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# "This is not Kate Moss" - An exploration into the viewing of cyberpornography

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## Abstract

*In this paper I explore the changing form of pornography and put forward tentative suggestions as to how the phenomenon of cyberpornography might influence orthodox understandings of pornography. Feminist interventions have long been critical in altering the frame through which pornography is understood, but how does the emergence of cyberpornography complicate these visions?*

*The title of the paper comes from a comment supermodel Kate Moss made after her Calvin Klein adverts were accused of being pornographic. She said 'the more visible they make me, the more invisible I become'. The issues implicit here are identity and the relationship between subject and object, issue that have been central to the orthodox view of pornography. If these are disturbed, what then?*

*In Surrealist paintings, precisely that quality of subtle disturbance is central. Magritte's 'This is not a pipe' is the classic example. And of course it is not a pipe, but a picture of one, just as it is a picture of Kate Moss to which we react. Informed by Surrealist theories of art and film, I examine how understandings of pornography might be affected.*

*Taking this a stage further, I turn to the cyberpunk novel Neuromancer by William Gibson and the work of various cybertheorists. Using their visions of cyberculture, I try to imagine how cyberpornography might work and how we might understand pornography beyond the simplistic subject/object, stimulus/response debates within which it is commonly cast. If, as the postmodernist, postfeminist, gender and queer theorists argue, identity, gender, subjectivity and sex are destabilising, how will new pornographies fit in? It is my contention that the emergence of cyberpornography and postmodern debates on the fragmentation of the subject must irrevocably complicate our understanding of pornography. In turn, these new understandings may perhaps provide a way out of the anti-censorship/pro-censorship impasse.*

## Introduction

How do such apparently random things as Kate Moss, Surrealist film theory and cyberpunk novels come together? Let me start with Kate Moss. At the time of writing, Ms Moss seems to be experiencing somewhat of a renaissance. The fact that it is catwalk season may have something to do with this. More likely her renewed media coverage comes from her recent change in lifestyle, and various "scandals" (I choose to put the word in inverted commas because it is the media's judgement,

not my own) relating to alcohol and drug use. As a friend said to me the other day, the very fact that someone can 'have a ten year hangover and look that good' scandalous in itself.

The media have been largely supportive of her. This time, that is. My main recollections of her encounters with the media are the accusations of her being the cause of practically every case of teenage anorexia on record through her modelling of 'heroin chic' fashion. More pertinently, I recall the protest over her series of adverts for Calvin Klein, which were accused of being child pornography.

Kate Moss published her portfolio, a retrospective of almost a decade of fashion, during my final year of an undergraduate law degree at Leicester University. Somehow, I managed to tear myself away from writing my dissertation, on Victorian Obscenity Laws and Literature, and obtain a copy of the portfolio for myself. In the preface is her personal rejoinder to her critics,

"I also realise that with any amount of good, comes a certain amount of bad. That's fine. A lot of horrible, unfair, untrue things have been said about me...the things said...have been so ludicrous, that I have never given them enough credence to retaliate. I can only say that the best revenge is success. *And the more visible they make me, the more invisible I become.*"<sup>[1]</sup>

(my emphasis)

I can't say I gave the quote much more thought at the time, but I did continue to pursue the theme of my undergraduate research in choosing to look at aspects of pornography and law for my postgraduate research. Looking at pornography as a cultural form, one thing that I noticed was the radical change in the form of pornography itself. For instance, I noted its evolution from etchings and engravings to text based forms, the impact and influence of visual media (such as photography, video and cinematic film) and more recently its total transformation through electronic media and modern technology, making it something now almost unrecognisable in places.<sup>[2]</sup> What I also noticed was the influence of various theories such as feminist theories, postfeminist theories and queer theories in debates about the viewing of pornography - the emergence of an aesthetics of pornography, almost - but most certainly an incisive and complex critique of how it is viewed at the very least. It is these two interrelated themes that I am interested in for my research: **1) the question of what pornography is becoming, and 2) how it is/might be viewed.** As my Ph.D. research is law based, I am also interested in how the law relates or might relate to these two issues, but I will leave this part of the discussion to the later sections of the paper.

### Early critiques of pornography

As I have mentioned above, theories on how pornography is viewed are central to my research. Early critiques were formulated by first-wave feminists who exposed pornography as an expression and function of patriarchy.<sup>[3]</sup> Here, pornography reflected and reified the status of women in a patriarchal world as sex objects, subordinate to men. Women in pornography were manipulated and dominated, sexually humiliated, denied agency and subjectivity. They were portrayed as secretly enjoying violent and/or non-consensual sexual scenarios. In short, women were whatever the male pornographers wanted them to be. Pornography was understood to be created exclusively for the

benefit of a misogynist audience who would appreciate the negative roles women were portrayed in. Informed by psychoanalytic theory, feminist media critiques pointed out the role of male psychosexual anxieties in pornography.[4] Pornography was a device through which these tensions could be resolved, for example, the fear of men's sexual rejection underlying the portrayal of women in pornographic films as always being submissive. Men's viewing of pornography would lead to the internalisation of misogynist views and the image of women as objects. A pattern of behaviour would be induced, as men's actions in real life would be influenced by those of the pornographic scenarios they had seen. This was summed up by the feminist tenet 'pornography is the theory, rape is the practice'. All women were thus affected by pornography as pornography helped to produce a warped image of women. The degraded, used and humiliated woman of pornography was symbolic of women's real life status under patriarchy.

### Later critiques - postmodern interventions

It can be seen from the outline above that the early theories had very definite ideas about what pornography was and how it was viewed. However, these theories were based on uncritical binary identities i.e. man/woman, and a simplistic understanding of viewing i.e. stimulus/response. Later critiques tried to expand the analysis by critically examining the binary categories and assumptions underlying the earlier theories. Critical race theorists, for example, highlighted the lack of race analysis in early feminist critiques of pornography.[5] Postmodernist theorists and postfeminists, informed by the debates of postmodernism on the fluidity of the subject and the fragmentary nature of identity, started to challenge essentialist identities as Man and Woman, and binary hierarchies such as object/subject. It could no longer be assumed that the viewer and the viewed were readily identifiable subject positions, nor that the interpretation of what was viewed was definite and uncomplicated. Queer theorists noted the earlier critiques failed to address diverse sexualities in the viewing and understanding of pornography. Gay and lesbian pornography could not easily be fitted in to the earlier heterosexist critiques. Pornography through a Queer interpretation could be seen as a potentially subversive challenge to the stale, binary heterosexual model of pornography, rather than being a poor copy of it that replicated the roles of dominance and submission.[6] The cumulative effect of these more complex analyses was that the notion of pornography as a fixed referent, as it had been understood in the early critiques, was fundamentally challenged by questioning the roles of the viewer and the viewed.

### Kate Moss and Surrealist film theory: in/visible

Quite by accident, I happened to walk past a section on film and media studies in the library. The periodicals looked decidedly interesting, the black shiny covers and pictures of decadent 1920's film stars being infinitely more seductive than the very suspicious *beige* gracing the Harvard Law Review, which I was supposed to be finding at the time. Being eternally curious about black shiny things, I soon started reading copies of *Screen* instead of the Harvard Law Review. Given that I was concerned with pornographic film as a media and theories of viewing, I started to think about what film and media studies could add to my understanding of how pornography is viewed. It is at this juncture that Surrealist film theory comes in, and Kate Moss reappears.

To recall her words, she said 'the more visible they make me, the more invisible I become'. Who is viewed and who is viewing is no longer clear. Visibility and invisibility are seen to exist at the same time, almost sounding like a contradiction in terms. If it isn't Kate Moss, then who or what is it? Kate Moss *herself* is not being seen, it is her image to which we react. As I see it, her statement echoes the confusion - perhaps conflation at times, if that is possible - between reality and simulacra, and subject and object, that postmodernist theorists have drawn attention to.

Yet it is not only the postmodernists who have noticed the dissonance between events and their surroundings, and how we perceive them. About seventy years earlier, Rene Magritte, a painter associated with the Surrealist movement, painted "This is not a pipe". In this picture, a pipe is

painted on an otherwise blank canvas and below it the words "Ceci n'est pas une pipe" - "This is not a pipe" appear. It looks like a pipe and so the words beneath it seem misleading. That is, until, as Foucault remarks, you try to smoke the pipe you see.[7] The painting is far more than a simple play on words, however. The Surrealists were concerned with disturbing the accepted hierarchies of representation - for example, the classical ordering in painting of space and form, and the juxtapositions of colour and visual order. Surrealist painting actively subverts the expected tenets of classical aesthetics through subtle displacement. A bottle becomes a carrot or a carrot becomes a bottle, the lines between them blurring.[8] Both the bottle and the carrot are ordinary objects, neither are abstract shapes, but each is made surreal by the context. The real and the hyperreal are blurred, causing the viewer to question the naturally accepted order. Where, for instance, does the bottle end and the carrot begin? The boundaries of the very medium itself are challenged as non-painterly, unexpected objects and media intrude on to the canvas, as Foucault writes of Paul Klee;

`The juxtaposition of the shapes and the syntax of lines in an uncertain, reversible, floating space...simultaneously page and canvas, plane and volume, map and chronicle...Boats, houses, persons are at the same time recognisable figures and elements of writing.'[9]

The aesthetics of film developed by Surrealists continued the theme of the relationship between reality and imagination as seen in their paintings and other artistic works.[10] They examined how film transforms the act of viewing. At the time surrealists were writing, film was a novel medium, an advance from the static visual media such as photography and painting. Film was more `real' than static media because it captured the property of motion as well as being open to manipulation, i.e. technical effects, in order to produce visual effects unknown to painting.[11]

Predominantly concerned with the interplay between the process of visual perception and imagination, Surrealist film theorists saw film as a way in which the gap between reality and imagination, dream and consciousness could be bridged.[12] Surrealists understood film as offering a uniquely `free syntax', a medium able to translate and communicate what was untranslatable in words. In this way, it could breach the barriers between perception and reality - the virtual and the actual. It was, in a sense, a new artistic language. Film, like Surrealist painting, offered a new *order* of visualising, concentrating on the subject but at the same time emphasising the representation of the subject, its simulacra.[13] For Surrealists, the self was already fragmentary, and film was one way of representing that fragmentation.[14] Film had a hallucinogenic quality, in that each frame provided space for interpretation between the act of filming and the act of viewing. Each frame of film was thus a fragment, echoing the fragmentation of the self, and also an illusion, as film disclosed what was on the edge of vision, and beyond, through the process of viewing. As Fotiade writes,

`according to Artaud, a vibration or shock must occur between image and thought so that life can replace the stillness and discontinuity...the viewing subject...reconstructs and recreates reality, with the help of his/her imagination, during the projection of the film."[15]

## Surrealist film theory and Postmodern discourses

Surrealist film theory and postmodern discourses share the same interest in the fragmentation of the subject. As I understand them, the postmodern discourses on the fragmentation of the subject are based on the disruption of binary hierarchies that form the basis of enlightenment thought, whereas in contrast, Surrealist film theory grounds its fragmented subjects in ideas about the actual nature and properties of film, and the persistence of dreams woven through consciousness. Surrealist film theory considers the hallucinogenic nature of film, the specific nature of the medium, and the actual process of merging reality with hyperreality. It deals specifically with simulacra and suggests how the viewer participates in the hallucination of the film.

By going beyond the field of vision, both literally and symbolically, I think Surrealist film theory starts to explore the realms of Utopia, an exploration I find lacking elsewhere. Surrealist film theory, as I understand it, is one of the few places where the fragmented subject has an *environment* to exist in. As Brooks observes,

`fantasy offers the possibility of the fragmentation of or proliferation

of identifications which challenges the "very locatability of identity".[16]

The fragmented subject is not out of place in the Surrealist world, but rather belongs there. Postmodern theories concentrate on the fragmented subject but not so much on the environment in which it might be located, or how a fragmented subject might interact with the environment. An exception is *pornography*. Pornography is one of the few places where Utopias and fragmented subjects are considered by postmodern theorists in that alternative pornographies, i.e. S/M and gay and lesbian pornography, may provide new forms of pleasure and sites to explore them in. However, at this stage, as these ways of viewing pornography are very new, I would argue that the precise nature and forms of these pleasures remains unclear.

## Cyberpunk and Cyberporn: viewing the future

I had exhausted my pile of film and media journals. Rather than submit to the

beige-clad Harvard Law review, I trawled the library for new shiny things. I noticed, purely because it had a shiny cover (silver), Sadie Plant's book *Zeros and Ones*. [17] This book explores the relationship between women and technology/cyberculture, and in it, she quotes from a cyberpunk novel, *Neuromancer* by William Gibson. [18] Always a girl to choose a book for its cover, (not shiny, but artistic nonetheless) *Neuromancer* was next on my list. *Neuromancer* is a novel that is set in the future. It follows the exploits of Case, a computer cowboy, and Molly, his cooler, harder and infinitely more sussed razorgirl sidekick, a hired assassin with steel razor implants under her fingernails. They live in a world where cyberspace is a consensual hallucination experienced by users who can interact with it - 'jack in' to the space and experience it as a different dimension of existence.

Unlike other aesthetic media, there is little research on how users actually react to graphical interfaces - precisely what they experience, and how they experience and interpret cyberspace. [19] Much must be guesswork at this stage, yet not completely. Cyberpunk novels, like Surrealist films and paintings, provide possible scenarios and utopias, or rather dystopias, perhaps, for human experience. [20] Through a reading of cyberpunk's vision of cyberspace and an understanding of Surrealist film theory, perhaps a step can be made toward the envisioning and theorising of pornography in cyberspace.

In *Neuromancer*, Molly is part cyborg, a cybernetic organism who has had her body enhanced with electronic and cybertechnology. [21] At one stage, Case has a cyberlink into her body and can feel

and see as she does, simultaneously. His 'hitching' into her body blurs the boundaries between them. Where does Molly end and Case begin? Who is watching whom? Is there even a distinction between them? In this vision of cyberspace the boundaries between subject and object, viewer and viewed, collapse. They do more than just collapse, I would suggest that they are forcibly breached. As postmodernists theorised about the dissolution of the subject, cyberpunk fiction is one place where the nature of this process was actually being sketched out.[22]

With the viewer and the viewed disturbed, conflated even, what does the future of pornography look like? Previous distinctions and assertions collapse as pleasures extend beyond the body. However, I think that the disturbance goes even further. Molly and Case, who are lovers in the novel as well as partners in crime, not only seem to witness the future of pornography but become it. Literally. Cyberspace in Cyberpunk novels is a world of crime and pornography, unfettered by the rules of the physical world. When considering the future of pornography this is interesting to remember, as theories about pornography tend not to concentrate on the environment pornography is made in. In cyberspace it is this very environment that alters the nature of pornography completely. Molly and Case *become* pornography when they link in with each other, as opposed to assuming the traditional and separate roles of viewer and viewed who are only interpreting images. As I understand it, the gap between image and reality that the Surrealists desired so much to be bridged is totally closed in cyberpornography. In Surrealist film theory, the process of viewing involves the viewer actively participating in a 'hallucination' of film, filling in spaces with fantasy and forming a part of the experience. In cyberpornography, these critical spaces necessitated by the nature of visual media can be overcome with the medium of cyberspace. Cyberspace would allow for physical integration with the media, (as in the cyberlink between Molly and Case) thus facilitating an uninterrupted flow of dream, hallucination and physical experience - the fusion of image and reality. The experience of Cyberpornography could be understood by drawing on Surrealist interpretations of viewing processes, and the nature of the distance between reality and virtuality, and its users/participants as an extension, or realisation, perhaps, of postmodern disrupted identities and fluid sexualities. In this way, drawing on postmodernist theories we can start to understand the nature of the users of future pornographies with their fragmented, plural identities and desires, and using the Surrealist theories we can tentatively speculate about the implications of cyberspace as a medium in how that pornography may be experienced, i.e. as a hallucinatory experiences that fuses fantasy with reality.

Such an understanding of cyberpornography, then, can accommodate postmodern users and postmodern media. The future of pornography, as I understand it, lies in the fusing of identities, in the dissolution of boundaries between them, the opening of spaces in which to explore new pleasures. Throughout this paper I have been extending examples by analogy. There has, I admit, been a subtle sliding from paintings to film, to cybermedia. Such slippage cannot pass uncriticised, yet as I see it, it is inevitable. As I have mentioned above, some of the theorising about new media must be guesswork, explored by utopian visions rather than concrete, empirical theory. In a postmodern world, such a strategy is, I believe, eminently suitable. Neuromancer was written over ten years ago, when the future of cybertechnology was very much an open question. As I write this, cyberpornography is a recognised phenomenon, even if not quite in the form envisioned by William Gibson.[23] Although there is a long way to go before cybertechnology exists that meets the console cowboys' and razorgirls' demands, active interfaces with the Net are being pursued in the quest to bridge the gap between fantasy and reality; sophisticated sensory accessories are being developed in an attempt to bring the user closer to the action.[24] The vision of Neuromancer is rapidly becoming more fact than fiction.

### **Cybercensors: Law and cyberpornography**

After reading Neuromancer, I have started to think about what an existence in cyberspace would be like. Cyberpunk's version of cyberspace is a hedonistic realm of crime and pornography. All inhabitants will be active participants, as they will *become* part of cyberspace by physically integrating with the technology through cyberlinks. I can appreciate Donna Haraway's vision where

corporeality does not end at the skin, or begin there.<sup>[25]</sup> Just as the blurring of boundaries between human and machine has implications for conventional understandings about corporeality, the emergence of cybertechnology must have an impact on traditional understandings of pornography. Every new medium throughout the history of pornography has irrevocably changed it as a cultural form. In cyberpornography, identities and viewing positions are fundamentally disrupted as are the actual processes of viewing and experiencing. Traditional understandings of pornography fail to take these factors into account. While queer and other theorists influenced by postmodernism understand pornography in a way that accommodates fragmented identities, the impact of cybermedia goes largely undertheorised.

How will law deal with new pornographies in cyberspace? Law has always reacted to the emergence of new media in relation to pornography. It is possible to trace the influence of the emergence of the novel and text-based materials in Victorian obscenity legislation. Likewise, the appearance of video technology and instant film can be discerned as important factors in modern legislation. To account for the media, however, does not necessarily cause law to make critical examination of its concept of pornography. Law is heavily influenced by the view of pornography as a fixed referent, something that can readily be recognised rather than a changing and constructed form. Censorship is a concept that depends on being able to reliably differentiate between what is good and bad, what is corrupting and what is not, and identifying causal links. Pornography in law is understood to cause harm, and can therefore be justifiably suppressed or controlled.

Law cannot easily accommodate plural identities, sexualities and multiple realities because of its reliance on binary hierarchies. When faced with cyberpornography, the options of a clear-cut subject and object, cause and effect, viewer and viewed, oppressor and oppressed even as loosely defined groups may be unavailable. If this is a possibility, the concept of censorship becomes undermined as clear distinctions can no longer be made. If law simply imports its current, traditional understandings of pornography into cyberspace, they will not be effective. Considering practical problems, Alison Adams, writing about the nature of Artificial Intelligence and cyber artefacts, draws attention to their 'virtual' quality:

'But whereas a bridge is still there as a bridge when no-one is using it, when a computer is switched off the software has a curious way of disappearing. Even opening up the casing and inspecting the hard disk will not reveal what has just been viewed on the computer's screen.'<sup>[26]</sup>

What will the police take away as evidence, or show for an exhibit in court, when the pornography, that used to remain so conveniently in tangible form, vanishes?

When considering how pornography will be legally regulated in cyberspace, there is a tacit assumption that law can operate without any problems in cyberspace. Law will simply process the Internet and cyberculture and just like all new media it encounters. Law deals with new technology as it arises and reinterprets it to suit the legal hermeneutic. However, unlike other new technologies such as compact disk, a legal 'reinterpretation' may not be possible in the context of cybermedia. Why?

As argued above, law is grounded in binary and hierarchical structures. The Internet, however, is not. The principles upon which it runs are the very antithesis of binaries and hierarchies. The system was originally created with the threat of nuclear war in the background. To avoid sabotage or collapse in the event of a nuclear attack, computer programs were designed to be random. Each route

of information was designed to be unique - no piece of information should take the same path twice. Thus the system was designed to develop in a random and spontaneous manner, without central command system or hierarchical form. As Plant writes,

'Hypertext programs and the Net are webs of footnotes without central points, organising principles, hierarchies. Such networks are unprecedented in terms of their scope, complexity, and the pragmatic possibilities of their use.' '[T]here is no headquarters, no core zone. Information storage and processing is distributed throughout networks which defy all attempts to pin them down.'<sup>[27]</sup>

The danger is that law will try to enforce inflexible structures on a fluid medium and fail in its object of control. Law relies on certainty, but cyberspace just will not stay still. If the fluid structure of the Internet is reformulated into fixed principles for the purposes of legal regulation, law will have fundamentally failed to capture what it seeks to control. The essence of cyberspace will escape and attempts to pin it down into rules of precedent, legal certainty and regulated objects or subjects will prove pointless.

Does this mean that there will be chaos in cyberspace? Will the absence of law mean that it really *will* be a dystopic realm of crime and pornography? Perhaps, instead of asking how *law* will cope with the *Internet*, it is more useful to rephrase the question and ask how the *Internet* will influence *law*. There is a distinct possibility, if it is accepted that cyberspace and cyberpornography cannot fit into law, that law will have to fit in to cyberspace. How will this be done? Perhaps law could follow the model of the Internet itself. By this I mean that it could make itself up from scratch in every instance and follow a new path each time. Law could then be potentially be as fluid as the medium it seeks to interact with. In this way there would be no need to rely on binary hierarchies; precedent could be abandoned in favour of the exigencies of any given situation, and law would be created to fit the circumstance rather than the circumstance be made to fit the law. Certainty may be important in a non-cyber world, but can there truly be said to be any certainty to base a precedent on when the cyberenvironment is so rapidly fluctuating and evolving? Precedent is hard to hold on to when you don't know what or who you are going to turn into by the end of the evening. Black-letter law is only *one* method of articulating values such as justice. I am not sure quite *how* cyberculture could influence law at this stage, it is a tentative suggestion and an unorthodox one. Then again, speculation and unorthodox thinking fit in well with cyberculture...

### **Locating the political in cyberspace: cyberboys with cybertoy?**

I have been thinking about how to conclude this paper, which is not an easy task. For a start, I have run out of Kate Moss quotes, as the rest of the portfolio consisted, as they generally tend to do, of pictures. (For those of you who are reading this, you missed out on the overheads...) At this stage, I think it would be useful to take this opportunity to explore a few criticisms that could be made about the arguments in this paper. It may be argued that access to cyberspace is influenced by economics. Only rich people can afford the technology that will allow them to enter this virtual world. How then, can its pornography be transgressive, a site of resistance, if it excludes so many people?

It is true that generally only wealthy users will be able to use cyberresources. In this respect, cyberspace may well be just an extension of existing economic and technological inequalities. However, pornography historically has always been intimately linked with questions of economics and class. Only when pornographic works were translated, mass produced, cheaper and made

available to the working classes, were concerted measures taken towards regulation and control. With modern pornography, it is pornographic sites on the Internet that have enabled the development of e-commerce by virtue of the fact that they are the only sites that create enough money to be able to fund the relevant technology.[28] Regarding class, the distinction between high art and pornography has traditionally been determined as much by class and money as much as anything else. Consider the very fact that there is purported to *be* a distinction at all between high art and pornography.[29]

Aside from this, more problematic and more fundamental, I think, are possible feminist objections. With the fragmentation of identity, proliferation of sexuality, and deconstruction of gender, it is easy to lose sight of the political. The early critiques may still be relevant, as what is to prevent power hierarchies reproducing themselves in cyberspace? What about the role of gender in cyberspace? Cyberspace may well be a place where people can become fluid and compound, breaking away from binary existence, but the actual construction and modelling of cyberspace may well be based on a gendered reality. Female users may not be equal in cyberspace, and there is a danger that cyberpornography, instead of offering new pleasures and possibilities to explore, may end up mirroring the worst examples offered by the early feminist critiques.

It is extremely hard, I think, to locate the political in cyberspace. One of the major problems for postfeminists is finding a political basis for postmodern theories. For them, the fragmentation of identity is politically problematic, as Ann Brooks (paraphrasing Theresa de Lauretis) notes,

`...if the concept of woman is a fiction, then the very concept of

women's oppression is obsolete and feminism's *raison d'etre*

disappears.'[30]

Alison Adams argues that cyberculture and cyberpunk are masculinist youth cultures where virtual women look suspiciously like Marilyn Monroe.[31] In contrast, Sadie Plant, a self proclaimed `cyberfeminist' offers a vision of women as integrated users who can manipulate cyberspace for their own ends. Carol Adams's cyberpornography study concludes that there is clear evidence of a male privilege in cyberspace, but the existence of works like *wired\_women* by Lyn Cherny and Elisabeth Reba Weise suggest that women may be a substantial presence on the Net.[32] Can the power hierarchies of the material world reproduce themselves in a system designed to resist them? It would seem it depends on who you read. Alison Adam is critical of Sadie Plant in that her concept of woman is dangerously essentialist, and also in that she associates cyberfeminism with cyberpunk, which as a literary genre deliberately distances itself from politics;

`...although cyberpunk offers no hope of a better world, Plant

is claiming that cyberfeminism offers women a better future,

but with no political basis to back this up.'[33]

On this point I agree with her, any lack of political basis is indeed problematic. However, I also think it is a mistake to cede, without any apparent struggle, the realm of cyberspace and cyberpunk to men. Many fetish pornography sites have a very strong female presence. Cyberdykes also would not consider cyberspace to be a `masculine youth culture', and as for cyberpunk, it is questionable as to who is the stronger out of Molly and Case. I know where my vote lies...

I would hope that the future participants in cyberpornography would be, like Donna Haraway's cyborgs, fully political agents of every gender and sexuality, and not aimless constructs or manipulative, macho cybersleazes.[34] Only then could cyberpornography offer the promise of

being a possible site of new pleasures. It is extremely difficult to transcend the physical world and enter cyberspace without taking a degree of ideological, emotional and cultural baggage also. Yet as Alison Adams argues as the central thesis of her book, precisely what the architects of cyberculture and artificial intelligence systems bring with them, in terms of contributions such as experiential knowledge and worldviews, will be crucial in determining how these projects will develop. It is perhaps too early to speculate with any degree of accuracy on how the politics of cyberspace, its pornographies and its users will develop but it will be interesting to see how this area unfolds in the future, to see how the bridge between reality and representation might be crossed, and what new possibilities it may offer to its viewers and participants.

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[1] Kate Moss, Kate (1997) London: Pavilion Books, p 2

[2] There are several studies on the history of pornography. For example, see Lynn Hunt (ed.), The Invention of Pornography (1993) New York: Zone Books. For a discussion of the impact of electronic and media technology on modern pornography, see Brian McNair, Mediated Sex (1996) London: Arnold

[3] `Feminism' is a highly complex area. Terms such as `first-wave' are therefore used as rough guides only, and to help clarify the argument, for the purposes of this paper. I refer to the arguments of writers such as Catherine MacKinnon, Feminism Unmodified: Discourses on Life and Law (1987) Cambridge: Harvard University Press; `*Sexuality, Pornography and Method: Pleasure Under Patriarchy*' (1989) *Ethics* 99, pp 314 - 346; Andrea Dworkin, Pornography: Men Possessing Women (1981) New York: Pedigree; and Catherine Itzin (ed.), Pornography: Women, Violence and Civil Rights (1992) Oxford: Oxford University Press. A useful and incisive overview can be found in Emily Jackson's article `*The problem with pornography: A critical survey of the current debate*' (1995) *Feminist Law Review* 3 (1) pp 49 - 70

[4] For example, see the work of Laura Mulvey, `*Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*' (1975) *Screen* 16 (3) (Autumn) pp 6 - 18. For an overview and related critiques see Ann Brooks, Chapter 8, `*Postfeminist variations within media and film theory*' in Ann Brooks, Postfeminisms: Feminism, cultural theory and cultural forms (1997) London/New York: Routledge, pp 163 - 188

[5] see Brooks, n 4 above, pp 173 - 6

[6] see further Carl Stychin, Law's Desire, (1995) London: Routledge. As I write this, I am conscious of excluding bisexuality as a sexual identity by only using the terms `gay' and `lesbian'. I have only recently begun to consider bisexuality in relation to pornography debates and have found myself wondering whether there was a genre of bisexual pornography as distinct from gay and lesbian pornography. As yet, this is as far as my thought process has reached...

[7] "Ceci n'est pas une pipe" (1926) Private Collection. See Michel Foucault, This is not a pipe (1983) trans. J Harkness, Berkley: University of California Press

[8] Rene Magritte, "L'Explication" (1952) Private Collection.

[9] Foucault, n 7 above, p 35

[10] For this section of the paper I am indebted to the work of Ramona Fotiade, specifically her article *'The untamed eye: surrealism and film theory'* (1995) *Screen* 36 (4) (Winter) pp 394 - 407.

[11] Fotiade, n 10 above, pp 395, 396

[12] Fotiade, n 10 above, p 395

[13] Fotiade, n 10 above, pp 397, 400 - 401

[14] Fotiade, n 10 above, pp 403 - 404

[15] Fotiade, n 10 above, pp 403 - 404, 406

[16] After Judith Butler in Brooks, n 4 above, p 209.

[17] Sadie Plant, *Zeros and Ones*, (1998) London: Fourth Estate

[18] William Gibson, *Neuromancer*, (1984) London: Voyager/HarperCollins

[19] However, note the researchers such as Sherry Turkle, cited in Alison Adams, Chapter 6 'Feminist AI projects and Cyberfutures' in Alison Adams, *Artificial Knowing: gender and the thinking machine*, (1998) London/New York: Routledge pp 156-181

[20] I borrow the term 'Dystopias' from Pat Califia, who suggests that dystopias are more realistic versions of utopias. See further Pat Califia, *Doc and Fluff* (1985) Los Angeles: Alyson Books or <http://www.patcalifia.com>. Regarding Dystopias, Alison Adam (n 19 above, p 171, my emphasis) makes the following observation: '*Cyberpunk's* future world is dystopian; there are no communities, only dangerous, alienating urban sprawls. Yet *cyberculture* looks to a future utopia where where communities will spring up on the Internet, somehow to replace the old communities which people feel they have lost.'

[21] for more on cyborgs see further the seminal article by Donna Haraway, '*A manifesto for cyborgs*' (1985) *Socialist Review* 80 (5) pp 65 - 107

[22] Cyberpunk's version of cyberspace is only one of several and by no means authoritative, (see Alison Adam, n 19 and 20 above, *ibid.*) but is the most useful for the purposes of this paper.

[23] And also, having said this, my housemate's computer that I am writing this paper on does not recognise the words 'cyberpornography', 'pornographies', 'sexualities', 'cyberpunk', 'cyborg' or 'Dystopias' and on the whole has 'no suggestions' as to what they might be...

[24] see Alison Adam, n 19 above, pp 166 - 170.

[25] Donna Haraway, n 21 above, *ibid.*

[26] Alison Adam, n 19 above, p 14

[27] Sadie Plant, n 17 above, p 10, p 175

[28] David Bradwell, 'Sex Drive', October 1988, *Internet Magazine* pp 38 - 46

[29] see further Lynda Neade, *The Female Nude: Art, Obscenity and Sexuality*, (1992) London/New York: Routledge

[30] Ann Brooks, n 4 above, pp 22 - 23

[31] Alison Adam, n 19 above, p 8, p 167,

[32] Both examples are from Alison Adam, n 19 above, pp 175 - 177

[33] Alison Adam, n 19 above, pp 174 - 176

[34] the problem here is that I can only take the cyborg analogy so far, as Donna Haraway's cyborgs `replicate' rather than reproduce, and `have no truck with bisexuality'. I wonder, then, if they have any desire or possible use for pornography...see Donna Haraway, n 21 above, pp 66 - 67