual performances conveyed a range of powerful messages. Jorge the Obscene delivered a compelling statement with his assertion that “sex work is work”, emphasising the need to stop victimising sex workers. This theme resonates with the discussions in Chapter 4 regarding the film *A Sex Worker’s Story* (2019) by Thousand Faces Films, which explores various encounters experienced by a sex worker during a typical work week. Marisa Basura’s performance articulated a multitude of political messages using her body and a poignant voice-over reading from the essay “Carta Abierta al Tío Sam” in the book *Acá Soy La Que Se Fue* (2019, 34-35). She critiqued the archetype of the conquering white man and his impact on Latin America, addressing the exploitation of its people, lands, economies, and lives. In a striking display, she stripped naked and engaged in a provocative act of self-exploration, removing a Chilean flag from her vagina and mimicking the act of suffocating herself with it before attempting to insert it back into her body. As she danced against a white wall, images of wars and the devastation wrought by climate change in Latin America were projected, creating a stark backdrop for her performance. This powerful juxtaposition highlighted the rise of capitalism and the stark North/South divide, illustrating how wealth and abundance are often attained at the expense of looting and plundering in other countries. The combination of her physical expression and the projected imagery served as a bold commentary on the intersection of identity, colonialism, and environmental degradation.

Unconventional sexual practices prominently featured in the performances, reflecting the more adventurous spirit of post-porn productions. Winter James’s act included the use of needles on the body, drawing parallels to BDSM practices, while Mouse’s performance showcased anal squirting and penetration with objects such as candles and sparklers. These explorations underscore that sexual practices can extend far

beyond the limited representations typically found on mainstream porn sites. These artistic expressions bear striking similarities to the Spanish post-porn performances examined in subsections 6.1.1 and 6.1.2, characterised by low-budget productions and a punk, dissident aesthetic.

‘Videokabine’ successfully created a platform for a global audience to engage with a diverse range of performances while fostering interactivity through chat features. Audiences could share their thoughts in real-time, enhancing the communal experience of witnessing these dissident performances. Political messages woven throughout the acts, challenged viewers to reflect on issues like sex, desire, capitalism, and the stigmatisation of sex workers. By showcasing a variety of sexual practices, ‘Videokabine’ offered an alternative narrative that transcended the conventional depictions found on free porn platforms. In conclusion, ‘Videokabine’ exemplifies how performance art can disrupt traditional boundaries within the adult industry. The event serves as a reminder that the landscape of sexuality is rich and varied, inviting exploration and discussion far beyond what mainstream pornography typically offers. In doing so, it empowers performers and viewers alike to embrace a broader understanding of sexual expression.

7.5.2 ‘San Francisco PornFilmFestival’ 2020: an online experience

The ‘San Francisco PornFilmFestival’ aims to celebrate the creativity of sex-positive filmmakers, performers, and artists from the San Francisco Bay Area and beyond while honouring the city’s rich sexual cinematic heritage. San Francisco was the first city in the United States to host a public screening of hardcore sex with the ‘International Erotic Film Festival’ at the Presidio Theatre in 1970, setting a precedent for erotic cinema. In 2020, the festival was launched as an online event running from August 19th to 23rd and featured an impressive lineup of ninety live-streamed short films, along with post-screening Q&As and opportunities for audiences to meet participating filmmakers. To support this endeavour, the organising team launched a successful crowdfunding campaign IndieGoGo,³⁴⁴ raising over \$10,000 from 197 donations. This funding enabled the creation of an adult-friendly platform for the festival, ensuring that filmmakers—who

³⁴⁴ On the campaign see: <https://www.indiegogo.com/projects/2020-san-francisco-pornfilmfestival/> (Last consultation on March 30, 2021).

faced financial challenges due to the Covid-19 pandemic—³⁴⁵ received screening fees. In recognition of their contributions, donors were rewarded with an all-access Festival Pass, a PinkLabel.tv membership, and the option to feature their name or company during the event. As mentioned in Section 7.5, the festival was hosted on PinkLabel.tv, an ethical, feminist, and queer pornographic platform that showcases hundreds of unique, independent, and award-winning adult films. PinkLabel.tv was inspired by the films viewed by Shine Louise Houston at various porn film festivals, including ‘Pornfilmfestival Berlin’.³⁴⁶

The festival programme was thoughtfully divided into six segments: “Fore/Play: The pre-show”, “Brazen/Brits: Short Adult Films from the United Kingdom”, “Power play: Kinky short Adult Films”, “Post/Porno: Short Adult Films from Latin America”, “Vivid/Vision: Experimental Short Adult Films”, and “Tell/Take: Beautiful and Narrative Short Adult Films”. This diverse selection featured films from various countries, including the United Kingdom, Spain, Germany, Greece, France, Colombia, Brazil, Chile, Argentina, Mexico, Australia, United States, and Canada. Additionally, for those who missed a live event or wished to revisit a screening, a special on-demand replay of recorded programs was available for twenty-four hours, ensuring that viewers could fully engage with the festival’s offerings.

During the festival, a “Filmmaker meet and greet” session featured various directors who discussed their experience filming sex during the first Covid-19 wave. They shared the unique challenges they faced in creating socially distanced sexual content while adhering to health regulations at that time.³⁴⁷ For instance, the Terrence Higgins

³⁴⁵ More information at the following website: <https://sextechguide.com/news/sanfrancisco-pornfilmfestival-digital-platform/> (Last consultation on March 30, 2021).

³⁴⁶ The PinkLabel.tv website showcases a diverse array of films that represent all types of bodies, sexual orientations, and desires, which are often overlooked by conventional adult websites. It promotes a respectful and inclusive portrayal of sexuality, highlighting the work of marginalised artists, including those from LGBTQIA+ and BIPOC (Black/Indigenous People of Colour), communities, as well as individuals with diverse abilities.

³⁴⁷ During the meet and greet the directors spoke about several topics: their movies, recording methods and camera types, the good and bad things of shooting porn movies, their own interests and inspirations in creating pornography, among other topics. The festival audience was able to send questions to them through a chat enabled at the platform. The main theme was Covid-19 and how the health crisis was affecting the production of pornographic movies. Some directors said that they felt less motivated during the 1st lockdown, and so they created a smaller amount of content (or nothing) during that time. They

Trust in the United Kingdom highlighted that the best sexual partner during the pandemic was oneself or someone within one's household. Recognising the unrealistic expectation of total abstinence from sex, they provide a range of recommendations, including avoiding kissing, wearing masks, and opting for sexual positions that did not involve face-to-face contact. Ultimately, the guidelines emphasised that masturbation, the use of sex toys, and virtual intimacy through phone or video calls were the safest alternatives during this unprecedented period.³⁴⁸

In this challenging context, adult film companies faced significant hurdles in producing content while adhering to the new safety guidelines aimed at preventing the spread of the virus. A notable example from this period is *Sex in times of Corona* (2020), which was showcased at the 'San Francisco Porn Film Festival' within the "Power play: Kinky short Adult Films section" segment.³⁴⁹ This innovative film explored eleven ways to give and receive pleasure while social distancing. To mitigate the risk of contagion, the production was organised into small, separate teams. Furthermore, all donations collected from the film were directed to a sex worker emergency fund in Germany, underscoring a commitment to supporting those in the adult industry during this difficult time.

The first online edition of 'SFPPF' successfully reached a global audience by making its platform accessible to users from all countries. This approach provided easy and convenient access to the festival, allowing viewers to watch films at their own convenience and even revisit content as desired. The effectiveness of this model is evident in PinkLabel.tv's ongoing support for various festivals, including the 'Pornfilmfestival Berlin', which resumed in-person events in 2021 while continuing to offer online options. Additionally, the panel featuring the festival organisers helped foster a sense of connection, even in a virtual environment. The curated selection of "Brazen/Brits" films,

pointed to a sensation of fear, first for the health crisis itself and, secondly, concern about its effect on them economically and professionally. On the other hand, other filmmakers said they found more time for scriptwriting and planning their jobs better. Some of them were able to create more online content for their websites or for other directors, managing to make more connections with other professionals in the adult entertainment industry.

³⁴⁸ Sex guidelines in the United Kingdom during Covid-19: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/newsbeat-53736087> (Last consultation on February 2, 2022).

³⁴⁹ Sixteen filmmakers from Berlin participated in the film: Jo Pollux, Theo Meow, Candy Flip, Johnny Jane, Finn Peaks, Docytocine, Katy Bit, FrauDark, Toni Karat, Manon Praline, Binx, Doloris Maria, Hyenaz, *spir@lena, and Harvey Rabid. Trailer at the following link: <https://meow.wtf/2020/04/17/corona/> (Last consultation on February 2, 2022).

presented by Max Disgrace, further enhanced audience engagement since Disgrace interacted directly with viewers while introducing each film. In conclusion, the “SFPPF” navigated the challenges posed by the health crisis, creating a unique online experience that transcended the usual solitary consumption of adult content. By emphasising community interaction and accessible programming, the festival not only managed to celebrate its rich cinematic heritage but also set a precedent for future events in the adult film industry, demonstrating that even in difficult times, creativity and connection can thrive.

7.5.3 ‘Satyrs and Maenads: The Athens Porn Film Festival’ 2020

The inaugural ‘Satyrs and Maenads’ took place on the online platform PinkLabel.tv during the second lockdown in 2020. Under the provocative slogan “Stay Home, Stay Safe, Masturbate”, the festival showcased over ninety films, arranged in twelve distinct programmes, including a guest-curated selection by the ‘Vienna Porn Film Festival’.³⁵⁰ Streaming for seventy-two hours from November 20th to the 22nd, the event reached a global audience, with more than three hundred people purchasing tickets that granted access to the entire film lineup.³⁵¹ In addition to celebrating diverse expressions of sexuality, the festival emphasised community support and activism. Twenty-five percent of ticket sales were donated to the family of Zak Kostopoulos, an LGBTIQ+ activist who was tragically killed by neo-Nazis in 2018,³⁵² while ten percent of the profits from each movie were allocated to the Red Umbrella Athens fund, which aids Greek sex workers.³⁵³

According to its website, the ‘Athens Porn Film Festival’ aimed to delve into the central question: “What is porn?” through its films, discussions, and interactions with the public, directors, performers, and festival organisers. The festival aimed to showcase how

³⁵⁰ Trailer of the 2020 festival: <https://vimeo.com/414714553> (Last consultation on March 31, 2021).

³⁵¹ ‘Athens Porn Film Festival’: <https://athenspff.com/2020-2/> (Last consultation on March 31, 2021).

³⁵² Zak Kostopoulos was a queer activist and defender of the rights of LGBTIQ+ people and HIV-positive persons in Greece, also known by his drag stage name Zackie Oh. He was killed on 21st September 2018. The ‘Athens Porn Film Festival’ raised €650 for Zak’s/Zackie Oh’s family’s legal expenses.

³⁵³ The Greek government gave no financial assistance to artists and sex workers during Covid-19, for that reason, the festival wanted to donate part of festival proceeds to those people.

pornography transcends mere representation of sex for the exclusive purpose of sexual arousal. Instead, it emphasised that porn could inform, entertain, and educate, covering issues such as gender, sexuality, and identity. The festival's curated film selection demonstrated that porn can be a vehicle for raising awareness, addressing political issues, and even serving as a source of fun. The film programme was divided into twelve sections, each focusing on a different theme. These included "Opening Programme", "Erastes Shorts" (Heteroflexible), "Euprosyne Shorts" (Humour), "Hetairai Shorts" (Sex Work), "Lysistrata Shorts" (Female Sexuality), "Sapho Shorts" (Lesbian), "Ganymede Shorts" (Gay), "Teiresias & Pegasus Shorts" (Trans Queerness), "Philoctetes Shorts" (Disability Visibility), "Political Shorts", and "Prometheus Shorts" (BDSM).³⁵⁴ Some of its short movie programs were named in reference to Gods from Greek mythology, such as, "Euprosyne Shorts" or "Prometheus Shorts". Euprosyne is one of the three Graces and the goddess of good cheer, mirth, merriment and joy. With this compilation of short films, they wanted to show the fun and joyful side of sexuality. Meanwhile, "Prometheus Shorts" drew on the myth of the titan Prometheus, who was tied to a rock and tormented daily by Zeus's eagle as punishment for stealing fire from the Gods and giving it to humans. The festival organisation humorously suggested that Prometheus might have "enjoyed that punishment" thus making him the symbolic patron of their BDSM film section.

What follows is an examination of selected films from the "Erastes Shorts" and "Political Shorts" programmes, examining how they align with the objectives of the festival. Although the term 'erastes' in ancient Greece traditionally referred to an adult man involved in a relationship with a younger male, the festival reappropriated the term to simply signify 'lovers'. This modern usage encompassed individuals, couples, and threesomes, celebrating sensuality, desire, and sex in all forms.³⁵⁵ One notable inclusion in this segment was the short docu-porn *Gush* (2019), by Kate Sinclair. In this film, porn performer Ciel shared his experiences with male squirting, a rarely discussed topic in mainstream pornography. The documentary provided a candid exploration of how Ciel

³⁵⁴ Full programme: <https://pinklabel.tv/on-demand/the-first-athens-porn-film-festival-is-here/> (Last consultation on March 23, 2023).

³⁵⁵ This programme consisted in the selection of nine short films: *Adorn* (2018) by Jennifer Lyon Bell, *Be Brief* (2019) by Werther Germondari, *Linger* (2017) by Ms Naughty, *Warm* (2019) by Matock, *Cheap Hookers* (2020) by Rosario Gallardo, *Trinity* (2016) by Ms Naughty, *Ouroboros* (2018) by Dwam Ipomé, and *La Cuisine* (2020) by Carmina.

achieved squirting as a person with a penis and prostate, revealing the sex toys and machines he used to enhance the experience. *Gush* not only spotlighted male bodily functions that often go unrepresented, but it also offered an empowering narrative about self-discovery, pleasure, and openness to sexual experimentation. The film aligned with the festival's mission to present diverse and authentic sexual experiences that push boundaries and challenge conventional norms.

The "Political Shorts" took a more explicitly activist approach, invoking the phrase "the sexual is political" as a reworking of the second-wave feminist slogan, "the personal is political".³⁵⁶ This programme featured films that used sexuality as a means of addressing broader socio-political issues. One powerful example was *Gynecologia Autodefensa* (2019) by Julia Ostertag. This documentary focused on the Gynepunk project, "an autonomous research project about the history of gynaecology, which opens direct practical access to a self-managed DIY knowledge about our bodies as well as an active and radical proposal to give a twist to patriarchal history".³⁵⁷ Gynepunk's main objective is to create efficient and affordable medical tools to enable women to take care of their own bodies. The film presented a radical challenge to the patriarchal medical system by advocating for self-managed healthcare, showing that sexual and bodily autonomy can be both deeply personal and intensely political.

In addition to its diverse selection of films from international directors, the 'Athens Porn Film Festival' organised two virtual Zoom Parties in lieu of traditional Q&A sessions. These gatherings provided opportunities for filmmakers and audiences to mingle, albeit in a more casual, limited-capacity format. Each party, lasting forty-five minutes, accommodated up to one hundred participants. The first, titled "Late Brunch Fun" took place on November 22nd, while the second, "Farewell Party with Awards Announcement", marked the festival's conclusion. The festival gave three awards, designed by artist Zacharias Petrakispa, which were selected by three-member juries for each category.³⁵⁸ The winners included *Lemon Taste* (2018) by Nicky Miller, which

³⁵⁶ This programme consisted in five short films: *Fuck the Fascism* (2016) by Maria Basura, *No Democracy Here* (2019) by Liad Huseein Kantorowicz, *Criolo – Etérea (doc)* (2019) by Tino Moneti and Pedro Inoue, and *The Sewers of Heterosexuality* (2018) by Marianne Chargois.

³⁵⁷ Gynepunk: <https://gynepunk.tumblr.com/> (Last consultation on March 24, 2023).

³⁵⁸ The members of the jury were Panagiotis Evangelidis, Chara Kolaiti (Anna Goula), George Efthimiou, Vassilis Noulas, Zacharas Mavroidis, Zoe Manta, and the organising team of the 'Porn Film Festival Vienna'.

received the “International Short Fiction” award, *The Sewers of Heterosexuality* by Mariane Chargois, which won “International Short Factual” award, and *So quiet: The performativity of a Pussy* (2018) by Maria Katsikadakou, which claimed the “Greek Short” award. These films stood out for their artistic and narrative qualities, aligning with the festival’s commitment to exploring diverse representations of sexuality.

Despite the challenges posed by its inaugural online edition, the ‘Athens Porn Film Festival’ successfully met its goals. It raised funds for various causes, including donations to the family of Zak Kostopoulos and the Red Umbrella Athens fund for sex workers. The festival not only provided a platform for alternative and diverse sexual narratives but also embedded itself in the fight for social justice, bridging the gap between art, activism, and solidarity during a time of global crisis, while also addressing its central question, “What is porn?”. The festival’s film selection emphasized the festive, humorous, and political dimensions of ethical and alternative porn, offering a thoughtful exploration of the boundaries and possibilities of the genre. By linking its thematic categories to mythological figures, the festival added layers of cultural and philosophical meaning to its programming. It encouraged audiences to reflect on the multifaceted nature of pornography, presenting it as a medium that not only titillates but also provokes thought, challenges norms, and engages with a range of social and political issues. The festival proved that porn can be both playful and profound, blending art, activism, and entertainment.

7.5.4 ‘Uncensored in lockdown’ 2020

The first edition of the ‘Uncensored festival’ was held in London from May 17th to 19th, 2019, establishing itself as a multidisciplinary event on art, activism, and pornography. With over thirty-five participants, including sex workers, activists, and artists, the festival fostered a unique space for dialogue and creative expression. According to their website, ‘Uncensored’ aimed to:

Reflect on the existing and forthcoming legislation regarding sexually explicit content in the UK [...] explor[e] diverse permutations of censorship along with

their artistic and political implications and map what is at stake in the regulation of pornography in the 21st century.³⁵⁹

The ‘Uncensored Festival’ aimed to create a space based on freedom of expression, where open honest conversations about art, pornography, and queer-feminist politics could take place. In this spirit, they launched ‘Uncensored in lockdown’ on November 24th, 2020, which was streamed via the PinkLabel.tv platform. This special edition resulted from an open call initiated by the festivals’ organisers, seeking erotic and pornographic films created during the worldwide lockdown in March 2020. The event featured a selection of thirteen movies from countries like Spain, the United Kingdom, Germany, Sweden, Canada, and Brazil, offering intimate stories of isolation, sexuality, and creativity during a time of global crisis. At the conclusion of the festival, winners were announced in categories including “Best Short Film”, “Jury’s Choice”, and “Body of Work”.³⁶⁰ All proceeds from the event were donated to Pineapple Support, a charity providing free therapy services to adult industry performers —a fitting cause given the impact of lockdowns on the adult industry and its workers.

Much like other festivals mentioned in this chapter, ‘Uncensored in lockdown’ featured a live chat feature, allowing attendees to engage in real-time discussions during the screenings. This interactive tool not only facilitated dialogue among viewers but also allowed organisers to issue content warnings, such as for the film *SelfPleasure Scat* directed by Jeffe Grochovs, which included scatological content. The organisers used the chat to provide trigger warnings for sensitive material, ensuring that viewers could make informed decisions about their viewing experience.

The closing film of the festival was the pornographic documentary *Sex and Love in the Time of Quarantine* (2020), directed by Erika Lust and featuring stars such as Casey Calvert, MySweetApple, Kenneth Play, Jet Setting Jasmine, and King Noire. Set in four cities —Florida, Barcelona, New York, and Los Angeles— the film explores how these artists navigate their sexual and intimate lives during isolation, whether alone or with their partners. The concept of the film originated from a personal confession by Lust, who

³⁵⁹ ‘Uncensored festival’ manifesto at: <https://www.uncensoredfest.com/about/> (consulted on March 31, 2021).

³⁶⁰ *Reverie* (2020) by Danius Monoceros won “Best Short Film”, *Sex in Times of Corona* (2020) by CoronaSolidarityFilm was the winner of ‘Uncensored’s’ “Jury’s Choice”, and *Arid* (2020) by Kupalua, produced by Brazil’s EDIY productions, was the winner of best “Body of Work”.

proposed a playful exploration of intimacy during lockdown through games like a sexy version of Twister and coin-tossing challenges, which culminate in four distinct sexual encounters. The documentary provides a rare glimpse into the private lives of its stars, showing how their personal relationships and routines were altered during the pandemic. King Noire and Jet Setting discuss the difficulties of maintaining intimacy, both as a couple and individually, while confined at home with their children. Kenneth Play on the other hand, reveals the emotional toll of isolation, expressing how much he missed the physical contact and emotional connection with others during the lockdown. As Erika Lust explained on her website, the film came up with the idea of seeing how life had changed considerably for over half of the world during the pandemic. She wanted to show “new ways of interacting and new ways of experiencing intimacy”. The film successfully delves into themes of connection, loneliness, and creativity during an unprecedented time, offering a thoughtful and intimate portrayal of love and sexuality in isolation.³⁶¹

This movie, like others showcased at the festival, explores how the pandemic has impacted people’s emotional and sexual relationships, examining how individuals use the Internet and other technologies to engage in sexual encounters. As Elena Urko, a post-porn activist and specialist in dissident sexualities, remarked during an event hosted by Barcelona en Comú during the first lockdown:

In a world in which physical distancing becomes part of this ‘new normal’, we want to reflect on the role of sex in confinement, especially those practices far from the cis-heterosexual family prototype, and how it has also affected sex work. And explore the place of technologies, which have enabled sexting and virtual sex. (*)³⁶²

Other films screened at ‘Uncensored in lockdown’ depicted sexual encounters between couples who followed Covid-related safety guidelines, blending pandemic realities with eroticism. For example, *Reverie* (2020) by Danius Monoceros and *Waiting for the Tsunami* (2020) by Rori Dior both explored the fantasy of intimate connections with another person —be it a neighbour or a stranger on public transport—despite physical separation (Moreno 2021, 295). Another movie that used the pandemic as its

³⁶¹ On the film: <https://erikalust.com/watch-my-new-movie-sex-and-love-in-the-time-of-quarantine-for-free-now/> (Last consultation on April 7, 2023).

³⁶² Full seminar at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gwJjmYVVfa8&list=WL&index=2> (Last consultation on April 7, 2023).

central theme was *The Silent Witness* (2020) by Torri Lisek, starring adult performers Bat Boi and Manon Praline. This film portrays how, after months of isolation, the performers decide to meet for an intimate encounter. They “explore their bodies with the use of protective masks, suits, and plastic gloves —maybe part of a fetish— but, thanks to that, they can feel the touch of another body again” (Moreno 2021, 295-296). This creative integration of pandemic-related elements in erotic contexts highlights how filmmakers adapted to the new realities of intimacy during lockdown.

Through its multidisciplinary approach, ‘Uncensored’ illuminated the intersections between art, activism, and sexual politics, fostering critical discussions around censorship in the digital age and its broader societal consequences. Despite the challenges of isolation and the logistical complications for shooting films posed by Covid-19, directors and performers found innovative ways to continue producing diverse and engaging content. The sample of movies screened during the festival were a testament to the resilience and creativity of the adult film industry during an unprecedented global crisis. The selection offered a refreshing glimpse into how filmmakers adapted to the constraints of 2020, using the pandemic as a springboard for originality. These works not only kept the spirit of erotic cinema alive but also served as a poignant reminder of the artistic innovation that emerged during a time of immense uncertainty for the world.

7.7 ‘Porn Film Festival Vienna’ 2021: Working as a volunteer

The ‘Porn Film Festival Vienna’ is organised by the central team formed by Yavuz Kurtulmus (curator, artist, director and founder and festival director of ‘PFFV’) and Jasmin Hagendorfer (writer, filmmaker, curator, producer and co-founder and creative director of ‘PFFV’)³⁶³, who have been working since 2018 to create a space for open dialogue. Their goal is to challenge and expand the horizons of pornography, sexuality, and sexual identity. The first edition of the festival was held from March 1st to 4th, 2018, and posed the question, “What is porn?” The inaugural edition aimed to blur the lines between sexuality, art, and cinema through a carefully curated selection of films, debates, and a variety of activities. The second edition, held from April 4th to 8th, 2019, explored the theme “What is shame?” The choice of this particular question stemmed from the recognition that nudity continues to provoke significant social discomfort, making the

³⁶³ About the team at: <https://www.pornfilmfestivalvienna.at/team> (Last consultation on April 13, 2023).

pornographic genre an ideal lens through which to examine such issues. This edition featured a rich array of erotic art exhibitions, screenings of pornographic films — including short films, documentaries, and feature films depicting a wide variety of sexual orientations, identities, and body norms— as well as lively parties that celebrated sexual expression and creativity.

In 2020, the festival made a comeback from October 1st to 4th, this time adopting a hybrid format that combined online streaming through Arthouse Vienna and PinkLabel.tv with in-person events at the Schikaneder and Top Kino cinema. The festival remained committed to showcasing and celebrating the vibrant diversity of pornography while stimulating social discourse around the question, “What is sex?” By exploring the various social and political phenomena associated with sexuality, the festival aimed to provoke discussions about the essence of sex and who holds the authority to define it. To achieve their objective, they created a four-week long exhibition named “The (in)escapable monotony of pornographic representations”, which ran from September 2nd to October 3rd. The project included discussions, lectures, and performances by numerous artists, encouraging a dialogue between the art and the public.³⁶⁴ The exposition aimed to reflect on the connotation of various concepts such as sex, sexuality, pornography, gender, pleasure, fantasy, reality, and the discrepancy between viewer perception and personal experience.

Pornography presents a vast array of possibilities, nevertheless, it remains heavily influenced by mainstream norms and heteronormative perspectives (for further exploration, see Section 1.3). Therefore, the question “What is sex?” is far more intricate and layered than initially seems, requiring an examination of diverse topics, including consent, desire, hetero-centrism, and the representation of the pornographic image. At the ‘PFFV’, the focus was on critically analysing the masculine gaze and the limitations inherent in conventional definitions of sex and sexuality. The festival also addressed the need for queer and feminist porn to reach broader audiences, displaying its subversive nature and creative potential. As stated on their website, the ‘Porn Film Festival Vienna’ aims to take a definitive stand:

³⁶⁴ The artists who participated in the collaboration exhibition project were; Alexandru Cosarca, Alice Moe, Berivan Sayici, David Meran, Johanna Bruckner, Kamran Behrouz, Laura Stoll, Marko Markvic, Nam Hyeji, Nora Scherer, Nora Staggl, Philosophy Unbound, Romina Achatz, and Offerus Christoph Ablinger. On the project at ‘PFFV’ 2020 booklet: https://www.pornfilmfestivalvienna.at/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/pffv_booklet_2020.pdf (Last consultation on April 13, 2023).

To promote diversity, sexual freedom, and self-determination. We want to put a focus on feminist and queer productions, an important step to show the diversity of people, their bodies, and their desires. We want to offer a platform for pornography in its various manifestations. The Porn Film Festival Vienna wants to provide an open and welcoming space for reception, discussion, and reflection and to challenge and broaden horizons. When a global pandemic challenges our everyday lives, and therefore too our sexuality, in such a time, we say, a porn film festival can be more than just entertaining. It can also be empowering, visionary, utopian, sustainable, solidary, and unifying.

The festival featured a comprehensive film and theory programme presenting feminist, queer, and LGBTQIA+ perspectives, screening works from countries including Germany, the United Kingdom, Belgium, Spain, Austria, France, Greece, Sweden, Italy, Ukraine, Netherlands, Poland, Canada, the United States, Mexico, and Brazil. The hybrid programme was carefully curated and offered a wide compilation of movie shorts categorised under themes such as “female pleasure”, “straight”, “fetish”, “gay”, “lesbian”, “queer”, “experimental”, “political”, and “Austrian porn shorts”. In addition to film screenings, the festival included Q&A sessions with filmmakers, panel discussions, lectures, and parties. This varied programme highlighted a wide spectrum of cinematic expression, from comedic narratives to politically charged pieces, while placing a strong emphasis on marginalised perspectives. It raised critical questions about self-determination and sexual freedom, encouraging attendees to engage deeply with the diverse themes presented throughout the festival.

The fourth edition of the ‘Vienna Porn Film took place from October 6th to 10th, 2021, continuing the exploration of the provocative questions posed in previous years: “What is porn?” (2018), “What is shame?” (2019), and “What is sex?” (2020). The festival featured a rich programme that included art exhibitions, workshops, a burlesque show, talks, panel discussions, Q&A sessions with filmmakers, parties, and numerous screenings of pornographic films, encompassing short films, documentaries, and feature-length works. Current debates on pornography simply continue to label this genre as a form of oppression, ignoring the fact that there is an entire community of marginalised people who use it as a tool to claim representation of their bodies, desires, and sexualities, therefore, threatening the dominant hetero-patriarchal structures (see Section 3.2.2). To quote feminist sex theorist and educator Annie Sprinkle, “The answer to *bad porn* is not

no *porn*; it is to try and *make better porn*".³⁶⁵ During this fourth edition, the festival aimed to reopen a public debate on pornography, sexuality, body politics, and gender roles, encouraging a re-examination of porn culture through fresh perspectives and a celebration of individual fantasies and desires.

Over the past few years, 'Porn Film Festival Vienna' has analysed sex, gender, and politics through a pornographic lens. Building on the foundational themes established in its earlier editions, the festival launched the virtual exhibition space "Fuck culture, descriptive". This initiative aimed to explore how, in a more hybrid world where the digital and the physical realms intersect, the concepts of sex, gender, pornography, and politics are renegotiated in everyday interactions on platforms like Pornhub, Grindr, and Tinder. The exhibition also delved into the significance of computer games, recognising that many of these games serve as crucial gateways to understanding sexuality. By doing so, they highlight and often recreate existing power structures within sexual dynamics.

The fourth edition of the festival adopted a hybrid format, allowing me to attend in person at the Schikaneder Festival Centre after two years of participating in online events. During my time at the festival, I volunteered and was responsible for ensuring compliance with Covid-19 safety measures in the screening rooms and lecture spaces. Capacity was limited across various venues, and seating was assigned through ticket purchases. Attendees were required to wear FFP2 masks, with covered mouth and nose, throughout screenings, workshops, and lectures. At that time, Austria implemented the 2-G rules (2G-Regel), meaning that attendees had to show proof of vaccination or recovery from Covid-19. This verification was necessary for entry. Additionally, ticket buyers had to provide their name, phone number, and/or email address for contact tracing in case of any reported infections during the festival. The entire team was diligent about maintaining a clean environment, regularly disinfecting surfaces such as door handles and microphones, and ensuring proper ventilation between individual events.

During the festival, I had the opportunity to interview seven fellow volunteers, who, like me, attended the event for free. Their motivations for participating varied but included appreciation for "the amazing programme", "the festival and what it stands for", "to meet new people from the queer community with the same interest: porn", and "to learn and thinking about sexuality, bodies and sex work, and film as a medium to expand

³⁶⁵ Quotation extracted from: <https://hagendorfer.jimdofree.com/kunst-projekte/porn-film-festival-vienna/> (Last consultation on November 6, 2023).

all those topics”.³⁶⁶ The festival not only fosters a sense of community but also serves as an important platform for education and exploration, encouraging attendees to challenge societal norms and embrace a broader understanding of sexuality. Through these interactions, it became clear that the festival is more than just a showcase of films; it is a vibrant space for dialogue, connection, and growth within the queer community.

As we have seen, the ‘Porn Film Festival Vienna’ actively seeks to destigmatise sexuality and kink with their movie selection, workshops, and panel discussions. The festival provides a valuable lesson on accepting sex and sexuality in its many forms while encouraging a critical examination of pornography. Rather than demonising or judging these subjects, the festival fosters a respectful discourse that creates a safe, educational, and inclusive environment for discussing topics often regarded as sensitive or private in society. In conclusion, the ‘Porn Film Festival Vienna’ not only serves as a platform for showcasing diverse representations of sexuality but also plays a crucial role in expanding conversations around sexual freedom, body politics, and the complexities of desire. By engaging with these themes in a supportive community, attendees can explore and celebrate their identities, fostering a more inclusive understanding of sexuality that resonates beyond the festival itself.

7.8 Transformative encounters: evaluating the influence of porn film festivals

As this chapter illustrates, alternative porn film festivals have emerged as vital gathering spaces where individuals come together to explore a diverse array of films from around the world. These festivals feature carefully curated programs that include screenings, talks, seminars, parties, artistic exhibitions, all centred on themes of sex, sexuality, pornography, gender, feminism, and politics. Attendees have the unique opportunity to interact directly with artists, performers, directors, and influential people from the porn industry, gaining a deeper understanding of the ethical and feminist aspects of pornography. These discussions address important issues such as working conditions, fair compensation, consent both on set and in intimate relationships, and medical tests. Furthermore, these festivals facilitate conversations about the artistic elements of a director’s work and the difficulties of producing porn that diverges from conventional

³⁶⁶ See annexes, Online questionnaire(s) administered to volunteers and organisers at the ‘Porn Film Festival Vienna’ 2021: compilation of answers.

norms, and also, festivals serve as essential spaces for breaking the stigmas surrounding pornography and sexuality, fostering open dialogue and community engagement.

As discussed in Sections 7.1 and 7.2, festivals serve as community spaces, fostering environments where individuals gather to exchange ideas, strategies, and emotions. However, I understand that it can be overwhelmingly uncomfortable to sit in a room packed with lots of people while watching a porn movie together. This discomfort stems not only from the nature of the genre but also from the societal norm of consuming such content in private settings, rather than in a public cinema surrounded by strangers, even friends or family members. Experiencing pornography in a communal way can be both refreshing and transformative. It turns a typically private activity into a shared experience, allowing individuals from various backgrounds to connect and engage in meaningful conversations over the course of the festival. This unique setting not only challenges traditional notions of privacy surrounding sexual content but also creates a sense of solidarity and openness among participants, enhancing their understanding of sexuality in a broader context.

Erotic film festivals have gained momentum since the early 2000s, fuelled by the rise of self-managed pornographic websites focused on dissident sexualities and DIY (Do It Yourself) aesthetics. Platforms like PinkLabel.tv have emerged to fulfil the community's demand for diverse and inclusive content. Since 2006, various festivals have surfaced across Europe and globally, reflecting a collective interest in cultural production and the exploration of non-traditional sexual practices. As demonstrated throughout this analysis, these pornographic film festivals cultivate communities of like-minded individuals and create spaces where participants can engage without stigma. They also serve as vital platforms for alternative content creators to connect with new audiences, fostering a richer dialogue around sexuality and representation in the arts.

The health emergency brought on by the Covid-19 pandemic profoundly impacted different aspects of our lives, and for film festivals, it meant that fewer festivals were able to organise screenings and face-to-face events in 2020 and 2021. However, the critical takeaway is that many festivals chose to persist, adapting to the circumstances and finding ways to connect audiences virtually at a time when in-person gatherings were impossible. As a result, these festivals played a significant role during a period of uncertainty and pessimism, uniting people through shared experiences and fostering a sense of community when it was needed most. The shift to online festivals during the pandemic allowed broader public participation, enabling individuals who might otherwise face

barriers —such as financial constraints, time limitations, or geographical distance— as was my case with the ‘SFPPF’ (‘San Francisco PornFilmFestival’) for all those very reasons. By utilising PinkLabel.tv as an accessible platform, the 2020 pornographic film festivals reached a global audience, allowing viewers to experience films during the event and revisit them later. This digital format not only allowed for diverse content offerings, such as experimental films and educational discussions on sexual health, but also facilitated interactive workshops led by industry professionals. Online discussions and thematic panels fostered a sense of community similar to in-person experiences, encouraging audience participation through live chats and Q&A sessions. Moreover, festivals could expand their accessibility by providing closed captions and audio descriptions, ensuring that attendees with disabilities could engage fully. Initiatives like post-festival content on PinkLabel.tv and dedicated online forums would enable ongoing conversations, while fundraising efforts for sex worker support organisations would underscore the festivals’ commitment to social responsibility. By implementing feedback mechanisms, organisers could continually enhance festival offerings to meet community needs, creating a more inclusive dialogue around sexuality, art, and representation in the pornographic film industry.

The online pornographic film festivals of 2020 showcased films from around the world that addressed themes of sexuality, desire, and non-hegemonic pornography from a feminist and queer perspective, portraying contemporary issues like isolation and the pandemic. In response to the crisis, many collectives created films and music videos to raise funds for sex workers facing dire situations due to lockdowns. In addition, online talks and conferences were also given to address that problem.

Based on my analysis of the festival programmes I attended between 2018 and 2021, several recurring themes emerged in the films: non-normative sexual and non-sexual practices —such as humour, BDSM, sex work, and art— along with diverse representations of bodies that challenge conventional notions of femininity, masculinity, and able-bodies. A significant focus was placed on consent, normalising conversations about sexual preferences before, during, and after encounters. Furthermore, the exploration of eroticism, pleasure, and *jouissance* as political tools underscored the films’ narratives. The emphasis on feminist themes added meaningful layers to the storytelling. The creativity exhibited by ethical pornographers during this period highlighted that, while our bodies may have been confined, our minds and imaginations remained unrestrained (Moreno 2021, 296). As the landscape of pornographic cinema continues to

shift, it remains essential for these festivals to persist in showcasing innovative and ethical content, ensuring that diverse experiences and identities are celebrated and represented. Ultimately, they play a pivotal role in redefining the cultural significance of pornography, transforming it from a stigmatised genre into a medium for empowerment, education, and artistic expression.

CONCLUSIONS

Pornography is an extensively researched subject, with an increasing number of scientific approaches aimed at understanding the complex relationship between pornography consumption and its effects on sexual health and interpersonal relationships. Much of the research tends to focus on the impact of adult cinema on the behaviours of men, primarily targeting young, white, heterosexual, and non-disabled subjects. This narrow focus often overlooks other demographics, particularly women and marginalised groups, while emphasising the negative effects of pornography on male psychology. For instance, a 2013 study from Cambridge University suggested that brain activity in individuals identified as ‘addicted’ to pornography resembled that of alcoholics or drug addicts.³⁶⁷ Similarly, research conducted by Simone Kühn and Jürgen Gallinat in 2014 revealed a correlation between higher levels of pornography consumption and a reduction in grey matter volume in the right caudate of the striatum.³⁶⁸ Furthermore, pornography has been linked to how men relate to the world and their partners. In the 2013 TEDx Jaffa Talk, Ran Gavrieli shared his personal experience of how pornography cultivated anger and violence in his fantasies, ultimately constraining his ability to envision anything beyond the sexual narratives shaped by these films.³⁶⁹

As discussed in Chapter 1, the dispute surrounding pornography is often framed in a simplistic binary of whether it is inherently ‘good’ or ‘bad’. As Attwood and Smith suggest “these have become over time topics of intense public scrutiny and debate — sometimes spilling into moral, legal or administrative action” (2014, 1). Within feminist discourse, the conversation has evolved since the late 1970s and early 1980s, with two prominent and opposing positions emerging during the ‘Sex Wars’. On one side, anti-pornography feminists, championed by figures like Andrea Dworkin and Catharine MacKinnon, argued that porn is inherently exploitative, reinforcing patriarchal structures

³⁶⁷ The research conducted by the University of Cambridge was part of the documentary *Porn on the Brain* (2013), fronted by Martin Daubney.

³⁶⁸ “Brain Structure and Functional Connectivity Associated with Pornography Consumption”. *JAMA Psychiatry*. 2014, 71 (7): 827-34. <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamapsychiatry/fullarticle/1874574> (Last consultation on October 3, 2024).

³⁶⁹ He concluded that the only effective solution for him was to abstain from pornography entirely. See: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gRJ_QfP2mhU (Last consultation on November 14, 2022).

by objectifying women, perpetuating violence, inequality, and promoting unrealistic standards of female sexuality. This perspective views pornography as a tool of male dominance that harms women both in and out of the industry. On the other side, pro-sex feminists, including figures like Gayle Rubin and Pat Califia (now Patrick Califia), advocated for a more nuanced understanding. They saw pornography as a potential platform for sexual expression, empowerment, and liberation. From this viewpoint, pornography can provide a space for women and marginalised communities to explore and reclaim their sexuality on their own terms. Rather than being inherently oppressive, pornography's impact depends on its context, production, and the representations it offers. This perspective emphasises the potential for porn to be both a site of empowerment and a tool for dismantling traditional power dynamics.

These divisions continue to shape feminist discussions nowadays, influencing ongoing discussions about sexuality, education, power, and representation. As Smith and Attwood highlight, these arguments are often based on a conception of 'normal' — good— sexual practices and 'abnormal' —bad— sex:

'Good' sex is associated with heterosexuality, marriage, monogamy and procreation. It includes sexual encounters that take place within the same generation, involve couples, and are carried out in private. 'Bad' sex includes encounters that are cross-generational, casual, sadomasochistic, or homosexual, those that are forms of solo or group sex, and those that are carried out in public. Similarly, roles and identities that play or experiment with gender and sexuality —such as butch/femme, trans and SM practices— have also been associated with 'bad sex' (2014a, 11-12).

Pornography should not be dismissed merely as something insane, deviant or perverse, as De Brito (1998) suggests, rather it can be understood as a legitimate form of cultural expression and entertainment. This underscores the importance of studying pornography, as it reflects and shapes societal values, norms, and ideas about gender, sexuality, and power. Linda Williams argues in *Hard Core: Power, Pleasure, and the "Frenzy of the Visible"* (1989) that pornography serves as a political discourse, communicating specific ideas about sex and relationships. Understanding pornography as a cultural product opens up discussions on its influence on relationships, body politics, and sexual education, accenting the significance of investigating its impact on both individuals and society as a whole.

Porn is often perceived as a standardised genre, typically featuring heterosexual narratives depicting white, cisgender, young, and able-bodied individuals.³⁷⁰ This representation, however, oversimplifies the complexities of human desire. While mainstream pornography is undeniably mass-produced, it is questionable whether it fully represents the wide spectrum of sexual desires within society. The emergence of alternative currents —such as ‘porn for women’, feminist porn, ethical porn, and post-porn— reflects a growing challenge to the hegemonic sexual model promoted by the industry. Human desires are inherently diverse and cannot be fully encapsulated by a monolithic industry like mainstream porn (Aravena 2019, 70). This highlights why more creative and varied representations of sexuality emerged.

These alternative movements seek to redefine the industry’s values by emphasising mutual respect, pleasure for all participants, and the dismantling of traditional power dynamics associated with gender and sexuality. At the forefront of this shift are directors like Erika Lust, whose XConfessions project in Spain exemplifies this new approach. As analysed in great detail in Chapter 5, Sections 5.1, 5.2, and 5.4, Lust combines eroticism with storytelling, focusing on female pleasure, consent, and the diversity of sexual experiences. Her work presents a more narrative-driven, artistic style that appeals to women and challenges mainstream porn’s male-centred perspective. In her films, Erika Lust is committed to presenting nuanced portrayals of sexuality, focusing on a wide range of people and sexual experiences. The XConfessions series showcases diversity in terms of race, sexual orientation, and body size, yet Lust has encountered challenges in hiring directors and performers from various age groups and with different physical abilities. Although expanding inclusivity is a commendable step forward —each new representation enhancing the portrayal of sexuality in a more equitable and relatable manner— it does not fully capture the complexities inherent in the porn industry. Addressing these complexities requires a deeper examination of intersectionality, ensuring that all voices and experiences are represented and valued, thereby enriching the narratives within this evolving medium.

Chapter 4 provides an in-depth exploration of alternative and ethical pornography in the UK, focusing on platforms like Four Chambers and Thousand Faces. These platforms explore ethical and artistic porn, incorporating performance art, high aesthetic values, and deeper emotional narratives. Four Chambers, for instance, focuses on

³⁷⁰ See Chapter 3, Subsection 3.3.1.

cultivating a space for artistic expression and intimacy, while prioritising ethical production practices. Their work frequently highlights diverse narratives that celebrate various facets of sexuality, philosophy, and symbolism. This approach not only challenges the conventional boundaries of porn but also invites viewers to reflect on their own experiences and relationships. Similarly, Thousand Faces accentuates a collaborative approach to filmmaking, often bringing together artists, performers, and filmmakers to create pieces that are not only visually captivating but also rich in storytelling. Their films often intertwine elements of performance art, poetry, and visual artistry, inviting viewers to engage with sexuality in a more holistic and nuanced manner. By elevating the discourse surrounding pornography and treating it as a legitimate art form, these companies contribute to a broader cultural shift that recognises the potential for porn to be both ethical and artistically significant.

Feminist porn does not hold all the solutions to the industry's shortcomings, nor does its creation eliminate the broader context of the patriarchal, often misogynistic, and power-imbalanced society in which it operates. Acknowledging these challenges is essential to understanding the ongoing efforts needed to foster a truly inclusive and representative pornographic landscape. For example, Lust focuses on making porn accessible and appealing to women, emphasising women's pleasure, desires, and narratives that highlight emotional connection, mutual respect, and consensual encounters. Four Chambers and Thousand Faces push the boundaries of erotic art, presenting sex as part of a broader artistic expression. Both movements bring something new: a reconsideration of how sex is portrayed, how pleasure is experienced, and how both can be communicated through film. Together, these porn companies and directors represent a profound paradigm shift, challenging not only the conservative conventions of mainstream porn but also reshaping broader cultural attitudes toward sex, gender, and representation.

In contrast, the Spanish post-porn movement of the early 2000s took a more radical and experimental route, often subverting conventional pornographic aesthetics to deconstruct ideas of desire and the body.³⁷¹ They also aimed to give voice to marginalised identities and experiences often overlooked in conventional narratives, embracing diverse representations of gender, sexuality, and body types. Through this lens, the movement explored the intersections of sexuality with race, class, and politics, engaging in a broader

³⁷¹ See Chapter 6.

critique of societal norms and power structures. This movement subverted expectations, exploring the fluidity of gender, sexuality and desire while critiquing the social and political structures that regulate them. By pushing the limits of what porn can be, the Spanish post-porn movement contributed to an ongoing dialogue about the potential for pornography to serve as a space for genuine exploration, critique, and liberation.

These insurgent forms of pornography create space for diverse expressions of sexual dissent, offering narratives that break free from the restrictive, normative, and patriarchal frameworks long upheld by mainstream porn.³⁷² Feminist porn, for instance, emphasises consent, mutual pleasure, and sexual diversity, often rejecting the exploitative, male-gaze-driven dynamics of traditional pornography. Ethical porn, similarly, focuses on creating safe, consensual environments for performers, advocating for transparency, respect, and better labour practices within the industry. Post-porn, on the other hand, goes even further by deconstructing traditional pornographic aesthetics and narratives, frequently embracing experimental and avant-garde forms of expression. By placing queer identities, racial minorities, and non-normative bodies at the centre of its narratives, post-porn directly challenges mainstream representations of sex, making room for bodies and desires that are often excluded or fetishised in conventional porn.

It is crucial to consider who is engaging with the emerging from alternative pornography and which viewers are responding to this call for change. The Internet's ability for private, individual access via personal devices has allowed many women to discreetly engage with these materials. Historically dismissed as a minor audience, women's increasing visibility in porn viewership reveals a demographic that had long been underestimated (Aravena 2019, 112). Feminist porn, ethical porn, and post-porn aim to be accessible to a wide audience, providing inclusive and diverse representations of sexuality. While these genres welcome all viewers, they particularly resonate with those looking to transcend the conventional narratives often found in mainstream pornography. They offer a more liberated and thoughtful exploration of desire by prioritising ethical production practices and showcasing a broader range of body types, sexual orientations, and identities. This focus not only aligns with the values of viewers who seek authenticity but also fosters a deeper, more conscious understanding of sexuality, empowering individuals to engage with content that reflects their experiences and desires.

³⁷² See Chapter 2 for the complete chronology of the different pornographic movements that have emerged in the UK and Spain since the early 2000s.

As discussed in Chapter 7, the rise of pornographic film festivals has been instrumental in expanding both the reach and legitimacy of feminist, ethical, and post-porn movements while also broadening their audiences. These festivals provide a platform for celebrating diverse forms of sexual expression. Showcasing films that prioritise consent, mutual pleasure, and inclusivity, these events bring visibility to the filmmakers, performers, and artists working within feminist, ethical, and experimental porn genres. They also foster important conversations about sexuality, representation, and the artistic potential of pornography. Beyond their niche appeal, these festivals are reshaping public perceptions of porn, challenging the idea that it must conform to exploitative or one-dimensional narratives. Instead, they highlight pornography's potential to reflect the complexity of human experiences, desires, and identities, further legitimising these alternative approaches as culturally valuable and artistically significant. Through this exposure, the festivals help broaden audiences' understanding of what porn can represent, attracting those who may have previously felt alienated by traditional content, while reinforcing the idea that pornography can be a space for critical and creative engagement with sexuality.

These movements are not only transforming the landscape of pornography but also driving a substantial cultural shift toward more inclusive, authentic, and empowering representations of sexuality. They encourage viewers to critically examine the norms perpetuated by mainstream porn, paving the way for more creative, diverse, and ethically responsible forms of sexual expression in visual media. This evolution calls for comprehensive future research into feminist, ethical, and dissident audiovisual productions, exploring the intersectionality within these movements, examining how factors such as race, class, and sexual orientation influence the production and reception of alternative porn. Researchers might also consider how these movements address or fail to address issues of ableism, ageism, and representation of marginalised communities, contributing to a more holistic understanding of inclusivity in pornographic narratives. Additionally, studies could investigate the long-term effects of these alternative forms on viewers' perceptions of sexuality, consent, and healthy relationships, as well as the role of social media and digital platforms in expanding their reach and visibility. Another important area of inquiry could be the impact of feminist, ethical, and post-porn on sexual education, particularly among younger audiences, and how they may influence sexual attitudes and behaviours. These expanded inquiries could provide valuable insights into

how these movements can continue to challenge and redefine societal narratives around sex and desire.

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ANNEXES

Interview 1. Pornographic festivals, the opinion of a porn director: interview with Lucio Massa

Transcript of the online interview conducted by me on October 16, 2021, via Skype with Lucio Massa. Personal recording in my possession. Duration: 16 minutes.

Lucio Massa is a pornographic film director —producer of the movies *Beyond Madness* (2016) and *Undercover Mistress* (2016)— and one of the creators of the ‘Hacker Porn Film Festival’ held in Rome since 2017 —together with Fran Stable (producer of *Porn to be Free*, 2016).

I met Lucio Massa during the second day of the Vienna porn festival, as we both went to the same film session. After the movies we had an informal conversation and shared our e-mails. I contacted him a few days later to conduct an online interview, which happened on October 16, 2021.

- **Was this your first time attending the ‘Porn Film Festival Vienna’?**

This was not my first time. I was there two years ago in the first edition. So, this was my second time and, for sure, both editions were so interesting, the facilities really well managed and the people there. Also, the KINO (cinema) was a super nice venue and the quality of the screenings they had shown to the audience. Really well organised in my opinion.

- **Why did you decide to go to the festival?**

I decided to go because, they usually select my movies. When it is possible for me, I attend the screening of my movies. Basically, this is why I usually go to the festival. I am interested in watching the reaction of the audience at the screening of my movies.

- **Are you going to other festivals this year?**

Yes, I will go to Berlin at the end of October. And after that, I do not know, because a lot of festivals there are now online, and I really do not like this option.

- **You have also recently been involved with the ‘Hacker festival’ in Rome?**

Yes. In these days we started the edition. Last Wednesday we had the first event. Because we have fourteen events in October and November. The main festival is in December, because we combined the 2020 and 2021 programmes. So, it was interesting to see the audience come back to the festival, and the kind of atmosphere, because our festival is not like Vienna, I mean, it is more underground. It is totally underground. Our venue is like a bunker. It is quite an interesting place. So, the first screenings were nice. We have a good audience, and we have three screenings. And after the screening we have this party all night. So, it was okay. I think we finished at 5 o’clock in the morning.

- **And now, during this month, in October, do you have other events or parties?**

Yes, next week, next Wednesday. The 20th of October will be the second day of the festival and after that, we will have two [more events on] Wednesday in November and after that, the main festival from the first to fifth of December. We [will] do the screening, three screenings, plus parties every day.

- **Did a lot of people go to the festival?**

We had a screen cinema for seventy people, and all our screenings sold out. And the party after that was full. Considering the Covid situation it was not so bad.

- **Do you expect people from other countries will come to the festival?**

Basically, we have our local audience. In the past, before Covid, some people came from other countries, but right now it is not simple easy to travel abroad. In this event nobody came from another country. I mean, we will see in December, but normally our audience is local plus some people, maybe they are tourists in Rome, and they discover there is a porn film festival and then they come, usually. We might have some guests, but probably not this year with the Covid situation.

- **About the ‘Porn Film Festival in Vienna’, what did you expect from the festival? What were your expectations?**

From my side I usually want to maybe discover some new movies from Austria or maybe some new movies in the fetish and BDSM program. That is usually my goal. So, also, this year I found some new movies very interesting. Because usually they choose a good selection of movies so, basically, I am expecting this and also, obviously, the

opportunity to network with the people in the festival, like you or other directors. So, this, basically, is a good opportunity for people to get involved. This is one of my goals when going to Vienna.

- **Do you think it is important for your career to go to porn film festivals?**

Yes, sure. I mean, if you think about the opportunities, it can be useful. So, for sure, it is a good option to go there, to share movies, to talk with people and to have the opportunity to network. Maybe, [for] some performers this kind of festivals can be useful. It is also a way to make friends and [to see] old friends, because usually there is a little-known group of people that move around these festivals. [It is a good thing] to spend time together.

- **That point you just made is my last question. Do you feel a sense of community in these types of spaces? Does it seem like a safe place for the LGBTIQA+ community?**

Yeah, sure. In a way, the goal, the aim of this kind of festivals is, more or less the same, if you go to Berlin, Vienna, Rome, Athens or London, basically the goal of the festival is to share movies and bring different people together. And also to bring people who may be doing research maybe on desire or pleasure or sometimes also, on our festival. [For example], last Wednesday, the movies that people watched connected them, [and] maybe they were pushing [in a new] direction, maybe to play with needles, to play with something they discover watching the movie. This is the connection point with your question. I mean, if you are going to this festival, you will find a community. Maybe there are people coming from outside, maybe they are not really involved [in the porn community] and they want to do [what they see in the] movies. They can have the opportunity to play with new emotions, new feelings and they can do it in a safe place, in a safe way. I mean, with good people that put [them] in the right conditions to feel, maybe, a new way of sexuality, a new possibility to explore the imagination. Basically, this is what can happen in these kinds of festivals or in the parties connected to the festival.

- **That was all the questions. They were a few simple questions about how you felt about the experience of this festival, and, if it is important for your career to go to these types of venues.**

I think it is a fantastic opportunity because usually in these places, you have the chance to meet new people, and maybe new performers. Last Wednesday, in Rome, I met a couple of people who were interested in shooting a movie. So, you never know, but for sure, if you go with an open mind, from the point of view of the organisers, from the point of view of people attending the screenings, usually, in this kind of situation, you find people with open minds, and also maybe, in a way [they are] open to discovering new things, new ways of thinking about sex, about sex positive.

- **Thanks a lot for your time! It was interesting to talk to you.**

Thanks to you. Let's keep in touch!

Interview 2. Pornographic festivals, the opinion of a director and porn performer: interview with Marcus Quillan

Transcription of the online interview conducted on 24/01/2022 via Skype with Marcus Quillan. Personal recording in my possession. Duration: 47 minutes.

About Marcus Quillan see Chapter 4 section 4.3 and about his films at subsections 4.3.1 and 4.3.2.

- **First, thanks a lot for agreeing to be interviewed and, as well, for allowing me to use some frames from your movies for my thesis. Thanks a lot! I do not want to keep you busy for too long. I am not going to ask you too many questions. Feel free to answer all of them or some of them. So, shall we start then?**

Yes, we can start.

- **I know that Thousand Faces is your company. Why did you create your own porn company?**

Well, I started out wanting to be a performer and I was really into a lot of, I guess, alternative type stuff. So, like Four Chambers Heart and the stuff Erika Lust was doing. This was like five or six years ago when I was starting to think about it and, I was looking up companies in the UK and Europe and trying to find a work as a performer basically. I made a few, like content share type scenes myself, to sell online, but I was not super happy with them, it was ok. I just thought “[It would] be cool to do like some stuff that is a bit different or a bit better quality”. Funnily enough I found work doing that. I went to the ‘Pornfilmfestival Berlin’, when I was not really thinking at the time, I guess, of starting something like Thousand Faces, but I was thinking about doing some work myself. In a certain style, maybe because I had been in a play. I am an actor and a mainstream actor as well, I used to do a lot more of that. I did, in London, like a theatre play all about the kink scene and BDSM [in London]. I met some cool people doing that. Doing sort of fetish photo shoots and things like that. That was already exciting and got me into that world, and I thought this play would work well as a porn film and I knew one of the performers in the play would be interested in doing that, potentially, as well

with me. That was kind of the main idea in the back of my mind which I did eventually make it into *Unbridled*, the first Thousand Faces Film. That was after the Berlin festival, because, once I got there, and I was seeing all these amazing indie alternative porn films and meeting awesome people that I had kind of -some of them I had met online already- just admired through their work on social media. So, many of them were there watching films and it was so cool to meet them, hang out and just talk about films and stuff, just making our own work. That is kind of how I planted the seed a bit deeper, and I was sort of inspired and I wanted to work in that. Then, that December, I think 2017, I filmed *Unbridled*. I started teaching myself editing. I wanted to do the music myself as well, that was a big part of starting, because I knew I had the ability to make great music for films like this, because I had sort of done similar things in the past and a lot of different musical things. I thought “well, that is my favourite part of a lot of this cool porn that I am seeing. It’s the music”. So, I knew I could do that. I would not have to pay to have someone else doing it or get a licence for the music and I could do it myself and I would enjoy that. Make it even more creative. Yeah, I did that for *Unbridled*, and then, worked from there, basically.

- **I did not know that you make some of the music for your movies. That is interesting! Do you use your own music in all the movies you have made?**

Yes. All original music written for the films.

- **That is a really good idea. I was going to ask you a little about what you think the main differences are between your company, Thousand Faces, and mainstream pornography, or the free ‘tubes’ that you can find easily like [for example] RedTube?**

I mean, I try not to draw a distinction too much because, I guess, the reason for doing it for me and part of what I am trying to do is to make it seem a bit different maybe to a lot of other stuff and be a bit more original or at least personal to my taste and style. But I am sure you have chatted to other people that think they still come across this idea that is kind of damaging, I think, to talk about mainstream porn as the single ‘monolithic thing’ and ethical porn as the alternative or feminist or whatever you call it. You know, it happens a lot, I guess, just because most people do not even know that there are differences between different pornographies or anything about even one kind [of pornography] so, sometimes, I guess, it is necessary to generalise and, you know, if you

only have a few lines to write about it in an article or something or you know, journalism is has to be catchy and can be sometimes lazy. I guess, I see a lot of similarities between my work and a lot of others, including like what you think mainstream porn is. It does not seem fair to say that “my stuff is super different and totally, you know, a different type of art or porn or something” because it is not. I just try to make it very personal to my taste of what I want to see and be a part of that as well, as a sex worker. So, I guess, I called my porn theatrical porn, and it is the most specific I get about it because my background is theatre. Makes you think of certain things and it has like a vibe, I guess, which is what I try and go for in some films more than others, and I do not always get there or you would not necessarily think from some of the films like “oh yeah, it’s theatrical” but it is kind the vibe that I want to achieve and, there are certain things I include more than others, maybe like themes and stuff but, you know, every porn is like that and every style is different. I do not think, you know, the things I do are particularly different or additional, it is just, maybe, the way I do it or the combination is quite unique to me, at least, as a whole. Expressing different kinks that I like to explore or like different visual styles and music.

- **I know you say you are a performer as well but, do you think it is important to work on both sides of the camera, as a director as well as a performer? Do you think that having the background of being a performer can help maybe with the direction of the movies?**

I do not think it is important necessarily, but it does help. It gives you a good extra perspective, creatively. But you know, everyone’s different and it may not necessarily help some performers to have that experience, it perhaps actually makes them maybe get more in their head, thinking when they supposed to be performing and maybe, not being like really in the moment. Also, maybe not being able to [stop] thinking [about for example] “what’s the camera doing? or what angle is this? [or what is it] going to look like?”. So, yeah, it can be helpful to be able to do that sometimes. But, maybe, not if you cannot shut that off, which can be an issue for me sometimes as a performer. You know, you can learn to do it and that is sort of what acting is like anyway. [In] any kind of acting, you have to kind of try not to think as much as possible. Once you are doing the performance, in the moment, if you wanted to be kind of, I guess, in the moment, and authentic and honest. I definitely think that is very helpful, again not necessarily important, like you know, there are great producers and directors, but they do not perform.

They can still be really empathetic and insightful about what it is to be a performer. Which I think is important to do and, obviously, helpful if you have been a performer. You learn how you communicate, how to shoot and those sorts of working practices. I try to be aware of what I would want as a performer when I am producing and directing other performers to make sure everything is cool.

- **I was going to ask you about the two movies I have been analysing for the past few weeks now, just to get more information about them. The movie, *A Sex Worker's Story*, I saw it at the 'Porn Film Festival in London'. I think I saw you there, at the festival in 2018. That was one of the last festivals I went to[physically] before Covid. I went last year to the 'Vienna Porn Film Festival', as a volunteer, and that was great. I was missing the experience of attending porn film festivals in person. I have been to so many different porn festivals, but online, last year, and it is just different, it is not the same thing.**

Well, there is the 'London festival' this May. I am sure you know, the 'Uncensored fest'. They started before Covid I think, and they did really well, so hopefully, I will have some films showing there and I will be in Berlin in October, of course.

- **Berlin is kind of the big one, always. So, about your movie *A Sex Worker's Story*, how did you come up with idea for this film? Do you think it is important to represent the life of a sex worker to try to remove stigmas?**

I think it is, and sadly, it is because they should not have to be in that situation. We really should have, already, empathy for sex workers. So, they are more stigmatised, you know, already and obviously, we have the situation that we have. Just the culture and the law in the different countries, so, it has become very important to do this. I wanted to do it with one of my films partly, because I was speaking to a sex worker friend and saying "I would like to involve this kind of theme and representation. What could be a good idea for doing it?" and she suggested, maybe, the sex work character has a kind of fantasy about the perfect client or something like that. I think that was the seed of the idea and I thought "that's cool". I performed in a scene with Viktoria Vaar in *Ersties*³⁷³ and met her through that company in Berlin and, we get along very well, we had a beer after the shoot, and we were just talking about different things. I think, a little after that, because I had

373 About the company: <https://en.ersties.com/> (Last consultation November 2, 2023).

met her and we talked about sex work and, I knew she was also a full-service sex worker, the idea kind of stayed in my mind. I started thinking maybe we can use that idea and have her as the main character and I can bounce ideas to her to get her experience and perspective on that. I talked to her about it first, about this idea, and she thought it was cool and she made some suggestions and, so, then I just wrote a little script and sent it back to her and asked her about it and she suggested some changes. We kind of almost made it together and then when we shot, as well, she improvised a lot of her dialogue with the other characters. It was just a bit more natural, and we tried to make it believable and naturalistic. Which is kind of rare with the style of my film releases, a lot of them are more like highly stylised, fantastical or just theatrical. So, it was amazing, it was kind of her story, even though it was fictional. I think, kind of the story had some truth, but it was the version that maybe we don't see so often. I guess, a lot of the time in porn when we see sex workers represented, and a lot of the time in mainstream stuff, it is more from the stigma, very negatively portrayed, like they are all victims.

- **I think that movie was a really good idea. I think it really helped to remove some stigma, and although fictional, the idea of her talking about her day, all the clients she had and the experiences, that was really interesting.**

Thank you.

- **Because that film was shown at different porn film festivals, for example, the one in London, and won several awards. Do you think Thousand Faces got more recognition for the film? Because of the awards and because of being in different porn film festivals?**

I guess the festivals are good, like good advertising. But, not so much from a business standpoint. I mean, it is better than nothing, but I do not know if it actually has much effect on the sale of my films, for example. Because I do not know, this is all theorising by me, but maybe you know, a lot of people that go to the festivals—including myself actually—they are not so much porn consumers in terms of people that buy a lot of porn. We are just interested in it as a kind of lifestyle thing almost, like they are sex workers themselves, they write about porn and sex work. So, it is like, I love going to the festivals and meeting people and just showing things, talk about them, which is great. I guess, in terms of like 'recognition', that is the one kind of recognition that is really cool, and I always want to do that because that is how I started and get inspired myself to make stuff.

I do not know, maybe it has had more effect than I thought to some people seeing the films and then, maybe, also wanting to show them on their websites and and they can buy the license for the films. Like there is a few other sites I sell films including mine. But yeah, it is hard to know, I mean, I do not know if awards make any difference.

- **About your movie *Sunlight*. How did you come up with the idea for this film? What were you trying to express with that film?**

Basically, I wanted to kind of use nature and, particularly, fruit, food and liquids. I thought it was already visually interesting. I was inspired by a few other films that do similar stuff that I saw at the first Berlin festival I went to. There is a Four Chambers film, called *Human Botany*³⁷⁴, that was kind of similar. I had sort of heard of this term eco-porn, I did not really know much about it but, it just sounded cool, and I guess, was the style I was using, like the natural world and environment and all vegan food and liquids and stuff, because I am vegan.

- **I am vegan as well. I remember when I was watching the movie, I really enjoyed it. I like the idea of using food as well. I like there was no penetration and [the movie] was not only focused on genitalia. I really enjoyed the movie because it was beautiful to see and arousing. One last question about your films. Do you think is important that they have a message or a statement?**

No, I do not think it is important. It is great when that happens, there is lots of porn that has that, but there are many that I like that does not as well, and I do not think it is the main focus of my films usually. I guess, sometimes it is like if the idea was based on that, maybe, like for example in *A Sex Worker's Story*, because the issue in the first place was wanting to have a certain representation of sex work. Everything kind of followed that and was important to that film. Some of my movie ideas is to make something that looks pretty cool, has a cool vibe and is hot, maybe in a unique way, but in the end, not necessarily with a message or if there is one maybe it is not super clear. Like, I called *Sunlight* a new kind of 'eco porn', mostly because it sounds cool. But it is not like really a message itself, it is not like I cannot really say all those codes definitely promote like the environment clearly or like a certain veganism or anything. I guess they do to me, but

³⁷⁴ About the movie see: <https://afourchamberedheart.com/cinema/human-botany> (Last consultation November 2, 2023).

that is because I already think that. I know that is pretty vague. I think it works artistically but, it is not the main point of my films to have a message. So, it depends. We can do all kinds of different stuff; it is not just black and white.

- **I think it is because a lot of people, when they start thinking about ethical or feminist pornography or something more underground, they always think that [that kind of porn] needs to have like a statement to prove they are different to all other kinds of porn [mainstream or traditional]. And it is true, some companies have a statement. I still think that your company has a statement anyway, but maybe not all the movies need to always have a kind of ‘political statement’ in a way. I think it is because mainly, lots of people just think there are two kinds of porn: alternative or mainstream. And lot of people still think that mainstream pornography is the main representation of “all pornographies”. It is only when you start getting involved in ethical pornography when you start thinking “oh, there are different things” and then, you start checking for different companies, and you can see how the pornographic movement is bigger than you thought. I had a few more questions about film festivals. I know some of your movies are going to be in different film festivals and, for example, you are going this year again to other film festivals. I wanted to ask you if it is important for your career—for *Thousand Faces*, and for you as a performer—to go to porn film festivals?**

Yes, it is important to me because, as I said, I kind of started that way, by going to the Berlin festival, well actually I went to the ‘London Porn Film Festival’ first that year in 2017, and that was really cool, it was like a mini Berlin festival but, Berlin has had, I guess, an even bigger effect on me and it was very inspirational and great just like a community event really for people like me—and there is not that many of them—and that was pretty cool to meet other people interested in the same stuff and working in the same field. And those are the main parts really to still be inspired by other people’s work and see it, because sometimes it can be difficult as well just to see different people’s work. You know that maybe they are not even selling it, or it is hard to find it online. So, yes, just to meet people as well. It is hard socially if you are not working with them or even if you are, you might know one or two that you work with separately or at different times but, it is really cool at festivals when there is lot of people in the same place and from different countries too, that you might never meet or see otherwise.

- **Do you feel that there is a kind of sense of community in those types of spaces?**

Does it seem like a safe space for the LGBTIQ+ community?

Yes, definitely. I do not identify as LGBTIQ+ myself, but definitely, I feel, I guess, like 'kinkship'³⁷⁵ with those communities, at events like porn film festivals, because they are the only places I can feel that sense of community, people like me in terms of sex workers, pornographers, performers and kinky people. Which, I guess, it has a small similarity to how I think a lot of LGBTIQ+ people feel. In that, they can only feel that sense of community in certain places as well, not all the time, sadly. And, so yeah, that is a cool crossover, I guess, as well with things like queer porn in certain companies and communities that make porn, and they are sex workers, and LGBTIQ+ and that is pretty cool. The community aspect is a big part of it because it is very easy, as a sex worker or a porn performer, I guess, to feel lonely or just to be alone all the time because you work from home a lot or you just you go to work to different places, different shoots, different people every time, you know, and you do not have a team to see every day like an office or people usually, so it is nice in that way.

- **So those were all my questions really. That was perfect, thanks a lot.**

Thanks for being interested and having all these questions as well. It was good to just listen and answer them. I like talking about this subject and my work. Thanks a lot.

³⁷⁵ Kinkship, the combination of kinky and friendship.

Online questionnaire(s) administered to volunteers and organisers at the ‘Porn Film Festival Vienna’ 2021: compilation of answers

The volunteers were women, men and non-binary people in between their twenties and thirties, who lived in Vienna, or like me, who travelled from other countries to help with the festival.

During the festival I tried to conduct personal interviews with them, but it was quite complicated because everyone was busy with different tasks and, there was always a lot of noise because of all the people who came to watch the films.

To arrange all the volunteers, the festival organisers created a Telegram group. On October 12, 2021, I sent to all of them an online questionnaire via Google Forms and, seven people —out of a group of twenty-seven— participated anonymously.

1. Was it your first time at the ‘Porn Film Festival Vienna’?

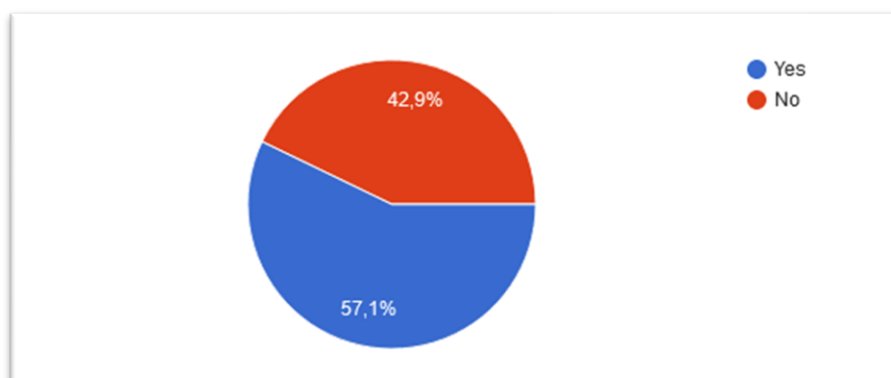


Figure 49 - Responses regarding attendance at the ‘PFFV’

Yes: Interviewees 3, 4, 6 and 7

No: Interviewees 1, 2 and 5

1. Why did you go to the festival?

Interviewee 1: The amazing programme, the people.

Interviewee 2: I was volunteering at the festival for the second year in a row. I really like the festival and what it stands for.

Interviewee 3: Interested in the artistic and social aspects of pornography. Very lovely set of people involved.

Interviewee 4: To meet new people from the queer community with the same interest: porn.

Interviewee 5: Because I do not like the influence of mainstream porn on body image, consent, attitude towards sex and bodies in general and wanted to support a kind of ‘enlightenment’ when it comes to porn. Our society seems to be oversexed, particularly in marketing, while it also makes a taboo out of porn, masturbation and various connected topics. I volunteered last year, because of those reasons and did so again, because of the same reasons and the people I get to meet.

Interviewee 6: I am interested in porn, I like watching, thinking and writing about porn and I have always wanted to attend a porn film festival.

Interviewee 7: Because I am interested in learning and thinking about sexuality, bodies and sex work, and also interested in film as a medium.

2. Have you been to other porn festivals? Why? How do they compare to this one?

Interviewee 1: Only online.

Interviewee 2: No.

Interviewee 3: No.

Interviewee 4: Not to a more-days festival. I have curated and hosted a queer porn film night in Amsterdam.

Interviewee 5: Sadly no.

Interviewee 6: No, it was my first time.

Interviewee 7: I think it is my first time at a porn film festival.

3. What did you expect from the ‘Porn Film Festival Vienna’?

Interviewee 1: Exactly what I got.

Interviewee 2: I expected to have a really nice time, meet some interesting people and also be challenged as an organiser.

Interviewee 3: Films involving a new viewpoint on pornography, people who are open-minded and equally interested.

Interviewee 4: That it would be nice.

Interviewee 5: An open-minded approach and exploring new forms of porn and my preferences towards them.

Interviewee 6: Watching lots of movies and having the chance to talk about porn with other people.

Interviewee 7: I expected to find films with different kinds of bodies (dis/abilities) and interesting perspectives especially when it comes to kink and sexuality.

4. What did you enjoy most at the festival? Why?

Interviewee 1: The atmosphere, the people, the programme.

Interviewee 2: I enjoyed meeting new people and working with a great team.

Interviewee 3: The atmosphere plus vibes altogether. Also, the body positive party.

Interviewee 4: The combination of awesome queers and really good movies.

Interviewee 5: Getting to meet all those lovely people, talking openly about sex, porn, kinks, and, of course, the screenings and the party.

Interviewee 6: The movies itself and talking with colleagues and random people.

Interviewee 7: I enjoyed spending time with my partner and friends.

5. What do you consider to be the significance of this festival?

Interviewee 1: Destigmatise sexuality and kinkiness.

Interviewee 2: I think the festival gives a great message of accepting sex and sexuality in its many forms and taking a critical look at porn while still having fun with it.

Interviewee 3: It opens a respectful discourse about pornography, on how to make it different, instead of demonizing or judging it. It creates a safe, educational and inclusive space for a topic that is usually handled as a sensitive and private one in society.

Interviewee 4: The organisation of the volunteer group was super good.

Interviewee 5: It probably should have more significance, but I fear, it is mostly an event for a bubble, that is already familiar with this topic and sadly lacks the mass appeal it should have.

Interviewee 6: Visualising that other types of porn are possible, that there is a whole world of people enjoying and working on ethical porn, that we can learn and turn on and have fun with this porn.

Interviewee 7: It is important to have spaces to learn, exchange and talk about sex work, sexuality, kink and so on.

6. Can you comment on your role during the festival? Why did you get involved in the festival?

Interviewee 1: Volunteer, it was fun.

Interviewee 2: I helped to coordinate volunteers. I heard about it previously from people I knew.

Interviewee 3: I volunteered because I wanted to take part in the organization of this beautiful event.

Interviewee 4: I helped with the workshops and setting up the party. As a workshop host myself on vulnerable topics. It was very nice to be able to assist in this role and share open stories.

Interviewee 5: I was a volunteer and got involved with the ‘Pffv2020’ [‘Porn Film Festival Vienna 2020’] via word of mouth, a friend of a friend told us about it and that they were looking for volunteers.

Interviewee 6: I was volunteering, generally at the hall, helping people to find their seats. I liked it a lot because I could see all the films during my work.

Interviewee 7: I was a volunteer, and I got involved so I could attend the festival for free because I could not afford it otherwise.

7. Do you watch porn at home?

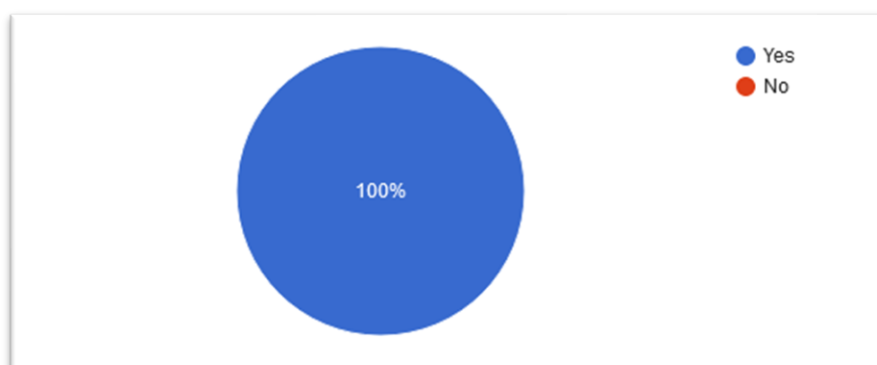


Figure 50 - Responses regarding consumption of pornography

Yes: 100%

No: 0%

8. Do you pay for your porn? Why?

Interviewee 1: Yes, because I do not find most of the Pornhub (etc.) stuff sexy and it's mostly problematic.

Interviewee 2: Not always. Until now, it was difficult accessing good quality porn.

Interviewee 3: No, because I cannot afford it at the moment.

Interviewee 4: No. Because the free porn is so easily accessible. Because I have little money. But my beliefs say: pay for porn! So hopefully I will do that in the future.

Interviewee 5: Yes, because it is mostly better quality, and I want to support creators of ethical/feminist porn.

Interviewee 6: Yes. Because a lot of people are working on making that porn and they should be paid. Because I pay for Netflix or Spotify, why I should not pay for porn? Also (and because of this) the porn I like to watch is not for free. I do not usually like mainstream porn.

Interviewee 7: It is really important to me that sex workers are paid and treated well and that films are made under ethical conditions. I do not pay for the porn I consume online though because I cannot afford it at this time.

9. Do you feel a sense of community in these types of spaces (porn film festivals)? Does it seem like a safe place for the LGBTIQ+ community?

Interviewee 1: Speaking as a pansexual woman I felt very safe and loved the exchange with other queers and allies.

Interviewee 2: Yes, absolutely. I felt like a safe space was really necessary in order to cover such a topic and show porn in a public space in a safe and respectable way.

Interviewee 3: Definitely.

Interviewee 4: Very much!

Interviewee 5: As a cis, straight, white man, I am probably not in a position to accurately judge, but I would certainly hope so and my feeling is, there is a sense of community and people are definitely more free to be themselves, without fear of judgement or attacks of any kind.

Interviewee 6: Absolutely. I have never felt so comfortable and safe as I have in this type of spaces.

Interviewee 7: I felt safe in regard to my queerness for the most part, but I did not feel a sense of community.

RESUMEN DE LA TESIS EN CASTELLANO

Objetivos

El corpus de esta tesis está compuesto por un total de ocho películas seleccionadas de plataformas web de pornografía feminista y ética de Reino Unido y España, todas ellas accesibles mediante suscripción o pago, y dos performances postpornográficas españolas. Partiendo de este corpus, la tesis se estructura en siete capítulos, cada uno de los cuales aborda un conjunto de objetivos específicos que guían la investigación. Entre las principales metas a desarrollar en este estudio se encuentran:

- Pornografía feminista y ética: explorar el concepto de pornografía feminista y demostrar que va más allá de una idea comercializada de porno “para mujeres”. De esta manera, se explorarán las principales características y valores de la pornografía feminista, incluyendo las formas en que este tipo de pornografía busca desafiar la objetificación tradicional de los cuerpos de las mujeres, promueve el placer y la agencia femenina, y pretende representar cuerpos y sexualidades diversas. En este análisis se examinan ejemplos específicos de pornografía feminista, señalando que no es necesario compararlos con películas pornográficas convencionales, porque las diferencias entre el porno convencional y el feminista no radican tanto en diferencias estéticas sino en las prácticas laborales, en el uso de narrativas más elaboradas, en la variedad de cuerpos representados, entre otros aspectos.

- Trayectoria de las mujeres radicalizadas en el porno: analizar la evolución del porno creado por mujeres desde la década de 1980 hasta la actualidad. Explorando los factores clave y movimientos que han contribuido al desarrollo del postporno en España y el surgimiento del porno ético y alternativo en el Reino Unido. Examinando, también, cómo el porno de mujeres radicalizadas ha respondido a los cambios en los contextos sociales y culturales, incluyendo los movimientos feministas y LGBTQIA⁺.

- Perspectivas feministas en la creación de pornografía: este tema implica examinar la pornografía con una perspectiva abiertamente feminista, enfocándose en las condiciones laborales, quién está detrás de la cámara (compañías, grupos feministas, artistas, activistas, entre otros), los mitos y valores que se transmiten, y las representaciones de la sexualidad, las orientaciones sexuales y los tipos de cuerpo. Estudiando cómo las perspectivas feministas se reflejan en los principios y políticas de creación, incluyendo la existencia de un manifiesto.

- Festivales de cine pornográfico como espacios de resistencia queer/feminista: estudiar la aparición de festivales de cine pornográfico en Europa desde principios de los 2000 y lo que ofrecen a la comunidad pornográfica (alianzas, trabajo, transgresión, educación, entre otros).

Esta investigación se enmarca en un marco epistemológico, político y cultural para investigar la disidencia política dentro de las tipologías emergentes de pornografía ética, feminista e independiente. Explora las sutilezas de estas nuevas formas de pornografía y examina espacios artísticos en línea (sitios web) y centros de convergencia, como los festivales de cine pornográfico. Este enfoque tiene como objetivo proporcionar una comprensión completa de cómo estas plataformas y géneros desafían las normas convencionales y contribuyen a discusiones más amplias sobre el sexo, la representación y la crítica cultural.

Hipótesis de investigación

Basándose en estos objetivos y los recursos a inspeccionar, se proponen tres hipótesis interrelacionadas:

- Hipótesis 1: En el porno ético o feminista, se da mayor importancia a retratar a las mujeres como agentes activas y tomadoras de decisiones.

Hipótesis 2: Detrás de las producciones pornográficas éticas existe un manifiesto o código de valores que orienta y regula sus prácticas.

- Hipótesis 3: La existencia de festivales de cine pornográfico proporciona un “espacio seguro” en el que la comunidad queer puede exhibir producciones sexuales que reflejan su diversidad y experiencias.

Metodología

El estudio se centra en plataformas de pago de compañías específicas de pornografía feminista en Reino Unido y España. Se utilizan herramientas como el análisis de contenido para explorar las estructuras narrativas, la estética visual y las representaciones de género, sexualidad y consentimiento dentro de las películas, y el análisis del discurso para investigar cómo la pornografía feminista y disidente desafía las normas convencionales, creando representaciones alternativas del deseo, el placer y el poder. En el centro de este análisis está el uso de la semiótica, una herramienta para examinar textos audiovisuales, así como la teoría feminista del cine como referente académico en los estudios cinematográficos. La semiótica de un texto se enfoca especialmente en las

formas en que este manifiesta su contenido, estudiando no tanto lo que una película dice, sino las estrategias utilizadas para manifestar ese contenido, es decir, las imágenes y sonidos percibidos por el espectador. Al ver el cine como un sistema abierto y dinámico de códigos que evolucionan a través de la práctica, esta metodología enfatiza la fluidez y naturaleza relacional del cine, donde los procesos culturales se entienden como una dialéctica entre código y mensaje, sistema y proceso.

El cine es un medio de comunicación, por lo tanto, los mensajes que expresa deben ser examinados para descubrir cómo se codifican los significados en el proceso comunicativo de lo que una película quiere transmitirnos. Por ello, no basta con simplemente ver una película; esta debe ser explorada con un ojo crítico para entrenarnos tanto en la comprensión del cine como narrador, como transmisor de valores y portador de arte y conocimiento. Como señala Colaizzi (2021b, 18), el cine nos exige adentrarnos en la reflexión, nos impulsa a superar las posturas anti teóricas que han marcado la reflexión sobre el mismo en las últimas décadas. De esta manera, las películas son como un mosaico del comportamiento humano, una representación simulada de la realidad social, una exhibición de mensajes que cada persona intenta interpretar basándose en lo que sabe o quiere encontrar. El cine nos habla sobre conocimiento y emociones, sentimientos y pasiones, esperanzas y valores; pero, sobre todo, nos hace reconsiderar y sentir, observar e imaginar, compartir y soñar.

Mi objetivo es articular una comprensión de la pornografía a través de un enfoque cualitativo, para estudiar los valores e ideas sociales que influyen en el pensamiento de las/os creadoras/os de contenido pornográfico feminista, y cómo ese contenido es recibido por las audiencias. Más allá de lo que se considera aceptable, de lo que es socialmente acordado, la intención de esta tesis es observar lo que las/os directoras/es e intérpretes intentan reflejar con sus creaciones al tratar un tema que aún está rodeado de estereotipos, moralismos y normas sociales. La sociedad está cada vez más inmersa en la cultura de la imagen. La imagen cinematográfica se constituye como un lenguaje genuino compuesto por marcos ideológicos, símbolos y significados que construyen todo un sistema discursivo naturalizado por las personas. En referencia a la sexualidad, la imagen pornográfica ha estado históricamente presente en la privacidad de las personas, convirtiéndose en una industria y accediendo a la esfera privada de manera fácilmente accesible gracias al auge de las nuevas tecnologías y al desarrollo de Internet.

Este proyecto, por lo tanto, realiza un análisis comparativo de los diferentes mensajes que presentan las películas pornográficas. Uno de los objetivos de la

investigación es valorar el género pornográfico a partir de la inclusión de obras que aporten diversidad ética, política y estética. A través del análisis de las diferentes películas, y considerando sus composiciones técnicas, estéticas y narrativas, es posible entender si y cómo los discursos pornográficos inducen, construyen o cuestionan la sexualidad. Mi investigación busca establecer si una pornografía feminista es posible y deseable a nivel conceptual y político, explorando la posición de quienes piensan que la manera de combatir la pornografía sexista es mediante la producción de una pornografía más diversa. Además, el estudio fílmico de las películas pornográficas seleccionadas ayudará a determinar si existen cambios en la representación que puedan llevar a la construcción de una práctica cinematográfica que rompa con los esquemas patriarcales tradicionalmente utilizados en la pornografía *mainstream*.

Cuando la gente habla de pornografía, generalmente tiene en mente una serie de elementos que describen la pornografía tradicional, es decir, la representación de sexo heterosexual o lésbico —desde un enfoque de satisfacción masculina— utilizando normalmente cuerpos jóvenes y blancos que se ajustan a los cánones de belleza establecidos. Los cuerpos femeninos son las imágenes centrales en estas películas, mostrando siempre el “ideal” de mujeres delgadas, con el cabello largo, depilación completa y maquilladas, como símbolo de la feminidad “deseada” o “verdadera”. Mientras tanto, el cuerpo masculino suele ocupar un rol menos central en estas películas, con el énfasis colocado principalmente en el tamaño del pene del hombre y su capacidad de mantener una erección. Los hombres participan en prácticas sexuales estándar basadas en satisfacer el deseo sexual masculino (a través de la penetración) y culminando —y finalizando— con la eyaculación masculina. La pornografía convencional se entiende generalmente como la “única descripción universal” que categoriza todo lo que se considera pornográfico.

La pornografía heterosexual hegemónica es tanto vasta en cantidad como monótona en variedad. Con el tiempo, los cuerpos de las actrices y actores porno se han vuelto más “sofisticados” a través de intervenciones como la cirugía plástica, lo que ha resultado en una representación de cuerpos idealizados, que recrean actos sexuales que son percibidos por el ojo del/la espectador/a como “reales” y “deseables” de ser repetidos. Este cambio ha llevado a un discurso que enmarca la sexualidad como biomecánica, caracterizada por una secuencia predecible: felación (y ocasionalmente cunnilingus) seguida de penetración vaginal o anal —frecuentemente mostrada desde ángulos que enfatizan la penetración de la mujer— y culminando con la eyaculación masculina dentro

o fuera del cuerpo de la mujer —pero siempre visible. El repertorio coital se ha vuelto rígido, con películas pornográficas contemporáneas que muestran frecuentemente un aumento en la dominación masculina y un enfoque en la dinámica de fuerza de la penetración sexual (ya sea felación profunda, penetración vaginal o anal). Los elementos examinados en este estudio han sido elegidos por su presencia recurrente, como lo evidencian estudios académicos sobre la pornografía convencional como Tuck (2009), Romero (2009), Albury (2014), Voros (2014), Moreno (2017), Aravena (2018) e Iglesias y Zein (2018), entre otros:

- Estructura narrativa: en la pornografía convencional, los encuentros sexuales suelen comenzar con la mujer practicando sexo oral al hombre. Esto es seguido por una serie de secuencias repetitivas de penetración vaginal y/o anal, culminando con la eyaculación masculina, que a menudo se dirige al rostro de la mujer u otras partes de su cuerpo.

- Tipo de plano: predomina el punto de vista masculino (*Point Of View*, de las siglas en inglés POV). Este tipo de plano ayuda al consumidor (público masculino) a identificarse con el protagonista (el actor masculino), adoptando el rol de “máquina viril de sexo”, así como los primeros planos de los genitales y el rostro de la mujer mostrándose excitada mientras satisface al hombre, perpetuando el mito de que el placer de la mujer consiste en ser instrumentalizada como objeto sexual. Como señaló Carmona, “el espectador se identifica así mismo como puro acto de percepción, como sujeto trascendental” (1991, 38). También hay otro elemento de identificación a considerar: la identificación del espectador con un personaje en la ficción cinematográfica. Esta identificación está relacionada con el hecho de que los espectadores encuentran, en cada momento de la historia, su propio lugar en la película observada (Carmona 1991, 39). Además, la constante fijación en los primeros planos de los genitales establece una fragmentación corporal, vinculando la zona erógena de los genitales como el medio predominante para lograr placer sexual. La eyaculación del hombre sobre la mujer es una constante en las películas pornográficas tradicionales. Este tipo de plano se conoce como *come-shot*, *cum shot* o *money shot*, ya que era la imagen más costosa de producir (Williams 1989b, 95). El espectador necesita estar absolutamente convencido de la veracidad física de la acción. De ahí el uso obsesivo del primerísimo plano de la acción genital para confirmar la penetración y el *money shot*, como la confirmación del placer masculino y el orgasmo final.

- Espacio/Escenario: el espectador se presenta como un voyeur que irrumpe en un espacio íntimo privado. Los encuentros sexuales tienen lugar en espacios cerrados y, a veces, la iluminación no es natural, lo que intensifica el efecto de artificialidad. A veces hay escenas en espacios al aire libre, para ofrecer la curiosidad de ser atrapado durante el acto sexual.

- Construcción de la feminidad: la pornografía convencional presenta una estética femenina basada en lo “artificial”, con los elementos estéticos embellecedores propios del estereotipo de la feminidad anclados en la cultura actual (objeto de deseo femenino con uñas largas y pintadas, maquillaje, cuerpo depilado, cabello largo, ropa interior seductora, tacones, entre otros elementos). La construcción de la feminidad en la pornografía se puede analizar desde la experiencia voyeur, es decir, desde lo que el espectador quiere ver, y los consumidores son principalmente hombres blancos, heterosexuales, jóvenes y de clase media. De esta manera, podemos ver cómo los *tubes*³⁷⁶ pornográficos tradicionales organizan los cuerpos femeninos en diferentes categorías, destacando sus atributos corporales (mujeres morenas, tatuadas, con pechos pequeños, etc.) y etnias (italianas, francesas, japonesas, entre otras).

- Construcción de la masculinidad: la masculinidad aparece casi exclusivamente en relación con su representación genital. Así, el acto sexual se ritualiza en torno a este símbolo —el falo— que construye el estereotipo masculino alrededor de redefiniciones provenientes de aspectos simbólicos basados en el vigor genital (tamaño, poder y su capacidad de mantenerse erecto). Cabe mencionar que actualmente la masculinidad presentada en el cine pornográfico está más preocupada por mostrar una imagen del cuerpo estético, es decir, un cuerpo joven, musculoso y depilado, una huella de la masculinidad posmoderna altamente preocupada por la estética y traída por la explosión de la metrosexualidad que ocurrió a fines de los años 90 y principios de los 2000.

- El orgasmo: en la pornografía convencional, el deseo femenino suele ocupar una posición inferior en comparación con el deseo masculino. Este género generalmente prioriza la satisfacción del actor masculino, reforzando una narrativa donde el placer y el orgasmo del hombre son centrales en el encuentro sexual. En consecuencia, la representación del deseo femenino frecuentemente ocupa un papel secundario, con actos sexuales representados como instrumentos para cumplir la gratificación masculina en

³⁷⁶ *Tube* es un término abreviado para un sitio web de pornografía con una interfaz similar al modelo de YouTube.

lugar de un placer mutuo. Esta dinámica refleja actitudes sociales más amplias que elevan la satisfacción sexual masculina mientras marginan la agencia y el deseo femenino dentro del contexto pornográfico.

- Dirección: en la gran mayoría de las producciones convencionales, el director y camarógrafo suele ser un hombre cis blanco, cuyo objetivo es presentar sus películas a una audiencia masculina. Esto crea una dinámica de “poder” en la que el director ejerce control sobre la narrativa y la representación de la sexualidad, construyendo historias pornográficas desde una mirada predominantemente masculina.

El discurso sexual predominante en la pornografía convencional se caracteriza por la mecanización de las relaciones sexuales, reducidas a actos repetitivos centrados en la genitalidad y la satisfacción masculina. Para examinar críticamente estas dinámicas, este estudio indagará en varios aspectos clave: la construcción de las estructuras narrativas, el papel de la cámara como herramienta para expresar el deseo, y la representación de mujeres y hombres dentro de estas narrativas. Esta investigación explorará cómo estos elementos difieren en las producciones feministas, éticas y postpornográficas. La investigación tiene como objetivo resaltar cómo los enfoques feministas y éticos desafían los paradigmas pornográficos tradicionales y ofrecen representaciones alternativas de las relaciones sexuales y las dinámicas de género.

Este estudio analítico considera tres elementos fundamentales para el análisis textual de los textos audiovisuales pornográficos: la trama o historia, las interacciones sexuales y los roles de los personajes masculinos y femeninos. Al examinar estos componentes, el estudio tiene como objetivo proporcionar una comprensión integral de cómo se construyen las narrativas y las dinámicas de los personajes y cómo contribuyen a la representación de género y sexualidad en las películas pornográficas. El primer elemento implica evaluar si las películas seleccionadas presentan una historia o guion estructurado, o si se basan únicamente en los encuentros sexuales entre las actrices y los actores. El segundo elemento implica examinar las interacciones sexuales para determinar si se adhieren al patrón convencional visto en la pornografía tradicional —típicamente presentando sexo oral (usualmente realizado sobre la figura masculina), seguido de penetración y orgasmo masculino. Este análisis tiene como objetivo revelar si la pornografía feminista y ética introduce una gama más diversa de interacciones sexuales y cómo estas interacciones difieren de las normas tradicionales. El tercer elemento aborda la representación de los roles de género en las películas pornográficas. La pornografía convencional a menudo perpetúa representaciones estereotípicas, con las mujeres

representadas como participantes pasivas cuyo rol principal es satisfacer el deseo masculino, y los hombres mostrados como constantemente impulsados por un apetito sexual insaciable. Este estudio evaluará cómo la pornografía feminista y ética contesta o redefine estos estereotipos tradicionales, proporcionando representaciones alternativas tanto de mujeres como de hombres. Examinará cómo estas representaciones ofrecen una perspectiva más compleja sobre el género y la sexualidad, superando visiones simplistas y arraigadas.

Cada una de las variables mencionadas se subdividirá en tres elementos de trama para desglosar de manera efectiva el análisis de las películas seleccionadas: duración, narración y recursos de trama que se desarrollan en las películas. En relación con las actrices y actores, se analiza la representación sexual (dinámicas de los participantes hacia el sexo) y el desarrollo de los personajes (independientes, codependientes y/o no desarrollados). Estos factores se consideran en relación con otros elementos fundamentales de la realización cinematográfica, tales como componentes técnico-audiovisuales, ángulos de cámara, cinematografía, iluminación, sonido y música, diseño de escenarios, maquillaje y estética general. Este enfoque integral proporciona una comprensión más profunda de cómo estos diversos elementos contribuyen a la estructura narrativa y temática de la película. El análisis de las películas incluye una breve descripción de la trama, un examen detallado de secuencias sexuales seleccionadas y los roles femeninos y masculinos de los participantes activos.

La elección de las películas para el análisis se fundamenta en las siguientes categorías: 1. Dimensión política y crítica: estas producciones abordan el interés y el compromiso político mediante sus narrativas al rechazar las formas tradicionales de hacer pornografía. En lugar de adherirse a los discursos convencionales, representan prácticas que trascienden lo hegemónico, reivindicando así la diversidad y multiplicidad de las experiencias humanas y, 2. Dimensión social y ética: se refiere a aquellas compañías de pornografía que adoptan y mantienen estándares de producción ética, distanciándose de los modelos tradicionales de la industria.

Una vez cumplidas las categorías previamente establecidas, las películas se seleccionaron de acuerdo con los siguientes criterios:

1. Las compañías elegidas deben contar con un reconocimiento dentro del ámbito de la pornografía alternativa.
2. Las películas deben desarrollar una narrativa coherente.

3. Deben representar prácticas sexuales que trasciendan las normativas hegemónicas.
4. Deben reflejar una diversidad de cuerpos y sexualidades.

Estos criterios son fundamentales para la selección de películas, ya que aquellas que se pueden clasificar como producciones éticamente responsables y que han recibido algún tipo de reconocimiento constituyen el foco principal de este estudio. Este enfoque permitirá analizar si estas películas son accesibles y atractivas para una audiencia normativa, es decir, para espectadores que típicamente consumen contenido pornográfico de forma gratuita, independientemente del productor o la naturaleza de la producción. Demostrar que una película desarrolla una historia coherente es crucial para este análisis, ya que se pretende examinar películas que ofrecen más que una serie de posiciones sexuales y que tienen una duración mayor que los clips breves típicamente encontrados en los *tubes* gratuitos. En cuanto a la diversidad de cuerpos, prácticas y orientaciones sexuales, el objetivo es determinar si las llamadas películas pornográficas éticas o feministas proporcionan una representación genuinamente diversa y, de ser así, cómo se compara esto con las representaciones superficiales y estereotipadas de “diversidad” encontradas en los sitios pornográficos convencionales, donde la variedad a menudo se reduce a una mera categoría.

Este enfoque se utiliza para analizar ocho películas pornográficas del Reino Unido y España, así como dos performances postporno españolas. El Capítulo 4 profundiza en dos películas de la compañía de pornografía ética Four Chambers y dos de la compañía de pornografía teatral Thousand Faces Films, ambas representando la pornografía alternativa británica. El Capítulo 5 se enfoca en cuatro películas del proyecto XConfessions de Erika Lust —dos dirigidas por Lust misma y dos por directoras invitadas— como ejemplos de contenido erótico ético creado en España. Todas las compañías pornográficas éticas y/o feministas estudiadas en esta tesis muestran sus productos en sus plataformas web de pago y en festivales de cine pornográfico alternativos y, de hecho, se niegan a colaborar estrechamente con plataformas web de pornografía convencional. Por lo tanto, no existen acuerdos o proyectos conjuntos entre compañías para generar nuevas películas. El Capítulo 6 examina dos performances, uno de Diana J. Torres y videoarmsidea y otro del colectivo Post-Op, todas figuras clave en la escena postporno de Barcelona.

Estas compañías fueron seleccionadas por su significativo impacto y prominencia dentro de los sectores pornográficos éticos y/o alternativos. Four Chambers y Thousand

Faces Films destacan por su enfoque artístico de la pornografía, a menudo entrelazado con declaraciones políticas y comentarios sociales. El proyecto XConfessions de Erika Lust ha logrado un considerable reconocimiento dentro de la comunidad pornográfica, conocido por su extensa filmografía durante la última década y su enfoque innovador apoyando a directoras en una industria predominantemente dominada por hombres. Además, XConfessions invita a la participación pública incorporando las confesiones y fantasías de las/os espectadoras/es en sus películas. En el ámbito postporno, los colectivos seleccionados —Diana J. Torres y videoarmsidea, y Post-Op— destacan como referentes fundamentales en el movimiento postporno de Barcelona. Su influencia ha sido crucial en la realización de actuaciones tanto en espacios públicos como en instituciones como museos y universidades, contribuyendo a la visibilidad e impacto del movimiento en España.

Investigar películas consideradas feministas y/o alternativas a la pornografía convencional es crucial, ya que han sido relativamente poco exploradas y analizadas. Es importante evaluar si estas películas tienen un impacto comparable al del cine convencional en términos de sus narrativas y si ofrecen referencias sexuales alternativas que desafían nuestra sociedad heteropatriarcal. Clasificar cada expresión pornográfica como un estilo distinto regido por sus propios principios es engañoso. La pornografía feminista no debe verse simplemente como otro subgénero de la pornografía, sino como un producto arraigado en valores políticos que abordan dimensiones críticas, sociales y éticas. Este estudio examina formas distintas de producción pornográfica dentro de lo que se llama pornografía feminista y ética y postporno, para proporcionar una comprensión integral de los enfoques contemporáneos dentro del género. Al analizar estas diversas formas de películas y performances, el estudio tiene como objetivo resaltar sus contribuciones únicas al paisaje evolutivo de la pornografía y su impacto en la representación de la sexualidad y el género.

Conclusiones

La pornografía es un tema ampliamente investigado, con un número creciente de enfoques científicos destinados a comprender la compleja relación entre el consumo de pornografía y sus efectos en la salud sexual y las relaciones interpersonales. Gran parte de la investigación tiende a centrarse en el impacto del cine para adultos en los comportamientos de los hombres, dirigidos principalmente a sujetos jóvenes, blancos, heterosexuales y sin discapacidades. Este enfoque estrecho a menudo pasa por alto a otras

demografías, particularmente a las mujeres y grupos marginados, mientras enfatiza los efectos negativos de la pornografía en la psicología masculina. Por ejemplo, un estudio de 2013 de la Universidad de Cambridge sugirió que la actividad cerebral en individuos identificados como “adictos” a la pornografía se asemejaba a la de alcohólicos o drogadictos. De manera similar, una investigación realizada por Simone Kühn y Jürgen Gallinat en 2014 reveló una correlación entre niveles más altos de consumo de pornografía y una reducción en el volumen de materia gris en el caudado derecho del estriado. Además, la pornografía ha sido vinculada a cómo los hombres se relacionan con el mundo y con sus parejas. En la charla TEDx Jaffa de 2013, Ran Gavrieli compartió su experiencia personal de cómo la pornografía cultivó ira y violencia en sus fantasías, limitando finalmente su capacidad para imaginar algo más allá de las narrativas sexuales moldeadas por estas películas.

Como se ha estudiado en el Capítulo 1, la discusión en torno a la pornografía a menudo se enmarca en una dicotomía simplista de si es inherentemente “buena” o “mala”. Como sugieren Attwood y Smith, “convirtiéndose con el tiempo en temas de intenso escrutinio público y debate —a veces desembocando en acciones morales, legales o administrativas” (*, 2014, 1). Dentro del discurso feminista, la conversación ha evolucionado desde finales de la década de 1970 y principios de los 1980, emergiendo dos posiciones prominentes y opuestas durante las “Guerras feministas por el sexo” (acuñadas en inglés como *Feminist Sex Wars* o *Sex Wars*). Por un lado, las feministas anti-pornografía, defendidas por figuras como Andrea Dworkin y Catharine MacKinnon, argumentaron que la pornografía es inherentemente explotadora, reforzando estructuras patriarcales al objetivar a las mujeres, perpetuando la violencia, la desigualdad y promoviendo estándares irreales de la sexualidad femenina. Esta perspectiva ve la pornografía como una herramienta de dominación masculina que perjudica a las mujeres tanto dentro como fuera de la industria. Por otro lado, las feministas pro-sexualidad o pro-pornografía, incluyendo figuras como Gayle Rubin y Pat Califia (ahora Patrick Califia), abogaron por una comprensión más matizada. Viendo a la pornografía como una plataforma potencial para la expresión sexual, el empoderamiento y la liberación. Desde este punto de vista, la pornografía puede proporcionar un espacio para que mujeres y comunidades marginadas exploren y reclamen su sexualidad en sus propios términos. En lugar de ser inherentemente opresiva, el impacto de la pornografía depende de su contexto, producción y las representaciones que ofrece. Esta perspectiva enfatiza el

potencial de la pornografía para ser tanto un sitio de empoderamiento como una herramienta para dismantelar dinámicas de poder tradicionales.

Estas divisiones continúan dando forma a las discusiones feministas en la actualidad, influyendo en debates continuos sobre sexualidad, educación, poder y representación. Como destacan Smith y Attwood, estos argumentos a menudo se basan en una concepción de prácticas sexuales “normales” —buenas— y de sexo “anormales” —malas:

El sexo “bueno” se asocia con la heterosexualidad, el matrimonio, la monogamia y la procreación. Incluye encuentros sexuales que tienen lugar dentro de la misma generación, involucran parejas y se llevan a cabo en privado. El sexo “malo” incluye encuentros que son intergeneracionales, casuales, sadomasoquistas u homosexuales, aquellos que son formas de sexo en solitario o grupal, y aquellos que se llevan a cabo en público. De manera similar, roles e identidades que juegan o experimentan con el género y la sexualidad —como butch/femme, trans y prácticas SM— también se han asociado con el “sexo malo” (*, 2014a, 11-12).

La pornografía no debe ser descartada simplemente como algo insano, desviado o perverso, como sugiere De Brito (1998), sino que puede entenderse como una forma legítima de expresión cultural y entretenimiento. Esto subraya la importancia de estudiar la pornografía, ya que refleja y moldea los valores, normas e ideas sociales sobre género, sexualidad y poder. Linda Williams argumenta en *Hard Core: Power, Pleasure, and the “Frenzy of the Visible”* (1989) que la pornografía sirve como un discurso político, comunicando ideas específicas sobre el sexo y las relaciones. Entender la pornografía como un producto cultural abre discusiones sobre su influencia en las relaciones, la política del cuerpo y la educación sexual, acentuando la importancia de investigar su impacto tanto en individuos como en la sociedad en su conjunto.

El porno a menudo se percibe como un género estandarizado, típicamente presentando narrativas heterosexuales que representan a individuos blancos, cisgénero, jóvenes y sin discapacidades.³⁷⁷ Sin embargo, esta representación simplifica en exceso las complejidades del deseo humano. Si bien la pornografía convencional es indudablemente producida en masa, es cuestionable si representa plenamente el amplio espectro de deseos sexuales dentro de la sociedad. El surgimiento de corrientes

³⁷⁷ Consulta el Capítulo 3, Sección 3.3.1.

alternativas —como el “porno para mujeres”, pornografía feminista, pornografía ética y postporno— representa un desafío creciente al modelo sexual hegemónico promovido por la industria. Los deseos humanos son inherentemente diversos y no pueden ser completamente encapsulados por una industria monolítica como la pornografía convencional (Aravena 2019, 70). Esta realidad pone de relieve la necesidad de representaciones más creativas y variadas de la sexualidad.

Estos movimientos alternativos buscan redefinir los valores de la industria al enfatizar el respeto mutuo, el placer de todos los participantes y el desmantelamiento de dinámicas de poder tradicionales asociadas con el género y la sexualidad. A la vanguardia de este cambio destacan directoras como Erika Lust, cuyo proyecto XConfessions en España ejemplifica este nuevo enfoque. Como se analiza en gran detalle en el Capítulo 5, Secciones 5.1, 5.2 y 5.4, Lust combina el erotismo con la narrativa, enfocándose en el placer femenino, el consentimiento y la diversidad de experiencias sexuales. Su trabajo presenta un estilo más narrativo y artístico que atrae a las mujeres y desafía la perspectiva centrada en el hombre de la pornografía convencional. En sus películas, Lust se compromete con presentar retratos matizados de la sexualidad, enfocándose en una amplia gama de personas y experiencias sexuales. La serie XConfessions muestra diversidad en términos de raza, orientación sexual y corporalidades, sin embargo, Lust ha enfrentado desafíos al contratar directoras/es y actrices y actores de diferentes grupos de edad y con distintas habilidades físicas. Aunque expandir la inclusividad es un paso adelante—cada nueva representación mejora la representación de la sexualidad de una manera más equitativa y relatable— no captura completamente las complejidades inherentes de la industria pornográfica. Abordar estas complejidades requiere un examen más profundo de la interseccionalidad, asegurando que todas las voces y experiencias sean representadas y valoradas, enriqueciendo así las narrativas dentro de este medio en evolución.

El capítulo 4 ofrece una exploración en profundidad de la pornografía alternativa y ética en el Reino Unido, centrándose en plataformas como Four Chambers y Thousand Faces. Estas plataformas exploran la pornografía ética y artística, incorporando valores estéticos y narrativas emocionales más profundas. Four Chambers, por ejemplo, se centra en cultivar un espacio para la expresión artística y la intimidad, priorizando las prácticas de producción ética. Su trabajo frecuentemente destaca por sus narrativas diversas que celebran varias facetas de la sexualidad, junto al uso de la filosofía y el simbolismo. Este enfoque no solo desafía los límites convencionales del porno, sino que también invita a

los espectadores a reflexionar sobre sus propias experiencias y relaciones. De manera similar, *Thousand Faces* acentúa un enfoque colaborativo en la realización cinematográfica, a menudo reuniendo a artistas, actrices, actores y cineastas para crear piezas que no solo son visualmente cautivadoras, sino también ricas en narrativas. Sus películas a menudo entrelazan elementos de poesía y arte visual, invitando a los espectadores a interactuar con la sexualidad de una manera más holística y matizada. Al elevar el discurso en torno a la pornografía y considerarla como una forma de arte legítima, estas compañías impulsan un cambio cultural más amplio que reconoce el potencial del porno para ser tanto ético como artísticamente relevante.

La pornografía feminista no ofrece todas las respuestas a las deficiencias de la industria, ni su creación erradica la misoginia y el desequilibrio de poder presentes en la pornografía convencional, que se inscribe en un contexto social más amplio caracterizado por el patriarcado. Reconocer estos desafíos es esencial para entender los esfuerzos continuos necesarios para fomentar un panorama pornográfico verdaderamente inclusivo y representativo. Por ejemplo, *Lust* se enfoca en hacer que el porno sea accesible y atractivo para las mujeres, enfatizando el placer femenino, los deseos y narrativas que destacan la conexión emocional, el respeto mutuo y los encuentros consensuados. *Four Chambers* y *Thousand Faces* empujan los límites del arte erótico, presentando el sexo como parte de una expresión artística más amplia. Ambos movimientos aportan algo nuevo: una reconsideración de cómo se representa el sexo, cómo se experimenta el placer y cómo ambos pueden ser comunicados a través del cine. En conjunto, estas empresas y directoras/es pornográficas/os simbolizan un cambio de paradigma significativo, que no solo desafía las convenciones tradicionales de la pornografía *mainstream*, sino que también transforma actitudes culturales más amplias hacia el sexo, el género y la representación.

En contraste, el movimiento postpornográfico español de principios de los 2000 tomó una ruta más radical y experimental, subvirtiendo a menudo las estéticas pornográficas convencionales para deconstruir ideas de deseo y el cuerpo.³⁷⁸ También buscaban dar voz a identidades y experiencias marginadas que a menudo son pasadas por alto en las narrativas convencionales, abrazando representaciones diversas de género, sexualidad y tipos de cuerpo. A través de esta lente, el movimiento exploró las intersecciones de la sexualidad con la raza, la clase y la política, involucrándose en una

³⁷⁸ Consulta el Capítulo 6.

crítica más amplia de las normas sociales y las estructuras de poder. Este movimiento exploró la fluidez del género, la sexualidad y el deseo mientras criticaba las estructuras sociales y políticas que las regulan. Al expandir los límites de lo que puede ser el porno, el movimiento postpornográfico español ha enriquecido el diálogo sobre su potencial como un espacio de exploración, crítica y liberación.

Estas formas insurgentes de pornografía abren un espacio para la expresión de disidencia sexual, ofreciendo narrativas que rompen con los marcos restrictivos, normativos y patriarcales que la pornografía convencional ha mantenido durante tanto tiempo.³⁷⁹ La pornografía feminista, por ejemplo, enfatiza el consentimiento, el placer mutuo y la diversidad sexual, rechazando a menudo las dinámicas explotadoras y centradas en la mirada masculina de la pornografía tradicional. La pornografía ética, de manera similar, se enfoca en crear entornos seguros y consensuados para las actrices y actores, abogando por la transparencia, el respeto y mejores prácticas laborales dentro de la industria. El postporno, por su parte, va aún más allá al deconstruir las estéticas y narrativas pornográficas tradicionales, frecuentemente aplicando formas de expresión experimental y vanguardista. Al colocar identidades queer, minorías raciales y cuerpos no normativos en el centro de sus narrativas, el postporno desafía directamente las representaciones convencionales del sexo, dando lugar a cuerpos y deseos que a menudo son excluidos o fetichizados en el porno convencional.

Es fundamental reflexionar sobre quienes está interactuando con la pornografía alternativa emergente y qué espectadores están respondiendo a este llamado al cambio. La capacidad de Internet para ofrecer acceso privado e individual a través de dispositivos personales ha permitido que muchas mujeres se involucren de manera discreta con estos materiales. Históricamente subestimadas como una audiencia marginal, la creciente visibilidad de las mujeres en el consumo de pornografía revela una demografía que había sido ignorada durante demasiado tiempo (Aravena 2019, 112). La pornografía feminista, ética y postporno buscan ser accesibles para una amplia audiencia, proporcionando representaciones inclusivas y diversas de la sexualidad. Mientras que estos géneros dan la bienvenida a todos los espectadores, resuenan particularmente con aquellos que buscan trascender las narrativas convencionales que a menudo se encuentran en la pornografía tradicional. Ofrecen una exploración más liberada y reflexiva del deseo al priorizar

³⁷⁹ Consulta el Capítulo 2 para la cronología completa de los diferentes movimientos pornográficos que han surgido en el Reino Unido y España desde principios de los años 2000.

prácticas de producción ética y representar una amplia variedad de cuerpos, orientaciones sexuales e identidades. Este enfoque no solo resuena con los valores de los espectadores que buscan autenticidad, sino que también promueve una comprensión más profunda y consciente de la sexualidad, empoderando a los individuos para interactuar con contenido que refleja sus propias experiencias y deseos.

Como se analiza en el Capítulo 7, el auge de los festivales de cine pornográfico ha jugado un papel crucial para expandir el alcance y la legitimidad de los movimientos feministas, éticos y postporno, al mismo tiempo que amplía sus audiencias. Estos festivales proporcionan una plataforma para celebrar formas diversas de expresión sexual. Al exhibir películas que priorizan el consentimiento, el placer mutuo y la inclusividad, estos eventos dan visibilidad a los cineastas, actrices, actores y artistas que trabajan dentro de la pornografía feminista, ética y experimental. También fomentan conversaciones importantes sobre sexualidad, representación y el potencial artístico de la pornografía. Más allá de su atractivo de nicho, estos festivales están remodelando las percepciones públicas del porno, desafiando la noción de que debe adherirse a narrativas explotadoras o unidimensionales. En cambio, resaltan el potencial de la pornografía para capturar la complejidad de las experiencias, deseos e identidades humanas, lo que legitima aún más estos enfoques alternativos como culturalmente significativos y artísticamente valiosos. A través de esta exposición, los festivales amplían la comprensión del público sobre lo que el porno puede representar, atrayendo a quienes anteriormente se sentían alienadas/os por el contenido *mainstream*, al tiempo que refuerzan la idea de que la pornografía puede ser un espacio para el compromiso crítico y creativo con la sexualidad.

Estos movimientos no solo están transformando el panorama de la pornografía, sino que también están impulsando un cambio cultural sustancial hacia representaciones más inclusivas, auténticas y empoderadoras de la sexualidad. Alientan a la audiencia a examinar críticamente las normas perpetuadas por el porno convencional, allanando el camino para formas de expresión sexual más creativas, diversas y éticamente responsables en los medios visuales. Esta evolución requiere futuras investigaciones sobre las producciones audiovisuales feministas, éticas y disidentes, explorando la interseccionalidad dentro de estos movimientos, examinando cómo factores como la raza, la clase y la orientación sexual influyen en la producción y recepción de pornografía alternativa. Los análisis podrían también considerar cómo estos movimientos abordan o no abordan cuestiones de capacitismo, edadismo y representación de comunidades marginadas, contribuyendo a una comprensión más holística de la inclusividad en las

narrativas pornográficas. Además, los estudios podrían investigar los efectos a largo plazo de estas formas alternativas en las percepciones de las/os espectadoras/es sobre la sexualidad, el consentimiento y las relaciones saludables, así como el papel de las redes sociales y las plataformas digitales en la expansión de su alcance y visibilidad. Otra área importante de investigación podría ser el impacto del porno feminista, ético y postporno en la educación sexual, particularmente entre audiencias más jóvenes, y cómo pueden influir en las actitudes y comportamientos sexuales. Estas investigaciones ampliadas podrían ofrecer valiosas ideas sobre cómo estos movimientos pueden continuar desafiando y redefiniendo las narrativas sociales sobre el sexo y el deseo.