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MAKE PORN, NOT WAR

How to Wear the Network's Underpants

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Pornography on the Web offers us a way in which to experience an economy of excess through media experiments and pornography saturation, vanguard culture, and culture wars. How can we understand and feel netporn as excess? Jack Sargeant wrote that there has been a tendency in the pornography industry to produce ever more extreme and degrading sex acts as licensed obscenities. Sargeant zoomed in on the example of ass-to-mouth videos where a male typically pulls his cock from the anus of a female and then sticks it straight into her open mouth and down her throat. Often, the female cavity is cast as the receptor of brutal and excessive male agency, as when multiple penises plunge into an asshole, or hordes of penises ejaculate on a female face, or men are lining up to do the world's biggest gang bang.⁵⁴⁰

Besides the fact that we can crave or hate such depictions of literal excess, Sargeant proposed that we think of excess in a more philosophical way, in which "all nonreproductive sexual activity belongs to the category of excess expenditure, where the unrestrained pursuit of pleasure becomes in itself both object choice and subject."⁵⁴¹ The more we access pornography images as expenditures of resources and desire, the more we may fail to grasp the boundaries between the object of our pursuits and the agencies of desire itself. In a similar vein, Dougal Phillips theorized pornography agency based on his study of Web users swapping pornography files in the

BitTorrent forum *Emporium*.⁵⁴² He defined acts of peer-to-peer (P2P) file-sharing as energy flows in which quantities of sexual energies are invested. The energy flows can even survive the metaphorical death of the sun or transformation of material bodies or economies. The data are now becoming bodies of their own: “Networked computers are giving rise to self-perpetuating economies of data, driven in the first instance (currently) by human bodily desire but beginning, it would seem, to take on a ‘life’ of their own.”⁵⁴³ Phillips observes P2P file trading as a near perfect manifestation of excess as humans build technologies of desire and even get lost within the flow of data.

This chapter shows that our awareness of pornography excess, or the more philosophical way of comprehending excess, has coincided with a tendency to theorize the dissolution of traditional pornography industries. In the face of the atomization of pornography we can find thousands of personalized fetishes and interest groups online. As Wendy Chun pointed out in *Control and Freedom*, the pornography users’ tendency to perpetually upload/ download images and store them in personal archives is part of a *will to knowledge*.⁵⁴⁴ In other words, the sex drive lies not only in the search for partners or arousal, or the testing of moral mainstream norms, but in the urge to build power around habits of navigating pornography sites, monitoring and selecting, or manipulating the products of pornography excess. As she wrote:

these evasions and traversies—the downloading of images that do not represent the vanilla sexuality that most Americans reportedly enjoy—perpetuate spirals of power and pleasure, spreading sexuality everywhere, making database categories—its basic units of knowledge—sexually charged. Power is therefore experienced as sexuality.⁵⁴⁵

Chun’s will to knowledge is defined here as a sexually charged and emotionally involved awareness of pornography culture maintained by both female and male pornography users, and by innovative groups and reactionary groups. This chapter suggests that alongside the pornography excess being cultivated by libertine amateurs and feminists or queer pornographers, there has been a further patriotic right-wing move toward database eroticization. The meticulous archiving of images of military torture as warporn complicates the experience of philosophical excess as pleasure. Progressive netporn culture has, it seems, been titillating the political enemy, and vice versa. For instance, the Abu Ghraib torture photos triggered massive reactions of outrage and revenge in viewers. But, even though these images were shocking, they were also a known ingredient of Internet database culture and its thrust toward excess. As Max Gordon wrote in an online testimony:

The prison photographs represent the perfect hybrid of two of our greatest current cultural addictions—reality television and violent porn. No one seemed to understand where the photographs came from, and yet Internet porn use and its related addictions are at an all-time high, depicting ever harsher and more realistic forms of abuse and sexual cruelty. The line between simulated and actual rape becomes more blurred each day. The most shocking realization about the photographs at Abu Ghraib is that they weren't shocking at all.⁵⁴⁶

Gordon compared the Abu Ghraib photographs to a history of U.S. photographs of public lynchings of Blacks. He mentioned Hilton Als' essay, *Without Sanctuary, Lynching Photographs in America*, which describes the murder of Jesse Washington, a Black man who was castrated, mutilated, and burned alive in front of a crowd that included women and children. A postcard was later sent around with his image on the back that read: "This is the barbecue we had last night." Afterward, Washington's corpse hung in public display in front of a blacksmith's shop.⁵⁴⁷

In the era of netporn excess, Web mobs can construct technological infrastructures and attitudes to classify and dissect such images as pornography fads. This tendency is not new in the history of gory mass media, but has reached a culmination point, as soldiers have become photographers who proudly display their war trophies to other Web users. Media activists such as Matteo Pasquinelli have pointed out that these macho images don't leave us cold, but speak to our morphing animal instincts and should intensify discussion of reclaiming pornography as public eroticism and bodily reactions. The staging of sexualized acts of violence reinforces a feminization of political enemies, or represents war as males invading helpless females.⁵⁴⁸ But rather than simply condemning these ongoing and porn-inspired processes of fictionalization, do-it-yourself (DIY) pornography culture can acknowledge more clearly how it fluctuates between elusive image cultures and bodies of privilege. Rather than offering a solution to the problem of perpetrating male fantasies in pornography, this chapter suggests tactile media experiments as pornography culture's gradual surrender to a more gender-fluid sculpting of the private and public body.

UNCLE BATAILLE SAID: LET'S MAKE PORN, NOT WAR

Georges Bataille admitted to losing himself in images of vicarious eroticism when writing his philosophy book, *Tears of Eros*, a treatise into the long-standing human fascination with eroticism as images of death and violence evoke sensations of tremor and abyss. As he contemplates the graphic

images of publicly tortured Chinese criminals at the end of *Tears of Eros*, he is affected and would like to watch and rewatch the image in solitude “without which the ecstatic and voluptuous effect is inconceivable.”⁵⁴⁹ He confessed a similar exploration of affect in *Eroticism*: “Man differs from animal in that he is able to experience certain sensations to the core.”⁵⁵⁰ In recent times, with the explosion of violent reality media, on TV and in Internet databases full of pornography or warporn, it is perhaps harder to explore the strong and voluptuous effects of vicarious eroticism in the way that Bataille did, yet arguably pornography browsing still may lead to a sad and philosophical awareness of excess.

But is it possible to revive a solitary kind of core experience of eroticism in our netporn times? Web users develop attachments to pornography sites as they build multiple identities and seek buddies alongside sexual partnerships and friendships within social networks. Even though mainstream psychologists are cautious about the suggestion that one could find satisfaction in virtual lovers, Web users can be seen as a vanguard force in opening up eroticism to shared bodily aesthetics and emotive effects. One result is the atomization of sanctified pornography industries or the cultivation of micro-niche groups in homemade porn-making and pornography criticism. Italian netporn archeologist Sergio Messina defined this moment of pornography atomization as “realcore.” To Messina, realcore pornography fulfills two of the original missions of the Internet, which is to connect special interest groups around very specific tastes and desires, and to encourage DIY media-making. Web users are encouraged to develop their very specific tastes and share their homemade images or stories within Usenet groups.

Messina first became interested in this new type of economy when he found a collection of pictures on a Usenet group, which included a picture of a housewife showing her rubber glove. He then realized that realcore images are widely varied and may baffle even the most hardened pornography viewers. On Messina’s realcore Web site, we can see images of a woman showing her very hairy groin, and a man who likes to touch people while wearing a gorilla suit. We can also see a person staring at his socks and another one donning a balaclava-style scarf. To take a simpler example, on an average day in Usenet land the breast group would include: “breasts, large (331), breasts, natural (340); breasts, saggy, (234); and breasts, small (496).” More than 200 people have posted saggy breasts within this group, even though they are widely frowned upon by traditional pornography establishments and a large percentage of pornography workers artificially augment their aging breasts with implants.

In *Paradise Lust Web Porn Meets the Culture Wars*, Mark Dery argued that pornography atomization and excess is characterized by an undercurrent of grotesque body imagery. Despite the ongoing clashes between right-wing fundamentalism and vocal sex radicals, the Web has allowed us to keep

working and to “culture mutant strains of pornography and bizarre new paraphilias.”⁵⁵¹ Dery singled out the example of breast expansion fantasies, such as a picture entitled *Breast Expansion Morph*, posted by Mr. Licker. The picture shows a woman kneeling backward on a beach chair. Her breasts extend all the way from her upper torso onto the surrounding lawn. In this picture we are exposed to the wicked mind of Mr. Licker, a porn-maker who likes to concoct unusual images of his naked woman. Even though the practice of augmenting breasts is of a popular and widely practiced form of body alteration today, Mr. Licker’s reveals a need to explore pornography as excess; as he increases the breast size of this woman to such an extent that she is unable to move her body, or is virtually handicapped.

Dery sketched the climate of excess as characterized by mutant strains of body alteration as well as visions of inundation and death. As he described so eloquently:

Despite the right’s unflagging efforts to turn back the clock to the days when people put pantalets on piano legs, we’re living in the Age of the Golden Shower, a heyday of unabashed depravity (at least in terms of online scopophilia and virtual sex) that makes de Sade’s *120 Days of Sodom* look like *Veggie Tales*. The Divine marquis never imagined aquaphiliacs, a catch call category that include guys whose hearts leap up when they behold babes in bathing caps, fanciers of underwater cat-fights, connoisseurs of submarine blowjobs, breath-holding fetishists, fans of simulated drowning, and weirdest of all, people who get off on swimming and showering full clothed, like Suitplayer, the guy in Amsterdam who likes to take a dip now and then in business suits, dress shirts, and suit jackets—especially the ones with two vents.⁵⁵²

Suitplayer’s desire to take showers produces a novel kind of pornography image, but its codes of sexiness are understood and reinterpreted within specific niche groups.

These mutant databases and grotesque images also traverse the Web to reach even greater Web mobs; hence they may take on new meanings and cause unpredictable sensations in viewers. An example mentioned by Dery is the dick girl cartoon figure from Japanese *bentai* or *anime*, or a woman with a life-size and life-like penis. Dick girls typically are supposed to make us laugh, as they show facial expressions of bewilderment or anxiety at discovering and using their new organ. In a 2006 presentation at Hong Kong University, as part of the conference Film Scene: Cinema, the Arts, and Social Change, I projected a collection of dick girls and asked the audience to write down their comments and whether they believed these images were made for male or female pornography consumers. The responses from female and male audience members were quite varied, ranging from: “To my eyes it seems quite grotesque and a quite castrated image; between a nice

pretty face and breasts we have an ugly big penis instead of pussy,” to “Men give women the cocks they want to have.”⁵⁵³ The dick girl figure was probably invented by Japanese *hentai* artists to suit their male niche group. But even though they are perhaps more instinctively understood and appreciated within this group, they also are reaching new mobs.

These images are reaching widening orbits of viewers. Again, this trope of sexuality and affect is not just another category of literal excess, but it confronts our routine modes of craving sex. Netporn and its atomization as a myriad of progressive-subversive and reactionary-exploitative genres has challenged Web users who generally participate in articulating the crisis of a stable desiring body.

THE ECHO OF MALE FANTASIES

When the Abu Ghraib abuse photos were revealed to the public at large in September 2005, several critics used the word *warporn* to denote the soldier's eroticized representations of torture. *Warporn* refers to a blurring of war torture and war mythologies as pornographic fictions. Web users were watching the torture images in their mediated twilight zones. They were not exactly war news, nor mainstream pornography, but “fucked up” or altered strains of the netporn culture. Before looking at the actual depictions of pornography excess in the Abu Ghraib photos, I make a reference to *Male Fantasies I & II*, Klaus Theweleit's famous study of the fantasy lives of *Freikorps* soldiers, or the German post-World War I autonomous proto-Nazi militias. I use this particular example of historical analysis because it provides a rigorous multilayered view on military-minded young men, their self-representations, and literary ambitions. Theweleit took these cultural expressions seriously, and provided a rare contribution to war journalism that supersedes a polarized ethical debate. Theweleit's study is also a curious predecessor to the database complex of netporn users as it archives and dissects heaps of cultural erotica icons and journal writing. Theweleit's study scrutinizes this peculiar group of males and draws us in, or turns us off, through his many details about their patriotic dreams and fantasies. As Barbara Ehrenreich positioned the study, “Theweleit draws us in too closely so we cannot easily rationalize the study of these men from the point of view of detached or stable scholars. Historically they were soldiers in the regular WW I army, then irregular militias that fought the revolutionary working class in German, and finally, they were Nazis.”⁵⁵⁴ But at the end of the survey, we have indeed been touched by Theweleit's obsessive-intellectual showcasing of a right-wing essentialism in war culture, a faith in solidity and strength of the physical body in times of crisis, and a rigorous misogyny and belief in gender difference.

In this way, we start wondering about essentialist gender politics in our own war times and pornography culture. Theweleit showed that soldiers generally are trained to express a machine-like masculine strength and to have control over bodily processes, erupting bodies, and enemy bodies associated with femininity. As summarized by Anson Rabinbach and Jessica Benjamin:

Two basic types of bodies exemplify the corporal metaphysics at the heart of fascist perception. On the one side there is the soft, fluid, and ultimately liquid female body which is a quintessentially negative "Other" lurking inside the male body. It is the subversive source of pleasure or pain which must be expurgated or sealed off. On the other there is the hard, organized, phallic body devoid of all internal viscera which finds its apotheosis in the machine. This body-machine is the acknowledged "utopia" of the fascist warrior. The new man is a man whose physique has been mechanized, his psyche eliminated.⁵⁵⁵

These antithetical bodies are reflected in German propaganda and popular artworks, in the construction of male and female archetypes, and in male testimonies of fear over the perpetually engulfing other. The fear and revulsion toward the feminine manifest themselves as incessant invocations and metaphors of approaching fluids and floods, dirt, streams, lava, dying bodies, diseases, and emissions of all kinds. It produces a collective-psychic neurosis that disciplines, controls and contains these fears and sexual desires, in an attempt to conquer the flows of violence.

As can be read in Theweleit's testimonies, most commanders also pretended to be untouched by the bodies of their prisoners. For instance, he detailed an account of the ritualized whipping of a homosexual camp prisoner, which provided release for the commander. The whippings of the prisoner had a specific duration to satisfy the commander, who was the main performer in the spectacle: "Its primary product is the totality of the experience of the tormentor, his absolute physical omnipotence. Torture not only involves the public display of the victim, but also of the tormentor; it is he and not the victim, whose actions function as deterrent."⁵⁵⁶ Tormentors became protagonists in drawn-out scenes of abuse, but they carefully contained the danger of losing themselves. According to Theweleit, the tormentors followed the rule of protecting their armored selves.

Theweleit referred to Wilhelm's Reich's sex theory and critique of fascism, which formulated a positively streaming body in tune with the external cosmos. Reich described orgasm as a cultivation of an oceanic feeling that allows individuals to break boundaries between the self and the cosmos, or between the self and others. Reich wrote in the 1930s that the concept of orgasm was in endangered in his modern society. In many older cultures, a spiritual acknowledgment of desire was practiced within animistic types of

religion. Reich also criticized the psychoanalytic theories of Sigmund Freud, who constructed a gender binary as modern-industrial male and female ego. Reich challenged the gender binaries of Freud and resurrected a primitivist theory of pleasure and orgasm. In this theory, sexual inclinations do not develop in our identification with our parents, nor with our symbolic Mothers and Fathers, but they rather stem from libidinal feelings and emotions triggered by natural environments and the cosmos. More importantly, as is seen in the next section, inner denial of the streaming body coincides with the ruthless torture and humiliation of the enemy, often taking the form of feminization.

In 2005, the Abu Ghraib photographs and videos were officially made available on the Internet through the *Abu Ghraib Files*, a comprehensive database of carefully annotated galleries, compiled by Mark Benjamin and Michael Scherer for *Salon.com*.⁵⁵⁷ The files contain 279 photographs and 19 videos from the U.S. Army's internal investigation record. As one can see when browsing through these files, the gender dynamic between masculinity and femininity has shifted somewhat, as female soldiers are now also involved as torturers. Even so, the prisoners who were suspected insurgents were humiliated and tortured by means of feminization by male and female soldiers. For instance, they were often forced to wear women's underwear on their heads. One prisoner testified to the Criminal Investigation Command (CID) investigators: "[T]he American police, the guy who wears glasses, he put red woman's underwear over my head. And then he tied me to the window that is in the cell with my hands behind my back until I lost consciousness." In another photograph, Specialist Sabrina Harman herself poses for a photo (Fig. 9.1) with the same red women's underwear on outside of her uniform. She is the tormentor, but she shows off a private moment of imitating the prisoner's forced feminization. The report finds there was ample evidence of prisoners being forced to wear women's underwear (Fig. 9.2) and concluded that this may have been part of the military intelligence tactic called "ego down," adding that the method constituted abuse and sexual humiliation.

There is a photograph of Private Lynndie England holding a detainee on a leash. Her fiancée and ringleader of the torture events, Charles Graner, took the photo. England is shown as Graner's side-kick with a big smile on her face, glowing perhaps, as one of the first-ever female patriotic war machines. In another famous case of abuse, seven detainees were "verbally abused, stripped, slapped, punched, jumped on, forced into a human pyramid, forced to simulate masturbation, and forced to simulate oral sex, several Army reports concluded (see Figs. 9.3 and 9.4)." England told the CID that she had visited the military intelligence wing in the early morning hours of that abuse event because it was her birthday and she wanted to see her friends. She said that Graner and Frederick told her they were bringing in seven prisoners from a riot at Ganci. The prisoners were brought in with



FIGURE 9.1. Photo reprinted with permission of Salon Media Group. Salon's full report on the Abu Ghraib files can be found on the Salon.com Web site.



FIGURE 9.2. Photo reprinted with permission of Salon Media Group. Salon's full report on the Abu Ghraib files can be found on the Salon.com Web site.



FIGURE 9.3. Photo reprinted with permission of Salon Media Group. Salon's full report on the Abu Ghraib files can be found on the Salon.com Web site.



FIGURE 9.4. Photo reprinted with permission of Salon Media Group. Salon's full report on the Abu Ghraib files can be found on the Salon.com Web site.

handcuffs and bags on their heads, wearing civilian clothes. She said that she initially watched the ordeal from a higher tier, as everyone else was downstairs pushing the prisoners into each other and the wall, until they all ended up in a dog pile. Later on in the session, England went down and took part in preparing the dog pile. Throughout this session, Graner is photographed as the master-executor, wearing his green rubber gloves to distinguish himself from the other soldiers and from the “dogs.”

The Abu Ghraib photos and gender dynamics were not an isolated incident in the emergence of warporn. In April 2006, the media revealed that Florida resident Chris Wilson was sentenced to 5 years probation for running the popular Web site www.nowthatsfuckedup.com, which included photographs of war dead taken by U.S. troops. Wilson gave soldiers free access to pornography in exchange for posting pictures from both the Afghanistan and Iraqi wars. In a September 2005 interview with George Zornick in *The Nation*, Wilson claimed that there were about 150,000 registered users on the site, 45,000 of whom were military personnel. Zornick described the development of the Web site:

The posting began as benign images of troops leaning against their tanks, but graphic combat images began to appear later, with close-up shots of Iraqi insurgents and civilians with heads blown off, or with intestines spilling from open wounds. Sometimes photographs of mangled body parts were displayed. Most of the time the photos were accompanied by sadistic cynical comments or wisecrack captions.⁵⁵⁸

The military personnel used www.nowthatsfuckedup.com as a venue to showcase Iraqi remains as daily war images and trophies. The site was an outlet for soldiers in reconstructing daily struggles for closure and victory over enemy bodies. As stated by an anonymous soldier in an interview with Mark Glaser:

To answer your question about posting the gory pictures on this site: What about the beheadings filmed and then put on world wide news? I have seen video of insurgents shooting American soldiers in plain day and thanking God for what they have done. I wouldn't be too concerned what I am doing on a private Web site. I'm more concerned of what my fellow soldiers and I are experiencing in combat.⁵⁵⁹

As of September 20, 2005, there were 244 graphic battlefield images and videos available to members. When Wilson was finally arrested in April 2005, U.S. military officials refused to state that the combat photos posted on a pornography site were troubling. The county's sheriff officials stated

that the arrest was made because of the site's sexually explicit content, not the pictures of the war dead.

Wilson's lawyer, Lawrence Walter, thus laid out an argument in defense of Internet pornography which was previously used by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) in order to strike down the Child Online Protection Act (COPA). Walter defined cyberspace as a global and multicultural universe, and argued that it would be a mistake to apply the moral norms and legal justice of the most restrictive country. Even though it could be ethically and legally justified to use the site to distribute pornographic images to military personnel, the more pressing issue of how the site was used to amplify male fantasies by patriotic mobs and angry critics was not debated in this court case.

WE ARE ALL GRINNING MONKEYS

Is there any way that we can extend Bataille's and Theweleit's introspective attitudes toward the contemplation of eroticized war culture? As the net-porn counterculture is building its own databases of queer and transgender pornography, and gender-fluid bodies, how can we extend a counter-philosophy of pleasure to the networked masses? In August 2004, a few months after the Abu Ghraib abuse scandal appeared, Pasquinelli wrote the inflammatory essay "*Warporn Warpunk! Autonomous Videopoesis in Wartime.*" According to Pasquinelli, rather than countering violent images with benign ones, we can be grinning monkeys and start analyzing the bodily sensations in which we became trapped. Pornography culture can only speak to the media-infected bellies and brains of Web users. As in Bataille's work, Pasquinelli believes that pornography theory can tackle images of pain or violence and address a winning back of the dimensions of myth and the sexual body.⁵⁶⁰

As in Theweleit's analysis, pornography theory can analyze DIY fantasies as occupying a psychic zone between fantasy and documentary news. For instance, the USA's National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) has recently sponsored a project entitled *Operation Homecoming*, where American writers are working with soldiers at 25 military installations to record their experiences. The NEA has managed to collect about 1,000 pages of discourse, and a selection will be published in an open government archive. A preview of the stories was published in the *New Yorker* in June 12, 2006, while audio recordings and images were made available on the *New Yorker's* Web site. When reading the previews of *Operation Homecoming*, we continually witness the blurring of fact and fiction. There are some testimonies of soldiers utterly traumatized by killings and dead

bodies, and death—of dead Iraqis and dead fellow Americans, and finding a desperate-poetic need to express these sensations to outsiders.

Besides recognizing layered realities in mediated documents, we can also reclaim theories of desire and spectatorship. Tobias Van Veen's essay "*Affective Tactics: Intensifying a Politics of Perception*" argues for independent erotic/pornographic media zones where people can trust, affect, and touch each other again. Going back to Hakim Bey's idea of the Temporary Autonomous Zones, Van Veen believes that "we must seek (to) *touch*. On the agenda of an open affect of hospitality . . . is an engagement with *affirmative* desire."⁵⁶¹ Van Veen perceives a resurfacing of the steel hard bodies in right-wing propaganda: "The right embraces affect as its inverse: a hate politics of the foreign other (the immigrant, a race, etc.), of the non-believer, of sexuality (hatred of the other's body, of one's own body). The state embraces affect through discipline, conformity, and work."⁵⁶² But left-wing groups also have to reacquaint themselves with a positive philosophy of desire and technology, reinventing strategies of affect and sensualism.

Such a formulation of desire can be found in the work of contemporary artists who portray the soft or empathic sexual body to comment on media conditioning and a global politics of crisis.⁵⁶³ Included in this exercise are new views on sensuality within the subcultural practices of sadomasochism. Here we can consider Gilles Deleuze's essay "*Masochism: Coldness and Cruelty*," an introduction to Von Sacher-Masoch's diaries that were originally published in 1967. A central figure in Deleuze's study is the cruel mother as a larger than life archetype and proponent of anti-reason who participates in sexual politics by obsessively carving out new zones of the sexual body and bodily awareness. The essay explains masochism as a gradual surrender to such feminine body sculpting, resulting in desire which isolates fragments of the body and networks the fragments between shifting erotogenic zones. Moreover, rather than enacting cruel compulsions onto others, the masochist develops introspective strategies. The slow and ritualized process of networking zones (through pain and pleasure rituals) is the subject of Sado-Masochistic (S & M) performances. Renewal occurs through an intense process of disorientation and bodily discomfort, which Deleuze called the art of destruction. This art of destruction requires the subject to imagine an altered image of the autonomous body through formalized rituals of cruelty in which he or she expresses a wish for reconstruction through identification with the mother.⁵⁶⁴

For instance, practitioners of S&M explain that players try to find and deconstruct and reconstruct each other's physical signals in a request for play or perversion.⁵⁶⁵ As explained to me by a person who self-identifies as dominant (dom):

sex emanates from different zones: the body and brain as genital intercourse or penis and vagina are not the center of operations, the places

where sex is. . . . The dom should be flexible and work very hard trying to understand the needs and desires of the submissive (sub). As far as the dom side, in my view the real servant is always the *Top*. The scene is always about the sub's limits, fears, kinks, etc. Empathy (especially from a dom) is essential. You have to know what's going on in a sub's body and mind in order to take a session somewhere. . . . You understand this through empathy, observation and extreme attention on the other person. In a way you need to feel what they feel and know where he/she's at. You could call this "shifting boundaries."

When I asked him to react to the common perception that war porn would be inspired by male S&M fantasies, he said:

S/M sex practices make me feel less like a male. One of the reasons I really like to belong to a sexual minority is that I think much less like a male now. You could say: less dick/pussy, more brains. It seems to me that this more mental way of perceiving and practicing sex is more feminine. I certainly feel very different from straight people, and S/M gives me the confidence to question typical straight stereotypes, attitudes and behaviors (simple questions such as "is this thing I'm doing useful and meaningful?"). . . . One way to become one with the other is to mix fluids. I believe this fear of fluids has to do with the fear of the power of women's sexuality (which is more than the males). But the way I see it, in S&M this power is not as antagonistic to the man as it is in vanilla sex.

The example of S & M practice is important as it points to the possibility for players to experience shifting sexual boundaries and gender identities. It is possible today to undergo pornography excess and share such experiences as a solitary search for sex or flings with other users. In this way we are perhaps simply writing a Foucauldian art of sexuality to assert our unrepressed belonging to an increasingly pornography-satiated Web culture. But we perfect this mindset of hoarding products while atomizing into different selves or interest groups, in this way we are all just pornographic data. So rather than relishing a numb or helpless attitude toward pornography excess, or making simplified disavowals of the niche groups of sexism and violence, we can explore our morphing bodily sensations. This may also be a more female-friendly or feminine way to negotiate pornography excess as this kind of fragmentation of the sex drive undercuts a blunt and macho display of violence in pornography.