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FETISHIZING SOUTHERN BRUTALITY:
AN INTERSECTIONAL ANALYSIS OF ANIMALISTIC DEHUMANIZATION IN
INTERRACIAL PORNOGRAPHY

A Thesis
presented in partial fulfillment of requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts
in the Department of Southern Studies
The University of Mississippi

Shawna Felkins

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ABSTRACT

Pornography has been a widely debated issue within the feminist movement since the sex wars of the 1970's. The conversation has shifted to a sex radical position within the third movement, seeking to be "sex positive" in representations of pornography as a potential site of empowerment. This work, however, seeks to complicate the idea that all depictions of sex are empowering by examining the popular genre of interracial pornography through the lens of the southern tropes that are often enacted within them: the jezebel, southern belle, and black brute.

By using these historical tropes with the work of Judith Butler and Patricia Hill Collins as a lens to examine contemporary mainstream pornography, this thesis addresses the violent humiliation and dehumanization of oppressed bodies that have become standard in porn. My first and second chapters work to analyze the films of *DogFart Productions*, a company specializing in interracial pornography, often with neoconfederate themes. Each uses Patricia Hill Collins' "matrix of domination" to do an intersectional, comparative analysis of performers. My third chapter attempts an analysis of "ethical" pornography, seeking sites of possible subversion within a medium that has historically been deployed by women to explore sexual fantasies: erotica.

DEDICATION

For Mama and Daddy. Thank you for your unwavering love and support. I love you.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would first like to thank my advisor, Dr. Jaime Harker and my committee members, Drs. Kirsten Dellinger and Jessica Wilkerson for their inspiration and guidance during this journey. I would also like to thank both the Center for the Study of Southern Culture and the Department of Writing and Rhetoric for their assistantship and fellowship, respectively. I could not have financed my studies without their support, and for that, I am truly grateful.

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Lastly, I want to thank my family for their undying support. While I am sure they will not be pumped about my thesis topic, I am always certain of their love for me, even when I write about pornography.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

I first discovered pornography after finding the word “boobs” in a list of previous Google searches on our home computer. My younger brother, at ten years old, knew that the best way to find pictures of boobs was to use the internet, and as I soon found out, there are millions of pictures of boobs out there. After taking my first women’s studies class in 2009, I leaned strongly toward the sex radical position of pornography as liberating for women, because it was the only avenue where I could see any form of sexuality growing up in a conservative, religious household. My time spent researching pornography, however, has challenged my previously firm belief in pornography as a social good by proving that a blended, liminal position of radical antipornography and sex radical feminism is possible and even necessary to a full investigation and analysis of a cultural product that permeates society. My interest in pornography peaked last year when using an intersectional analysis to look at the tropes of the “black brute” and the “southern belle” in interracial pornography in an effort to interrogate pornography as a site of reproduction for sexism and racism. From my preliminary analysis has come this thesis, an examination of why southern tropes are still appearing in mainstream pornography, why white male viewers have pushed the genre of interracial pornography into a top category, and what is in

these films that consistently market to and attract the white male viewer to watch the racialized and sexualized violence that is rampant in mainstream interracial pornography sites.

First, it is important to address how pornography, a cultural product, can reproduce sexism and racism. A *BBC* article in June 2013 sought to address misconceptions surrounding the amount of pornographic material on the internet. While they found that previous percentages cited were often exaggerated, the actual estimated number of 4% translates to a large number of sites considering the expansive nature of the internet and the advancements in technology that grant millions of people access to the internet with handheld devices. As such, pornography as a cultural product has great significance in generating notions surrounding gender, sexuality, and other identity categories. In his “Notes on Deconstructing the Popular,” Stuart Hall writes about the possibility of cultural products to challenge and/or reproduce the dominant culture:

The cultural industries do have the power constantly to rework and reshape what they represent; and, by repetition and selection, to impose and implant such definitions of ourselves as fit more easily the descriptions of the dominant or preferred culture... These definitions...occupy and rework the interior contradictions of feeling and perception in the dominated classes; they do find or clear a space of recognition in those who respond to them.” (447)

According to Hall, cultural products are not something to be trivialized. They have real effects on people who consume them and the ability to influence societal norms. Discussing societal norms, Judith Butler argues that “a norm operates within social practices and the implicit standard of normalization... Norms may or may not be explicit, and when they operate as the normalizing principle in social practice they usually remain implicit, difficult to read, discernible most clearly and dramatically in the effects that they produce,” (*Undoing* 41). Norms surrounding gender and

other identity categories can be reproduced and legitimated in cultural products such as pornography. Therefore, examining the existing research on porn and the current debates surrounding it allows for an analysis of trends in the research as well as the potential to see possible issues that need further attention.

In the following introduction, I intend to lay the foundation for a discussion of interracial pornography that continues previous discussion by feminist scholars. I begin by exploring the research surrounding the “sex wars” in feminism that have led to both anti-pornography and sex-positive scholarship on pornography. I will include opposing views on how pornography enforces or subverts race and/or gender roles and stereotypes, contributing to the production and reproduction of these norms in culture and society, ultimately working to dispel or uphold racial and gender inequalities.

To understand pornography as a gender issue, one must first understand sociological definitions of gender and how the author’s are deploying these definitions. While most of the articles do not specifically define gender, their analyses of pornography utilize a gender framework most like the theory of “doing gender” put forth by Candace West and Don H. Zimmerman. West and Zimmerman theorize that “doing gender means creating differences between girls and boys and women and men, differences that are not natural, essential, or biological. Once the differences have been constructed, they are used to reinforce the ‘essentialness’ of gender” (137).

Taking this concept of “doing gender” further, Kristen Schilt and Laurel Westbrook write, “... this sex/gender/sexuality system rests on the belief that gendered behavior,

(hetero)sexual identity, and social roles flow naturally from biological sex, creating an attraction between two opposite personalities. This belief maintains gender inequality, as ‘opposites’—bodies, genders, sexes—cannot be expected to fulfill the same social roles and, so, cannot receive the same resources” (459). Schilt and Westbrook’s addition furthers the analysis of pornography as a gender issue because of the dichotomous roles—dominant and submissive, perpetrator and victim, active and passive—that exist for men and women acting in pornography are assumed to come from differences in biological sex.

While not sociological, I find feminist philosopher Judith Butler concept of performativity useful to defining gender as well. Emphasizing the repetitive nature of gender identity construction, Butler adds that “[g]ender ought not to be construed as a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts follow; rather gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a stylized repetition of acts” (191; emphasis in the original). As Butler explains, to define different genders across cultures there must be a deconstruction of gender into its “constitutive acts” and to examine the forces that “police” or control what is defined as acceptable gender performance within a group. Gender then, as used in the articles, is an identity that is constantly in flux through a process of perceived reactions. It also influences and operates within a social structure where biology is thought to predetermine essentialized groups of behaviors assigned to men and women, and a dichotomous hierarchy is created to attribute characteristics to each group that are valued differently in society.

In my thesis, I will be combining “doing gender” with Judith Butler’s concept of “performativity” to form the concept “meta-performance” in my thesis to analyze the

performativity of the actors in pornography as performance of performance—using bodily practices to construct the “essential” sex roles for each gendered actor.¹

I will also be using Butler’s theory of performativity to discuss how race is a performed set of behaviors to fit into the correct culture. As first articulated by W.E.B. Du Bois, black Americans must possess a “double consciousness” in order to fluctuate between the two cultures of black and white.² Race is policed by the black community to construct blackness within the black community, but more violently by the white community in power. When applying Butler’s theory, race then becomes a performed set of behaviors that works to categorize people on the socially constructed race spectrum. In order to define the parameters of what is a correct or incorrect performance of race, the “group” uses policing strategies in an effort to call out what is consider a deviation from the norm. The dominant group, and thus the creators of legitimate culture, define the correct racial performance as necessary to entrance into, or in my limited capacity, even access to the dominant group. In the racialized history of the United States, it is white culture that defines itself as the normative as the group in power, deeming pigmentation of skin color as a marker of the ability to be a part of the dominant group.³ As previously explained

¹ Butler defines gender saying, “Gender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being. A political genealogy of gender ontologies, if it is successful, will deconstruct the substantive appearance of gender into its constitutive acts and locate and account for those acts within the compulsory frames set by the various forces that police the social appearance of gender” (193).

² In *The Souls of Black Folk*, Du Bois defines double-consciousness saying, “It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness,—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.

³ Bourdieu defines “legitimate culture” to be a level of culture that is defined by the elite as a way of preserving their status. See *Distinction* pages 3-15.

by Butler, the physical performance or “corporeal signs” in sustained and legitimated by the language surrounding such actions, the “discursive means” (185). “[“Black,”] as a slur or derogatory remark, is not so much a constative utterance, a statement of fact, as a performative through which the [Black] body is produced and shamed” (Inda 86). “[S]ince the term ‘black’ must continually be repeated in order to effectively shame racial subjects, it means that the racial subject is open to the possibility of resignification” (Mirón and Inda 102). My thesis uses the theory of race as performance will be used to examine of the female performers’ whiteness as it is defined against the male performers’ blackness.

Before beginning an analysis of the films, however, it is important to address what pornography is and how scholars have approached it. Many of the authors acknowledge differences in the definitions of what constitutes pornography. Gossett and Byrne reference Andrea Dworkin and MacKinnon’s definition in their work that defines pornography as “the graphic sexually explicit subordination of women through pictures and/or word” (690). They address that many of the definitions put forth by feminist scholars have focused on the “lived gender relations” that stem from pornography, and that ultimately, what is pornographic is difficult to specifically define. From the sex radical side, The editors of *The Feminist Porn Book* even go so far as to imagine a feminist pornography which “uses sexually explicit imagery to contest and complicate dominant representations of gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, class, ability, age, body type, and other identity markers” (9). Combining stated definitions from the articles, I work from the assumption that pornography contains some form of sex work and is a sold *visual* experience of someone else’s sexuality. For that reason, I have included two articles

on stripping, another form of sex work where the sexual experience sold is visual and the largest market is toward men.

Making a call for the study of pornography as a “site of intersecting oppressions” Patricia Hill Collins asserts in her *Black Feminist Thought*, that without the historical objectification of black female bodies, pornography would not exist:

The pornographic treatment of black women’s bodies challenges prevailing assumptions that since images of White women prevail in pornography, racism has been grafted onto pornography. African-American women’s experiences suggest that Black women were not added to preexisting pornography, but rather that pornography itself must be reconceptualized as a shift from the objectification of Black women’s bodies in order to dominate and exploit them, to one of media representations of all women that perform the same purpose. (138)

Black women’s bodies were sexualized and commodified in the beginning stages of the white supremacist, patriarchal American culture. Therefore, pornography presents an interesting opportunity to interrogate the objectification of all women’s bodies at the source, examining a cultural product that was originated between a merger of sexism and racism. I focus on interracial pornography specifically, because it most often traffics in racial and gendered stereotypes to market to the “male gaze.”

Pornography is gendered and racialized because it has historically been created for and marketed to the white “male gaze” in an effort to cater to the dominant group. This stems from a history, even in art, of the female body being “available” to the viewing of others. As Eck argues, “both men and women have access to shared, readily available cultural scripts for interpreting and responding to female nudes” (690-1). Furthermore, these cultural scripts do not exist for responding to male nudes because “these images are less common and less available for

objectification” (693). Gossett and Byrne’s analysis of internet rape uses Laura Mulvey’s concept of the “male gaze” and—further substantiating MacKinnon’s claim that pornography is for the pleasure of men—they conclude that “the gaze of the man is the privileged point of view” in most contemporary pornography (704). Laura Mulvey describes the “male gaze:” “the determining male gaze projects its fantasy onto the female figure, which is styled accordingly. In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and deployed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote to-be-looked-at-ness,” (19). She continues to describe women being used historically on film as “erotic objects” for the male viewer. Because the viewer is assumed to be a man, pornography is not often created for a woman. In Parvez’s analysis in the experience of the female viewer, she writes, the “emotional dissonance” created made it difficult for them to see pornography as a pleasurable experience, because the women viewed this exchange as “degradation” and “abuse” (623). This objectification is blatantly gendered and violent, and also appears blatantly in pornography, an issue that has been the center of the feminist debates surrounding pornography.

Feminism has been divided on the issue of pornography since “radical feminism’s stance against sadomasochism and other forms of ‘kinky’ sex at the 1981 Barnard College conference, ‘The Scholar and the Feminist IX: Toward a Politics of Sexuality,’ opened a ‘sex war’ that has not died down to this day” (Lorber 83). Informing radical feminists, Catherine MacKinnon has famously argued for the alignment of pornography with violence. She argues that pornography cannot be separated from the erotic because it is used for the pleasure of mostly men: “...the idea

that pornography is violence against women, not sex, seems to distinguish artistic creation on the one hand from what is degrading to women on the other” (MacKinnon 73). Separating pornography from sex, therefore, glosses over the fact that the degradation of women is eroticized in pornography. She states, “What pornography says about us is that we enjoy degradation, that we are sexually turned on by being degraded.” (74) Radical feminists, then, focus on the way pornography has sociological effects. These effects are represented in the created and perpetuated conception that women enjoy “degradation” as part of their sexuality.

Further exploring the radical or antipornography feminist stance on pornography, the 1989 article “Conflicting Ideologies and the Politics of Pornography” seeks to examine the similarities and differences between two groups pushing the anti-pornography platform: feminist and religious antipornography activists. The article uses surveys to determine why the seemingly polar groups unite on the issue of pornography and the reasoning behind each of their respective stances. The authors conclude that “although feminist and religious antipornography activists desire some community control over pornography to protect people from its harmful consequences, the significant differences between these two groups make political coalitions tenuous and conflictual” (323). Furthermore they state, “In promoting antipornography politics, feminists face the danger of facilitating the religious-conservative's establishment of a broader antifeminist social agenda. On the other hand, an alignment of anticensorship feminists with non-feminist anticensorship minimizes women's particular sexual vulnerability” (Cottle et al. 323). In obvious anger with this article, Lorber wrote a letter from the editor addressing the findings: “What do men want? Do they want pornography? Not the religious-conservatives and certainly

not the small number of feminists, but perhaps the liberals do, according to ‘Conflicting Ideologies and the Politics of Pornography’” (Lorber 301).

Judith Lorber describes the division in the feminist community surrounding the subject of pornography: “Some feminists do not think pornography is that harmful to women, unlike radical feminists, who are in the forefront of the fights against exploitation, harassment, rape, and battering” (82). Referred to as “sex radical,” “propornography,” and “sex positive,” the group of feminists often diametrically opposed to radical feminists take the stance described by Lorber above, and taking it further to explore pornography as a potential site of empowerment for women. As R. Claire Snyder notes third-wave feminism grew out of a faction in the second-wave and that it is “revisionist” to “conflate” pro-sex with the third-wave and anti-sex with the second (179). Growing out of the faction created during the spilt of the “sex wars,” many feminists that identify as part of Rebecca Walker’s self-defined third wave of the 1990s see pornography and its consumption as potentially empowering for women and a previously repressed sexuality. Snyder writes that one of three defining characteristics of the third-wave “in response to the sex wars, third-wave feminism emphasizes an inclusive and nonjudgmental approach that refuses to police the boundaries of the feminist political” (175-6). Contemporary members of the sex-positive movement have identified some of the benefits of pornography, especially given the rise in popularity of amateur porn and the ease of access that the internet provides. Often white, Western feminists, however, these women fail to understand the history of sexualization and objectification black women have endured and their analyses often lack an intersectional analyses necessary to understanding a cultural product that traffics in bodies, real

bodies that exist off-screen in the “matrix of domination” (18). In the following sections, I will outline the major themes present in the literature, the most common frameworks, and provide questions for further research.

To build my own theoretical framework, I start first with a look at what theories other scholars in the field have deployed. A variety of theoretical frameworks were deployed in the articles I used to create the foundation of my research, and there is a clear building of the literature. For instance, every article explored here (except the essays in *The Feminist Porn Book*) cited the work of Catharine MacKinnon and used her critiques of pornography to help situate their own analyses. Gossett and Byrne, Barton, Neal, and Cruz all draw heavily on Patricia Hill Collins, creating the basis for their framework from her *Black Feminist Thought*. Their criticisms of past feminist analysis of pornography aligns with Collins’ argument that white feminists have used generalizations of men and women to argue, incorrectly that “men oppress women” (180, 703).

Beth A. Eck’s 2003 article “Men are Much Harder: Gendered Viewing of Nude Images” also uses Mulvey’s “male gaze” in order to bolster her claim that both men and women already have a script for interpreting an image of a nude woman because the female body has historically been subject to looking (692). Also, Eck’s article on the way men and women view nude images deploys West and Zimmerman’s concept of “doing gender” to see the “work” men and women had to do to make sure that were “doing gender” correctly when speaking about nude images. Eck’s is the only article to directly address the concept of “doing gender,” even though the other

articles look at men and women as gender categories, exploring how their gender effects their attitudes towards and experience of pornography.

In conjunction with Butler and Hill Collins, I will be utilizing other theoretical frameworks to interpret the sites featuring interracial pornography. Both the theories of hegemonic masculinities and gendered organizations would provide new ways to analyze pornography. Connell's theories of "hegemonic masculinity" and "subordinated masculinities" can be used to examine how men and masculinity are portrayed in pornography (77). It also provides a framework for examining possible influences on society that pornography may have had and comparison points for contemporary connotations of masculinity with hypersexuality.

Because companies that produce pornography have positions that are also gendered, Joan Acker's 1990 article "Hierarchies, Jobs, Bodies: A Theory of Gendered Organizations" and her theory of "gendered organization" may prove useful. She asserts that to call an organization "or any other analytic unit, gendered means that advantage and disadvantage, exploitation and control, action and emotion, meaning and identity are patterned through and in terms of a distinction between male and female, masculine and feminine" (146). Her theory can be applied to not only the men and women in front of the camera, but those behind it, providing an avenue to analyze the gender of directors, producers, camera operators, and distributors in an effort to look for how gender influences the kind of pornography that is created and how it is created.

Undoubtedly, the discussions surrounding pornography have come a long way from the generalizing debates of the "sex wars" between radical and sex radical feminists. The articles above work from within a liminal analysis, focusing on the spaces and positions between radical

and sex radical, generalizations and individualism, challenging and reproducing societal norms, and agency and victimization. I believe, however, that there are still questions that need to be asked. Few of the articles I read engaged with the West and Zimmerman concept of “doing gender.” Because cultural products both reflect and work to produce cultural norms surrounding identity categories such as gender, I believe that an analysis of “doing gender” within pornography in the form of a content analysis could benefit greatly to questions surrounding the sociological effects of pornography. Furthermore, I think more studies, like that of Parvez, need to consider how the viewer is understanding the content they are watching. Does porn perpetuate stereotypes and tropes attributed to race, gender, or sexuality?

Throughout my time examining the South’s culture and history, I have sought out southern influences in popular culture and issues of oppression. After reading Hill Collins, it became very clear that a discussion of pornography and the bodies involved in its creation could not be accomplished without a discussion of how southern tropes have shaped not only the southern imaginary, but how they have contributed to a specific set of traits that are assigned to identity categories such as race and gender in the name of biological determinism. Because the economy and culture of the South was built upon the bodies of Black men and women in chattel slavery, it is impossible to divorce the southern tropes created and circulated throughout society to aid in the policing of those bodies from the racism and sexism rampant in mainstream pornography. Applying these tropes to a discussion of mainstream pornography is not anachronistic, but rather serves to trace the sexualization of racism and sexism that has created a niche market of fetish pornography openly marketed as “race play” where black women are

forced to vomit on camera from fellatio and black men are compared to livestock. While it is clear that the images in the videos I use for my discussion are deplorable (I truly feel it is safe to make this assertion), what I have yet to discover is the “why?” If the fantasy is rooted in the taboo, how are these fantasies of degradation and humiliation sexually arousing? How are current stereotypes surrounding oppressed bodies reproduced through these films? What demographics are these sites marketing to specifically? Can this form of pornography ever be “subversive?”

From these questions, comes the following chapters. Using Judith Butler’s theory of performativity and Patricia Hill Collins’ work on black sexual politics and racial performativity, I will explore what the production and marketing of these products says about viewers and society at large focusing on how stereotypes of racial and gender performativity and reproduced for society through the new portal of the internet, a globalizing force that carries southern culture to homes around the world.

In chapter one, I examine the historical context of the southern belle and jezebel stereotypes to see how these tropes fit within interracial pornography. I then make the argument that interracial pornography traffics in fantasies of slavery, specifically that as expressions of racism in public have become taboo, racism has fused with sexuality to form a genre of porn that triggers both disgust and arousal in the racist white male viewer.

In chapter three, I explore the arguments made historically about the presentation of black masculinity in pornography. I then use the argument from chapter one to explore the animalistic representations of the black brute present in interracial pornography and to interrogate the role of

the white male viewer's meta-voyeurism. I also explore the work of Dred Scott, a male performer in gay interracial pornography famous for breaking the stereotype that black men will not bottom for white men in pornography. My analysis leads into my discussion of subversive pornography in my third chapter.

In chapter three, I make the argument that pornography should not be abandoned wholesale and use a subversive reading of the erotica series *Hot Texas Bosses* as an example of pornography that is successful among female readership because of the use of kink to subvert traditional gender roles. I examine these texts with an interview with the author as an example of what a subversive reading of pornography that is created by those in an oppressed position for sexual arousal of oppressed peoples.

The topic of pornography is vast. There are many questions to ask and factors to consider in an analysis of how a prominent cultural product works to reify the open racism and sexism that many believed to be banished to the hinterlands in the age of "colorblindness" and "equal rights." I argue, however, that an intersectional analysis of pornography demonstrates that these openly racist and sexist ideologies have been relegated to a sexual expression that is protected under free speech by the dominant group of white men who have found themselves losing footholds of powers through movements such as women's liberation and Civil Rights. Furthermore, I argue that this genre of porn, centered around the dehumanization of oppressed peoples, serves as a mechanism of fantasized punishment for oppressors who consume such pornographic films. While I cannot deal with all of the ways that mainstream pornography is problematic, I make an attempt to deal with a small fraction of it in the following pages.

CHAPTER II

BELLES AND JEZEBELS: FANTASIES OF SLAVERY AND THE POLITICS OF DISGUST

Throughout history, a clear demarcation has been made between white and black women: their position in society, their standards of beauty, their sexual availability to men. Exploring this demarcation in *Reconstructing Dixie: Race, Gender, and Nostalgia in the Imagined South*, Tara McPherson posits her theory of “lenticular logic” explaining, “...a lenticular logic is a monocular logic, a schema by which histories or images that are actually copresent get presented (structurally, ideologically) so that only one of the images can be seen at a time. Such an arrangement represses connection, allowing whiteness to float free from blackness, denying the long historical imbrications of racial markers and racial meaning in the South” (McPherson 7). These images cannot be seen at the same time, thus illustrating McPherson’s theory that contemporary viewers have problems merging black and white and tend to see in binaries or a lenticular lens. She explains: “In post-Civil Rights America, the lenticular often serves to secure our understandings of race in precise ways, fixating on sameness of difference without allowing productive overlap or connection...” (27). Lenticular logic is reproduced within media and cultural products that keep races, especially black and white, separate, making the maintenance

of racial stereotypes and racism easier.

This lenticular logic has translated to the stereotypes surrounding white and black women, creating a clear dichotomy that has appeared throughout American culture, including mainstream pornography. One of the defining characteristics of the belle is her whiteness, therefore the status of pure womanhood to be protected is unavailable to black women. The defining role for black women, then, was assigned to excuse and obscure the violence committed against the black female body by white men who held complete control over their lives.

Townsend et al. explains:

Although women of other ethnicities have also experienced sexual victimization, the legacy of slavery associate the sexual exploitation of African American women with distinct dehumanizing and degrading practices. In order to justify their enslavement and incessant sexual violation, the role of primitive sex object was ascribed to women of African descent, resulting in images of African American women as animal-like, savage, and highly sexual beings. (Townsend et al 264)

The animalism associated with the “jezebel” trope is emphasized in interracial pornography featuring white male and black female performers. In this chapter, I use the assertion of Patricia Hill Collins “...that African-American women were not included in pornography as an afterthought but instead form a key pillar on which contemporary pornography itself rests” to attempt to prove her hypothesis that “pornography’s significance as a site of intersecting oppressions promises new insights toward understanding social injustice” (136, 138). Building upon the work of pornography and feminist scholars such as Andrea Dworkin and bell hooks, I examine the animalistic features ascribed to black women in interracial pornography, first exploring dichotomy of the southern belle and jezebel to examine the different presentations of

the white female and black female body in mainstream pornography. I argue that these tropes with their beginnings in southern culture offer a unique lens to understand why race is fetishized, and more broadly how the taboo becomes the erotic.

As McPherson identifies, since Reconstruction the white southern woman has stood as the moral center of the South, placing white southern women in a position to be protected from the influence of the outside world. She notes, “The South, responding to its own feminized position vis-a-vis the North—a feminization that was both literal, owing to the loss of a large portion of the male population, and figurative, given the South’s status as defeated—turned to a hyperfeminized figure of the southern woman as discursive symbol for the region, with the land itself being figured as feminine as well” (McPherson 19). In their book *Look Away!: The U.S. South in New World Studies*, Jon Smith and Deborah Cohn work to identify a new direction for southern studies. They argue for a performative version of southern identity saying, “If southernist scholars stop speaking of ‘the South’ as though its borders were clear...and if, perhaps, we cease to speak of ‘southern identities’ except as contingent and performative...” then scholarship may be able to move away from the fixed ideal that they deem as the “navel-gazing” of previous scholars (Smith and Cohn 15). In other words, it is these women’s bodies and mannerisms, in relation to the other performers, that signifies to the audience that she is performing what it means to be the southern woman or “lady,” that even if the ideas they discuss are not what would be considered traditionally southern (or perhaps conservative in some minds), her body serves as a constant site of reifying southern identity and femininity.

With such an emphasis on the body as the site of gender and even racial performance, it is no surprise then that much of the racism and sexism in interracial pornography is carried out as sexual violence on the body. While sexual violence has always been an issue for all women, sexual violence was normalized and supported in the institution of slavery against black women's bodies.⁴ The sexual violence against black female bodies continued long after slavery. Carolyn West describes such violence: "During nighttime raids, vigilante groups, such as the Ku Klux Klan, whipped African Americans, destroyed their property, and raped Black women. The Jezebel stereotype, which branded Black women as sexually promiscuous and immoral, was used to rationalize these sexual atrocities. This image gave the impression that Black women could not be rape victims because they always desired sex" (West 294). Expanding on the historical consequences of the commodification and dehumanization of Black women's bodies Hill Collins writes, "Because efforts to control Black women's sexuality lie at the heart of Black women's oppression, historical jezebels...represent a deviant Black female sexuality. Jezebel's function was to relegate all Black women to the category of sexually aggressive women, thus providing a powerful rationale for the widespread sexual assaults by White men typically reported by Black slave women" (81). This availability of the Black female body carries over into both mainstream popular culture and mainstream pornography in similar ways: the hypersexualization of Black women.

Because of this historical and continued hypersexualization, according to Patricia Hill Collins, it is impossible to have a discussion of pornography and its specific brand of sexism and

⁴ West, p. 294.

racism without exploring the role of black women. “Notions of biological determinism claiming that people of African descent and women possess immutable biological characteristics marking their inferiority to elite White men lie at the heart of both racism and sexism. In pornography these racist and sexist beliefs are sexualized” (138). There is a clear difference when examining pornography between the objectification of white women and black women, the difference centering around their skin color. For black women, their skin presents another opportunity for fetishization, furthering the dichotomous thinking that assigns “inherent” attributes to people who appear to belong to a racial category. Following this logic, if a white woman is the epitome of morality and purity, to be protected at all costs, then the hypersexual foil, the receptacle of white fantasies of bestial sexuality is the black woman.

While it has been previously asserted that it is a history of racism that prompts the sexual enjoyment of white male viewers watching the degradation and humiliation of black female bodies, I think there is something more that stems from the trope of the Jezebel. The Jezebel stereotype hinged on the ability of white men to *own* Black women’s bodies through either literal chattel slavery or through laws such as Jim Crow that devalued Black lives. However, while Black women are victim to some of the strongest oppressive forces in society, strides have been made in their bodily autonomy. I would argue that this progress in the liberation of Black female bodies is what drives the need for white male viewers to see Black women be punished sexually, because the punishment had always been inherently sexual. Such an assertion makes necessary that the very moment of arousal instigated by watching such pornography is *racist* because the viewer is experiencing pleasure through the lens of *disgust*. Furthermore, the animalistic

dehumanization and degradation used in these films can be viewed as a backlash, a grasp for the power conceived as lost to oppressed peoples.

In an attempt to discover how disgust functions within sexuality, Belchner surveys the historical shift in how attitudes of “disgust” around certain sexual acts change as they become more prevalent in society: “...reactions to sex have many vicissitudes in our society. The same behavior can in some cases cause disgust and in other cases cause pleasure. And, as with all aspects of sex, different subcultures in different times may experience these behaviors quite differently” (35). Blechner continues: “The subjective, phenomenological component of sex is greater than in most of our perceptions. We use “sexual” as an adjective to describe a stimulus, but sex is a special case in our perception. Things are sexual because they make us feel sexual. Nothing is intrinsically sexual” (42). Blechner’s assertion that “nothing is intrinsically sexual” suggests that it is possible for a sexualized racism and misogyny to exist as a social construct, that an entire group of people could be filled with hate for both women and people of color to the point of seeking sexual gratification from pornography that incorporates violence into sexual acts.

In the following pages, I will explore several sites that focus on violent interracial pornography, examining both the role of white and Black women both behind and in front of the camera. Hill Collins defines pornography as “...a series of icons or representations that focus the viewer’s attention on the relationship between the portrayed individual and the general qualities ascribed to that class of individuals” (136). For Hill Collins, pornography requires an inherently intersectional lens not only because each performer’s experience is dictated by their place in the

matrix of domination, but because of the marketing strategies used by porn studios to create individual genres of porn where the viewer can expect the same experience. Pornography fetishizes these “general qualities” in an attempt to market them as representative of an entire group, such as the trope that all Asian women are submissive (Gossett Byrne 701). Hill Collins’ assertion is explored in the content analysis of Gossett and Byrne’s article that refer to a “jukebox” style pornography website where categories of race and age are used to filter the pornographic videos for the consumer (702). To better understand the different experiences of white and black performers in pornography, I began with studies of the sex industry.

In his book *Money Shot: Wild Days and Lonely Nights Inside the Black Porn Industry*, Lawrence C. Ross Jr. explores the racial dynamics within sex from the perspective of both male and female performers. Describing the plethora of porn available, Ross explains: “Porn has millions of subgenre to fit whatever you fancy when it comes to seeing people have sex. White men overtly degrading black women are some of the most popular. Racism manifested as sexual domination is as American as apple pie” (Ross 57). He continues, “Racism and sexism mix in with black porn fans, particularly those who are white, because its fits a black woman fantasy that has been with white men since the days of slavery in the pre-Civil War United States and colonialism in Africa. And while most white men won’t have sex with a black woman, they can vicariously have it through film (104). Ross touches on a very important point here. Why won’t “most white men have sex with a black woman”? The simple answer is racism, but by looking at the way *disgust* contributes to and functions as a part of racism, the reasons behind his next statement become more complicated. Pornography allows a safe-space for a racist white man to

act out his fantasies of ownership and degradation of black women without implicating himself as someone who would “lower” himself to have a sexual encounter with a Black woman. This is twisted logic to be sure, but it explains the fetishism surrounding blackness that Ross also attempts to explain: ““Porn imagines the black female as a fetish centered particularly around race. It’s sort of the anti-mammy syndrome. At the same time, she is often depicted as the object of desire, and while most of this is disgusting, there is this desire to see black women, and an enjoyment that this (degradation) is happening to her, mainly because whites can’t talk about their desires for black women”” (Ross 67). Because interracial pornography hinges on the pleasure of a white male viewer, it is inherently created through a white male gaze.

Exploring the “male gaze” and its intersection with race, in their article “Racism and Sexism in Interracial Pornography,” Cowan and Campbell review the ways sexism and racism are created in specifically interracial pornography. They explore how this works, and the exploitation of a dark history that allows racism to be perpetuated: “Black and interracial pornography came into the market in 1983 and is produced and marketed for a White male audience...It is not the fact that pornography portrays African-American people that makes it racist. It is the fact that it exploits the history of slavery and myths surrounding and oppressing people of color” (325). They conclude that pornography is not only created for a “male gaze,” but for a white male gaze, thus explaining how an intersectional analysis is necessary to understanding the way race and gender intertwine within the industry.

As Hill Collins explains, “In a context where Whiteness as symbolic of both civilization and culture is used to separate objects from animals, racial difference constructed on the bedrock

of sexuality becomes the distinguishing feature in determining the type of objectification women will encounter” (139). While both white and black female performers encounter humiliation and sexual violence in mainstream interracial pornography, the level of both is directly related to their racial appearance. The jezebel trope can be linked historically to the justifications for the abuse of black female bodies: “Treating African-American women as pornographic objects and portraying them as sexualized animals, as prostitutes, created the controlling image of jezebel. Rape became the specific act of sexual violence forced on Black women, with the myth of the Black prostitute as its ideological justification” (Hill Collins 147). Because the black female performer participates in sex-for-money, her filmed experience of prostitution sold again and again, the violent sexual acts within the films, the dialogue used by the performers, and the marketing used to sell the experience focusses on the natural-state of the black woman as animalistic and deserving of degradation. This effectively justifies a violence and humiliation she experiences as her “natural-state” reproducing the jezebel trope within contemporary society.

As with many identity constructions, the jezebel cannot exist without its antithesis, the southern belle. This historical dichotomy is proliferated in mainstream pornography that traffics in these tropes, and the language surrounding them, for the marketing of both black and white female performers. Gender and race performances are a crucial component of the female performer’s participation in films created by *DogFart*. McPherson’s description of the pure, pious, white woman in need of protection is used often by the film. The actresses are often petite with very pale skin. Because they do not follow the proper gender performance (by having sex with black men), however, the actresses are punished both on and off set for their transgressions.

In an article for *TheRoot* titled “Is the Porn Industry Racist,” Keli Goff explores the consequences and stigma placed on female porn stars for doing interracial scenes.⁵ Goff quotes an interview with the famous Lexington Steele, a black male performer: “It’s just an element of American culture that still exists, and that is the feeling that a white female will be deflowered or soiled, if you will, by doing a scene with a black male...But that does speak to the continued existence of bigotry and racism, and I don’t think porno is unaffected by certain elements of American culture” (Goff). Steele specifically speaks to the purity myth of white women, a myth that if disproven, results in the humiliation and degradation of the woman involved, as evidenced by some of the dialogue in *DogFart’s* films. Referred to as “black cock sluts” and “disgusting whores,” the female performers are punished by effectively having their title of pure women, or even white women, stripped away. Once void of their purity, these women are no longer afforded the protection of their race, and as shown in the WMDGB videos. As upper class white women (the tagline refers to them as “spoiled suburban white girls”), these women fail to perform their gender and race correctly by “slumming it” with black men, stripping them of respect in the films the act it as they are spit on and slapped and of respect in reality where they can receive salary cuts for having done interracial work.

DogFart’s site *WifeWriting* traffics in the same sort of defilement, but uses a different part of the “southern belle” trope: submissiveness. With the headline “our white wives are starving for thick black meat,” the site makes it clear that the target audience is largely white heterosexual men with the inclusive word “our.” Using the combined degradation of writing vulgar phrases

⁵ See, http://www.theroot.com/articles/culture/2013/04/pornindustry_racism_whats_behind_it.html

such as “black cock slut” all over the white female performer’s bodies and the gonzo-style pornography, the type of fantasy being created is a punishment of white women where they face the ultimate humiliation of being “soiled” in every way possible by black men for the pleasure of their white husbands. Member’s comments revealed that viewers enjoy the videos where women who appeared to be a “good girl” are placed in extremely degrading positions: “Love the anal licking. Very subservient. Only wish she begged and screamed more. Super cute and wholesome looking girl too” and “Loved the derogatory messages written on her body like "I am a whore for black dick.”⁶ Discussing all interracial films featuring white women and black men, Gail Dines writes, “The focal point of these movies is the numerous ways in which a huge black penis can do damage to small white orifices, as a constant mention is made of her inability to deal with such a large penis” (Dines 136-7). Proving Dine’s assertion, the same member also comments, “Hey admin, how about this for a future theme. Pale Hot Ass Full Breasted Gorgeous White Woman. HUNG TO THE KNEES 3 or 5 Dark Skin Black Men. They write their stuff on her body while raping her in multiple positions. And get a good babe who can fake a realistic cry with tears streaming down her face. Guarantee this will be top rated if you do it” (“Roxy”). While there is also a description provided for the black male performers that I will discuss in the next chapter, the description of the ideal white female performer and shoot emphasize the theme of degradation and humiliation. The member specifically asks for a “pale” woman with “dark skin black men” creating a clear contrast in the racialized bodies. The member also wants the site to digress from its usual set up of only two performers focusing on oral sex to a gang-bang rape

⁶ *WifeWriting.com*, “Aspen Stevens,” “Keiko”

fantasy. For this member, a woman being degraded by being written on and having gonzo-style sex is not enough. Instead, more violence is needed to fulfill the fantasy and the violence needs to be believable: the deviant sexuality of the “black cock slut” is brought to light and then she is punished for it as she is raped by the “black brute.”

To demonstrate this dichotomy, the two sites *GhettoGaggers*⁷ and *FaceFucking* use different marketing strategies to advertise for the same porn content. Each site focuses on the complete degradation and debasement of its female performers with extreme and violent fellatio being performed. The women are often covered in their own tears, saliva, and even vomit, as men repetitively ram their penises down the women’s throats. However, there is one difference between the two sites and the female performers they feature: their race. *GhettoGaggers* uses racial stereotypes and slurs to market the sex acts between the black female performers and white male performers. *FaceFucking*, in contrast, features only white female and male performers, but does not traffic in any tropes surrounding whiteness. These white female bodies are not racialized in the same way and their race is certainly not fetishized in the same way. The videos of FF focus on the debasement of the performers by using gendered slurs instead of racial ones referring to the women as “cunts, sluts, bitches, etc.” Discussing the site *GG*, Gail Dines, anti-pornography activist, writes “Unlike much of gonzo, there is not attempt to even pretend that these women like the sex, as they are shown close to tears, grimacing, and, in many cases, thoroughly disgusted by the semen that is all over their eyes, mouth, and, nose” (130). She continues, “The role of such violence is to feminize her [the black female performer] into being a

⁷ Gail Dines also writes about *GhettoGaggers* in her work, *Pornland*.

real woman, and who better to deliver this message in a racist society than white men” (130). It is not the sexual acts that are sexually gratifying. It is the reduction of a Black female body to the subhuman, a body once again available for complete possession. The fantasy violent interracial website are selling is nothing short of slavery, a completely submissive Black woman to be used until she is covered in spit, vomit, and semen.

Issues of socioeconomic class also appear in the films and member’s comments. The use of the term “ghetto” in the site’s name and the repeated use of it in descriptions of the black female performers (“ghetto bitches,” “ghetto hoers,” “ghetto sluts,” etc) serves to solidify for the viewers that women in the films are lower class, and as such fulfill a specific stereotype of black women. Blogger Jamel Shabazz writes about the degradation of black women on GhettoGaggers:

After we get through with them they’re going to have to see a psychiatrist for the rest of their lives,” one attacker boasts on camera. In a typical video, three or four men take turns physically and mentally destroying their victims. During 90 minutes of barbarism, the perpetrators spit in their faces, slap them, stomp them and force some to crawl on all fours with chains around their necks. In other scenes, the women have watermelons smashed on their heads and then are forced to eat the melon, along with the men’s semen. Some women have their faces shoved into a toilet, much to the pleasure of the assailants. During the grotesque finale, the men shove their penises deep inside the women’s throats until they vomit into a large dog bowl, which is emptied on them. As the humiliated women cry, a host promises fans there will be new girls every week!

Shabazz has combined various scenes from a variety of shoots featuring different black female performers. It is clear from the list that the site focuses on particularly racist form of degradation, trafficking is such stereotypes as “watermelon eating” to further sexualize the race of the women. This example demonstrates that part of what is being used to turn-on the viewer is the

fantasy that *all* black women want this type of treatment, and perhaps more disturbingly, that they all *deserve* it.

White women experience a different type of expectation about their socioeconomic status. WMDGB focuses on the “spoiled suburban white girl” dressing the white female performers in stereotypically “ghetto” attire as a performance, a mockery of the fact that they enjoy sex with their black male partners. This is meant to be disrespectful to their upper class white fathers because they are behaving incorrectly, both in terms of their race and class. In “Roxy’s” *WifeWriting* shoot, one viewer refers to Roxy as “trailer trash” because of her “hair color.” Such a comment alludes to the fact that only “classy” white women or upper or middle class white women are desired as models to fulfill the fantasy of complete degradation.

While all of the sites uses acts of violence and sexual violence on the women, GhettoGaggers makes extreme violence the central focus of the films. In one video description, the writer claims that black female performer experience physical abuse at home and cites that as an excuse for why she should be abused in the pornographic film:

The reason Zahara Storm is sitting on our couch today is a depressing one. Her husband is not a nice guy. He uses her as a punching bag when he gets mad... but in his defense, she is a scandalous fucking dirtbag whore! Case in point, she's here tonight, behind his back. This is why Jimmy will never get married. All you cunts are a bunch of deceptive pigs. Anyway, getting knocked around by hubby trained Zahara to be a good obedient bitch for us. What's strange is that this weirdo craves the punishment. She can't cum unless some dude is treating her like dogshit. Well, she came to the right place. That's what we do.

Beyond the appalling nature of calling for sexual violence against victims of domestic abuse, the description in this video speaks to a larger culture problem. The storyline claims that Zahara

Storm is treated like property, like an animal by her husband and is deserving of such violence. Such logic works to reinforce the stereotype of the Jezebel, Zahara's promiscuity is inherent to her race and the fact that "she can't cum unless some dude is treating her like dogshit" perpetuates the myth that black women are animals with an unslakable thirst for wild sexual debauchery.

The website *CumBang* (CB), part of the DogFart Network, takes the appearance of southern culture and tropes in pornography to another level. CB's main premise is interracial sex between black female performers and white male performers, specifically "rednecks." The banner of the homepage tells the majority of the story with its rebel flags surrounding "CUMBANG" in block lettering and a screenshot from a film featuring a nude black woman surrounded by white men wearing confederate flag t-shirts. The site features two slogans: "Fine chocolate bitches disrespected by their black boyfriends one too many damn times" and "These sistas have defected to the other team out of pure spite!" Members referred to the women in racialized terms as well praising "Jessica Grabbit's" "nappy pussy."⁸

A few of the films feature a white female performer who coaxes the black female performer to have sex with white men and "teaches" them how to please "white meat." Placed in this role, the white female performer meets another requirement of the "southern belle." She echoes the position of the benevolent plantation mistress, teaching her slaves the correct way to run a white household, and shows the black female performer the correct way to fulfill the white man's fantasies. In every appearance of a white female performer, member comments display

⁸ http://www.cumbang.com/tour/black-bukkake/jessica_grabbit/#scene



Figure 1 1. [CumBang.com](http://www.cumbang.com) Main header

hostility at her being involved. In a shoot featuring “Jade Aspen” the comments discuss the appearance of “Stevie Shae” remarking: “the blonde is so fucking vile, please do not put her in any more scenes” and “word she is annoying and I'm white and I still think a dumb bitch is annoying.”⁹ The members make it clear that they are on the site to see black women in pornography, demonstrating that it is the race of the performer being sexualized. While the member comments on the site are telling, the descriptions given with each shoot in attempt to entice non-members to join the site traffic in the worst racial slurs. They also focus on the whiteness of the male performers and emphasize the southern (or more likely Confederate) theme of the shoots. The description given for the shoot with “Jessica Grabbit” provides a multitude of references to things that would identify the white male performers as southern:

Race relations are about to get a whole lot better thanks to Jessica Grabbit and her snow bunny pal. We've caught both ladies talking about the pros and cons of white and black cocks...Stevie's there the whole way to show her support as her

⁹http://www.cumbang.com/tour/black-bukkake/jade_aspen/#scene

black friend slurps down on 8 of the most insane rednecks this side of Alabama. Stevie's constant coaching and cheerleading brings out the inner slut in Jessica Grabbit. Jessica's mouth is never void of a white cock in this interracial sex bedlam. Jessica's fat ebony jugs get bent over a trash can as it's open season on her black pussy. Those country boys slam their Confederate cocks right past her Mason Dixon slit as she screams and pleads for more. This ebony whore wouldn't be fulfilling her love for white cocks unless she allowed each one to shoot it's grits all over her face. Stevie Shae looked on as her friend slowly drowned in Southern sauce and she couldn't be happier for her friend.

All of the language used to describe Jessica focuses on her race, using a variety of words to describe her body parts. Perhaps even more telling, is the way southern is equated with being white and subsequently redneck. It is not a far leap to consider the implications of the same video being produced in the Civil Rights era south, since the site uses words such as “Confederate” and “Mason Dixon” in the description of sex acts. Thus, the sex Jessica is having with a group of white men, while thinly veiled as an attempt for her to seek her own pleasure, becomes a punishment session where they hypersexual jezebel doubly fulfills the fantasies of white male viewers through a gang-bang with pseudo-klanmen and quells her supposed thirst for sex with white men. Discussing the violence of interracial pornography Ross writes, “This isn’t sex, it’s violence disguised as sex. If the Ku Klux Klan has put out the tape (and who knows if they didn’t make it), there would be an outrage. But in reality, it’s just another subgenera of porn” (Ross 60). Because of the taboo nature of pornography and the fear of censorship that is often cited in discussions about the problems within it, Ross is right. Hiding behind censorship laws, these pornographers can continue to create content that reproduces sexist and racist stereotypes and promotes violence disguised as sex against oppressed peoples.

Is then, all pornography doomed to reproduce the sexism and racism as that described above? What problems specifically could be addressed to change pornography to be less sexist, less racist, and more ethical in the content produced and the treatment of the performers? Engaging in an intersectional discussion of gender and class, Z. Fareen Parvez focuses attention of what she believes to be an under-used demographic, working-class women, and their perceptions and enjoyment of pornography. She concludes that “past experiences with... economic struggle led many of the women I interviewed to perceive porn acting as self-destructive and in some cases coercive” (625). Women who classified themselves as working-class, were more likely to see sex work as economic necessity, questioning in the women participating in the films would do that in a better financial situation (623). Because the videos were created for the “male gaze,” without consideration of women viewers, the women felt a disconnect, especially when considering their own financial situations in relation to the actresses in pornographic films.

Parvez’s analysis of the viewer experience of pornography also brings up the subject of violence in pornography. The women interviewed by Parvez stated that they were “turned off” by pornography that focused on violence or degradation of women, specifically in films that focused on rough sex and objectified the women in the films by zooming in to see only their genitals and breasts (618). Concerned that the women on screen were not enjoying the sexual acts that were shot in this way, the women viewers recognized and empathized with the actress’s and could not find pleasure in a type of sex that they would not enjoy (618). This list included: “‘cum-shots’ on the actress’ face, anal penetration, and three-way penetration” (618). Women also saw some

types of pornography as coercive and abusive, and even degrading to the actresses (623). Depictions of violence and degradation made women less likely to perceive the sexual pleasure portrayed by the actress as real, connecting violence with the theme of “emotional labor” (620). All of the problems with pornography that the women identified are key features of the gonzo-style pornography—focused on making sure the viewer can imagine themselves as the male in the scene—that this type of interracial pornography focuses on. When comparing Parvez’s findings to the material in films like *WMDGB*, *GhettoGaggers*, and *CumBang*, the sexual acts and violent imagery that women are “turned off” by are present in every single film. The presence of these sexual acts helps to solidify the fact that these sites are creating pornography to satisfy the white male gaze, and as such the films seek to push the limit of sexual objectification and degradation of white and black women’s bodies because they can, because the demographic demands it.

Another major problem in the creation of pornography that could be addressed is the race and gender of the people working behind the camera. For white female performers, choosing to do scenes with a black male performer means taking a pay cut and possibly losing work in the future. As Lexington Steele explains, “Ironically, if a black female performer takes the option to not perform with a white male performer, she's almost blacklisted -- pardon the pun -- by the majority of adult directors and producers, who in most cases are white and would take personal offense and spread the word that the girl should not be booked” (*The Root*). This double standard reflects a racism behind the camera: if black women want to work in the industry, they should always choose to work with white male performers, because (thanks to the logic of the white

men in charge) why wouldn't she? With such rampant racism in directing and producing, it would be expected to bleed into the material being produced.

But even more disconcerting than the double standard regarding interracial sex scenes within the industry is the double standard regarding compensation. While men of different races are compensated in a comparable fashion, it is an industry practice that black women are paid substantially less than white women, regardless of the project or performance. Misty Stone, who has been called the Halle Berry of the porn industry for her ability to achieve crossover stardom with an extremely diverse fan base, acknowledged that despite her stardom, she is still compensated less than her white peers. She explained that her bookings went down once her rates increased, despite the fact that they had increased based on her popularity and stardom. She further explained that for certain, more extreme sexual acts, she knows white colleagues who were offered \$3,000, while she was offered around \$1,500 and occasionally as low as \$1,200. She has so far declined to participate in such scenes. (*The Root*)

With white men making the majority of the decisions in directing and production, it becomes harder to challenge the standard of the white male fantasy that is created again and again. If women and people of color are given more chances to produce pornography, it does not mean that the porn magically becomes unproblematic. It does present more of a potential to create pornography that they would want to watch, porn that has the potential to eliminate racist and sexist stereotypes. In her interview with *The Root*, Misty Stone was asked "what could be done to change things in the industry." Her reply solidifies the claim that the person behind the camera really matters: "Diversifying who makes decisions within the industry matters." Stone "... recently incorporated her own adult film company, although it has not yet made its first project. She joked that she wanted to have a company populated with black performers and 'one token white girl,' a play on the fact that she has so often been the token black girl."

Discussions surrounding the problems in pornography are rarely heard outside of circles around the religious right and anti-pornography feminists and activists. Anti-pornography activist Gail Dines writes about the reason examining pornography as a cultural product is important: “While these stereotypes are often a product of the past, they are cemented in the present every time a user masturbates to them. This is a powerful way to deliver racist ideology, as it not only makes visible the supposed sexual debauchery of the targeted group, but also sexualized the racism in ways that make the actual racism invisible in the mind of most consumers and non-consumers alike (Dines 140). Pornography that presents such racially and sexually violent imagery sexualizes violence against women’s bodies and normalizes the racist and sexist language and actions used against them. More conversations about the content of pornography and more conversations about what could work to change pornography need to happen. It is unlikely that porn will be going away anytime soon. Furthermore, it would be reductive to overlook that some women have found empowerment through watching porn and even participating as performers in pornography. However, it is obvious that these kinds of pornographic films are destructive to the efforts of seeking equality and eliminating sexism and racism within society. Until these issues are addressed both in front of and behind the camera, these cultural products will continue to normalize the violent treatment of women and people of color to a generation logging on to get off to the degradation and humiliation of oppressed peoples.

CHAPTER III
BRUTES AND SUITS:
WHITE MALE META-VOYEURISM
AND THE BLACK SURROGATE PHALLUS

I think of black-man dick and I think that once upon a time we were hung from trees for being, well, hung. The sexual beast, the loin-engorged predator, the big-dick destroyer not just of white women but also of white men's sense of themselves. That's where black men have found themselves, culturally speaking: hung. Strung up from trees; lynched to protect the demure pureness of white women; dissed to soothe the memory sin of slave-raping white masters; castrated to save the community from the sexual brutality black men trail behind them like a scent—the scent of the stereotypical boogeyman created by the fears of the nation.
—Scott Poulson-Bryant

In his book *Hung: A Meditation on the Measure of Black Men in America*, Scott Poulson-Bryant examines the myth surrounding the black penis and how this has influenced the perception of black men both inside and outside of the black community. While Poulson's book would not be considered academic, it does take an introspective look at the racist culture that continues to measure the success of black men by their sexual prowess, simultaneously painting them as the rapist in the night to be feared or the taboo sexual encounter of experiencing "big black cock." Historically, Black men were painted as the antithesis to the white men, as inherently threatening to the purity of white women. Historically in the South, white upperclass women have been defined as the epitome of morality, to the point of serving as the moral center for both the family and the community (Hodes 199). Piety and purity were of the utmost

importance. Southern femininity was defined by a woman's ability to maintain a specific aesthetic for herself, her family, and her home. She was expected to be docile, demure, and especially, submissive to the men in her life, specifically her husband and her God. This dichotomy created a cause for white southerners after slavery, a cause that was soon picked up by hate groups like the Ku Klux Klan. In an interview with online publication *The Root*, Mark Potok with the Southern Poverty Law Center, addresses the correlation with hate groups and pornography: "Racism has so much to do with sex, and always has. The first era [Ku Klux] Klan was absolutely obsessed with fear of white women being violated by black men... Many movement men are involved with the sex industry or child porn." Potok attests to the metamorphoses of the forbidden into the fetishized. While the "fear of white women being violated by black men" may not be overtly expressed into contemporary culture (at least outside of white supremacists groups), the fear is still present in both the marketing of and the rhetoric used in interracial pornography. According to *Adult Video News*, interracial pornography is one of the most popular and fastest growing subcategories of porn, and overwhelmingly these films focus on black male and white female performers¹⁰. The black male body becomes an animalistic attraction as it is juxtaposed to the implied purity of the white female body. The historical anxiety of seeing black men with white women sexually shifts to desire for the "other," to experience the exotic sexuality of the "black beast." From this fantasy, the black male performer becomes a surrogate phallus for the white male viewers who can, as commonly noted in the sex worker community, "point and criticize with one hand and jack off with the other." To understand how

¹⁰ *TheRoot*

this transition from anxiety to desire happens, it is necessary to understand how black male bodies were relegated to horror stories of the rape and defilement of white women within the Southern conscious.

Discussing the way black bodies have been used in horror films, Robin Means Coleman writes, “[blacks in horror] films have contributed significantly to discussions and debates regarding not only Blackness, but also its proximity to interpretations of what is horrifying and where it is embodied” (6). While Means Coleman does not address pornography in her article, I think her insight on the use of black bodies in media is pertinent to a discussion of pornography and the body black male performer. A white female performer is seen as “unclean” after a scene with a black male performer because of the anxiety projected by society onto the black male body. This projection produces and reproduces the “black brute” trope that has plagued black men for centuries, making black male sexuality both fetishized and forbidden. In this chapter, I will explore the way racism is reproduced in pornography through the trope of the “black brute” and the way black and white male performers are marketed dichotomously. Black male performers in interracial pornography present an opportunity to critique the “meta-performance” of the depiction of the “black brute” on screen: they are characters, performances of

performativity¹¹. I will also explore the role of “meta-vouyerism” in white male viewers of interracial pornography to demonstrate the correlation between interracial pornography and racism outside of the adult entertainment world.

Given the legislation and societal attitudes surrounding interracial marriages or couples, it would seem odd that interracial pornography, that depicting a black man and white woman, has become one of the most popular genres of porn. Statistics currently show that regions with “conservative legislation on sexuality” such as the South, and specifically Mississippi watch the most porn online of any other state or region, and it is logical to assume that some of this porn would be interracial.¹² It is important to examine how gender and race are performed in studio produced pornography, giving a glimpse into how black bodies continue to be marketed and sold for the pleasure of a white audience, and more logically of white men. For the purposes of this paper, I will focus on pornography films marketed to white men that center around the “defiling” of white women by black male performers. I posit that through the critical examination of race and gender meta-performances in pornography, it is possible to understand how subversive performativity can be applied in porn to turn it into a tool that challenges societal norms and the constructions of race and gender.

¹¹ My definition of “performativity” comes from Judith Butler’s work *Gender Trouble*. Butler explains that gender is not innate, but rather a construction, a performance that comes from presenting oneself correctly: Gender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being. A political genealogy of gender ontologies, if it is successful, will deconstruct the substantive appearance of gender into its constitutive acts and locate and account for those acts within the compulsory frames set by the various forces that police the social appearance of gender. (193) I use “meta-performance” to discuss the gender or racial performances of characters—in order to acknowledge their creation and fictional status—but still attempt to examine them as representations of people constructed from societal norms.

¹² See, <http://consumerist.com/2009/03/05/which-state-consumes-the-most-online-porn/>

Black compulsive masculinity, defined by its hypermasculinity, "...is a product of the male-to-male cultural transmission of norms that emphasize toughness, sexual conquest, manipulation, and thrill seeking" (Oliver 202). The hypermasculinity that has defined black masculinity, while present in interracial pornography, takes another form. The trope of the "black brute" that emerged from literature defending slavery in the American South is crucial to understanding the meta-performance of black male actors in interracial pornography because the trope has always been dependent upon the alignment of the black male body with the animalistic. While the "black brute" has always remained attached to the black male body and the public fascination with the black penis, it is in pornography that this trope is performed over and over on the screen, reproducing the harmful cultural notion that black men are sexual beasts and best and predators at worst. While none of the videos or sites I will be analyzing use a specifically southern theme, the history of forbidden sexual relationships between black men and white women begins in the South, therefore it is important to explore, specifically how these racial and gendered performances grew out of southern culture. Southern culture has been entrenched in a plethora of white/black stereotypes since slavery, offering a dichotomous version of personalities, separating what is defined as clearly white and clearly black. This dichotomy extended to the sexuality of blacks. If white was defined as purity and morality, then black necessitated as the Other, would be defined as hypersexual with an inherently immoral version of sexuality. Black men have historically been cast as "Toms," subservient men happy to be in the care of whites, or brutes, ready to force their hypersexuality and stereotypically large penises on

an unsuspecting white woman¹³. The black brute became a figure to simultaneously fear and fantasize about for white southerners because of the aforementioned dichotomies. White women with their prized virginity and white men with their supposed Christian morality would have been barred from the exotic sexuality that the black brute assumes of black men. For those restrained by the decorum of high society, the horrifying becomes the erotic and therefore a taboo fantasy.

In *Reconstructing Dixie: Race, Gender, and Nostalgia in the Imagined South*, McPherson uses the importance of commonality to argue for a change in racial relations in the South. Working with intersectionality and the importance of shared culture, specifically race and gender, Tara McPherson posits her theory of lenticular logic. To explain her theory, she describes a lenticular post card with stereotypical images of a white woman in front of a plantation house and black mammy that is revealed by moving the post card (McPherson 26). These images cannot be seen at the same time, thus illustrating McPherson's theory that contemporary viewers have problems merging black and white and tend to see in binaries or a lenticular lens. She explains: "In post-Civil Rights America, the lenticular often serves to secure our understandings of race in precise ways, fixating on sameness of difference without allowing productive overlap or connection... Faced with racial complexity or inequity, even well-meaning southerners tend to clam up, often unsure of what to say or afraid to say the wrong thing" (27). Works such as "Black Monday" a pamphlet circulated by the White Citizens Council in Mississippi, show how prevalent this ideology was in the South during the 1950s, an ideology that created a foundation

¹³ See Poulson-Bryant's *Hung: A Meditation on the Measure of Black Men in America*, specifically chapters one and six.

for the trope of the “black brute” and the “southern woman.”¹⁴ These stereotypes were perpetuated in an effort to keep white women “safe,” while black women were afforded no such protection due to the hypersexualization of the black female body.

The Brute stereotype embodied the threat of black masculinity to the purity of the white race. “The construction of white female purity in the post-Reconstruction South was dependent upon images of black men as bestial...” (Hodes 199). Furthermore, “in an effort to maintain the rigid racial categories of ‘black’ and ‘white’ that were vital to racial hierarchy, whites argues as well for the purity of white women in a way that began to cut more thoroughly across class lines” (177). Miscegenation laws in various southern states speaks to this fear of blurring the races with interracial relationships punished by law and the public through lynchings. Religious rhetoric and Biblical evidence was often cited for why the two races should not mix such as, “If God would’ve intended for the races to mix he wouldn’t have created them different.” (*Mississippi Burning*). As discussed earlier in the paper, historically in the South, white women have been defined as the epitome of morality, to the point of serving as the moral center for both the family and the community. Piety and purity were of the utmost importance. Any threat to this morality, to white southern womanhood, was treated with the utmost severity. In their work *A Festival of Violence*, Tolnay and Beck identify the reasons cited for the lynchings of black men and women during the years after Reconstruction. The authors use a combination of statistical data and

¹⁴ “The movement [of the White Citizens Council, led by Mississippi Circuit Court Judge Tom P. Brady, grew to encompass virtually the state's entire white business class. Council members published a book entitled *Black Monday* which outlined their simple beliefs: African Americans were inferior to whites and the races must remain separate. ‘If in one mighty voice we do not protest this travesty on justice, we might as well surrender,’ Brady wrote.” —*American Experience: The Murder of Emmett Till*

descriptions of individual lynchings to prove their argument that the economy and social status were the causes for the southern lynchings: “We suggest that southern whites did not resort to mob violence to compensate for a weak and inefficient criminal justice system. Rather, they used lynchings as a tool for maintaining dominance in a society that was forced to accept a revolutionary change in the status of blacks—from slaves to freedom” (Tolnay and Beck 256). For the most part, crimes that resulted in the murder of these men were infractions against a white woman or child. The most common was rape, followed by other instances such as “whistling at a white woman” or “making a white baby cry” (256). Tolnay and Beck’s assertion that lynchings were used for “maintaining dominance” is a crucial one. Lynchings served as a way for southern whites to retaliate against a shifting culture and social order. While I would never equate the extreme violence of lynching with the violence in pornography, I think that Tolnay and Beck’s analysis of the motivations behind lynching can be used to understand why racist viewers are aroused by watching sexual acts performed by those they purport to hate.

Though pornography has garnered some supporters in recent years, especially among new wave feminists and young supporters of “Tumblr-feminism,” the very construction of mainstream contemporary pornography focuses on the degradation and objectification of bodies, turning people into consumer commodities available for purchase. In their article “Racism and Sexism in Interracial Pornography,” Cowan and Campbell review the ways sexism and racism are created in specifically interracial pornography. They explore how this works, and the exploitation of a dark history that allows racism to be perpetuated: “Black and interracial pornography came into the market in 1983 and is produced and marketed for a White male

audience...It is not the fact that pornography portrays African-American people that makes it racist. It is the fact that it exploits the history of slavery and myths surrounding and oppressing people of color” (325). In the realm of porn, “interracial porn” is deemed a specific genre and in some circles, a fetish. This fetishization works to establish a taboo around sexual encounters between black men and white women, a taboo that both white men and black men have enjoyed historically for different reasons. In a post on psychforums.com titled “Addicted to interracial porn” a user explains:

I am a 23 year old white male, I used to watch a lot of ordinary white men/white women porn. But the past 6 months I constantly fantasize and watch only black men/white women porn. And it’s the only time when I look at the guys big dick and feel jealous of his sexual prowess, and how the white women enjoys it. I feel extremely embarrassed of this fantasy and hide it from everyone. It’s the only time when fascinated with the big black penis, but don’t desire a relationship with a man. What is really causing this and why, is it a fetish. I still am extremely attracted to women, and love everything about women, but its when a see black men, blonde women porn that I cannot control myself.

As this viewer demonstrates, the appeal of interracial pornography is double-sided. While the white male viewer arguably enjoys the stereotype portrayed in such films (the black beast with a large penis), he is simultaneously emasculated to the point of questioning not only his sexual skill, but his actual sexuality. Through watching interracial porn, the viewer participates in the perpetuation of the black brute stereotype, voyeuristically participating in what would be defined as an exotic, animalistic type of sex. The white male viewer is able to be what he never can, the Other, in the safe private sphere of the home that offers relative anonymity.

To prove my point, a quick Google search for “interracial porn sites” yields over three million results, turning up site with such names as blackwhitepleasure.com, blackonblondes.com,

and apetube.com, the latter a blatantly racist play on the famous free porn site *Redtube*. Out of these three, the most popular paid site was undoubtedly *BlacksOnBlondes*. The site clearly markets itself off racist imagery. The homepage features black men performing a “thug” version of black masculinity with large jewelry, tattoos, and one performer baring his teeth to show off his “grille.” The introduction video begins with “Hey little girl, want some chocolate?” Beside the obvious racism and sexism (present in the infantilization of the female performers), the introduction video provides a revelation that may not be present to the everyday viewer. While the site is titled *BlacksonBlondes*, the female performers are all not blonde, proving that the important aspect of their performativity is not hair color as the website title intimates, but rather “race,” or the physical marker of the actress’ white skin. The video furthers sexism and racism further in its catchphrases such as, “black cock sluts,” “monster black dicks,” and “interracial nirvana.” If *BlacksOnBlondes* does not go far enough,

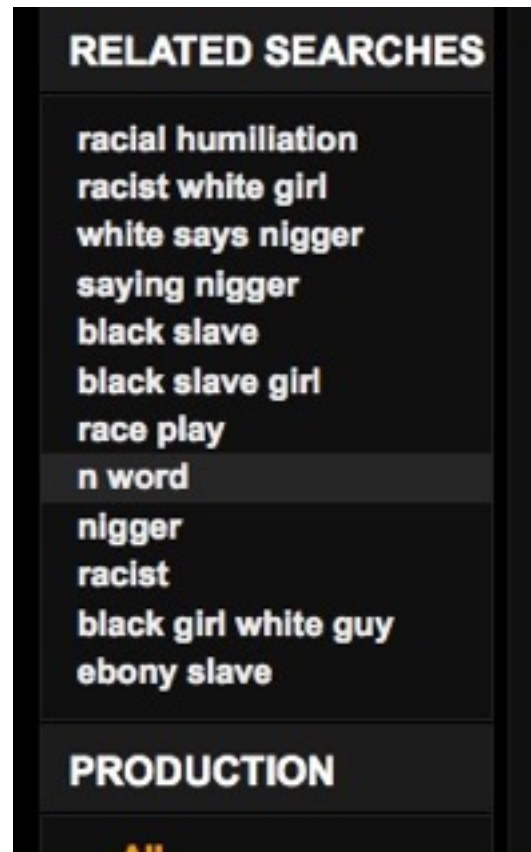


Figure 3. Screen-cap from Pornhub of searches related to “interracial”

their sister sites, all owned by the company *DogFart*, offers membership to all 22 interracial sites they own with the purchase of one membership¹⁵.

Out of all the sites however, the newest addition to the *DogFart* franchise relies solely on the “black brute” stereotype and a specific racial performance that furthers the taboo of sex between white women and black men: *Watching My Daughter Go Black*.¹⁶ The videos feature variations of the same basic plot. A white female performer is dressed to appear as a teenager and has sex with a black male performer while an older white male, dressed in business attire watches from the end of the couch with his head in his hands. If there is any doubt that the featured videos are inherently racist, then the members comments can prove their explicit racist imagery and even consumption. One such member comments: “I would love to see more race play and use of the n-word in these scenes as well, but I know that is a common request in the comments and that you have to work in where in makes sense.”¹⁷ Apparently, the racist



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¹⁷ See, http://www.watchingmydaughtergoblack.com/tour/interracial-porn/tiffany_kohl/#scene

Figure 3. *WMDGB* Main header

performance of black men dresses as “gangsters” while the white men discuss their “big black cocks” as they perform “disgusting” acts with their “young” and “innocent” daughters with “milky white skin” is not enough for many members on the site.¹⁸ Such comments appear on almost all of the site of the forty-six females performers, demonstrating that overwhelmingly, this type of pornography, even though it does not make use of racial slurs, perpetuate a racial performance that incites the need from viewers for an even great exaggerated racial performance, referred to as “race play.” Unfortunately, the members do not have profile pages on any of *DogFart’s* sites, making it impossible to determine the race of the members making such comments.

The site *Wife Writing*, also uses the “black brute” trope to market interracial porn featuring a black man and white woman. The main page claims to feature “white brides and black bulls,” “wives tagged up properly as black cock sluts,” “black cocks only - nothing under ten inches,” “our white wives are starving for thick black meat.¹⁹” The member comments for the site focus mostly on the female performers, but those addressing the male performers focus on disappointment with the hardness of the penis featured in the scene. Member “mjro” wrote a poem to give his feedback to the site saying “There once was a Porn Stud named Billy, / Who just couldn't keep up his black willy. / Sharon sucked his black phallus, / till her knees grew a callus.. / but Billy forgot his Ciallis.....beautiful girl.... a wasted scene!²⁰” Other members commented when a performer’s penis was a “6 in hot dog bun,” implying that the only reason to

¹⁸ Excerpts taken from various member comments on multiple videos.

¹⁹ <http://www.wifewriting.com/tour/>

²⁰ <http://www.wifewriting.com/tour/?p=5> (“Sharon”)

watch a black male performer was for the size of his penis. These comments are reflect the way the black male body has been aligned with the bestial and eroticized as such. Members feel free to make these comments referring to the black male performers as “meat” and criticizing their bodies as if they were once again on the auction block for white men to inspect every feature of their body, their masculinity, their worth. Black men are only valuable when they are able to perform their bestiality by “destroying” white women and degrading them in all of the ways that would be socially unacceptable for white men to do. The same commenter (named “funn”) also called for more brutality in the films. Here he address the site administrator directly: “Hey admin, how about this for a future theme. Pale Hot Ass Full Breasted Gorgeous White Woman. HUNG TO THE KNEES 3 or 5 Dark Skin Black Men. They write their stuff on her body while raping her in multiple positions. And get a good babe who can fake a realistic cry with tears streaming down her face. Guarantee this will be top rated if you do it.²¹” The suggestion for brutality appeared in multiple comments asking for more films featuring specific black performers who knew how to “destroy white pussy.” Implied in this request is not only the existence of the stereotype of the “black brute” seeking to destroy the white women of the community, but also a call, a demand for it. These viewers, the majority of which are white men, want to watch black men “rape” and “destroy” white women in an animalistic way, fetishizing the very behavior that Poulson-Bryant identifies as the reason for the lynching of black men historically. These comments identify the real presence of the stereotype of the “black brute” in pornography driven by the demand for it by white viewers. White viewers dictate the content,

²¹ <http://www.wifewriting.com/tour/?p=8> (“Roxy”)

white directors and producers oblige, and then the trope is reproduced as a culturally accepted idea by society. The line between fetishized fear of black men and the real fear of black men that ends in the deaths of black men and boys like Trayvon Martin becomes blurred as this type of pornography becomes more and more popular. The same fear that killed Emmett Till is allowed to go unchecked in a cultural product that is often defended by anti-censorship rhetoric and is not often discussed as the influential medium that it is.

In an interview with *The Root*, pornography performer Lexington Steele discussed the taboo surrounding white female performers participating in scenes with black male performers saying:

It's just an element of American culture that still exists, and that is the feeling that a white female will be deflowered or soiled, if you will, by doing a scene with a black male... But that does speak to the continued existence of bigotry and racism, and I don't think porno is unaffected by certain elements of American culture... And quite honestly, adult media is the only major business that allows for the practice of exclusion based upon race²².

Steele speaks from experience, becoming most popular for his performances in interracial films with white women sometimes referred to by the slang “dogfart.”²³ Trafficking in the same fantasy of defilement, *Watching My Mom Go Black*²⁴, WMDGB’s sister site, launched a few years after the success of the niche pornography that featured meta-vouyerism. This iteration of meta-vouyerism focuses on “white MILF black cock sluts” that use sex with black men as “punishment” for the bad behavior of their white sons. WMMGB traffics is the same racist

²² http://www.theroot.com/articles/culture/2013/04/pornindustry_racism_whats_behind_it.2.html

²³ Along with his AVN awards for performer of the year, Steele was also awarded an AVN in 2006 for the “Best Interracial Release” and in 2008 for the “Best Ethnic Themed Series - Black.” (LexSteele.com)

²⁴ Will be referred to as WMMGB.

stereotypes of the “hood” or “gansta” black man who is friends with her son. The focus of these videos is not only the punishment or degradation of the pure “southern belle” trope that appears in *WMDGB*, but again serves to “prove” the white male assumption that all white women secretly want sex with black men. This justification for caution and even violence is then passed on to a younger generation of white men who are taught that they should not only discipline and control the sexuality of black men, but the sexuality of their mothers.

Anti-pornography activist Gail Dines identifies the rampant racism in mainstream pornography in the seventh chapter of her work *Pornland: How Porn has Hijacked our Sexuality*. In “Racy Sex, Sexy Racism: Porn from the Dark Side,” Hines focuses on various iterations of racism within film pornography. She describes the way black male performers’ sexuality is racialized and subsequently bestialized by both marketing and production of interracial films (131). “And what better way to debase a white woman, in the eyes of white men, than to have her penetrated over and over again by that which as been designated sexually perverse, savage, and debauched” (136). Hines also analyzes the role of the white male viewer:

The white man watching this, or indeed any IP movie gets to shed his whiteness and identify with a group of men who seem to be tailor-made for porn. As the white man unzips, he steps out of the socially constructed cage of whiteness and into a thoroughly debauched world of huge, semen-filled black penises out to rip, tear, pummel and hammer white women into the utter subordination of becoming the fuckee. (139)

The white men Hines describes above appear very literally in the films of *WMDGB* and *WMMGB*. From member comments, it also becomes clear that white men are the viewers leaving feedback and are imagining themselves as the destroyer of white women from the relative safety

of being behind a computer screen. While they may fantasize about the complete subjugation and humiliation of women, calling for rougher sex and “more hardcore anal,” they are given the freedom to point once again at the “black brute” as the true threat to white womanhood.

In what could be read as an attempt to control this fear of black and female sexuality, one of *DogFart's* sites, *Cuckold Sessions*, often traffics in the fantasy of meta-voyuerism and control, when white men are placed in the role of “dominants” who remain clothed throughout the scene while directing the white female and black male performers. Here black men are undoubtedly dehumanized in a scene reminiscent of slavery as the white male is placed in complete control of the black male’s body. Many of the videos focus on “small white dicks” wanting to “spice up” their sex life by having their girlfriend or wife have sex with a black man. Dines addresses this phenomenon as well, discussing a specific shoot available at *BlacksonBlondes*: “What we have here is a playing out of a stereotype that demarcates the white man as civilized...versus the uncivilized animalistic black man who, unencumbered by social norms and dictates of bodily control really knows how to please a woman” (138). Once again, white men are provided a safe distance at which to experience “wild” sexuality. By placing themselves in the role of the meta-voyuer, they are twice removed from the sexual debauchery happening on screen, but can still participate in the taboo sexual fantasy without the condemnation of polite (white) society.

While the white women in these films are certainly objectified, they too are complicit in and further the racial stereotypes attached to the black male performers. The preview videos for the individual shoots the paid member has access to feature a picture-in-picture interview with the individual actors and sample scenes from the video. Videos on several of the sites begin with

a white woman describing how much she did not want to have sex with a black man, placing the emphasis on black. They then explain their shock to discover they are actually “black cock sluts” and find the experience enjoyable. Addressing the objectification and dehumanization of black male performers Cowan and Campbell explain: “Pornography also reinforces racial sexual stereotypes such as the idea that the Black man is prodigiously sexually endowed...they are not shown as people, but as sex machines, even more so than other characters...Black men may not be violated in the same manner as women, but they are dehumanized nonetheless” (335). The inclusion of the white female performers in this dehumanization is important to maintaining the myth of the racial superiority of white men. If a white woman expects not to enjoy sex with a black man, even with the myth “once you go black you never go back,” solely because of his race, then it reproduces two stereotypes: (1) white women are all secretly “black cock sluts” and thus worthy of inferior status to white men; (2) black men will always violate a white woman given the chance, even if she is reluctant, fulfilling the stereotype of the “black brute.”

All of these sites operate within and use to their advantage the “myths surrounding people of color” that Cowan and Campbell identify as one of the largest problems with interracial pornography. Instead of normalizing what has been historically considered a taboo form of sex, the sites use this taboo to their advantage, marketing their pornography as exotic. The *DogFart Network* consists of 22 different sites and 15 of them focus on sex between black men and white women. Two of them, *Blacks on Boys* and *Gloryholes & Handjobs*, focus on sex between black men and younger white men or “twinks.” Each of the sites focus specifically on the body part that has come to represent black hypermasculinity in many aspects of contemporary culture: the

black penis. Using such words as “huge,” “massive,” and even “monster” the sights focus on the pairing of animalistic black men with petite women and men and the implied impossibility of a smaller person being able to “take” the pain of sex with a black man²⁵. This idea of the “big black cock” and the subsequent “big black cock slut” is the main language used in the videos of DogFart that focus on black men and white women.

The sexism and racism rampant in videos produced by sites such as *DogFart's* has also started to appear in gay interracial pornography. In his article, “Let’s Talk about Interracial Porn,” Jarret Neal discusses the origins of the interracial porn industry and how those roles have evolved with the rise in gay porn for men²⁶. Some of Neal’s most important commentary discusses the history of slavery and racism that has continued to define the creation of gay porn and how roles are ascribed to the black and white actors in the films. Neal does assess, however, that some black actors are branching out to participate as “bottoms” or the submissive partner to a white “top” or dominant. Historically, and for obvious reasons, this would be problematic given the place of power and privilege that white men have assumed in the United States.

Neal discusses the type of hypermasculine performativity, and internalized racism, that is necessary for black male viewership of gay porn: “The catalogue of black gay porn, in which all of the participants are of African descent, ascribes to conventions that are common in gay porn: straight male seduction, muscle worship, and exhibitionism can all be found in gay porn specifically marketed to a black viewership” (Neal 23). For black men to be able to accept the

²⁵ These words appear in the site descriptions on the entry page on *BlacksonBlondes*.

²⁶ While I cannot give this topic the space it deserves, I feel that mentioning the racial components of navigating scene partners for male performers in gay pornography is crucial to understanding that this racism is not limited to straight porn.

femininity that has become associated with gay culture, gay porn marketed to black men plays up the hypermasculine performativity that is present in many areas of black culture such as hip-hop or thug culture and the worship of the body of the black male athlete. Neal says that this hypermasculinity is necessary for white viewers as well: “The homo-thug presents white-collar gay white men with an opportunity to indulge their lust without leaving the insular world they inhabit. By viewing interracial gay porn, gay white men who purposely distance themselves from genuine relationships with African-American men can indulge their private sexual fantasies while allowing racist and stereotypical beliefs regarding black men to persist” (24). Like the voyeuristic elements of male-female interracial pornography, the films Neal discusses are created with the white male gaze in mind, situating the racial and gender performances of the men involved within the realm of stereotypes. However, actors such as Dred Scott, explains Neal, are attempting to create what I would call a “subversive performativity.” I would argue, that Dred Scott’s hypermasculinity, and his decision to “bottom” for white male performers (albeit only those from Europe) challenges the notion that a sexual interaction where a white male takes on the dominant role is inherently racist²⁷.

There are problems, however, with attempting to analyze how the viewer will ultimately consume and understand the pornographic material being produced. As many feminists have posed, what happens when such a dynamic is filtered through the subjective lens of the reader? In his article “Sadomasochism As Make-Believe”, Nils-Hennes Stear examines arguments from

²⁷ In the interview, Scott explains that the problem with bottoming for white men from America, comes from the difference in historical race relations, a problem many performers do not perceive as an issue with white men from Eastern Europe.

previous scholars that challenge the radical feminist idea that sadomasochism is not feminist. Stear discusses the idea of “glorification” that radical feminists have used in arguments against BDSM as an extension of patriarchy: “...we may not believe that the filmmakers are consciously trying to endorse anything at all, and yet claim that their work glorifies a dubious principle, regardless. In fact, we may even know that the authors are averse to what their film purportedly glorifies. In this case, glorification involves the manner in which audiences receive the film. Naive or foolish viewers may misconstrue a game of make-believe, into which a gangster film invites them, as somehow approving the actual use of weapons” (Stear 35). This “glorification,” according to Stear, occurs from the viewers perspective. As with any type of work, interracial gay porn is ultimately up to the interpretation of the viewer, and while some may see, as I would argue, liberated men exploring different power dynamics of sexuality and race, others may view the work as an instruction manual, taking the power exchange out of context. Such a viewing could be potentially dangerous, and would indeed work to perpetuate racial and patriarchal ideals of masculinity and racial performance. With discussion, however, and a critical viewing, it is possible to view these films as subversive, anti-racist, and even feminist, where the goal at the end of the film is not sexual domination or racial degradation, but rather a sexually satisfying encounter.

Lawrence C. Ross Jr.’s book *Money Shot: Wild Days and Lonely Nights Inside the Black Porn Industry* takes a journalistic approach to examining the porn industry from the perspective of black male and female performers. Ross frames the book by spending a year with Lexington

Steele, documenting his journey from amateur to owning his own production studio. In his introduction, Ross explains the role blacks have been placed into by a white-dominated industry:

If you are black in porn, you tend to be the invisible man or woman in the invisible industry. Blackness in porn is seen as peculiar, different, and not really that necessary to the white porn that makes the most scroll for porn producers. Blacks in porn are, for the most part, considered a niche, like chicks with dicks and tiny Asian women, whose subjects are exploited as fetishes. Like children in church, black porn actors and actresses are to be seen (when needed) but not heard. (4)

If representation behind the camera and in production is necessary to producing pornography featuring black performers that is not considered “niche,” then the prognosis for the industry looks grim. As Dines observed about the make-up of production positions, “the racial politics of the porn industry today mirror those of pop culture in that a majority of people involved in the production end of the business is white” (122). The whiteness behind the camera undoubtedly contributes to the continued fetishization of black performers, and specifically black men.

Echoing this assessment of the presentation of black sexuality in media, Patricia Hill Collins writes:

But without challenging a U.S. sexual politics that installs a hegemonic White masculinity in the center of all assessments of human worth as the gold standard against which we are all measured (and that includes White men)...that justifies the new racism with a media saturated with updated class-specific images of bucks and jezebels, how can African Americans develop a more progressive Black sexual politics? (304).

Interracial pornography is part of the media Hill Collins addresses, but often it is forgotten as a taboo subject, regulated to discussions by pornography scholars or condemned wholesale for the depiction of women, without much attention to the problems it presents with depictions of race.

Inarguably, interracial pornography and the feelings of its actors prove that the effects of slavery and racism are still deeply felt by the black community, no matter how many people in privilege decide to argue that race is no longer a problem. There is a question that must be asked from the analysis of these films: is this the way that meta-performativity can function to overcome racism or sexism? I would argue that it is possible, if not probable. Until genres of porn are discussed openly in classrooms where students are given the tools to think critically about pornographic material, it is unlikely that there will be a mass development of critical consciousness. I think, however, that as porn becomes more easily accessible, it is important to consider such classes in an effort to combat the rampant sexism and racism reproduced through the viewing of porn such as that discussed here. Until these representations of gender and racial performance can be challenged and perhaps defetishized, porn will continue to serve as a site of reproduction that works to uphold white and male privilege.

CHAPTER IV

SOUTHERN SUBMISSION: A SUBVERSIVE READING OF THE D/S SERIES *HOT TEXAS BOSSES*

In the previous chapters, I have discussed the ways that mainstream pornography might change in order to make a move away from the sexism and racism that has plagued it for so long. As previously discussed, I think it is possible for performers to participate in projects that feel subversive for them. The next step, I believe, is to champion the creation of a broader “subversive pornography” that works to challenge contemporary understandings of sexuality and to actively challenge the racist and sexist stereotypes that have dominated pornography historically. But what would subversive pornography even look like? How would we recognize it? Where would we begin to look? I began my exploration in the Tumblr community of sex workers: cam girls, clip models, phone sex workers, dominatrixes, and more. The community is comprised of many young women who use sex work for a variety of reasons, everything from a hobby to survival. I noticed very quickly that these women were educated and openly voiced opinions about sex work and the contemporary issues surrounding it. The phrase I heard most often was “ethical pornography,” and wanting to explore this concept, I sought out a book recommendation from one of the women: *The Feminist Porn Book*.

Seeking to analyze what sex workers in the Tumblr community refer to as “ethical

porn,”²⁸ *The Feminist Porn Book* explores, from the view of participants of the porn industry and porn scholars, the potential for porn as a site of power, agency, and subversion. The book, while not entirely sociological, provides an imagining by some scholars of what porn can be when it is not produced for the mainstream “male gaze” (12). The book includes the voices of sex workers and how they envision their pornography to be feminist. With essays ranging from topics such as “hyper-corporeality, genderqueerness, transfemininity, feminized masculinity, transgressive racial performance, and disability” (18). Finding inspiration from these essays that included voices of sex workers and academics, I decided to examine a form of pornography that has maintained wide success with women readers and has recently seen a resurgence in support and readership: erotica.

To aid in my analysis, I emailed a list of questions to romance author Lyla Sinclair and she gave some very telling answers. Some of her most poignant words came after the questions. She says, “Personally, I think I find these stories engaging because I was brought up in a very religious household (by parents from Texas and Louisiana) where sexuality felt taboo. I got the idea nice girls didn't want it. But if you're tied up...” (Felkins 2014). Her answer made me start to wonder about the ways women could use different kinks and sexual experiences to circumvent traditional attitudes surrounding sexuality and chastity. As I understand it, Sinclair is referring to a form of subversion in which these white women, policed into purity by religion and Southern tradition, use being tied up as a way derive pleasure from sex while alleviating possible guilt for

²⁸ “Ethical pornography” is porn created with clear, enthusiastic consent and focuses on depictions of sex that women enjoy, both on and off screen. It is most associated with amateur pornographers where women are the writers, directors, actors, and editors.

the encounter. Bondage, a part of BDSM, often relegated to the fringes as deviant sexuality (even within some feminist circles) becomes a tool to subvert the restrictions placed on women's sexuality by a patriarchal society. While the topic of BDSM has long been debated within the feminist movement, I wanted to examine a popular books series as a form of subversive pornography written from a woman's perspective (and a self-identified feminist) for the pleasure of women.

In recent years, romance novels and erotica have garnered attention from academics seeking to examine a popular genre that has long been discredited by the academy and ignore canonically because it is "women's writing" or more contemporarily "chick lit." Addressing the stigma that continues to surround romance novels and their authors, Sinclair says:

Women in this country are still stigmatized for sexuality in this country. No one is more aware of this than published romance writers who have any love scenes at all (even very tame ones) in their novels. Nearly all the romance, erotic romance and erotica authors I know are mothers and, often, grandmothers living perfectly normal real lives. However, if they aren't writing under secret pen names, they're constantly dealing with snide remarks from women acquaintances saying they don't read "trash," and by male acquaintances wiggling their eyebrows and asking about how they "researched" the love scenes. Although romance fiction is the best selling genre (see: <http://www.rwa.org/p/cm/ld/fid=580>), romance writers--nearly all of whom are women--get the least respect. So far, nearly every newspaper article I've seen about the Romance Writers of America national conference (run in the newspaper of whatever major city it's held in that year) has been snarky and full of cheesy puns, displaying disrespect that's not suffered by authors of any other genre. I think this is just a part of the general shaming of women for having sexual thoughts or, God forbid, acting on them in some way. Meanwhile, male writers can write about heinous rapes and murders and no one questions them about how they portrayed the crimes so graphically.--Eyebrow wiggle, 'So, how many women did you rape and murder to get that scene so disturbing?' (Felkins 2014)

Sinclair addresses the differences in attitudes toward sex scenes in women's writing versus

violent scenes in men's writing. While I will not be able to address the more sweeping argument of the value of romance novels overall, I think it is important to include a discussion of subversive pornography in a genre, that while written and not filmed, has dominated and thrived from the readership of women.

In 2011, the romance novel *Fifty Shades of Grey* was released and quickly skyrocketed to widespread fame in the United States. By bringing a BDSM relationship into popular culture, the series opened up new discussions about kinks in the bedroom and brought a revival of romance novels. Remarkable on the series and how it has changed attitudes surrounding discussions of erotica Sinclair writes, "However, I've noticed since the popularity of *50 Shades of Grey*, more and more female readers are posting openly on Facebook about the erotica they're reading. One young woman told me her aunt recommended one of my stories to her. I can't imagine one of my aunts ever recommending erotica to me, so maybe times truly are changing" (2014). The success of the *Fifty Shades* trilogy coupled with the increasing popularity of eReaders (because of the privacy they offer the reader when reading a "racy" novel) has led to an increase of BDSM themed romance novels available only for download, and thus a larger examination and discussion of what has previously been a secretive and taboo form of sexual expression. These novels include a special subsection of BDSM romance set in the South that feature the submission of both southern and northern white women and dominance of white southern men. For those outside of the BDSM scene and for many within the feminist movement, the general understanding of submission in a power exchange relationship is that it leads to the devaluing and objectification of the human body, stripping the female of any power or voice within a

sexual relationship. However, this is a broad generalization, failing to encompass all of the facets of a D/s (dominance and submission) relationship. In a critically aware, consensual D/s relationship, it is possible for a woman to be in a role of complete power. To state the issue bluntly, without a person who willingly gives submission, there is no dominant.

In this chapter, I intend to explore Sinclair's *Hot Texas Bosses* series focusing on the female protagonists in the novels *Training Tessa* and *Controlling Krysta*. Using Elizabeth Grosz's theory of corporeal feminism in *Volatile Bodies*, Judith Butler's concept of performativity in *Gender Trouble*, Tara McPherson's examination of the construction of southern women in popular culture in *Reconstructing Dixie: Race, Gender, and Nostalgia in the Imagined South*, and some historical background, I will explore the role of the submissive in a BDSM relationship, how that role has been depicted in southern romance novels, how this role fits within the contemporary construction of white southern womanhood, and how a submissive role played out through the inherently oppressed female body has the potential to garner some women more power in their relationships. I will use textual analysis through a theoretical framework and the findings of sociological studies of women in BDSM to explore the characters in these novels and how they function within their relationships with a dominant male. I posit that these women find power through their submission, fulfilling the role of "proper" white womanhood while ultimately maintaining the power position in a D/s relationship by giving the responsibility of her sexual pleasure to a dominant male. Furthermore, I posit that the performativity of exaggerated submissive femininity allows these female characters to subvert the oppressive gender roles

placed upon them, by distinguishing between their persona in and outside of the bedroom in interactions with men in positions of authority in both the public and private spheres.

Before I begin my textual analysis, I will define some key terms that I will be using throughout the text. When referring to “the body,” I mean the politicized physical body of people and the representations of such bodies, ultimately removed from the individual, that appear in various forms of media, including literature, television, music, and film. In this way, “body” is a site subjected to the policing of cultural norms. To describe the policing of these bodies, I will use the terms “corporeal oppression” and “performativity.” My definition of “performativity” comes from Judith Butler’s work *Gender Trouble*. Butler explains that gender is not innate, but rather a construction, a performance that comes from presenting oneself correctly:

Gender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being. A political genealogy of gender ontologies, if it is successful, will deconstruct the substantive appearance of gender into its constitutive acts and locate and account for those acts within the compulsory frames set by the various forces that police the social appearance of gender. (193)

Butler adds, “Such acts, gestures, generally construed...are performative in the sense that the essence or identity that they otherwise purport to express are fabrications manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means. That the gendered body is performative suggests that it has no ontological status apart from the various acts which constitute its reality” (Butler 185; emphasis in the original). She goes on to state that “[g]ender ought not to be construed as a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts follow; rather gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a

stylized repetition of acts” (191; emphasis in the original). As Butler explains, to define different genders across cultures there must be a deconstruction of gender into its “constitutive acts” and to examine the forces that “police” or control what is defined as acceptable gender performance within a group. From this policing, stems such oppressions as “corporeal oppression,” in which the body experiences oppression directly related to the embodied performance of gender such as clothing, cosmetics, skin tone, etc.

In order to understand how these character’s bodies serve as sites of both agency and oppression in their representation of southern white women and men, it is important to understand Elizabeth Grosz’s theory of corporeal feminism and how her effort to erase the mind/body split that has been constructed by modern society. Elizabeth Grosz focuses on the reclaiming of the female body in her philosophical work *Volatile Bodies*. She argues that “the male/female opposition has been closely allied with the mind/body opposition...Patriarchal oppression in, other words, justifies itself, at least in part, by connecting women much more closely than men to the body, and through this identification, restricting women’s social and economic roles to (pseudo) biological terms” (Grosz 14). Through an exploration of the body in various philosophical and theoretical texts, Grosz formulates a new wave of feminism that would focus the feminist agenda on breaking down the most innately oppressive force that women are faced with: the female body. Through a reclaiming of patriarchy’s main source of power over women (through the oppression that begins at birth biologically by placing females in the gender role of woman), women may have a chance to eliminate the oppression at the source. While the reading of such a text in this way is logical from the way it is written, it is important to consider

the application of such theories to reality. I therefore base my analysis in theory that has been applied to reality, while making no claims that literature can be examined in the same way as real people in real BDSM relationships, rather that literature can be studied as a *reflection* of reality, an imagining of what could be in the author's mind.

In Lyla Sinclair's *Hot Texas Bosses* series, gender roles are challenged through performativity in the power exchange of BDSM. While the women are from the "North" and are not expected to perform the identity of "southern woman" in their respective home-states, their transplantation in the "South" requires the adoption and correct performance of the regionalized gender role. McPherson argues: "The performative nature of the lady signals a difference both in a kind and of degree, limning a very different history of race, gender, and place than that of other regions. Even if this difference in regional femininity were only one of degree, that difference has been fetishized, fixated on, and marketed for so long that it has taken hold, creeping into the white southern consciousness like kudzu" (152). Even though the performance of southern femininity has been constructed, because it has been reproduced time and time again in society is has a very real presence in culture, especially in the culture of those people who self-identify as "southern."

Before beginning textual analysis, it is important to consider the fictional nature of the erotica novel and the potential site of fiction of a D/s performance. In an interview posted to *LylaSinclair.com*, Sinclair answers questions about herself and specifically about her writing. She says "...I tend to write stories in which, through her romantic and/or sexual experiences, the heroine learns something about herself, overcomes an obstacle, or feels better about herself at the

end than she did at the beginning of the story..." (*LylaSinclair.com*). Sinclair's description of her leading ladies demonstrates that she intentionally created complex characters who grow through their experiences in her erotic romance novels. The protagonists of the Hot Texas Bosses series are not different. Each of the women are described as educated and strong-willed, by no means the docile "southern woman." It is through their relationships with the "bosses" that the women explore the submissive side of femininity, finding power through their performance of hyperfemininity in the relinquishing of control to their partners.

In his article "Sadomasochism As Make-Believe", Nils-Hennes Stear examines arguments from previous scholars that challenge the radical feminist idea that sadomasochism is not feminist. Stear takes this one step further to argue that practiced privately as "make-believe," sadomasochism can be feminist. I use Stear's argument to further my own argument of performativity, that submission, at least in a consensual D/s relationship is in fact a performance. This evidence is crucial to my argument of submission as subversive and not a reiteration of patriarchal standards for the gendered performance of woman. "Does this real sexual pleasure preclude SM from being a make-believe activity?...Remember that, though we *fictionally* fear the monster or *fictionally* grieve for Anna Karenina, ultimately, we really enjoy these works of fiction..." (Stear 32; emphasis in original). Therefore, "...to compare the sexual pleasure sadomasochists obtain from SM with the quasi-emotions one experiences when one engages with fictional works is to commit a category mistake. As such, role-play SM still constitutes a make-believe game" (Stear 32; emphasis in original). The experience of pleasure one feels when reading the novels, as Stear argues, is ultimately different than those participating in "make-

believe.” The demarcation between fiction and “make-believe” is important. While fiction is just that, fictional, “make-believe” takes place by merging fantasy and reality. Those participating in a BDSM scene can transition in and out of these “make-believe” spaces. But, as many feminists have posed, what happens when such a dynamic is filtered through the subjective lens of the reader?

To address this, Stear discusses the idea of “glorification” that radical feminists have used in arguments against BDSM as an extension of patriarchy: “...we may not believe that the filmmakers are consciously trying to endorse anything at all, and yet claim that their work glorifies a dubious principle, regardless. In fact, we may even know that the authors are averse to what their film purportedly glorifies. In this case, glorification involves the manner in which audiences receive the film. Naive or foolish viewers may misconstrue a game of make-believe, into which a gangster film invites them, as somehow approving the actual use of weapons” (Stear 35). This “glorification,” according to Stear, occurs from the viewer’s perspective. As with any type of work, erotic fiction is ultimately up to the interpretation of the reader, and while some may see, as I will argue, liberated women seeking a refuge from the constrictions placed upon them by gender performance, others may read the work as an instruction manual, taking the power exchange out of context. Such a reading could be potentially dangerous, and would indeed work to perpetuate patriarchal ideals of women’s sexuality. With discussion, however, and a critical reading, it is possible to read these novels as feminist, where the goal at the end of the novel is not marriage, but rather a sexually satisfying relationship.

Sinclair’s first novel of the *Hot Texas Bosses* series, *Training Tessa*, reads at first like a generic erotica novel with what appears to be a minimal plot and little character development. However, upon a closer read, it becomes clear that through a D/s relationship, Sinclair gives the protagonists the opportunity to explore gender roles and sexuality in the gender performances they feel most comfortable in. Tessa, the transplanted southern woman, goes to work for the Maddox brothers, what would be described as your stereotypical Texas men—well-muscled, tan, authoritative. In an interview with David Weir, Sinclair described how she created the male characters for the series, for who’s southernness appears to be completely coincidental, saying, “For erotica aimed at women, the fantasy is an alpha male-type, who might also happen to be a millionaire...something else interesting...Apparently, a lot of people have boss/office fantasies, plus the two male characters...are rich cowboy types. I guess rich-cowboy-boss may be an erotic romance triple threat” (Weir). Unarguably, Sinclair’s leading men display what many would call a hypermasculinity, aggressively pursuing their new secretary Tessa for sex on the job. While their behavior would alarm many feminist readers, their advances are accepted and relished by Tessa, demonstrated by her often enthusiastic consent to their almost animalistic advances.

A performance of southern identity is carried out by the men, Krysta, and eventually



Figure 4. *Training Tessa* Digital Cover

Tessa, through the coaxing of her new “cowboy” lover. Tessa makes several remarks regarding the South as she learns to navigate her relationship with her new employers, including one about the preference for a feminine appearance (*Tessa* 27). The men carry out their performance of southern masculinity, in an obvious way, through their dress (Dixon has a penchant for oversized belt buckles and both men are often described as wearing cowboy hats), their speech (each use familiar southern euphemisms beginning “my Daddy always used to say...”), and their expressions of devotion through wealth (Dixon remarks to Tessa that he wanted to get her a “Texas-sized” diamond). For the women, however, the performance is more subtle. McPherson addresses southern femininity as a performance that requires “an air of graciousness and a demeanor of submissive delicacy...” She says, “The belle or lady raises flirtation and softness to an art form, deploying a performance of heightened femininity to disguise both determination and potency” Ultimately, “[t]his performance is an agreed-on social fiction...here southern femininity glosses the body and adorns it, smoothing its surface by substituting manners and ritual for overt sexuality” (152-53). While the women are expected to behave this way in the office through the presentation of their bodies and their flirtatious interactions with clients, the women, through their role as submissive, are able to relish in “overt sexuality.” The women challenge patriarchy through their physical bodies, fulfilling the argument of Grosz, by using the physical nature of sex and masochism to explore and ultimately explode the constraints placed on them by their gender.

The “boss fantasy” that Sinclair mentions adds another level of power exchange and subsequent exploration to the women’s relationships. In her article “Pain As Culture: A

Postcolonial Feminist Approach To S/M And Women's Agency," Maneesha Deckha works to start a conversation between postcolonial feminist theory and the practice of S/M through a literature review, specifically using examples pertaining to corporate America as an S/M atmosphere. She lists "the features of S/M generated by corporate cultures" that work to: (1) normalize 'strict hierarchy' according to which rankings of personal superiority and inferiority are assigned; (2) repress freedom, including freedom of expression; (3) devalue low-ranking employees; and (4) motivate superiors to exert increasing levels of control and power over their subordinates (Chancer, 1998; J Williams, 2000)" (Deckha 136). This example shows how people operate within power exchanges everyday which may have the potential to remove D/s from something that is labeled taboo toward a critical examination of the relationship as a potential for sites of agency and power. While these identified features seem exceedingly harsh, when translated into the bedroom, these female characters experience *more* freedom by being able to experience a new type of kink while being out of control. Therefore, they perhaps are absolved of the possible guilt attached to free sexuality for women, allowing for a more complex performance of gender outside of the bedroom.

This power exchange within "corporate cultures" continues in the second novel in the series, as it centers on a relationship between a new secretary, Krysta, and her relationship with Mason. The novel also has the continuation of the Tessa/Dixon romance, with the two solidifying their emotional and physical connections. Krysta's excitement in a sexually submissive role becomes more interesting as the reader considers her background. Krysta is educated; she only takes the job at Maddox Brothers Inc. to help pay for graduate school. She is not the lustful,

simple woman who graced the covers of popular romance novels decades ago²⁹. Krysta is an intelligent, single woman, whom, as it is revealed to the reader through her internal monologues, has grappled with being turned on by sexual submission her whole life. In one such monologue, Krysta struggles with her desire to be Mason's "sex-slave:" "A memory flashed into my brain. My mother was driving me home from church, lecturing me about whores, and the evils of fornication. Sex was dirty. Sex was bad. Good girls didn't want to do it...I'd suspected for a while that I would find being punished for sexual thoughts arousing, but I tried to avoid exploring that idea in depth" (*Krysta* 23). Raised in Texas, Krysta has been taught that performing "southern woman" means being pious. In this recollection of her mother, her mother is policing the sexually promiscuous women as "whores" indicating that they have not preformed their gender correctly.

Even though she desires it, Krysta struggles with becoming Mason's "sex-slave" in a contractual agreement because of the submissive gender performance she has grown to despise:

Although I'd been terribly tempted in the past, I'd avoided websites discussing BDSM or novels portraying it. As a future psychologist, I knew I would tell my patients that these kinds of fantasies and sexual role-playing were completely normal. But since I was afraid my interest in bondage and discipline in the bedroom came from my sexually repressed religious upbringing, I didn't want to go there. I wanted to believe I had completely escaped that lunacy. What would happen to me if I let go and lived the fantasy? Would I become completely dependent on a man to make decisions for me? Eventually become someone's good submissive wife like I'd been brought up to be? (*Krysta* 34)

²⁹ In *Mastering Mari*, Krysta makes a remark echoing feminist ideas saying, "Oh, I'm keeping my name. Can't give a man the upper hand, right off the bat. Like, 'I'm so desperate to have you, I'll give up my whole identity while you give up nothing'" (*Mari* 111).

It is clear from her thoughts that Krysta has always rebelled against the performance of being “the good submissive wife.” Her steadfastness to challenge the gendered performance her mother set as expectation, however, wavers with the prospect of being punished during sexual encounters as part of submission. Ultimately, at least in the case of Krysta’s character, it is not the performance itself that intrigues her, but rather the exaggerated performance of femininity, the ultimate submission that allows her the free sexuality she craves. Her performativity of hyperfemininity simultaneously makes her a “slave” and sets her free.

In her article “The Heroine Is Being Beaten: Freud, Sadomasochism, And Reading The Romance,” Stephanie Wardrop examines romance novels with S/M themes, specifically examining the power relations involved rather than the actual practice of receiving or inflicting pain. Using Butler and Freud, Wardrop argues that reading romance novels as a reproduction of patriarchal culture, and women’s enjoyment of them as false consciousness is incorrect (Wardrop 459). Wardrop makes the claim that women’s agency is the important argument against damning D/s practices as anti-feminist. As Wardrop explains, “Sadomasochism, then, cannot be seen as simply a ritualized game in which one partner overpowers the other. Instead, it involves a highly orchestrated, complex interaction requiring mutual trust and cooperation. The sadist (or “top”) generally assumes the responsibility for directing the scene and must monitor the level of enjoyment for the masochist (or “bottom”) who indicates how far any given activity can go” (459). In S/M, and other facets of BDSM, the interaction of the power exchange is complex, working to create the illusion that all of the control rests in the hands of the “top” or dominant.

However, with such measures as “safe-words” and “safe-signals,” BDSM is designed to place the “bottom” in ultimate control as they have to power to completely stop the sexual encounter.

Such control is seen in the beginning of Mason and Krysta’s relationship. In one encounter, Mason uses ice as a form of “punishment” for Krysta’s disobedience. While the couple did not set a safe-word in this scene, Mason, the “top,” listens when Krysta, the “bottom,” indicates that she has had enough: “Please! I can’t!” My body trembled. He removed the ice. Still, I shivered miserably” (*Krysta* 146). In *Training Tessa*, Dixon exercises the same obedience, pushing Tessa until she lets him know she has had enough: “I struggled, but he held me tightly. He moved back to the first breast and sucked the nipple so hard, I thought he would tear it from my body. ‘Please!’ I begged as tears gathered in my eyes. His lips relaxed on my skin and his tongue comforted my tortured bud” (*Tessa* 74). In both instances, the women were ultimately in control. Because they were with trust-worthy partners and their pain play was consensual, these women can give “control” of their bodies sexually to these men while still having final control over themselves.

In another important scene, Dixon travels to Michigan to see Tessa and shows up prepared to dominate her. Before he starts the “scene,” however he takes the time to attain consent and set a safe-word, demonstrating the shift from reality to fantasy for the couple: “In case you decide you don’t want this, your safe word is ‘Mason Maddox.’”...She realized he’d chosen the last words she’d want to say in a sexual context, especially after the bizarre situation they’d found themselves in with his brother” (*Krysta* 162). By setting a safe-word, Dixon is acknowledging that it is in fact Tessa who is in control of the situation. If she says the name of

his brother, their entire scene, including his domination of her ceases immediately. This is perhaps the most important aspect of D/s as performativity. It is acknowledged by both people that the scene is indeed a sexual performance, one that can end at any time, transitioning from fantasy to reality with the utterance of one name.

The performance of dominance and submission also provides freedom for the male characters, freedom from masculinity. In *Controlling Krysta*, the reader learns more of Mason's psychological issues and his struggle with Obsessive Compulsive Disorder that leaves him unable to touch women without gloves on. Krysta, the convenient psychologist in training, assesses this disorder as a fear of intimacy. In one important scene for Mason, (obviously set in a barn as any good southern sex scene) he struggles to let go completely with Krysta. She observes, "He had to find a way within himself to escape the feeling of helplessness human emotions brought on. 'You're in charge, right now, Mason. Just be in control'" (*Krysta* 218). Mason finds it difficult to express his emotions because in his gender masculine performance he understands that to be a loss of control. By giving him both trust with and control over her body, Krysta grants him the power, the performance of the hypermasculine sexual dominant, in order to fully experience sex in a way that does not disarm him and leave him feeling vulnerable.

While these works are fictional, they are being purchased and read for pleasure by real readers. Therefore, I think it is important to understand who is reading these novels, and what their potentially feminist message could mean for readers. In her article "Sex in America Online: An Exploration of Sex, Marital Status, and Sexual Identity in Internet Sex Seeking and Its Impacts," Julie Albright explores how people look for sex on the internet, including their usage

of pornography. Her analysis breaks down the data to see not only what kinds of sex men and women seek, but how often and how viewing pornography changes their sexual lives inside relationships. What I found most interesting about Albright's article, is that she identifies where the dollars are going in seeking sexual encounters. Women are more likely to spend money on porn or sex chats online than men, a hopeful statistic considering the power of economics in the production of sites of culture (Albright 185). Women also sought out pornography as a way to implement new positions and techniques in their own relationships, making women more likely to explore their sexuality (185). Such explorations connote agency. Just as Tessa and Krysta find BDSM freeing, it is possible that the women purchasing these novels find empowerment in the fantasy, whether or not they try to attempt to merge fantasy with reality.

Even if the BDSM genre of erotic novels remain a controversial topic, their widespread availability has opened the topic up for discussion academically and within popular culture. For many of the academics I have cited, the issue is not *if* there should be a discussion, but that the discussion should include the agency of women to consent to and possibly enthusiastically enjoy a critical BDSM relationship (Deckha 141). The *Smashwords* interview with Sinclair echoes Albright's conclusion about the demographic of paid pornography. She identifies that the majority of the readers that contact her are women and that with a growth in visibility of BDSM due to the release of *50 Shades of Grey*: "This is a genre that's been around forever, but it's suddenly out of the closet in a big way. Previously, a handful of women would send me discreet Facebook messages telling me they enjoyed my books. Now, they're posting proudly on my Facebook pages...and sending me emails that say, 'I lovvvvvvvved *Training Tessa*!!! When is

Controlling Krysta coming out?’ The embarrassment factor seems to be disappearing” (Weir). Such reader feedback demonstrates that as the popularity of these books grow, they present an opportunity for the mainstream representation of a previously taboo sexuality, allowing more women to explore their own fantasies and sexualities through reading, and perhaps opening the door for discussions of gender performance and agency within a patriarchal society. While I think the discussions of subversive pornography need to move into examinations of the work of independent cam girls and clip models, it is clear that erotica is an important place to begin these conversations. If porn becomes less racist and sexist when individuals are creating representative pornography of what they want to see, I am hopeful that mainstream film pornography can be challenged by people seeking to change a larger patriarchal capitalist structure.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

I went to the opening weekend of the film *Fifty Shades of Grey* with my partner. I was not too surprised to see a wide range of people there, nor was I surprised to be in a sold-out theater considering an article had just been published the day before that sales were quadruple what they expected for the state of Mississippi. What did surprise me, however, were the amount of young women getting ready to watch a soft-core porno with their moms. I was more surprised, however, when my mom texted me to tell me that she and her friends were going to see it. Given my parent's conservative attitudes around sex, to say I was shocked was an understatement. However, the mainstreaming of the erotic series had presented me with a unique opportunity: to talk to my mother about pornography like we were just discussing a romantic comedy.

Because of our conversation and the conversation that have developed around dinner tables and crowded bars from saying, "I write about porn!" I am not willing to abandon pornography wholesale. However, I think that a shift in the way we talk about and analyze pornography is necessary. With the rise in popularity and availability of the internet, porn has changed drastically in many ways, but it has also offered an avenue of financial support to many young women my age. Work like that of Dred Scott and Lyla Sinclair dares to push the

boundaries of what is acceptable in pornography in an effort to challenge current racial and gendered stereotypes. While it is never guaranteed that pornography intended to be seen as subversive will indeed be interpreted that way by the viewer, it is better to support pornography that seeks explicitly to trouble our current notions of race, sexuality, and gender than to blindly condemn it all.

Z. Fareen Parvez's article, "The Labor of Pleasure: How Perceptions of Emotional Labor Impact Women's Enjoyment of Pornography," uses an empirical and qualitative analysis to examine the many ways women respond to watching mainstream pornography. She argues that antipornography feminists have "ignored social difference" in their analysis of how women consume pornography and propornography feminists have created reverse arguments labeling porn as "liberating" ignoring "sociological factors" that help illuminate the effects of pornography on a societal scale rather than an individual (607-8). Working toward a more complex analysis, she uses the concept of "emotional labor" to explain the ways women viewers interact with the pornography they watch. She also uses an intersectional analysis to look at how "social difference" effects the women. She argues:

In the field of erotic labor, the relationship between production and consumption bears particular salience: Unlike with consumer goods and many service provisions, the labor product is in large part the emotional labor process itself. In addition to performing the physical act of sex, the porn actresses must in general display arousal and pleasure to satisfy most viewers. I suggest that because of the existence of emotional labor and its particular importance in pornography production, the women consumers interviewed in this study experience a parallel sort of dissonance to that of the porn actresses. (606)

Parvez's argument for "emotional labor" as a central part of participating in sex work, is important to understanding how gendered difference exists in pornography. If the heft of the emotional labor is placed on the woman in a scene—since it is her pleasure or appearance of pleasure, be that authentic or not, that sells pornography as a "real" depiction of sex. It also explains gendered differences in the consumption of pornography: actresses who can successfully portray pleasure provide more pleasure for women viewers because they imagine themselves as the actress (617).

Also examining the liminal position between radical and sex radical views, Bernadette Barton's 2002 article "Dancing on the Möbius Strip: Challenging the Sex War Paradigm" focuses on an analysis of another form of sex work: stripping. While Barton is not discussing pornography specifically, her analysis of the polarized views of the "sex wars" and her call for an intersectional analysis for further sex work studies are useful to discussions of pornography when the actors are being examined. As such, I believe she advances an argument for an analysis of the "emotional labor" involved in the larger category of sex work:

Missing from the literature of the sex wars is any analysis of the temporal experience of stripping. By using *temporal*, I refer to both the emotional vicissitudes that characterize the course of an evening's work and the changes that occur in a dancer's feelings of self-esteem and satisfaction the longer she works in the sex industry. These two temporal dimensions, moreover, are intertwined; the volatile ups and downs a dancer encounters daily exact physical and emotional costs that mount the longer she labors in stripclubs. (Barton 587; emphasis in original)

Barton's focus on emotional labor centers around the constant criticism and rejection dancers are subjected to because of their need to make tip (593). This is a different form of emotional

labor than the recorded sexual experience in pornography. Because a woman’s “worth” is constantly reinforced by the tipping system, when a woman receives low tips her emotional labor it could become too much to bare and her self-esteem is affected (594).

It is clear from Barton’s analysis that the pressure of emotional labor weighs on sex workers over time, because the sole purpose of selling an experience of their sexuality is for the pleasure of someone else. This leads me to wonder, what would sex work and porn look like that focuses on the actual enjoyment of women?



Figure 5. kink.com Banner Image

My quest for this woman-centric pornography ultimately kept bringing me back to online communities that focus on the voices of sex workers and attempt to keep real women’s pleasure at the center of their focus. While most of the sex workers I talked with focused on independent sales on clip and cam sites, some filmed with the company kink.com, a website that promotes the sane, safe, consensual slogan at the heart of the BDSM community. One such sex worker, known as SubmissiveFeminist, provided a list of books for research on the convergence of kink and third wave feminism, one of which was *The Feminist Porn Book*. Seeking to analyze what sex

workers in the Tumblr community refer to as “ethical porn”³⁰, *The Feminist Porn Book* explores, from the view of participants of the porn industry and porn scholars, the potential for porn as a site of power, agency, and subversion. The book, while not entirely sociological, provides an imagining by some scholars of what porn can be when it is not produced for the mainstream “male gaze” (12). The book includes the voices of sex workers and how they envision their pornography to be feminist. With essays ranging from topics such as “hyper-corporeality, genderqueerness, transfemininity, feminized masculinity, transgressive racial performance, and disability” (18).

Ariane Cruz’s article “Pornography: A Black Feminist Woman Scholar’s Reconciliation” focuses on her relationship to the work of Alice Walker and Patricia Hill Collins and the difficulty she encountered when trying to envision pornography as liberating for black women (219). She argues that using the two—black feminist thought and pornography—in conversation with each other provides a more productive dialogue on both blackness and sexuality. She states, “...pornography forces black feminism to reckon with artifacts like the politics of respectability, the legacies of black female sexual violence, and our personal and institutional investments in heterosexualization. Black feminism similarly propels pornography, making it more accountable to black women’s sociohistorical cultural and political experiences, informative standpoints, activism, agency, labor and representation” (224). Cruz continues tradition of refusing to abandon pornography altogether started by Hill Collins, seeking to find a liminal space where

³⁰ “Ethical pornography” is porn created with clear, enthusiastic consent and focuses on depictions of sex that women enjoy, both on and off screen. It is most associated with amateur pornographers where women are the writers, directors, actors, and editors.

both black feminist thought and pornography can have a relationship of mutualism, providing new imaginings of black women's representation.

Continuing the theme of representation and utilizing the voice of a sex worker, "The Power of My Vagina" is an exploration by author Buck Angel of his body in pornography as a transman. Actors such as Buck Angel, a trans man, provide representation for bodies that people are not used to see in pornography. What surprises most people, however, upon viewing his films is that there is no anal sex taking place in the films, but vaginal penetration (284). He writes, "but when I first began, I had no idea that my work would ignite such a firestorm of controversy. The negativity and hate that my porn unleashed was primarily from biological men, I think because they are so attached to the idea that 'the penis makes the man' (285). While Angel does not use a theoretical framing in his essay, Betsy Lucal's essay "Building Boxes and Policing Boundaries: (De)Constructing Intersexuality, Transgender and Bisexuality is a useful companion. Lucal writes, "Transgender identity does have radical potential, if, for example, it undermines the assumption that an individual's gender is determined by sex categorization at birth" (528). Angel's description of reaction to his pornography exemplifies this "radical potential," because confronted with the disconnect of seeing someone "doing gender" as a man, but then seeing him with what is societally determined to be female genitalia provides a representation in pornography that troubles the gender-sex correlation. Perhaps more porn like Angel's could demonstrate the fluid and organic nature of human sexuality.

The shift in analysis of pornography in academia and the personal stories of sex workers like Buck Angel prompted me to answer Patricia Hill Collins call for an intersectional analysis of

sex work that deals with the complexities of experience and refuses to deny agency. She argues that Western feminism has used too many generalizations, on both sides of the argument, in discussions of pornography and the effects it has on people participating in the making of and the people viewing pornography (Hill Collins 140). She states:

Those Black feminist intellectuals investigating sexual politics imply that the situation is much more complicated than that advanced within Western feminism in which ‘men oppress women’ because they are men. Such approaches implicitly assume biological deterministic views of gender and sexuality and offer few possibilities for change. In contrast, the willingness of Black feminist analyses of sexual politics to embrace intersectional paradigms provides space for human agency. (140)

This intersectional approach that seeks to examine other forms of oppression in the “matrix of domination” is deployed by many authors including, Parvez, Neal, and Gossett and Byrne.

In my further research, I would like to use this thesis as a foundation to begin a series of interviews within the sex worker community. While scholars in recent years have begun to examine the emotional labor required in sex worker, I think an in-depth look at how emotional labor is related to those participating in traditional racist and sexist pornographic productions versus those who work for companies who seek to produce “ethical porn” and those who work independently such as cam girls and clip models. My interactions with these women online and their critical engagement with the complexities of the porn industry have helped to shape my thoughts on pornography and anti-pornography feminists such as Gail Dines and Gloria Steinem. Although these women have contributed greatly to discussions of pornography, I think it is time to move forward with the open mind necessary to truly listen to sex workers and their experience before writing off pornography as a lost cause.

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