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Porn's pedagogies: teaching porn studies in the academic–corporate complex

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The explicit study of porn in university Sexuality Studies programs poses challenges to the classroom as framework for pedagogy. Mid-way through a federally funded study of feminist porn and porn cultures, this paper begins to interrogate the challenging and difficult knowledges, methods and pedagogies that can be put into motion in the undergraduate classroom *as* porn. Detailing the work of one such undergraduate course, this paper argues that porn as a pedagogical method raises but also reconfigures the spectre of embodied learning as it occurs in two other places: the 1981 anti-pornography feminism documentary *Not a Love Story: A Film about Pornography*; and, conversely, through the pedagogical work of sex educator Tristan Taormino. Such differently configured bodies of knowledge work against the desiring-to-know 'bad' bodies put on display in anti-pornography feminist films such as *Not a Love Story*, still taught in many undergraduate classrooms as the feminist anti-porn text exemplar. This project asks can the body caught looking and, indeed, caught wanting – that is, the body desiring-to-know and desiring-to-unknow through porn – exceed both the pedagogical body and the body subjected by the imagined affect of 'anti-woman' violence? Of what kind of public might such an edgy body be generative?

Keywords: feminist porn; Tristan Taormino; pedagogy; counterpublics; reparative porn

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This similarity between the teachers of the text and the teacher in the text should give us pause. Could it be that the pedagogical enterprise as such is always constitutively a project of teaching ignorance? Are our ways of teaching students to ask some questions always correlative with our ways of teaching them not to ask – indeed, to be unconscious of – others? Does the educational system exist in order to promulgate knowledge, or is its main function rather to universalize a society's tacit agreement about what it has decided it does not and cannot know?

Barbara Johnson, 'Teaching Ignorance' 1993.

The women's movement laid the groundwork … for women looking at their genitals, learning how to masturbate, for everyone in America knowing what the clitoris is … without all that groundwork, my entire career wouldn't even exist.

Tristan Taormino, quoted in *Hot and Bothered: Feminist Pornography* dir. Goldberg.

Have a journal but you've got to have a plurality of voices on the editorial board and there simply isn't. There's a pornographer on it, for God's sake [Tristan Taormino].

Gail Dines, quoted in Cadwalladr, 2013.

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Despite a great deal of seeming incredulity about the supposedly sudden appearance of porn in university classrooms, pornography has been a consistent staple of university curricula since, at the very least, the mid-twentieth century. Its existence in universities cannot be disputed. What might be up for debate is precisely how it arrived there and to what kinds of pedagogical and epistemological ends it is worked. On the one hand, Porn Studies *qua* Porn Studies is, as Penley (1996), Williams (2004), Lehman (2006), Attwood (2007), Attwood and Hunter (2009), McNair (2009), Penley (2013), Taormino et al. (2013) and many others suggest, a fairly recent academic field of scholarship that has entered various university classrooms (Media Studies, Film Studies, Communications, etc.) almost always under duress from administrative moral panics. But on the other hand, porn has already been in many kinds of classrooms (for instance, Women's Studies classrooms) for a very long time, especially in the classrooms of anti-pornography feminists seemingly without similar administrative moral panics. For instance, Jensen (2007), Dines (2010), Dworkin (1989) and Mackinnon (1987) all talk at length about the kind of work they do/have done in feminist anti-porn courses where porn is featured on a regular basis in regular classroom screenings and in-depth textual analysis. The difference, then, between how and why a particular porn object appears on a course outline and inside a classroom is very telling. In the first case, porn studies scholars expend a disproportionate amount of academic, political and emotional labour managing the unfounded and exceptionalizing fears, anxieties, ignorances and panics of mostly administrative bodies that, in the best-case scenario, are vastly under-read. In the second case, porn studies scholars and students alike – although with different stakes relative to institutional power – do the sometimes very dangerous work of managing and navigating treacherous incarnations of feminist fundamentalism and ongoing sex wars over the work accomplished by porn, wars that have long and traumatizing histories.[1] In neither case is porn taken up *for the purposes of* and, indeed, *as* feminist reparative practices as well as pedagogies (Albury, 2009). This paper seeks to make such an intervention through three very different pedagogical scenes of feminism: my Porn Studies course; fictions of feminist pedagogies in the documentary film *Not a Love Story* (Klein 1981); and the pedagogical performativities of Tristan Taormino as feminist sex educator.[2]

Discursivities

Grounded both in the distinction articulated by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (2003) between reparative readings and paranoid readings, as well as in the thinking of Barbara Johnson's (1989) work on teaching as the un-thinking of ignorance, porn in the classroom is performative of a series of surprising and reparative crises about what can be known, and what needs to be unknown, in order to encounter porn differently. For Johnson, ignorance is not the absence of knowledge; it is, in some ways, its very constitution. Within deconstructive epistemological paradigms, Johnson argues that what has passed as an array of received ideas, prejudices and opinions is in fact an impediment to pedagogy. Such ways of knowing are, instead, a way of not knowing that one does not know. The work of such a pedagogue, then, is not to transmit knowledge, but to suspend it (Johnson 1989, 85). In the case of porn in the classroom, so much transparency about the object (sexuality), its modes of representation (realism with its attendant fantasy for viewers of non-mediation), its

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everyday distribution (with internet technologies) and its self-evidence as form (recalling American Justice Stewart's legal assertion that he did not know what porn was but knew it when he saw it), combined with anti-pornography feminism's ironic successful campaign (that porn is bad for women, good for capitalist pornographers), porn is an overdetermined set of practices that necessitate a complex series of suspensions.

Sedgwick's distinction between reparative and paranoid reading practices is also crucial to a pedagogical imperative of unthinking knowledges that have become obstacles to knowing. On the one hand, what Sedgwick calls the 'present paranoid consensus' details a complex set of interpretive reading practices that read through the mandatory injunction of suspicion. Within this admittedly complex set of reading practices, a text is then palpated for the larger hidden or latent structures of normativity and power of which it is always already symptomatic. Of course, Sedgwick herself noted the complexity around what she comes to call both a methodology and a positionality of paranoia, suggesting that both feminism and queer theory have had 'a distinctive history of intimacy with the paranoid imperative' (2003, 126). Still, one of the effects of paranoid reading practices and positions is a tendency to collapse and telescope the temporalities of meaning and structures of affect where time is a bound *now* (meanings, possibilities and interpretative horizons are locked into what can be thought within a very tight and controlled frame of reference) and affect is strongly negative (2003, 145). Moreover, the imperative of paranoid reading methodologies is to reveal, to uncover hidden structures, to render those barely visible structures knowable while locating a great deal of 'faith' in such structural and epistemological exposure (2003, 139). To remediate this temporal and affective boundedness, Sedgwick instead offers reparative methodologies. Not necessarily only signaling a repair or correction, but also opening up interpretative frameworks and horizons, reparative readings do not foreclose on the way that meanings can shift across time and space. Instead, they index a refusal of the iterative knowability of power, meaning and knowledge. Through reparative methodologies:

> the reader has room to realize that the future may be different from the present, it is also possible for her to entertain such profoundly painful, profoundly relieving, ethically crucial possibilities as that the past, in turn could have happened differently from the way it did. (Sedgwick 2003, 146)

In other words, reparative positionalities risk both surprise and queer hope. 'Hope,' Sedgwick writes, without sentiment or normativities, 'often a fracturing, even a traumatic thing to experience, is among the energies by which the reparatively positioned reader tries to organize the fragments and part-objects she encounters or creates' (2003, 146). Where paranoid readings are often grounded in a 'hermeneutics of suspicion,' reparative readings are both the product of but engender the possibility of a hermeneutics of surprise:

> To read from a reparative position is to surrender the knowing, anxious paranoid determination that no horror … shall ever come to the reader as new; to a reparatively positioned reader, it can seem realistic and necessary to experience surprise. (Sedgwick 2003, 146)

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That Sedgwick genders her reader as 'her' is significant in this context where feminism emerges not just in porn, but as porn. The insertion of a female pronoun into feminist theory has long been a strategy to universalize the presence of a female reading and theorizing public in the face of the erasure created by appeals to an exclusively male pronoun and, by inference, public. Sedgwick's positing of a female subject is not that unusual in this regard and is one that creates the additional possibilities of complex and queer reader identifications orbiting around that pronoun. At the same time, in the context of thinking surprise as part of the affective relation between feminism and porn, the possibilities of a female subject reading porn – or indeed making porn – is the very possibility refuted by paranoid readings of porn which argue that it is precipitated by and can only do violence, regardless of the consent of women viewing, working in or producing porn. For anti-pornography feminism, 'pornography', characterized monolithically and with the same *always already* self-evidence, is mis-recognized as the manifest effect of structural conditions of 'patriarchal capitalism' that seek to 'oppress' women through over-sexualization and commodification (Dines 2010). These knowledges as fundamentalist truth regime are steeped in paranoid positionalities and methodologies that rigidly stabilize both the meanings of pornography but also its affects as inherently, only and strongly negative. This 'strong negative affect' as the genre and industry of porn, feminist porn included, is so potent hegemonically that no other possible relation of production, consumption, distribution or meaning could possibly be discerned or deemed credible. Dines's frustrated surprise and incredulity over the presence of Taormino – someone she can only read categorically as a 'pornographer' – on the board of the *Porn Studies* journal clearly signals such imagined self-evidence as fixed affect and an either/or imperative moral imperative. That Taormino locates both herself and her work as deeply feminist and grounded in feminist genealogies is fully unintelligible to Dines's paranoid feminist affect and reading practices. This is even more telling of the complex ways that porn and pedagogy already orbit each other. Pedagogy has been central to anti-pornography feminism as one of its self-imagined core mechanisms – that people just need to be taught that porn both teaches violence against women and is symptomatic of such structures of feeling. In other words, there has been such an overdetermined and paranoid epistemology between porn, pedagogy and gender that to disregard these discursive orbits means to not teach students in a post-anti-pornography feminist historical moment to unlearn what we might think porn is. One cannot imagine approaching anything dubbed 'feminist porn' without needing to unknow what anti-pornography feminism has already so successfully taught.[3]

How, then, does one begin to (un)teach both porn and porn-y-ness in the classroom as anything other than self-evident and mimetic anti-feminist practices? What happens instead when the porn-y-ness of porn is analyzed through queer pedagogies but also, in the case of feminist porn, as critical pedagogy? But also what kinds of pedagogies can be deployed to discern these complex relations? Given the weightiness of such questions, in my Porn Studies course one of the primary pedagogical decisions I made was to defer an engagement with the visual texts of porn until the third module of the course in order to, paraphrasing from Johnson, teach the students that we may not yet know what we need to not know about porn as we approach our study of it. Or, to rephrase slightly: in order to study porn,

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especially as feminists, we have to both forget what we think we know and come to think 'porn' from a place of active unknowing.

Such reparative pedagogical approaches are in contradistinction, for instance, to the paranoid positionalities of feminism as the privileged knowing subject in anti-pornography documentary genres. Of particular significance is the 1981 Canadian documentary by Bonnie Klein, *Not a Love Story*, with its conversion narrative centered on performance/burlesque artist Lindalee Tracey who, after being taken on a feminist-inspired journey through pornland in the late 1970s, supposedly renounces that newly seen world in the end. Tracey is quite literally deployed as the non-feminist female subject in peril. That she is a burlesque artist and not quite a full-fledged 'porn star' is significant in that she is available for narrative focus without being a subject so fully embedded that she is beyond reproach to the imagined audience of the text. It becomes the work of the film-maker, Bonnie Klein, as guide, to reveal to her what she does not see about the world in which she otherwise chooses to work. The film ends with Tracey's supposed confession of ignorance and knowledgeable conversion to feminism.

Not a Love Story is also an example of anti-pornography pedagogy that quite ironically depends as heavily upon its object even as it attempts to critique that object. But these texts also function as sites of distribution as they in essence cut and paste as much porn into their narrative as they offer critique of the imagery and practices. Moreover, *Not a Love Story* and its producers, editors and director are critiqued by Tracey in a subsequent memoir for 'pimping' Tracey to their end without her consent. Of its voyeuristic conversion of supposedly 'unenlightened' Lindalee Tracey into a subject with the right feminist consciousness and knowledge enough to indict her own participation in the 'anti-woman' porn industry, Tracey writes:

> Months go by and then the women from the NFB show me the film. I'm stunned. They huddle around me, wanting me to like it, needing me to. I have to stop myself from shaking. How do you tell someone you like that you feel betrayed and sickened? I can't believe I'm the star of the film, the one holding it together. I can't believe what they've turned me into. There's nothing of my studio or my performance art … I'm reduced to a porno queen … I'd never have done it if I'd known it would be used that way. … it looks like I'm bleeding from being a stripper … at the end I'm a snappy happy born-again feminist penitent – a bad girl gone good. The film takes credit for my supposed conversion as if I had no intellectual context before … – I feel exploited, the same way the filmmakers say pornography exploits other women. (Tracey 1997, 201–203)

Despite the fact that Tracey's condemnation of the film occurred in her published memoir by 1997, this film continues to be taught as contemporary feminism in many cases without so much as a nod to Tracey's recontextualization of her role in its work. Tracey's account – in her own words – echoes Derrida's (1998) assertion that when you control the archive, you do indeed control historical memory and what becomes codified and institutionalized as truth. And moreover, there are resonances here with the work of Walter Kendrick (1997) who argues that feminism has produced its own porn as part of its work educating the otherwise unenlightened about what remains unknowable in this supposedly inherently anti-feminist industry. Tracey's story is a case in point. Her memoir and its very clear and unambiguous condemnation of the film forces us to recontextualize the pedagogical value of this

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documentary as a supposed truth-telling form *vis-à-vis* the conditions of its production along with the conditions of its reception that require Tracey's silence to do its work. It now reads as exploitatively pornographic when judged by its own logic. In its own use of non-consenting subjects supposedly in duress (i.e. in addition to Tracey, the many other women who feature in the clips borrowed and recontextualized), the film hides its mechanisms and presents its content in a form that makes claims to truth-telling.[4] When *Not a Love Story* is taught through Tracey's memoir – as it should be – those structures become all the more visible. To my knowledge, the feminist producers of the film – who include Bonnie Klein, mother of Naomi Klein – have never once publically acknowledged the violence their feminist text does.

Curiously, this film continues to be a potent litmus test for feminist discourses about porn. It teaches well, as a difficult and ironic example of anti-pornography feminism's poaching practice where, in this case, non-fans comb regularly through an archive of texts and poach or borrow images, stringing them together in decontextualized proximity to each other differently to produce an entirely different narrative (Jenkins 1992). The same semester that I launched my Porn Studies course, which included work on this and other anti-pornography documentaries as porn, *Not a Love Story* was also being taught as a contemporary example of anti-pornography feminist anti-violence activism in a course taught by a colleague in my department. Two of my students were taking both courses and found themselves in a very compromising and confusing pedagogical moment where two feminist courses that were diametrically opposed to each other were teaching the same film as key content. In addition, then, it becomes vital to ask a series of questions in our accounting not only for what happens inside the Porn Studies classroom, but also what happens when porn is not examined as an overdetermined set of discursive and representational practices before it even reaches that space.

Panicked ad/ministrations: infrastructural biopolitics

Analyzing anti-pornography feminist discursivities proved to be only one of a number of exceptionalizing and overdetermining practices that required critical attention while studying porn in the classroom. My course was one that the Sexuality Studies undergraduate program of my home university also successfully championed through a somewhat complicated but illuminating administrative moral panic to make available to our undergraduates. As I have argued already, while porn has been deployed inside university classrooms, the integration of porn as genre, as industry, as representational practice, as sexual genealogy, as very queer feminist counter-public discourse and practice, porn as any and all of these, inside the academic–corporate complex has not quite made its way successfully through all university levels. This, of course, proved to be very challenging, as these courses do, to administrative structures and processes not orientated toward thinking sexuality in such charged terms. My course, Porn Studies, raised the spectre of at least one further set of paradoxes in and about the classroom – the relation between porn bodies and pedagogical bodies. 'Porn-y' bodies, bodies I define as at the very least adjective not noun, as subjects in relation to the thing that makes porn porn-y, seemed to be incommensurate with 'student' bodies; that is, bodies subject to the

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institution, its constructions of knowledge, its pedagogies, even its architectures, and, most importantly, administrative infrastructures.

The administrative assumptions of my home institution about this course were, from the start, contradictory, uneven and confusing even to itself, despite deviating slightly from other institutional responses as documented by many others (Church Gibson and Gibson, 1993; Lehman 2006; Miller-Young 2008; Penley 2013). Like these and other scholars introducing porn studies into the curriculum, my course proposal received much anxious, biopolitical critical scrutiny from this upper-level administrative fourth look (not by Gender and Women's Studies nor by Sexuality Studies; both of these programs and many of my colleagues fully endorsed the course). It was under surveillance by a Faculty-wide Curriculum Committee, a committee that oversees the course development of all of the programs and departments under its jurisdiction. While approval was not fully withheld and was, after numerous delays, eventually granted, there were, as predicted, some anxious questions raised about the course content, about the legal age of consent of some students, about the use of the internet in the classroom, about the age-old red herring 'what-if' that had nothing to do with the course – that is, what if the students stumble across child porn – and of course, the very presumptive legal question of parents and students suing the corporate institution for damages from harm incurred in the classroom.

These were the anxious traces not only of administrative panics but also of that administrative body's own ambivalence about the public visibility of such a course. Willemen raises the spectre of the fourth look in a very early essay on the complicated network of 'to-be-looked-at-ness' structured in and around porn (1992, 173–174). In addition to the camera's look, Willemen suggests that, unlike narrative film, porn structures into its visual economies a network of relations between the viewer, image, and the relation between the two such that neither of these is any way reducible to each other. He posits what he calls a fourth look, as something of a different order to the three looks he indexes: the intra-diegetic looks, the camera's look at the event it constructs, and the viewer's look at the image (1992, 174). The fourth look is the imagined social scene of the looking. To frame this differently, Willemen writes:

> [T]he fourth look gains in force when the viewer is looking at something she or he is not supposed to look at, either according to an internalized censorship (superego) or an external, legal one (as in clandestine viewings) or, as in most cases, according to both censorships combined. In this way, that fourth look problematizes the social dimension, the field of the other of the system of looking at work. (1992, 174)

Curious, then, that the administrative bodies anxiously scrutinizing Porn Studies course proposals function in the shadow of an imagined fourth look (a public outside itself that may critique the school); but they also become that fourth gaze, creating an institutional quasi-censorial backdrop against which students and porn studies scholars alike shape an additional pedagogical and epistemological network of looking. Willemen phrases the relation as follows: 'The fourth look and its direct implication in both the social and the psychic aspects of censorship, of the law, introduces the social into the very act of looking while remaining an integral part of the textual relations' (1992, 175).

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To calm some of their own anxieties about who might scrutinize their approval of this Porn Studies course – an overvigilance that included consultations with university legal counsel – very telling remedies were recommended. These flag three belief sets: an untenable belief in the exceptionality of sex as an object of analytical study and curriculum; assumed levels of self-evidence about porn; and most troubling, a belief as well as imperative that students *must be* incommensurate with porn (in other words, as impossibly and always already non-involvable in porn cultures whether that be in production, distribution or consumption of porn). Remedies then included: that students sign legal waivers agreeing that they know what course they are getting themselves into; that the course director must interview perspective students and handpick the group (this at a school with about 54,000 undergraduates); that the course director should somehow cut the internet to the actual classroom on the day of the course to prevent students from becoming trapped in endlessly opening websites and hubs that will not close fast enough to prevent students from seeing (and presumably, being harmed by) their content (how this was supposed to happen was never fully detailed); that 'young' students not be allowed into the course; that the course director engage in daily entry and exit monitoring practices looking for students in duress from what they had seen; and finally that students sign not just legal waivers indicating a knowingness of sexually explicit content but also that the course director develops a legal mechanism whereby students also agree (legally that is) not to sue the university should they be exposed to material by which they might be profoundly traumatized enough to want to sue.

The Sexuality Studies faculty, staff, a faculty librarian and some students *en masse* 'visited' the meeting where the final decision was to be made about the course. The Sexuality Studies program refused almost all of the remedies suggested except the condition that the course director should approve students who wanted to take the course, ensuring they had necessary prerequisites. But even more fascinating was the fact that it seemed to never occur to the administrative and legal bodies (and minds) of that faculty curriculum committee that any of the students who might be taking the course would actually already be *consuming* the films we might study, never mind that some of them might actually be *in* and/or *making* any of the films. Nor did, or perhaps do, any of us doing Porn Studies – nor those involved in approving/disproving it as curriculum – consciously know that it might well be precisely the institutionalization of that fourth look within this social formation that stokes the desire of students and potentially of educators to take/teach such a course in the first place. It was precisely in these surprising moments of pedagogical interruption that the work of my course began.

Classrooms and porn-y ways of unknowing

One of the remarkable things about Porn Studies in the classroom was the degree to which each flagged the other (i.e. both 'porn' and 'studies') as a fascinating and productive site of pedagogical incommensurability. By this I do not mean people are antagonistic or incommensurate, despite the administrative assumption that students would only be harmed or victimized by what they encountered. Rather, while they most certainly can and do overlap, the porn body productively scrambles the student body by, in part, bringing the sensate and affective body back into the scene. Those bodies return as something other than those constituted by Willemen's repetitive loss

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of materiality in the face of hegemonically gendered fantasy or by what Williams identifies as the frenzy of the visible – including the most irksome of things, the seemingly available body of the pedagogue as the public teaching body (Williams 1989; Willemen 1992, 179). This unsettling of the supposedly clear distinction between the public and the private domains and the bodies they produce becomes all the more telling as it is spatialized in the architecture of the university. Such designs for teaching and learning – inside the university classrooms with podiums, very small plastic chairs with arm-desks, positioned in rows facing the front of the room, classrooms supplemented with library holdings and catalogue systems without proper subject headings for porn texts and so on – do not facilitate either the body or the bodies of knowledge that porn produces. In my course, these differing forms of embodiment remained in tension with each other.

Such characterizations of porn as discourse and practice troubling the spatializations of knowledge lead to the two-part question about pedagogy and porn that structure this paper (and indeed my course): first, what kinds of porn-y practices emerge when we de-centralize teacher-as-hero and consider instead the space of the classroom and its multiple pedagogical bodies as context, scene and text? And second, mindful of the argument by Williams, that porn itself as an object is always already deeply embedded in a threesome between truth, power and knowledge, what might happen pedagogically if we defer viewing the object of porn (i.e. films and/or clips) until after a deconstruction of the talk of porn-y–ness where we deconstruct the terms by which we think we encounter a self-evident object in the first place? My answer, on both counts, is a great deal. To imagine that we can access porn in an unmediated way means to miss, as I have suggested here, how the content, form and constitution of the object itself are overdetermined as forms of thought and knowledge before we even see one single image on a screen. What remains to be both thought, then, is not just what we learn when we transition porn from the domains of knowledge to those of teaching, but what we might actually in equal parts both discern and productively forget through this transition.

The classroom is admittedly a complex space in which to discern these unbecoming technologies working through porn. As my colleague Susan Driver (2004) has noted, student (and indeed faculty) pleasures collide *in* the classroom in profoundly uneven ways at the best of times. Describing a moment in a media class where three different student presenters argued three vastly different interpretations of Christina Aguilera's 2002 video *Drrrty*, Driver suggests that what she calls pornography (what I am calling porn-y-ness) stages an epistemological rupture where 'the wild loose ends of a questioning process' remain productively undone. In my classroom at least, several years after *Drrrty* and after the willful intransigence of 'feminist porn' in its most recent incarnation (after all, feminist porn has been around for at least four decades now), such undoing pleasures no longer only collide *in* the classroom but they also productively collide *with* the space of the neoliberal corporate university classroom.

Like other institutional shudders that occur when Porn Studies courses make their appearance, my course, from the first day of class onwards, produced a reality where the content and difficult knowledges of the course staged themselves in tension with pedagogical protocol. The outcome was that student bodies productively did, or perhaps defiantly refused to do, what student bodies are often asked to do in the conventional classroom; in part, sit still and 'learn' rather than be complicit in

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learning to unknow. This outcome was launched three minutes into the first day of class when one of my very best students dropped her coffee, sending its contents splattering onto her colleagues, setting up what the students called our classroom 'money shot' at the beginning of the term. Such uncontainment indexed not just our content, but also a cognizance on the part of students about the stakes of getting the course launched in the first place. From that start to our very last day when I literally could not get students out of their institutionally restrictive and regulatory classroom seats and out the door because none of us wanted it to be over, *porn in the morn* (this was also an 08:30 a.m. class at a commuter university) functioned as a porn-y site of bodily ambivalence and excess that seemed to both defer sexual responsiveness but also became its place-holder, a kind of stand-in for what could not materialize even as it constantly did.[5]

We continued to have leaks of coffee, water, juice, any and all purchasable fluids – more in that room than in any other classroom or meeting room in which I have taught. But from my vantage point we continued to have non-stop interjections from that sensate body usually silenced in the classroom: deep sighs; nervous laughter; the sounds of resisting readers non-verbally vocalizing those resistances; students with smartphone technology Shazam-ing the screen to discern porn's musical tracks that they could not otherwise discern; outright incredulous laughter (very different from nervous laughter); and a constant shuffling of bodies, seats, backpacks, and so on. Bodies murmured continuously. Curiously, when talk did happen, this became cross-talk and occurred interestingly across the heterogeneity of sexual categories. One of the things that was very different in this classroom were the sounds and sights and practices of intimacy, hugging at the beginning of class, stroking each other's hair as they greeted each other and watched the films. This was a profoundly intimate group of students, one-half of whom were strangers to each other at the beginning of the term and not all of whom shared equally in the physicality. Still, if feminist/queer porn functions as a counter-public, which it most certainly does, then porn as pedagogy in this classroom duplicated such counter-hegemonic spatializations. The space of the room became not only its own kind of institutional counter-public, but one in which the body of that counter-public insisted on spilling out of the spaces – that is, the seats in particular, but also the protocols – imagined for it in the architecture of the classroom and, by inference, pedagogical design.

While Driver noted the productive pedagogical use of silence in her classroom, these spaces are often anything but silent if by that we mean an absence of spoken discourse. In agreement with Driver, there certainly were many moments when it was clear that the pedagogue's job was actually to step out of the way of the process, not try to lead it. At other moments, these silences were also filled with the sounds of desiring, responding embodied engagements that to my mind exceeded but spoke beyond the grammars of discourse and the setting. If it is true, as Driver (2004) notes, that 'differences produced through what she calls porno-chic entertainment are about a shifting divergence of social experiences, media powers and embodied pleasures,' then our classrooms most certainly need to be places where students develop critical analytical skills with which to digest these, yes. But before they get there, they also just need, as Richard Fung (1993) noted, to unburden through the surprise of talking sex in the classroom. Such talk in this group was in the end anything but simple or neat and was often organized around the ways that the heterogeneity of the group itself generated a surprising pedagogical archive of sexual

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epistemologies, ones that created moments of unlearning when students engaged each other in sex talk across imagined differences: after the lesbian porn, the gay guys asked the dykes about female ejaculation; the cis-boys[6] talked cock and queried the 'wet cum' shot versus a 'dry cum' with the gay guys; the self-identified straight cis-girls talked preferences for and aesthetics of cut versus uncut penises while the gay guys just grinned; and my only trans-man rendered most students silent for a few minutes when they queried what they shyly called the T-spot (the trans-man g-spot).

Such labours of languaging that occurred during discussions in my classroom are not generalizable beyond our immediate context but they most certainly do defy the way that sex talk – especially porn talk – often occurs through the deferring effects of verbal languages like double entendres, jokes, euphemisms, witticisms, displacements, substitutions and so on. But they also undo and queer what Willemen calls the 'social and textual', which mesh in the fourth look not only as process but also as a triangulation in and of gendered space (1992, 180). In many ways, this is decidedly what emerges as feminist about feminist porn. Willemen argues that in much sex talk women are actively absented, as from such enunciations where A (the man) indirectly addresses B (the woman) by triangulating his desire for sexual satisfaction through his rival C (another man). These triangulations work through the joke, euphemism, displacement and substitution and so on. Sex talk in my classroom deployed direct address as the modality of intellectual and sexual curiosity. That fourth look, and its censorial potentialities, were rendered not just mute but, for the students, irrelevant. These institutionally imagined subjects, supposedly under porn duress, gave radical re-dress to that constitution and occupied that space as one in which to 'talk sex bodies' as well as to read them, think them, and be of them – both simultaneously and critically, unknowingly and quite willfully – all at the same moment.

In addition to engaging in discourse analysis first and textual analysis second, we also presumed as a methodological axiom that the desiring body would be present in complicated *unknowing* ways even if we willfully misrecognized that body and desires emerging in unusual contexts. It is difficult, with institutional power structures overdetermining the choreography and stakes of the classroom, to imagine ways that sexual bodies can be both safely present in a classroom (by which I mean not subject to coercion) and the object of analysis in the same moment. That we might well 'enjoy' some of our visual texts and continue to think sometimes *with*, sometimes *through*, sometimes *as*, but sometimes also in *excess* of those embodiments and their representation as image poses an interesting pedagogical challenge and in part explains the increased physical intimacies that became part of this course's culture. All the more so given the assertion by Williams (1989) that gendered-ness is itself one effect of porn's formal technologies emerging and developing as historical forms of looking. So we agreed that responsiveness would not only be something we cultivated; rather, it would be something about which students would develop cognizance, not as something that authenticated identity but something that troubled it by remaining stubbornly outside its normative grammars (Butler 1991).

The item that the students were most curious about as they both participated in the process but remained cognizant of the process was precisely *my* process and thoughts about *theirs* as we proceeded through our work. Repeatedly throughout the term, but certainly more so as we neared the end of our course, my students productively interrupted and triangulated what any teacher would describe as the

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pedagogical flow of scene with questions and comments and reflections about the scene itself from my vantage point. To be clear, these were in no way challenges to that process (how do you rebel in a porn studies course?). Nor did they seem to be, from my vantage point, approval-seeking behaviours. Instead, these struck me as both the reiteration of the pedagogical/epistemological setting of the classroom as context but also a further layering of the already very nuanced network of looks embedded both in the visual texts threading through circuits of production, distribution and consumption. Time and time again, my students repeatedly needed to ask questions such as 'Did we respond to the film the way you thought we might?', 'Did you?', or 'What did you notice about what we said?' or 'How did we respond as a group to the film?' and my favourite, after an end-of-term performance/installation piece by three of my queer theatre students that was interactive and involved nude (but not sexual) bodies, food, hundreds of simultaneous porn clips, accompanied by disorienting music and lighting, was 'What was it like for you, Bobby, to be in the space with *us* through that performance?'. These questions signaled a kind of complex self-reflexivity and something like W.E.B. DuBois's double-consciousness about the labours of the fucking body in tension with the classroom body for all of us (1994). Again, the actual objects of our analysis continuously receded from view. These moments became productive interruptions or ruptures in the classroom teacher/student scene that otherwise often works best when students are not aware of the pedagogy design, never mind curious about its flows, successes, or failures. To me, then, the reparative pedagogies we were positioned by were conditioned and at times created by the students in their progress through the course, not by my heroics at getting the space operationalized at all. That progress was in no way linear as if somehow we mean students moved from a place of ignorance and intellectual emptiness at the beginning of the course to enlightened knowing at the end. Instead, a nuanced engagement with porn, especially in a moment that is not just post-sex wars but post-feminist, where the affect of those wars continues to impose very fundamentalist and paranoid affective binary logics (i.e. us vs. them, the feminists vs. the pornographers, good vs. bad, etc.), requires developing the sophisticated reparative positionalities and languages with which to navigate through contradictory and competing discourses to learn what it is we still do not yet know. There is much to *re-know*. Feminist porn does very complicated work as a sentient, interactive and responsive counter-public culture, as genre, as industry, increasingly as social movement itself driven by ethical questions of intention, effect, process and conditions of production *vis-à-vis* who makes its product, under what labour and production conditions, how it is distributed and who consumes it, and, most importantly, who defines it when, where, why and how.

Afterword: porn-y bodies, porn-y pedagogies

It is not possible to talk about ethical porn or to fully take up the deeply embedded relations between porn and pedagogy – either within the classroom or outside its very recent institutionalities – without, at the very least, a serious epistemological nod to feminist porn workers whose literal bodies of work have made feminist porn pedagogies and methodologies possible. As noted by Shannon Bell (1994, 1995) and others, feminists working in porn (Nina Hartley, Annie Sprinkle and the rest of the Club 90 feminist porn workers support group) who eventually became feminists

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making porn (including Shar Rednour, Jackie Strano and Carol Queen) have been in existence for a substantial portion of the latter end of the twentieth century and continue to be significant community-builders of the feminist porn movement.[7] One such figure merits closer analytical attention here: Tristan Taormino. To in any way ignore the profound influence of and contributions by Taormino to queer feminist porn counter-publics and industries of feminist porn would be a serious error. As a cultural worker, Taormino's credentials[8] are significant and her role in the feminist porn movement is equally noteworthy. For my purposes here, however, what makes Taormino especially interesting is the way that she is located precisely at the overlapping pedagogical functions flagged by Johnson in the opening epigraph of this paper: Taormino as producer of her own work but also self-made pedagogue in her work. As such, 'Tristan Taormino' as text signals that complex performative tension between 'the teachers *of* the text and the teacher *in* the text' (Johnson, 76).

Taormino's entry into the world of porn as a feminist porn sex educator and worker is the stuff of growing legend and an almost mythical origins story. Not only was she an exclusive director for Vivid Entertainment for six years, during which time she created and helmed the company's sex education line Vivid-Ed, in so many of her films she fully articulates through a teacherly subject position. Of 25 films where Taormino is listed as 'Director/Producer/Host,' 17 are either in the 'Expert's Guide to …' series or contain the words 'Sex Ed' in the title. With her thick black plastic glasses, conservative but feminine attire, bobbed hair and her direct address to the camera, style of enunciation and pronunciation detailing anatomically correct language and 'how-to' instruction containing a slight hint of porn-y-ness, Taormino porn-ucates in visual economies that are as porn-y as they are teacher-ly. And the feminist education of desire *vis-à-vis* Taormino begins quite literally in the hands of legendary porn director, John Stagliano aka Buttman. Although anti-pornography feminism might see in feminist porn an imagined niche market by 'pornographers' and Taormino as part of what they would probably call 'false consciousness' at the very least, I see Taormino as guided by a series of very determined feminisms, (un) doing the thinkable, doing the (un)thinkable, quite literally by hijacking the means of representation through which women's pleasures supposedly have been constituted and, according to anti-pornography feminism, mis-represented.

A close reading of Taormino as both porn-maker and pedagogue is very telling. The scene with John Stagliano is now somewhat legendary and warrants a closer analysis, especially if in such an analysis we understand its work as documentary truth. Taormino, not yet the infamous 'TT', has set up a meeting with Stagliano to whom she seeks to pitch a documentary version of her 1997 book *The Ultimate Guide to Anal Sex for Women*. Stagliano meets with Tristan and all but dismisses her pitch. However, right before he is about to ask Taormino and her camera-person to leave his office, Stagliano strikes a bargain with her: he will agree to produce her film if she can get porn star, Ruby, notorious in Stagliano's world for refusing to do anal scenes because she cannot do them physically, to receive anal penetration at the hands of Taormino and actually enjoy it. With her own camera person already filming the entire scene, although losing that frame when Stagliano takes control of the camera, Taormino opens her briefcase of sex toys, and proceeds to anally fuck Ruby who, much to Stagliano's surprise, learns to not only receive penetration but also claims to enjoy Taormino's three toys. Stagliano upholds his end of the bargain

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and produces her first two films in which Taormino restores a feminist frame to the images (Greene and Stagliano, 1999). The rest, as they say, is feminist porn history.

The diegetic narrative succeeds on its own terms. The story, it turns out, is not necessarily only that of Ruby but of Taormino attempting to find her first big break in an industry hostile to feminist practice by literally seizing the means of production. The gloss, of course, is the beautiful and very queer confusion created by Taormino's adeptness at proving herself not only a skilled sex educator but also a practitioner. The most effective and long-term success of the moment is the witnessing of the scene through the presence of the camera. It cannot be forgotten that this is also a scene in a documentary about feminist porn and, as such, is itself narrated as what we might call an 'occupy' moment, where Taormino and film crew burst in on an unsuspecting Stagliano. But it is also narrated as an origin story, along with the work of other feminist porn workers/legends such as Shar Rednour, Jackie Strano, Carol Queen, Nina Hartley, and so forth, who have been working in various porn industries and their points of crossover both as feminists and in feminist porn for a substantial period of time. They are the history of the present moment. Taormino is especially significant as a figure of both feminist pedagogies and feminist activism, both of which get disappeared by anti-porn feminist logics when she cannot be thought of as woman in need of feminist rescue or as feminist educator/pedagogue doing the rescuing. She can only be the site of unknowing-ness, a kind of feminist aporia or vanishing point for anti-porn logics, a figure who creates, on the many levels of representation at stake here, an equally alarming and disalarming set of ruptures in what is supposed to be a self-evident set of terms (i.e. porn can only be anti-feminist). Her simultaneous positioning as sex educator, as queer femme-top, as feminist activist, as film-maker, and as pedagogue instructing another generation on the commiserations of 'feminism' and 'porn' initiates an entirely different set of grammars that, to evoke Johnson, compulsively and continuously teach what cannot yet be understood. And the figure and body of the porn pedagogue is central to that logic as the locus of 'what must – and cannot – be taught' (Johnson 1989, vii).

If Lehman is right in his assertion that 'pornography also should be studied as a way of understanding what it tells us about human sexuality' (2006, 11), then it might also be the case that the study of porn has much to tell us about the desires organized around what it means *to study inside these pedagogical structures of visual economies*. But the study of feminist porn also helps us answer the question asked by W.J.T. Mitchell and reiterated again by Sara Matthews: what is it that images really want? To be sure, neither Mitchell nor Matthews reify the image. And neither ask their questions about *wanting images* as if somehow the content of visual languages transcends meaning and context-specific reading practices (Matthews 2013). But they certainly ask the same questions as Butler (2007, 959) does about the way that photographs and visual images depict both with representational and referential functions. 'What does the referential function do,' Butler asks, besides refer? What other effects does it produce?' (2007, 959–960). In many ways, these are the same kinds of questions my work with porn as pedagogy helped develop. By virtue of the referential proximities languaged in the writing of 'feminist porn', these representational cultures and practices most certainly ask that the modifications occurring as the result of those proximities be of note. That is, to miss the potent recontextualizing and performative functions of even the phrase 'feminist porn' is to reduce all

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porn and its pedagogies back to paranoid and violent readings like those to which Lindalee Tracey was subject both in *Not a Love Story* and since, given its canonical status in some Women's Studies curriculum. On the other hand, Taormino as feminist pedagogue necessitates in this present an aggressive undoing of the historical lessons of feminist anti-pornography pedagogies. Moreover, the story I tell here about Porn Studies is decidedly not the porn-y killjoy story of teaching porn under institutionally oppressive conditions (Ahmed 2010). Nor is it a tale that reinvigorates or rearticulates the neoliberal promises of the academic institution as a site of political progression. But it might well risk a reparative reading of the very queer desires and frames of reference that feminist porn articulates as its content and the way that porn's form, content, frames of reference and pedagogies produce different kinds of practices in and about our classrooms. Such framings remain evident in the narratives and readings that refuse to know porn so self-evidently cast as an object easily separated from the discourses that produce it or refuse it and which, in turn, it shapes. While it is heroic that so many have battled to bring porn inside academe's walls, certainly that this no longer need be the *only* case is the new story that requires our attention.

Acknowledgement

For d …

Notes

1. I characterize anti-pornography feminism as what I describe as a kind of gender fundamentalism in Noble (2012, 282): 'gender fundamentalism [is] (not unlike that of nationalism, military-state, white supremacist, Christian, to name only a few) [and] functions to ground both a feminist imaginary and its methodology of social, moral, and biological coercive normalization'. In the case of anti-pornography feminism, such fundamentalism emerges as its primary methodology: binary thinking; a belief in unmediated and transparent realism; rhetorical strategies of describing such realist practices as self-evident and, again, unmediated; rigid anti-intellectualism; and often accompanied by raging trans-phobia and fantasies of rescuing, speaking on behalf of, and otherwise routinely dismissing, the voices of sex workers.
2. This paper is part of a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council-funded (Canada) collaborative study of feminist porn called the Feminist Porn Archive and Research Project. We are a Sexuality Studies professor (Noble) and a faculty librarian (Lisa Sloniowski) documenting, studying and archiving queer and feminist porn as a counterpublic.
3. One should note here that such strategic assumptions of a female reader signaled by the use of 'her' in feminist theory can, at the same time, performatively index a series of problematical reductions between feminism and cis-female-ness (see note 6). Not only can they suggest a series of linkages between female-ness and feminism (or female and affect, for that matter), they also close out trans-masculine, transgender, and gender-queer readers for whom male pronouns are equally as strategic as transfeminist identifications. Moreover, in the context of the extremely helpful reader reviews of this paper (for which I thank anonymous reviewers), my own subject position was assumed similarly as a 'her'; that is, as cis-female. As a female-to-male trans scholar, it is curious to note the moments where assumptions about reading publics of feminist pedagogies, feminist porn and so on might unintentionally stabilize gender regimes rather than troubling them. For an analysis of these feminist stabilizations between sex, gender and feminist practice for many subjects of masculinity, not just transmen, see my monographs: *Sons of the Movement: FtMs Risking Incoherence on a Post-queer Cultural Landscape* (Noble 2006) and *Masculinities without Men?: Female Masculinities in Twentieth-century Fictions* (Noble 2004).

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4. This strategy of poaching images to recontextualize their meanings is evident in many anti-pornography feminist documentaries. Recent anti-pornography films follow a disturbingly similar formula: *The Price of Pleasure* (directed by Miguel Picker and Chyng Sun, 2008) is especially troublesome on two fronts. It is without a doubt very questionable to see it as a 'feminist' text claiming harm done against women, especially when that text itself does harm to recognizable feminist porn workers with public profiles by including their images in a documentary without their consent and against their own political articulation of feminist self-location. But not only are such recognitions problematic, they lead one to ask about the ethics of such projects that use footage under the Fair Use provisions of the Copyright Act of 1976, which states that the use of copyrighted work 'for purposes such as criticism, comment, news reporting, teaching (including multiple copies for classroom use), scholarship, or research, is not an infringement of copyright.' While perhaps 'legal,' such an alibi of 'fair use' continues to raise questions about feminist ethics and best practice, the likes of which I raise here about Tracey's condemnation of *Not a Love Story*. See 'The Price of Pleasure Feedback' (accessed October 12, 2013; http://thepriceofpleasure.com/feedback_qa.html).
5. The Feminist Porn Archive and Research Project project took three students to several conferences on panels about the course and its research outcomes. During the Q&A for every conference, someone invariably asked the question 'was it hot to watch porn in the classroom?' The students almost always turned that question back onto the questioner by referencing, in part, the physical intimacy that this particular group developed as a classroom 'norm.' The question and its various iterations are very curious. It misses the way that 'hotness' emerges in context-specific moments. But it also cannot think the way its own logics continue to be bound by an assumption that porn is going to be 'hot' regardless of context, setting, design, intention, and so on. In part, what the question also misses is the way that queer and feminist porn communities come to constitute their own kinship system in which sexuality, sexual intimacy and relationality are organized very differently – a re-organization that this group of students seemed to duplicate. Each time the question is posed, the students emit telling laughs about what they later described as its 'un-porn-y banalities'.
6. 'Cis' refers to genders where there appears to be no discrepancy between birth sex and chosen gender (i.e., non-transgendered genders).
7. Accessed October 12, 2013. http://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/onlinessays/JC32folder/PornWomenInt.html
8. Editor of eight books on sex; editor of 25 anthologies of erotic writing; co-editor of the significant *The Feminist Porn Book; The Politics of Producing Pleasure*; columnist for the *Village Voice* for nine years; director and producer of 25 adult films; organizer of The Feminist Porn Conference (Toronto, 2013); founder of Smart Ass Productions; host of Sex Outloud, a radio program talking about sex; winner of Feminist Porn Awards, AVN awards, at least three Lambda Literary awards; and if this list was not already long enough, highly sought after speaker and lecturer, to date having given over 75 lectures and presentations at top colleges and universities across North America (including Yale, Cornell, Princeton, Brown, Columbia, University of California Santa Barbara, University of North Carolina-Greensboro, and NYU) on subjects ranging from erotic empowerment to challenging the social construction of monogamy (puckerup.com). Taormino's contributions and accomplishments to date are substantial and have longevity across the spectrum.

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