

TRAFFICKING THE "EXOTIC": DAMAGING REPRESENTATIONS OF WOMEN OF COLOUR IN THE SEX INDUSTRY

HOW ARE WOMEN OF COLOUR REPRESENTED IN A WAY DAMAGING TO THEM?

IN THE WORLD OF COMMERCIAL PORNOGRAPHY, STEREOTYPED FANTASIES, EXPLOITATION AND INEQUALITY ARE SOMETHING OF AN INDUSTRY NORM. GAIL DINES, AUTHOR OF THE 2010 'PORNLAND', SUGGESTS THAT THE RELEGATION OF WOMEN OF COLOUR TO THE 'GONZO' GENRE, DEFINED BY ITS LIMITED PLOTLINE OR CHARACTER AGENCY, IS SYMPTOMATIC OF AN INDUSTRY CONTROLLED BY WHITE PRODUCERS FOR WHITE CONSUMPTION. THE EXISTENCE OF PORNOGRAPHY SCENARIOS SUCH AS THE ILLEGAL IMMIGRANT LATINA SERVICING A WHITE POLICE OFFICER, OR THE SEXUAL SUBMISSION OF AN "INNOCENT" ASIAN SCHOOLGIRL TO A FOREIGN TEACHER, CERTAINLY SUPPORT THIS CLAIM. IN PORNOGRAPHY, ETHNIC IDENTITIES ARE TIED TO A LIMITED SET OF SEXUAL AND AESTHETIC CHARACTERISTICS: THE VOLUPTUOUS REAR END OF A BLACK WOMAN, THE FEISTY LATINA MAID, OR THE STILTED ENGLISH OF A GEISHA FIGURE PROMISING TO "LOVE YOU LONG TIME".

THE TEXT ON PORN SITE "GHETTO GAGGERS" DESCRIBES BLACK ACTRESS 'VIXEN' AS "A SASSY GHETTO FABULOUS BEYATCH WITH MORE ATTITUDE THAN HARLEM HAS CRACK. SHE NEED A LEARNIN' BY SOME WHITE COCKS...GHETTO GAGGERS, WE DESTROY GHETTO HOES." VIXEN'S DEBASED ROLE AS A WOMAN IN THIS IMAGINED SEXUAL SCENARIO IS MELDED WITH, AND REINFORCED BY, HER DEBASED STATUS AS A WOMAN OF COLOUR. BLACK FEMINIST AUTHOR PATRICIA HILL COLLINS (1998) WRITES THAT, "CONTEMPORARY PORTRAYALS OF BLACK WOMEN IN PORNOGRAPHY REPRESENT THE CONTINUATION OF THE HISTORICAL TREATMENT OF THEIR ACTUAL BODIES." IN THIS WAY, PORNOGRAPHY IS BUILT UPON THE SAME ASSUMPTIONS AS THE INSTITUTION OF SLAVERY: THAT BLACK MEN AND WOMEN WERE NOT FULLY HUMAN AND AS SUCH, NOT DESERVING OF THE SAME TREATMENT OR RIGHTS OF THEIR WHITE PEERS. THE SAME LOGIC CAN BE APPLIED TO THE TREATMENT OF OTHER NON-WHITE BODIES IN PORNOGRAPHY. IF ABSTRACT IDEAS OF 'HUMANITY' AND 'CIVILISATION' ONLY APPLY TO WHITE BODIES, ALL OTHER BODIES ARE "OTHERED", CONCEIVED OF AS LESSER AND IN NEED OF, IN THE WORDS OF GHETTO GAGGERS, "A LEARNIN'". IT WOULD SEEM THAT THE REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN OF COLOUR IN THE SEX INDUSTRY IS BUILT UPON THE SAME WHITE SUPREMACIST PRESUMPTIONS OF COLONIALISM, DESIGNATING NON-WHITE WOMEN AS EXOTIC OR HYPER-SEXUAL AND ULTIMATELY, AS SUBMISSIVE TO CONQUERING WHITE MEN.

WHAT IS MEANT BY "SEX INDUSTRY"?

THIS RESEARCH FOCUSES ON THE INTERPLAY OF ONLINE OR 'WEB' PORNOGRAPHY AND SEX WORK. WEB PORNOGRAPHY IS UNDERSTOOD AS SEXUALLY EXPLICIT VIDEOS (DEPICTING ACTS OF PENETRATIVE SEX, CLITORAL AND PENILE STIMULATION, SEX ACTS SUCH AS KINK PLAY AND SCENES OF SEXUAL AROUSAL), FILMED USING AND BY THE COMMERCIAL PORNOGRAPHY INDUSTRY FOR ONLINE PURCHASE AND/OR VIEWING. A WORKING DEFINITION OF SEX WORK IS MUCH MORE DIFFICULT TO ACHIEVE: STATE REGULATIONS TYPICALLY IGNORE THE SUBTLETIES AND COMPLEXITIES OF AN INDUSTRY THAT PRODUCES MORE FORMS OF EMPLOYMENT THAN JUST PROSTITUTION. FOR THE PURPOSES OF MY RESEARCH, WHICH AIMS TO UNDERSTAND HOW PORNOGRAPHY INFORMS CONSUMER DEMAND FOR SEX WORK IN THE EU, SEX WORK IS DEFINED AS A DIRECT FORM OF PROSTITUTION, WHICH RANGES FROM THE SALE OF PENETRATIVE SEX TO OTHER ACTS OF SEXUAL TOUCH, AND INCLUDES PORNOGRAPHY. IT DOES NOT INCLUDE STRIPPING, PRIVATE DANCING OR ESCORTING IN ITS DEFINITION, AS THESE FORMS OF WORK (THOUGH SEX ACTS MAY TAKE PLACE ON OR OFF SITE) ARE NOT EXPLICIT IN THEIR INCLUSION OF SEX AS A FINANCIAL TRANSACTION OR AS A FORM OF LABOUR.

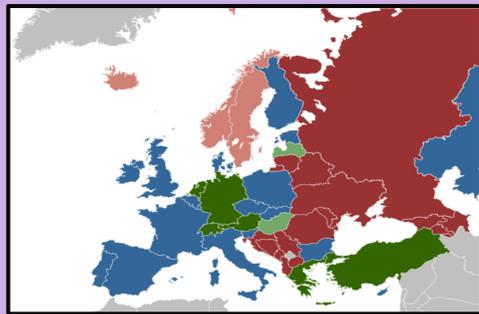
HOW DOES PORNOGRAPHY SHAPE OUR PERCEPTIONS OF SEXUALITY?

ANTHONY (2012) CITES WEBSITES SHOWING AND SELLING PORN AS MAKING UP 30% OF ONLINE SPACE, WITH XVIDEOS, THE LARGEST PORNOGRAPHY PROVIDER ON THE WEB, CLAIMING 4.4 BILLION PAGE VIEWS PER MONTH, DWARFING NEWS SITES SUCH AS CNN. PORNOGRAPHY IS NO SMALL PHENOMENON, AND AS THE AVAILABILITY OF THE INTERNET ITSELF INCREASES, SO DOES THE REACH OF PORNOGRAPHY. IN THE US, 68% OF YOUNG MEN AND 78% OF YOUNG WOMEN VIEW PORNOGRAPHY ONLINE AT LEAST ONCE A WEEK, WITH OVER A QUARTER OF THOSE VIEWING IT WITHOUT EVEN SEEKING IT (COVENANT EYES, 2014). IN RURAL INDIA, NEARLY 75% OF BOYS UNDER 18 ARE ALLEGEDLY ADDICTED TO WEB PORNOGRAPHY (EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE BANGALORE, 2013). THE NEAR OMNIPRESENCE OF PORNOGRAPHIC MATERIAL IN THE LIVES OF YOUNG PEOPLE – AT A TIME IN THEIR LIVES WHERE BIOLOGICAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS ARE COMBINING TO PRODUCE NEW CONCEPTIONS OF SEXUALITY – LOOKS SET TO INFLUENCE THEIR PERCEPTIONS OF SEX. PETER & VALKENBURG (2006) FOUND THAT THE REALISM YOUNG MEN, AS THE GROUP CONSUMING THE MOST PORNOGRAPHY, PERCEIVE IN PORN INFLUENCES THEIR RECREATIONAL ATTITUDES TOWARD SEX WITH OTHERS, WHILE LEE & TAMBORINI (2006) DISCOVERED THAT UNIVERSITY STUDENTS PERCEIVED THAT PORNOGRAPHY'S EFFECTS ON OTHERS WAS GREATER THAN IT WAS UPON THEMSELVES. PORNOGRAPHY SHAPES EXPECTATIONS OF OTHERS' SEXUAL BEHAVIOURS THAT, AT LEAST IN THE CASE OF YOUNG MEN, IS PERCEIVED AS REALISTIC.

FURTHERMORE, FARLEY, BINDEL AND GOLDING (2009) LOOK TO SUGGEST THAT THERE IS AN OVERLAP BETWEEN MEN WHO WATCH SEX ONLINE AND THOSE WHO BUY SEX FROM PROSTITUTES. THIS LINK BETWEEN VIEWED AND LIVED EXPERIENCE IS REFLECTED IN THE WORK OF MONTO & MCCREE (2005), WHO DISCOVERED A STATISTICALLY LINEAR RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MEN WHO WERE REPEAT-USERS OF WOMEN IN PROSTITUTION AND MEN WHO REGULARLY USED ONLINE PORNOGRAPHY. ONE INTERVIEWEE FROM THE 2009 FARLEY ET AL. STUDY CLAIMED THAT, "THE MORE I'VE WATCHED PORNOGRAPHY, THE MORE SPECIFIC MY WANTS HAVE BECOME. WATCHING PORNOGRAPHY HAS SHAPED MY SEXUAL DESIRES. I WATCH PORNOGRAPHY AND I DISCOVER 'HEY, THAT REALLY TURNS ME ON' AND I WANT TO RECREATE WHAT I'VE SEEN IN PORN."



A MEXICAN ACTRESS PORTRAYED AS A MAID IN THE FOLLOWING VIDEO: [HTTP://WWW.XVIDEOS.COM/VIDEO7727685/PHATASS_MEXICAN_MAID](http://www.xvideos.com/video7727685/PHATASS_MEXICAN_MAID) [ACCESSED 2 FEBRUARY 2015]



FRANCIS24. 2012. PROSTITUTION IN EUROPE. [ONLINE]. [ACCESSED 23 NOVEMBER 2014]. AVAILABLE FROM: [HTTP://EN.WIKIPEDIA.ORG/WIKI/PROSTITUTION_IN_EUROPE#/MEDIAVIEWER/FILE:PROSTITUTION_IN_EUROPE_-_CORRECTED_-_2.SVG](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prostitution_in_Europe#/media/File:Prostitution_in_Europe_-_corrected_-_2.svg)

KEY:
■ PROSTITUTION LEGAL AND REGULATED. BROTHELS ARE LEGAL AND REGULATED
■ PROSTITUTION LEGAL AND REGULATED, BUT BROTHELS ARE ILLEGAL
■ PROSTITUTION LEGAL, BUT NOT REGULATED. BROTHELS ARE ILLEGAL
■ PROSTITUTION ILLEGAL. THE CLIENTS ARE CRIMINALLY PROSECUTED, BUT NOT THE PROSTITUTES
■ PROSTITUTION ILLEGAL. THE PROSTITUTES ARE CRIMINALLY PROSECUTED
■ NO DATA

"YOU LIKE WHEN YOUNG ASIAN BEG FOR YOU." MODEL PAGE FOR ACTRESS 'HARUMMI'. [ACCESSED 2 FEBRUARY 2015]. AVAILABLE FROM:

[HTTP://BADABINGPHONESEX.COM/ASIAN-SCHOOL-GIRL-PHONE-SEX/](http://badabingphonesex.com/asian-school-girl-phone-sex/)

PROSTITUTION AND SEX TRAFFICKING IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

THE RECRUITMENT OF WOMEN AND GIRLS INTO THE SEX INDUSTRY BY TRAFFICKERS IS DEPENDENT ON A NUMBER OF FACTORS, THE MOST SIGNIFICANT OF WHICH IS THE VULNERABILITY OF THE GROUP IN QUESTION. THE SELECTION OF A PROSPECTIVE SEX WORKER IS INFLUENCED BY THE VICTIM'S SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS, THE LESS ABLE THEY ARE TO ACCESS STATE FUNDED SUPPORT, TO BE IN WORK OR TO ENJOY ANY DEGREE OF SOCIAL PROTECTION, THE EASIER IT IS FOR PIMPS OR TRAFFICKERS TO ATTRACT WOMEN INTO THE INDUSTRY WITH THE PROMISE OF A BETTER LIFE ABROAD, OR THE EXISTENCE OF LUCRATIVE OPPORTUNITIES UNAVAILABLE IN THEIR NATIVE COUNTRY. THE INTERSECTIONS OF RACE, CLASS AND GENDER MAKE WOMEN OF COLOUR AMONG THE MOST VULNERABLE IN THESE TERMS. BLACK AND OTHER "ETHNIC MINDRITY" COMMUNITIES ARE FREQUENTLY AMONGST THE MOST SOCIALLY AND ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED, WHILE THE PERCEIVED HYPER-SEXUALITY OF BLACK AND LATINA WOMEN (AND THE ASSUMED SUBMISSIVENESS OF ASIAN WOMEN) CONVEYS AN "UN-RAPEABLE" STATUS UPON THEM, BUILT UPON THE IDEA THAT THEY ARE ALWAYS WILLING TO HAVE SEX. ELMAN (1996) WRITES THAT THE RACISM INHERENT IN SEXUAL TRAFFICKING PUTS WOMEN OF COLOUR INTO THE MOST POWERLESS POSITION IMAGINABLE, EXISTING AS THEY MUST WITHIN AN ENVIRONMENT WHERE THEIR RACIAL OR ETHNIC GROUP IS CONSIDERED INFERIOR AND WHERE THEY MUST SUBMIT TO CLIENTS' STEREOTYPED FANTASIES. ELMAN'S (1996) WRITING CAME BEFORE THE BOOM IN ONLINE PORNOGRAPHY. IN THE TIME SINCE, THE PSYCHO-SOCIAL IMPACT OF PORNOGRAPHY IS ONLY LIKELY TO HAVE EXACERBATED THESE CONDITIONS.

WHAT'S MORE, EUROPEAN IMMIGRATION LAWS AND POLICIES INTENSIFY THE PLIGHT OF THE ESTIMATED 17,756 (EUROSTAT, 2014) WOMEN AND GIRLS TRAFFICKED INTO THE SEX INDUSTRY. BY RESTRICTING THE ABILITY OF IMMIGRANT WOMEN TO SEEK OUT AND HOLD 'ORDINARY' JOBS, PHILIPPINE ACTIVIST AURORA JAVATE DE LOS DIOS CLAIMS THAT WOMEN OF COLOUR ARE INCREASINGLY DEPENDENT ON THEIR EUROPEAN MALE CLIENTS, WHO ARE NOT SUBJECT TO THESE RESTRICTIONS.

DOES IT HAVE TO BE THIS WAY?

NO. PORNOGRAPHY IS NOT AN INHERENT SOCIAL EVIL. AN INTEREST IN SEX, AND THE CONSEQUENT CONSUMPTION OF READILY AVAILABLE AND EASILY ACCESSIBLE WEB PORNOGRAPHY, IS UNLIKELY TO ABATE. THIS IS ESPECIALLY TRUE WHEN ONE CONSIDERS PORNOGRAPHY'S CAPACITY TO PROVIDE REPRESENTATION OF NON-HETERONORMATIVE SEX WHERE NATIONAL CURRICULUMS ON SEXUAL EDUCATION IN THE UK AND ABROAD DO NOT PROVIDE. PORNOGRAPHY HAS THE POTENTIAL TO BE AN EXCELLENT SEXUAL HEALTH LEARNING TOOL, ADVERTISING THE HEALTH AND PSYCHOLOGICAL BENEFITS OF GOOD CONSENT AND SAFE SEXUAL PRACTICE, AS WELL AS PROVIDING A POSITIVE SPACE FOR QUEER-IDENTIFYING TEENAGERS AND ADULTS. DAVIS (2012) STATES THAT, OF A SURVEY MALE, FEMALE, TRANS* AND GENDER FLUID YOUTH, ONLY ONE PARTICIPANT REPORTED *NOT* TURNING TO PORNOGRAPHY TO EXPLAIN NON-HETEROSEXUAL SEX.

WOMEN OF COLOUR ARE ALREADY BEGINNING TO PRODUCE COUNTER-NARRATIVES TO MAINSTREAM PORNOGRAPHY'S STEREOTYPING OF NON-WHITE BODIES. DIRECTORS, CAM GIRLS AND WEB-MISTRESSES SUCH AS VANESSA BLUE, DIANA DEVOE AND SHINE LOUISE HOUSTON PROVIDE 'ALTERNATIVE', ANTI-RACIST PORNOGRAPHY, INVOLVING MUCH MORE COMPLICATED REPRESENTATIONS OF WOMEN OF COLOUR. COMPANIES LIKE HEATWAVE ENTERTAINMENT AND METRO HAVE BUILT THEIR BRANDING ON CONTRACTED POC ACTORS AND FEATURE FILMS, AND CREATED A VIABLE SPACE FOR NON-WHITE DIRECTORS AND PRODUCERS. AS PORNOGRAPHY SCHOLAR MILLER-YOUNG (2010) COMMENTS, "IF YOU REALLY WANT TO UNDERSTAND PORN FROM THE VIEW OF WOMEN OF COLOUR YOU NEED TO TALK TO THEM, NOT JUST EVALUATE THEIR EXPERIENCES BASED ON THE TITLES OF THE MOVIES THEY APPEAR IN." GREATER ENGAGEMENT OF WOMEN OF COLOUR IN PORN, AND IN POLICY MAKING, IS A VIABLE SOLUTION TO THE RISKS PRESENTED BY THE SEX INDUSTRY AS IT CURRENTLY STANDS.

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UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

EMMA LOUISE SIMPSON

DAYTIME TELEPHONE NO.: 07835246145

THE UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS