

## **The International Political Economy of Pornography. Speech given at 30 year celebration seminar of Finnish Council for Equality. 4 December 2002. Sheila Jeffreys.**

The international industry of pornography that has developed since the 1960s has had a profoundly damaging effect on the lives of women and constitutes a major obstacle to the possibility of equality between women and men. In the 1990s, in particular, the pornography industry has expanded at an unprecedented rate in profits and respectability but also in extremes of cruelty towards the women in the industry. I shall argue here that pornography constitutes violence against the women used in its production. Pornography is simply the photographing of prostitution but may be more harmful to women than other forms of the industry in the extreme violation of women that takes place.

In 1977 when I was involved in creating the first UK anti-pornography group we were shocked by 'salmon sandwich' or 'split beaver' i.e. women's genitals as double page spreads in porn magazines. Now women are subjected to multiple men engaging in practices such as anal and dual penile penetration over many hours to make movies. Big corporations like General Motors now, not just mafia run companies, are living off the earnings of prostitution, as pornography becomes a new growth market of international capitalism.

As the feminist theorist Kathleen Barry wrote in her book *Female Sexual Slavery*, pornography is the 'propaganda of womanhatred'. It promotes to generations of male consumers the idea that women are objects for men's use who enjoy the violent and degrading practices to which women are subjected in pornography. As the industry has been normalised in the 1980s and 1990s the pornographic idea of women has become the model for beauty and fashion practices. Porn has become the model for how young women should dress, how they should exercise. As the industry has expanded it has become normalised, extending its values into more and more areas of society. Everything from fast food to shoes is now sold using pornographic imagery. Young children in the US are sold Porn Star T-shirts. It is time to recognise this industry as harmful and work out how to halt it.

I shall be concentrating on the American porn industry here, not just because there is more information about it than about the industry in other countries, but because it is the motor force that keeps the industry growing. It is American porn that penetrates new markets all over the world in a form of American imperialism which forces American values about women on societies worldwide. Porn is quintessentially an American harmful cultural practice.

### **Development of the industry**

In the late twentieth century the industry of pornography became highly profitable and respectable. As it burgeoned in size, so it also began to have considerable social influence. The forces that led to the development of a porn industry were as follows:

#### **Effect of 'sexual revolution' and decensorship**

In the 1960s and 1970s in western countries censorship controls on pornography were progressively relaxed under the influence of the 'sexual revolution'. Pornography was represented as embodying sexual freedom. I have argued elsewhere that this sexual revolution simply enshrined as positive social values, men's rights of sexual access to women as playthings in pornography and prostitution and in their sexual relationships (Jeffreys 1990; 1997). But historians of sexuality have understood the 'sexual revolution' to be about women's sexual freedom. Certainly women made some gains. Women's right to some form of sexual response and to the right to have sexual relationships outside marriage became much more accepted, but the main beneficiary of this 'revolution', I suggest, is the international sex industry.

### **Laissez faire free market individualism**

The sex industry was able to expand in an economic and social climate of laissez faire free market individualism. The political liberalism associated with this particular economic ideology privileged men's 'free speech' right to pornography over the rights of women to physical integrity.

### **New technologies**

The expansion of the porn industry was facilitated by the development of new technologies. The videocassette and the Internet were extremely well suited to this industry and many argue that the porn industry drove the development of these technologies. The VCR was born in 1973. It was a crucial technology for porn because it provided privacy for the male consumers. They could access porn without having to go to special theatres or peep shows. Porn drove the video revolution, leading to the explosion of adult video stores and eventually mainstream chains such as Blockbuster. In the early 1990s the development of the Internet provided the porn industry with important new opportunities. It was even easier for the men using porn. They could protect their anonymity even more effectively and did not even have to go to the video store.

### **Hardcore goes mainstream**

Hardcore porn went mainstream with the release of the porn film *Deep Throat* in 1972. Linda Lovelace, the prostituted woman in the movie who had penises thrust down her throat with the justification that she had a clitoris there, was controlled by a violent pimp/husband and her bruises were visible on screen. Her sexual slavery is generally agreed to be the moment the modern industry took off. 'Adult' movies stopped being a dirty little secret and became part and parcel of the entertainment mainstream. Frank Sinatra put on a showing of *Deep Throat* for Vice President Agnew of the US at his home. The American talk show host Johnny Carson joked about the film on *The Tonight Show* in the early '70s. Reporters Woodward and Bernstein in the Watergate scandal dubbed their informant "Deep Throat."

## **Homemade porn**

In 1982 another development took place which, according to Adult Video News, was an important milestone in the history of porn. The easy accessibility of consumer camcorders in the late '70s led to homemade porn. Homegrown Video, established in 1982, was among the first companies to buy amateur porn made by men who prostituted their female partners. Amateur porn led to what is now known as Gonzo Porn which is created in an amateur fashion. The male actor holds the camera himself and intersperses the sex with interviews with the women being used. One formula of Gonzo porn was to 'Find a new girl who has never had sex on camera, interview her and videotape her first time'. The development of digital technologies made it possible for men to market their female partners straight onto the Internet, cutting out the middleman.

## **Satellite and Cable Porn – Mid 90s**

Porn became more easily accessible in the mid-1990s as its reach extended to cable and satellite systems. The progression enabled consumers to purchase adult videos without even having to leave their home. It was at this stage the porn became attractive to corporate America, to General Motors and AT&T. The new delivery systems enabled blue-chip corporations to profit from porn without getting too close to the product.

## **Extreme Porn – Mid 90s**

In the mid 90s extreme hardcore porn became popular amongst young men. This included such practices as what was called in the industry "spit and gape", where a man would stretch his partner's anus as wide as it would go and place a speculum and hose into it in which he could spit or urinate. Anal and double penetration became a requirement and what was known in the industry as the "airtight" trick i.e. a penis in every orifice, gang rape, what is called 'choke-fucking', and bukkake, which I shall explain later.

## **Harm to women**

The harms to women in pornography are the harms that women suffer in all forms of prostitution. Research on the harm suffered by prostituted women suggests that, like other victims of sexual violence, they commonly suffer the symptoms of sexual trauma such as suicidal thoughts, lack of sleep, depression, headaches, flashbacks, eating disorders and self-mutilation. There is a website devoted to the suicides of porn stars which is intended to give sexual satisfaction to the consumers. It is not a feminist statement but does record the methods of suicide of many famous porn stars. Like other women used in prostitution, women in porn also have to dissociate emotionally to survive. The after effects of such mind/body splitting consist of difficulties in sexual and emotional relationships.

Porn has the harmful physical effects on women's health of other forms of prostitution. These include the physical harms of sexually transmitted diseases, unwanted pregnancies, abortions, infertility, diseases of the reproductive tract that lead to considerable complications in later life, and psychological harms. Many porn movies are routinely made without condoms despite several porn actors having been found, in the 1990s, to be HIV positive and to have passed on HIV on set to others.

The effects of porn on the women abused in its production is clear in the moving documentary by Swedish feminist filmmaker Alexa Wolf, *Shocking Truth* (2000). Wolf sets out to show how child sexual abuse seasons women and boys for sexual exploitation in pornography and the harm that is done to them in its production. *Shocking Truth* includes clips of pornography from a pseudodocumentary about pornography shown on Swedish TV in which women are portrayed being sexually abused and then interviewed on set immediately afterwards. The women are shown being passed naked, except for high heels from one man to another in pack rape situations where penises are thrust violently into all their orifices at once or several men all thrust their hands in and out of a woman's vagina. When the women are interviewed, one with semen running out of her mouth, their eyes are blank from the trauma and their faces expressionless. The woman who is the focus of the documentary suffered savage sexual assault in her teens and was abused in pornography for two years from 18 years old. She explains that on one occasion when she was bleeding she asked to be taken to hospital only to be told not to make a fuss. She was wrapped in a nappy to soak up the blood so that the penetration could continue. The pornographers would tell her to 'smile' and 'giggle' for the camera.

As the practices in porn become more abusive it is likely the harm suffered by women will become more severe. In a piece for the *Guardian* on the increasingly violent nature of Gonzo pornography, Martin Amis interviewed a porn producer who explained that 'assholes are reality. And pussies are bullshit'. Amis tells us that 'A double anal is not to be confused with a DP (double penetration: anal and vaginal)...And there have been triple anals too' (Amis 2001). The female star of a Max Hardcore movie explains 'One of Max's favourite tricks is to stretch a girl's asshole with a speculum, then piss into her open gape and make her suck out his own piss with a hose' (Ibid).

An increasingly common practice in porn is Bukkake. A woman attorney interviewed for American Porn describes it.

Basically it's a woman who masturbates on top of a table or in a park. You see her by herself and then later you see about maybe 60-80 men around her. And there's a clap. The people then take off their shorts. And there's a clap. And then you see the men throwing the shorts at the woman. The next scene is every man ejaculating on top of this woman, who has her eyes closed. She's laying down on the table and it's dripping off of her hair and her head, and her face and her mouth... And then the crescendo of the film is a woman who has like a bong, with the tube in her mouth, and the men are standing around. They're ejaculating onto her face and into this upside-down cup, and she's drinking it. And that's the end of the film.(Interview with Deborah Sanchez pbs.org/wgbh/p 2001 American Porn Frontline, PBS.)

The makers of gonzo porn are quite honest and straightforward about what it contains. In an interview Lizzy Borden, who runs Extreme Associates with her husband, describes a scene in a porn movie she is making. She says 'A girl being kidnapped, being forced to have sex against her will, being degraded. Being called "a cunt, a whore, a slut, a piece of shit." Then being butchered at the end, and spit on. She's being degraded'. Of the woman used in the movie she says, 'Yeah. She's really going to get hit. She likes it. It's good. Sometimes, it makes you more horny when you're getting hit. It makes you more, like, more tingly down in your genital area. You should try it. You should hit your wife a little bit'. In another porn series, women 'made to suck the guy's cock all the way down their throat, and they puke and vomit and spit...' Borden says, 'No. I'm not for woman's rights. I am old school, where I think, when I have my baby I'm going to be home taking care of it. I'm just making a life for myself and happy, making good money. I used to be exploited when I did movies. So if someone's going to do it, I might as well...'

Adam Glasser creates Gonzo porn in which he both anally penetrates women and films the action at the same time has the pseudonym Seymore Butts. One form of movie he makes for his male customers is lesbian fistfucking. He cheerfully admits that most women start being used in porn when they are very young, 18, 19 or 20 years old. They may start out doing 'girl/girl' but soon have to graduate to anal if they are to continue getting any money. Their careers will be finished when they have been sufficiently exposed to every kind of degradation and are no longer new. The industry seeks new young girls all the time so that they can be advertised as 'fresh' and, in some cases, interviewed before and after being anally penetrated so that the male consumers can get all the vicarious excitement of watching the girl experience this violence for the first time. Remarkably, Glasser says, "Our movies are entertainment and educational tools'.

Rob Black of Extreme Associates describes what takes place in a porn series he produces: 'Girls have sex by a couple of guys, and the guys and the girl, they have sex with her, and she's giving fellatio and she's hacking up boogies in a bowl. And they're spitting in the bowl. And then she drinks it all down. That's pretty repugnant. (Laughs) Sometimes we do a fellatio line, where the girl's giving fellatio, and she's gagging so much she vomits...It's repugnant. It is'. As evidence of his social standing Black comments that he, 'I ran for mayor a couple months back'.

The women who produce porn have usually been used in the industry for years. There is, as with other kinds of prostitution, little opportunity for promotion. Women who seek to get out of being directly sexually exploited themselves can run brothels or make porn movies in which they sexually exploit other women. Danni Ashe of Danni's Hard Drive, one of most popular porn sites on internet, comments that when she was in stripping and porn, she 'had a number of really awful experiences.'

## **Pornography becomes respectable**

The mainstream porn industry went very quickly from being a disreputable industry to gaining very considerable social acceptability in the 1990s. The normalisation of the industry coincided with its period of greatest expansion in the 1990s as a result of the policy of the Clinton administration not to prosecute porn. Adult Video News speculates that Clinton liked porn and had a special stock on his airplane Air Force

One. AVN says that Clinton was a libertine. Under Clinton porn production companies doubled and porn made inroads into many areas of American society.

The US industry went to great efforts to gain acceptance. It hired lobbyists, participated in charity and campaigned for condom use to prevent HIV infection. It learnt from another very damaging industry, tobacco, which though it has lost social standing now, at one time used lobbyists and people to front for the industry very well. The Marlboro men were used to promote the industry, for instance, until they died of its effects.

In Australia a lobby group was set up to promote the industry called the Eros Foundation. It supports political candidates, seeks representation on government committees on sex industry matters, and has lists of over two million votes who, it says, have bought its products and can be called upon to vote in favour of its objectives. It runs Sexpos, or sex industry exhibitions, yearly in major Australian cities. In my city of Melbourne they are held in the state owned Exhibition Centre. Male citizens can view strip and porn on huge stages, buy lapdances in public and meet their favorite porn stars, all sponsored by the state. The American industry created exhibitions too and invented the award ceremony. This was started by the trade magazine Adult Video News in 1983. As AVN puts it 'With more and more mainstream media attention focused on the Awards Show every year, the extravaganza has also served to considerably raise the profile of the industry throughout the nation and indeed, the world. And they're not called the adult equivalent of the Academy Awards for nothing. Like the Oscars®, a Best Film or Best Video Feature statuette can significantly boost that production's sales and rentals'.

The American industry has employed the tactic of making celebrities out of a few leading porn stars who then crossover to be used in promotion of mainstream pop culture. Now porn stars are respectable enough to be on radio shows like Howard Stern or the Disney-owned ABC Radio's Porn Stars are People Too. Porn stars are appearing in mainstream TV shows. Porn performers dance on stage at music award shows.

The porn industry has recently made great advances in gaining influence over mainstream politics. One example of this is the success of Richard Desmond, the famous UK pornographer and publisher of such top shelf titles as Big Ones and Horny Housewives and a "live" sex website. In February 2001 the British Labour government approved Desmond's takeover of the tabloid newspapers the *Daily Express* and the *Daily Star*. Eight days later the British Labour Party banked a 100,000 pound donation towards election expenses (Maguire 2002). Despite some critical reaction to what looked like a decision to hand two major UK newspapers to a porn king in return for a donation, in May 2002 Desmond was invited for tea at Downing Street to meet with Tony Blair. It is hard to imagine this degree of social acceptance of pornography and the sex industry as completely reasonable sergeants in arms to the Labour Party in the 1970s when pornography still had a disreputable air about it. The profits of the porn industry are now so large that it is able to command considerable political obedience.

## The Economics of Pornography

In the 1990s the sex industry began to be covered seriously in the business pages of newspapers. Pornography companies began to be listed on the Stock Exchange. The exact profits being made from the industry are hard to gauge, partly because there is such a diversity of forms of sexual exploitation, and because some companies are not keen for their involvement in pornography to be known. There are some estimates available, however, for the US. A report from an IT research company in 2002 forecasts that profits from pornographic materials transmitted to mobile phones in the US will reach an annual US\$4 billion by 2006, out of a 'total porn spend of US\$70 billion' (Nicholson 2002). Other estimates of the worth of the porn industry in the US today are rather more conservative at US\$4-10 billion for America to include videos, pay-per-view and internet (Frontline 2002 which article?). For the industry outside the US it is hard to get estimates.

Bill Asher, President of the porn video company Vivid, estimates that the industry in 2001 was worth \$4 billion including video, DVDs, TV, Internet, Strip Clubs and magazines but says that was already twice what it had been worth only 3 years previously. Denis Hof, an associate of Larry Flynt of Hustler, confirms that the industry is increasing in size very fast. He says that whereas only 8 years ago 1,000 porn videos per year were produced in the US, the figure was 10,000 in 2001. The size of the industry on the Internet is indicated by the existence of 200,000 porn websites in 2002 (Confessore, Nicholas. Porn and Politics in a Digital Age. Frontline. Feb 7 2002).

In the 1990s pornography was embraced by the corporate world in the US. Very large, mainstream companies started to take considerable profits from the industry. The big companies make their profit from distributing porn. AT&T distributes it through its cable television network. The major hotel chains Marriott, Westin and Hilton profit from pay-per-view porn in the rooms. General Motors, the world's largest company, owns DirecTV, which channels porn into millions of US homes. General Motors now sells more graphic sex films every year than does Larry Flynt (Egan, Timothy. Wall Street Meets Pornography. October 23 *New York Times*.)

Adult Video News claims that porn videos are worth more than the legitimate Hollywood film industry and often use the same personnel. The industry is centred in Hollywood and creates, according to AVN, more employment for Hollywood's army of film technicians and set personnel than mainstream production. The porn industry uses similar methods and language, for instance porn production companies now have 'contract girls' who are under contract to work for the company as film actresses used to be in the regular industry. There are more and more crossovers between the regular and porn genres. Mainstream movies are made about the industry enabling men to see strip and sexual acts in their local movie cinema. The regular industry becomes more and more pornographised, showing ever more graphic sexual activity. Another aspect of the normalisation that is taking place is the way the music industry is becoming intertwined with the porn industry. Whole genres of pop music now join with the respectable porn industry with porn actors doing signings at Tower Records etc. They market to the same consumers, young men.

Ethical investment funds do not recognise porn as being an industry that offends their ethical principles. Investors all over the world, particularly through superannuation funds are likely to be making profits from the corporations that profit from porn. More and more it is becoming impossible to opt out of pimping, living off the earnings of prostitution.

Though huge profits are being made from the burgeoning porn industry it is not the women used in their production who are making the money. Porn models earn \$500 to \$1000 per movie. The women often see porn as a way to advertise their stripping careers and make themselves into stars.

## **Creating a pornographic culture**

As the porn industry becomes normalised and mainstream its values and practices inevitably start to construct the fashion, beauty and advertising industries as other branches of Hollywood production have before. A pornographisation of culture has taken place which affects women's lives in significant ways.

## **Effect on prostitution**

One effect of the normalisation of pornography is to create increasing acceptance of other forms of prostitution. Pornography is a form of prostitution i.e. women are paid to have sexual practices carried out on and in their bodies. Even in those countries where brothel prostitution is illegal such as the US, prostitution is legal if it is for pornography. This legal form of prostitution has created a foundation for demand the decriminalisation of other forms of the prostitution industry. In my state of Victoria the porn industry was an important force in legalisation of brothels in 1984 and now the brothels advertise and sell their women at the Sexpos. It is important to understand that porn is prostitution and brothel prostitution is able to become more respectable as the industry develops its strength, and political influence.

Presently there is an international campaign to decriminalise the prostitution industry. Lobbyists financed by the international sex industry and AIDS money work in South Africa, UK, Eastern Europe to create a profitable and legal brothel prostitution industry. Pornography leads the way, softening up attitudes to the sexual exploitation of women, and building the profits and political clout of sex industrialists who sought to diversify their interests into all forms of prostitution.

## **Fashion**

In the 80s and 90s the fashions on the catwalks at fashion shows became more pornographic. The male fashion designers such as Thierry Mugler, used black leather and vinyl to dress women up as dominatrixes or insects. Fashion models were required to show most of their bodies. The showing of one or both breasts became de rigeur. The fashions were not really meant for women to wear but to draw attention to the designers and products such as bags and perfume which were creating more profits than designer clothes.



For male consumers, the men involved in the fashion industry, the male-dominated media, fashion modelling and pornography are part of the same continuum of the sexual objectification of women for male excitement. There are distinctions beginning to develop between hard and softcore fashion advertisements in the same way that there is hard and softcore porn. The recent ad campaign for Sisley, part of Benetton, should perhaps be included in the more hardcore of fashion ads since it portrays sadomasochistic sexual practice. In one ad a clothed woman spans a naked woman draped over her lap with a shoe. There is an incongruity to the placing of these photos on the Sisley/Benetton website beneath addresses of the new Sisley stores in the UK. Rather explicit ads lurk beneath addresses in very respectable middle England, such as Leamington Spa and Solihull. Porn is now part of the most conservative and respectable of high streets.

The closer and closer integration of porn and fashion photography does not seem to have attracted outrage. Adult women, it seems, are fair game for sexual exploitation. But children are seen as innocent and to be protected so the move in fashion towards kiddy porn has caused serious outbursts of negative criticism. The US Media Awareness Network documents the journey into pornography of the bisexual designer Calvin Klein. Klein gained notoriety and sales in 1980 when he used the 15 year old Brooke Shields as a model and had her saying things such as “Nothing comes between me and my Calvins”. He contributed significantly in that decade to the overt sexualization of fashion advertising. In the nineties he went much further. In a 1995 campaign he used pubescent models in provocative poses. ‘In one of these ads, the camera focused on the face of a young man, as an off camera male voice cajoled him into ripping off his shirt, saying “You got a real nice look. How old are you? Are you strong? You think you could rip that shirt off of you? That’s a real nice body. You work out? I can tell.” In another, a young girl is told that she’s pretty and not to be nervous, as she begins to unbutton her clothes’ (Idem).

According to Media Awareness Klein insisted that the campaign was not pornographic and that the ads intended to “convey the idea that glamour is an inner quality that can be found in regular people in the most ordinary setting; it is not something exclusive to movie stars and models.” It does seem unlikely, however, that Klein would be innocent of the precise similarity between his ads and child porn. As a man very active in the sexual subculture of gay men in New York in the 70s/80s he is likely to have been familiar with pornography considering its extreme importance in gay male culture (Jeffreys 2002). In 1999 Klein went further with an ad campaign for a children’s underwear line which featured young children in their knickers smiling for the camera on a huge billboard in Times Square as well as in full page ads in the New York Post. The ads were withdrawn after only 24 hours.

The outrage that was voiced at the kiddy porn campaign has not discouraged designers from using sexualized child images for their shock value. In 2001 models as young as nine were used to show Stella Cadente’s collection in Paris wearing ‘plunging necklines and high hemlines’ (Fitzmaurice 2001). ‘The heavily made-up children, whose modesty was barely covered up by a tiny ruffle of material’ (Idem). It is probably not coincidental that this kiddy porn show comes ‘amid one of the leanest years in memory for the French fashion industry’ (Idem). Pornography and prostitution are industries of last resort when economic times get tough. Child models

were used to model adult women's clothes by Italian designer Mila Schon in 1999 and Vivienne Westwood in 1997 (Idem).

### **Pornographic fitness**

Another indication of the way that the sex industry is being integrated into more and more areas of social life is the craze for pole-dancing as a fitness routine (Tom 2002). The craze started in New York and took over from aerobics with women installing poles in their homes for exercise. According to columnist Emma Tom 'Pole dancing, aka "cardio strip" classes, are all the rage in New York and Los Angeles gyms with celebrities such as Heather Graham and Kate Moss receiving private tuition. Well-known fitness fanatics Pamela Anderson and Goldie Hawn have even installed poles in their bedrooms' (Idem). It makes sense that Moss, famously exploited as a model in highly sexualized fashion advertising, should become involved in the practices of the sex industry. Pole-dancing is being used in fashion shows too. Elle Macpherson hired strippers to launch a lingerie range at a strip club in Sydney in 2002. The models posed twined around poles (Idem).

### **Super models/pornstars**

The connection of fashion and porn is shown in the development of supermodel websites. Elle McPherson is portrayed naked but for a strategically placed towel in one shot, or sticky tape over nipples in another and naked but wound in what looks like plastic wrap in another, on a hot-supermodels website ([www.hot-supermodels.com/elle.htm](http://www.hot-supermodels.com/elle.htm) accessed 8.08.202). There are many websites dedicated to showing supermodels naked. The Elle McPherson site carries the advertisement 'Enlarge your penis! All natural penis enlargement pills. Doctor tested and Approved! No Pumps! No Surgery!' So it is clear that the sites function as a kind of softcore porn for the punters.

The pornographising of fashion photography in its most extreme forms may not have much effect on what women wear since not many will choose to be half naked in their social or professional lives. However, there are ways in which it has a negative impact upon women in general. It popularises the 'slut' and prostitute look, very short skirt, boots, piercings for young women. It makes looking as if you are in the sex industry chic and thereby helps sex industrialists by normalising their business of the international traffic in women. The sex industry sells clothes and the fashion industry sells prostitution and pornography.

### **Pornography constructs beauty**

As the pornography industry has grown and become normalised women have been exposed to it in their homes by male partners. It has spawned new 'beauty' practices of its very own. The women in pornography have their bodies transformed to suit the fetishistic interests of the male consumers. They have breast implants, as well as other forms of cosmetic surgery, Brazilian waxing and labiaplasty. The upsurge in the requirement that women should have large breasts and the concomitant profits of the breast implant industry owes a great deal to pornography. The porn star Lolo Ferrari died at age 30 in 2000 after 22 cosmetic surgery operations. She had her breasts

enlarged to the point where there were 3.3 litres of silicone in each one. Her name, Lolo, means breast. In March this year her husband and pimp was arrested on suspicion of her murder. There is a requirement that porn stars will have breast implants but this requirement has spread to the female celebrities who have the status of sex objects such as the Spice Girls and to hundreds of thousands of other women.

I will concentrate here on the impact of porn on women's genitals. Pornography has made women's genitals a new area they have to beautify. In pornography they are as exposed as and often more important than the face. Men come to require that their girlfriends shave and mutilate their genitals to resemble those of women in porn and the girlfriends suddenly feel self-conscious if their genitals do not resemble the airbrushed and mutilated genitals they observe in porn magazines and videos. The prostituted women in pornography have their pubic hair removed. This has, apparently, not always been the practice in porn. In the 1970s there were 'full bushes' and then from 1980 a trend towards hairlessness. The male consumers want to be able to look into women's genitals in 'split beaver' shots and hair would impair the view. There are other reasons why they have difficulties with hair. It makes women look grown up. Many men prefer women to look prepubescent and thus hairless.

Men are trained by porn to see hairlessness in women as 'natural' and to find the hairiness of their girlfriends distasteful or less than exciting. There are problems associated with shaving the genitals, though this is the practice that porn stars employ (Castleman 2001). Shaving has to take place every day to keep hair under control and it causes 'razor bumps' or the area can become very itchy as the hair grows back, or women can get ingrown hair of the genitals which is very painful. Porn stars explained to Castleman on the Salon.com site how they deal with having to be hairless. They shave daily and wear 'loose underwear and clothing' because 'A shaved vulva chafes more easily than one covered with a soft cushion of pubic hair' (Castleman 2001). One porn star says that many women on porn sets do have the telltale signs of painful damage that are razor bumps and ingrown hairs but the cameras cannot pick it up so the women look 'smoother than they really are' (Ibid). Rome says she gave up shaving as soon as she got out of porn and did not have to do it any more 'It was part of getting ready for work'.

In response to the hairlessness of women in porn the practice of Brazilian waxing has been promoted to women in general. In this practice women go to studios where their genital hair is ripped out with the use of wax. Most often a tiny circle of hair is left at the top of the vulva and this style is called The Playboy signifying its origins in porn.

Once women remove hair from their genitals they become anxious about the shape of their labia. They may decide that their labia are longer than the airbrushed labia shown in porn. Dr Alter, a leading exponent of labiaplasty calls the demand for the procedure the "Penthouse effect". Playboy caused the demand for breast enlargements after 1950s, then 'crotch shots in magazines and porn flicks have heightened women's awareness of their down-there's'. Cosmetic surgeons are exploiting this insecurity by marketing labiaplasty in which they cut women's inner labia down to size. The after effects of labiaplasty can be worrying. They can include pain weeks after the surgery and severe scarring. Risks after labiaplasty include loss of sensation after surgery, over tightening of the vaginal opening, discomfort from clothing, an unnatural look to the genitals rather than a positive change.

The close relationship between labiaplasty and porn is demonstrated by the auction by porn star Houston on an Internet site called EroticBid of the bits of her labia she had cut off in labiaplasty. The surgery was filmed for porn. She had a double multi-hour procedure to reduce labia and replace breast implants. "I've never liked my labia," Houston said. "They're always falling out of my bikini."

## **The internationalisation of porn**

The pornography industry now is international both in its organisation, in the trafficking in women which it facilitates, and in the damaging effects it has on women's status in non-western cultures in which pornography is a new harmful practice. The porn industry chooses to make porn movies in countries in which women are vulnerable to severe forms of exploitation and can be paid a pittance. Thus one American porn producer created material for his website 'Rape Camp' in Cambodia where women were cheap and compliant and the excitement of seeing them raped was enhanced by racism. Trafficked women are used in the making of extreme hardcore porn in many countries because they are the most powerless of prostituted women. A bestiality porn site on the Internet a few years back featured mainly women from Eastern Europe and Russia. In the description of one movie, available from Richmond, Virginia in the US, five women were penetrated by a gorilla and a chimpanzee. They were forced to address the gorilla in the only English word they knew, daddy. The porn was in the genre of incest/bestiality. Bestiality porn, of which there is a great deal on the Internet, creates sexual excitement in the male consumers by showing women as being even lower than animals. It is the ultimate in degradation. For those of us who care for animals the abuse in the pornography can be seen as victimising both the women and the animals. Through porn women and girls are trafficked around the world for men's delight enhanced by the visceral excitement of racism.

As the industry expands it seeks new markets. Where communism is destroyed it swiftly enters to create a pornographic culture in countries such as Russia. Porn has profoundly damaging effects upon women and girls in cultures where men have previously been unfamiliar with western methods of sexual exploitation. In indigenous communities in Northern Australia porn is carted in by the truckload. Porn combined with alcohol abuse is likely to be responsible for the extraordinarily high rate of abuse of women and girls in those communities which is only recently becoming recognised as a human rights violation. In Papua New Guinea the introduction of porn to a culture where men and women had traditionally behaved towards one another with extreme modesty has helped to fuel a massive epidemic of rape against women and girls.

Where porn is introduced quite suddenly to an indigenous culture it is possible to identify more easily the ways in which women's status is damaged. In western societies porn has become normalised over 40 years. As this has taken place the rhetoric of sexual freedom, free speech and sexual liberation has been used to justify it. It may be hard now for citizens to turn around and observe the harm that pornography has wrought because its values have become so much a part of so many areas of culture. In the west it is possible that the porn industry supplies to men a compensation for the advances that women have made. It offers subordinated and degraded women for men's delight to make up for the fact that they may have women

in their workplace now, and sexual harassment codes to punish their lack of respect for women's dignity.

Pornography offers a massive obstacle to women's freedom. It trains generations of men to see women as objects for their delight, as creatures who love to be violated and degraded. It trains men in practices of violence towards women and constitutes violence for the hundreds of thousands of vulnerable women abused in its production.

Women have made great strides since the 1970s towards equal opportunities. However the porn industry of today constitutes a very serious challenge to the possibility of equality. What is happening in porn gives the lie to equality and provides a stark contrast to the idea that women are becoming empowered citizens. As some women gain the satisfaction of careers in business and industry thousands of other young women, usually 18-19 years old, are suffering the violence of 'multiple partner' pornography in which gangs of men engage in multiple penetration of all their orifices. I would like to suggest a way forward. Pornography should be recognised as a form of prostitution. The excellent legislation in Sweden that prohibits the buying of sexual services should be extended to porn to make it illegal to offer money to women to engage in sexual acts with anyone or in any form.