

“I’ll bet I’m having more  
fun than you are.”

# A critical case study on pornography 2.0

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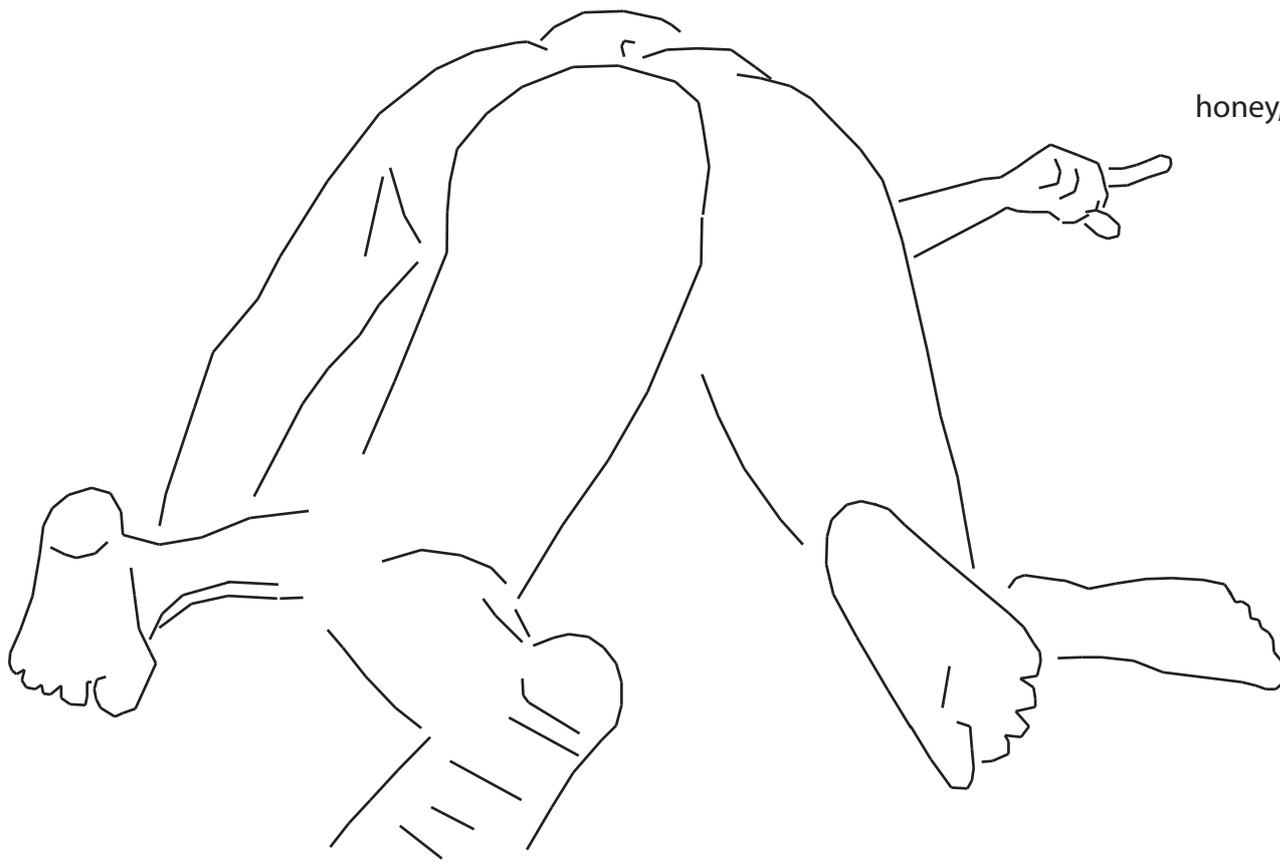
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honey, close the curtains.



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## 0. Introduction

A great sexual sermon – which has had its subtle theologians and its popular voices – has swept through our societies over the last decades; it has chastised the old order, denounced hypocrisy, and praised the rights of the immediate and the real; it has made people dream of a New City. (Michel Foucault, [1976] 1978, 7-8)

Perhaps, more than Michel Foucault may have foreseen, the contemporary discourse on pornography has transformed into a discourse where similar (although less eloquent) utterances to the ones Foucault himself describes can be found, speculating on an era that not only passes the general taboo that derives from the Victorian age, but also a discourse where there are profound changes within the explicit mediations of sex. When talking about the Victorian age, Foucault states that “[s]exuality was carefully confined; it moved into the home. (...) A single locus of sexuality was acknowledged in social space as well as at the heart of every household, but it was a utilitarian and fertile one: the parents’ bedroom.” (3) Not only has sex become more visible today but the home, and more specifically the bedroom, have moved into the world, where the private space, and the acts that are performed in this space, are distributed into a public space.<sup>1</sup> These acts – sex of course – reside in a space that for quite some time now is not exclusively utilitarian and fertile; sex nowadays is a means for several purposes of which only one is reproduction. As the taboo decreased the number of mediations of these acts have multiplied and become more visible.

It is easy to acknowledge that the fading of the taboo on images of sexual acts is in no way beatific in the sense that mainstream explicit sex in its mediated form – pornography – is often problematic from a feminist point of view.<sup>2</sup> Feminists have often, rightly so, expressed their concern about the asymmetrical division of power within mainstream hardcore pornography. Women are often subordinate to men’s needs; the somewhat ludicrous film *DEEP THROAT* (1972) is an excessive example in its content, but can be seen as prototypical in its attitude towards female pleasure. The film’s main female character has a clitoris in the back of her throat, and thus needs to fellate a man deeply, henceforth known as ‘deep throating’, in order to bring herself to orgasm (as well as her various male counterparts, of course).

The idea that that the porn industry created this much against the will of porn consumers is obviously false – just as in any market, porn creators and consumers form a feedback loop in which supply and demand constantly interact. Nevertheless, some fans argue against mainstream pornography, dismissively calling it simulacra and instead making a case for Porn 2.0, being YouTube like video sharing websites that contain pornographic videos created entirely by amateurs. For instance, in the digital space called yuvutu (<http://www.yuvutu.com>) amateurs gather to exchange sexually explicit moving-images with other amateurs as well as presenting them to a larger audience; in yuvutu’s words: “Free Porn by Real Amateurs”. The assumption is that these amateurs reveal their most intimate truth

1 I simply refer to the Victorian age – a construction that especially in retrospect is presented as far too unambiguous, a caricature of primness – because it highly influenced the Western mindset with regard to sexuality and sometimes seems to function as an antithesis to the modern practice of sexuality. Of course the Victorian sexual morals were preceded by less restrictive morals, thereby illustrating the meandering path of history, devoid of teleology.

2 Explicit images in general became easier available with the arrival of the World Wide Web and as a result prevalent. Previously ‘old media’ institutions functioned as gatekeepers, what was shown reflected their values, which in return correlated with the norms of society. Shock website Rotten.com (1996) is an early representative of the decline of gatekeepers on the Internet. Currently liveleak.com and wikileaks.org are examples of a popular news-oriented websites who present themselves as websites that exist because a lack of censorship. Hugely popular mainstream entertainment-websites like ebaumsworld.com and break.com have incorporated these ‘uncensored’ images.

unlike porn stars in mainstream hardcore pornography. Therefore fans also argue that this form of pornography is real: “Real humans, real sex, real sweat, blood and tears.” (Krut-Landau) One could argue, therefore, that it functions as, to appropriate a term used by Vincent Mosco, a ‘new sublime’.<sup>3</sup> Despite all this however, it remains very much the question whether so-called Porn 2.0 entails a democratization of gender agency. Can the producers of Porn 2.0, in addition to the “chastising of the old order” by its fans, really mediate outside the box they (and we all?) know? The central question of this thesis therefore is: do the democratization of production and distribution of pornography and the opportunity for these amateurs to gather and form a community entail a democratization of gender agency? To answer this question, we must also ask ourselves how the ‘realness’ of which users testify should be understood: as myth, metaphor, metonym, or down right true (or a combination of these things)?

What follows is a critical exploration of amateur pornography in a Web 2.0 era, starting with an introduction of Web 2.0 and thereafter Porn 2.0 and the claims made about it in the online popular discourse. After a review of the scholarly debate on pornography and netporn in particular I will argue my corpus and method before subsequently discussing my case study on yuvutu in the second chapter. Here I will begin with analysis of apparent dissonance in order to make a comparison between yuvutu’s amateurs and professional pornography and their aesthetics in relation to claims of truth. After formulating some basic features yuvutu’s content will both be categorized and linked to utterances from the larger discourse on sex in order to identify similarities and differences to ultimately improve our understanding of both, which will then be formulated in the conclusion.

<sup>3</sup> The ‘sublime’ in respect to cyberspace is used twofold by Mosco: the technological or the electrical or scientific sublime. Here I will use the technological of digital sublime, the form that Mosco uses most prominently, which comes from historian David Nye, who ultimately draws upon Edmund Burke. Mosco describes it as “a literal eruption of feeling that briefly overwhelms reason only to be recontained by it.” (22)

## 1. Key concepts

This chapter contains all the preconditions a successful case study requires. The metaphor Web 2.0 and its mythic implications will lead us to the next metaphor: Porn 2.0, exemplified by claims made in the popular discourse on this concept. Other components, which function as the backbone of the eventual dish if you like, are theory on pornography (1.2) and the demarcation of the case (1.3). Finally the tools with which the ingredients will be connected to the case, the method, will be presented in paragraph 1.4.

### 1.1 Metaphors, myths and discourse

As Marianne van den Boomen argues on her blog, “[m]etaphors are funny things. They elude questions of truth and reality, and at the same time they produce truths and realities.” In this paragraph the truths and realities that two key metaphors construct, how these realities can be understood, and what questions they raise are preeminent. In the next sub-paragraph the concept of Web 2.0 will be linked to Vincent Mosco’s digital sublime, which then can be connected to Porn 2.0 (1.1.2).

#### 1.1.1 Web 2.0

In the discourse on Web 2.0 one word pops up time and again: ‘inversion’.<sup>4</sup> Most fundamentally it is related to the perceived turn in the generation of online content – here another buzzword surfaces: ‘user-generated-content’. The Internet has reached a phase wherein the emphasis, at least in its discursive construction, lies on its social dimensions. The old divide between author and reader, producer and consumer is believed to diminish if not completely dissolve on websites that incorporate the principles of Web 2.0, at least according to techno-optimists such as the writers of *Wired*. The idea is that a so-called second generation of software applications alters the previously dominant one-way communication on the Internet. Websites become platforms for participation instead of yet another way of publishing (often referred to as an ‘old media’ broadcasting practice, because of its strictly hierarchical relation between reader/viewer and author); the promise of interactivity, so loudly proclaimed in the 1990s, seems to have come true. The most famous examples of this inversion are websites like YouTube and Wikipedia. The first is a video-sharing platform that enables people to distribute their moving images to other individuals and the latter is an encyclopedia whose lemmata are created and regulated by its users. Blogs and social networking sites such as Facebook and MySpace are considered to be part of the ‘revolutionary’ Web 2.0 generation as well. The ‘inversion’ here refers to content that was previously created by few to consumed by many visitors, and is now ‘inverted’ to be created by those very visitors, through which the hosts make their money. Because let there be no misunderstanding, as much as things could have changed for the better for the user, Web 2.0, perceived as software, is just as much a business model that can generate huge profit, as O’ Reilly acknowledges.

However, the emphatic terms like ‘inversion’ and ‘revolutionary’ are signifiers of an ideological construction what Vincent Mosco calls the digital sublime. In *The Digital Sublime* (2004) he points out that every new technological development in the past two centuries has been accompanied by myths:

Myths are stories that animate individuals and societies by providing paths to transcendence that lift

<sup>4</sup> It is widely acknowledged that the term Web 2.0 entered the lexicon with the 2004 Web 2.0 conference, initiated by the Irish Internet activist Tim O’Reilly.

people out of the banality of everyday life. They offer another reality, a reality once characterized by the promise of the sublime. (3)

'Believers' proclaim that the possibilities are endless, that nothing will ever be the same again and that the definitive medium has arrived (thereby, from a teleological standpoint, implicitly announcing the end of history). This is related to calling something 'new'; the ideological connotation is a modernist one, a belief in progress in general and more specifically in new media as an improvement. (Lister et al, 11) Labeling something '2.0' or '3.0' or even '4.0' implies a similar linear development, an analogy with software releases, of new and improved versions, so has Van den Boomen shown (although it also anticipates on what is next, implicitly denying any endpoint). Mosco, following Alisdair MacIntyre (1970), states that "myths are not true or false, but living or dead". (29) A recent infamous example is the boom and bust of the dotcom myth. The utterances that will be discussed in the next sub-paragraph can be understood with the help of Mosco, because the discourse is structured along these concepts. Central is the myth of Web 2.0 that is translated to Porn 2.0. as we will see, the myth that should transcend us from everyday life. Mosco writes that

[a] myth is alive if it continues to give meaning to human life, if it continues to represent some important part of the collective mentality of a given age, and if it continues to render socially and intellectually tolerable what would otherwise be experienced as incoherence. (29)

Therefore Mosco concludes that we should figure out "why the myth exists, why it is so important to people, what it means, and what it tells us about people's hopes and dreams." (29) Pornography could use such a myth, since the form in which it appears most prominently – heterosexually orientated hardcore moving images – is not widely understood as a cultural form that gives meaning to human life and thus intellectually and socially tolerable. The people quoted in the next paragraph seem well aware of this.

However, George P. Landow's nuance of Mosco is quite helpful: in *Hypertext 3.0: Critical Theory and New Media in an Era of Globalization* (2006) he deems that by calling those myths Mosco fails to find out "if some of the claims about location-independent work, business applications of the Internet, or hypermedia in education" are correct (xii). Therefore the perceived potential of Web 2.0 can be researched on two levels: on a practical level (does it deliver?) and as a promised route to go beyond the limits of everyday existence. This thesis, as mentioned in the introduction, wishes to combine Mosco's idea of 'the promise of the sublime' and Landow's nuance concerning the actual deliverance on this promise of Porn 2.0. So let us first look at how the promise is formulated in the popular discourse.

### 1.1.2 Pornography 2.0

"Porn viewers of the world: you are subject to a tyranny of monolithic tastes! Liberation is possible. I speak of democracy – a democracy for porn." So states Raphael Krut-Landau on the student website of the Johns Hopkins University. He is referring to the websites that are central to this article: recently emerged pornographic video sharing websites, YouTube-like platforms that mainly offer homemade pornography. As with YouTube users are able to upload, tag, rate and comment on moving-images; popular movies are easily viewed more than hundred thousand times within a few days and these websites are growing rapidly in terms of content and visitors.<sup>5</sup> In the online discourse concerning these

<sup>5</sup> Web statistics company Alexa shows that by the 3<sup>rd</sup> of May 2008 YouPorn (<http://www.youporn.com>) and Redtube (<http://www.redtube.com>) are in the top 50 most visited websites world-wide. YouPorn even reaches 1,8

websites, claims have been made about the kind of pornography they host, as well as the current decline in revenues that the 'offline' division of the porn industry allegedly suffers (Whitfield). This mainly American discourse consists of online journalistic articles or opinion-pieces in more general news and human interest media (varying from *New York* magazine to student-run websites) and weblog entries. These weblogs are either focused on technology (for example TechCrunch, <http://www.techcrunch.com>), emphasizing the narrative of pornography as a killer application (more on this later) and apologizing if readers find the topic offensive, on culture in general (Alterati, <http://www.alterati.com>), or specifically on pornography itself (GlobalAdultMedia, <http://weblog.globaladultmedia.com>, or Fleshbot, <http://www.flesbot.com>). It is important to note that the vast majority of the authors are male (again, more on this later).

The association of the concept of Web 2.0 with democracy Krut-Landau makes is nothing new; 'Democracy 2.0' is a concept that is mentioned often. Thus, last November I participated in "Participation 2.0", a so-called unconference on civil media, where the possibilities of using Web 2.0 as a tool in active citizenship were praised, as people spoke of a 'truly democratic medium'. Moreover, the Internet in general has been hailed as the medium that would 'save society': communities would be united again and democracy would advance.<sup>6</sup> Perhaps more surprisingly, a correlation between pornography and democratization has also been made before. In her introduction to *The Invention of Pornography: Obscenity and the Origins of Modernity, 1500-1800* (1993), historian Lynn Hunt proclaims that "when print culture opened the possibility of the masses gaining access to writing and pictures (...) pornography began to emerge as a separate genre of representation." (12, 13) Furthermore it was connected "to freethinking and (...) attacks on absolutist political authority" (11), because "[i]n early modern Europe (...) pornography was most often a vehicle for using the shock of sex to criticize religious and political authorities." (10) Simone de Beauvoir most prominently read the Marquis de Sade along these lines (*Must We Burn Sade?*, [1951] 1953), as did Angela Carter (*The Sadeian Woman and the Ideology of Pornography*, 1978), in contrast to anti-pornography feminist who often quote the Marquis de Sade as one of the roots of the pornographic degradation of women.

This presumed democratization of pornography is only partly about free pornography, about the democratization of the offer. For the ones who know how to use peer-to-peer file sharing applications like Bittorrent or a predecessor like Kazaa, file hosting sites like Rapidshare (<http://www.rapidshare.com>), spoofing applications for instance offered by Megaspoof (<http://www.megaspoof.com>), or illegal community-run pornservers, pornography was already freely available in large quantities.<sup>7</sup> More important than the efficient distribution and accessibility of free pornographic video, however, is the kind of pornography that these video sharing websites offer. Again, college student Raphael Krut-Landau, among several authors one could quote here, addresses this, in terms of being 'real':

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% of Internet users. Generally, since October 2007 Porn 2.0 websites have experienced substantial growth in visitor numbers. On yuvutu, YouPorn, Redtube and Pornhub (<http://www.pornhub.com>) on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of May 2008 the most viewed videos were viewed between 2 and 11 million times.

<sup>6</sup> See Rheingold (1993), Negroponte (1995) or the concept of 'electronic highway' that the Clinton/Gore administration hailed so loudly (although partly misunderstanding the Internet). Recently, in his book called *The Wealth of Networks*, Yochai Benkler made a compelling and among scholars popular argument that can roughly be placed within this tradition.

<sup>7</sup> Bittorrent is a peer-to-peer file sharing protocol that enables individuals to download large amounts of data without being dependent on the original source/supplier because while downloading a file, the sharing starts already (this process depends on metadata, which is, in general, a major aspect of Web 2.0). Rapidshare (since 2002) is basically a server from which you can upload to and download from. Megaspoof is a tool to break into paid websites and subsequently share successful cracks. However, the big difference between these applications and the kind of amateur 2.0 websites that are central to this paper is that these applications mainly thrive on breaching the copyright of professional content. The majority of these applications date from the period 2000-2002; the fact that O'Reilly (2005) considers these applications to be part of Web 2.0 show how old Web 2.0 and Porn 2.0 already are.

Sites like PornoTube – XTube, yuvutu and LubeYourTube are in the same genre – they give attention to those more obscure kinds of porn that might be harder to come by (pardon the pun). (...) The new pornographer is the same kind of normal human being as the viewer – people from your college, those girls from your high school, that dude and his kinky boyfriend down the road and millions of real Hot, Horny and Lonely Housewives. Best of all: you can finally have an audience for all of those self-produced pornos you have kicking around in the attic. (...) And the porn you'll find (if you avoid the commercial videos) is real, not the simulacra you might be used to. Real humans, real sex, real sweat, blood and tears. The moaning is real. The screaming is real. The tits are real, sometimes.

Here the 'sublime' paradoxically pops up in the promise of the real: the other reality that this myth offers, the sublime, is in fact everyday life. By calling mainstream pornography simulacra, that is to say representations that are seen as real and thereby replace reality itself, he assigns this "new" kind of pornography quite a status: it should deliver us from the persistent side effect of living in a hyper-mediated world. Ironically, he asserts that this should be realized by even more mediation, where Jean Baudrillard seemed to idealize a primitive society, freed from the 'terror' of the sign-value (1975, 143).

Like Krut-Landau, blogger Dr. Menlo defines "web 2.0 porn" (in this case referring to YouPorn) by opposing it to professional pornography: "Amateurs do YouTube and the result is nothing but a passionate plethora of people doing it on camera for the simple love and pleasure of sex and their bodies. For free." Dr. Menlo's lengthy blog entry is a reaction to anti-pornography feminist Naomi Wolf (and partly to Andrea Dworkin, more on her in the next paragraph). Dr. Menlo reacts to Wolf's position in general (calling it "off-putting" and "myopic") and specifically to an article Wolf published in *New York* magazine entitled "The Porn Myth", in which she calls on men to stop watching porn because it promotes an unrealistic image of women and it "does not free eros but dilutes it." Dr. Menlo points out the existence of Porn 2.0 to show that there is plenty of honest, female-friendly porn. Although he acknowledges "that there is horrible porn out there" he poses the question: "[a]re we to judge all comedies based on the performance of HOWARD THE DUCK?"

So two aspects come together here: it is argued that the kind of porn that can be found on Porn 2.0 websites is more 'real' and as a result more female friendly than professional pornography and it is therefore believed to be pornography's savior. The core of the argument that Menlo and Krut-Landau make is that there could be nothing wrong with the sex that 'ordinary' people have in their private space, which becomes pornography once they start mediating it. This line of reasoning is clearly naïve; it seems to me that it is highly unlikely that there are no negotiations of power at work in people's bedrooms, so I will remain skeptical of these rather lofty claims. But in order to understand these claims, we need to understand the binary opposition between 'professional' and 'amateur'. Therefore we need to answer the question 'What defines mainstream porn?' and eventually: 'What is it that those like Krut-Landau see as "real porn"?'

## 1.2 Theory of pornography

This issue is ultimately part of a larger debate on pornography, which will be introduced historically in the next sub-paragraph, after which Susanna Paasonen's criticism on the structure of this debate and the position of the scholar can be addressed (1.2.2) before the outlines of the present discourse, labeled Porn Studies, will be drawn (1.2.3). Paasonen's criticism does, however, open up the issue of narrative – and with this the perceived dichotomy between amateur and professional, as I will argue –, which will be evaluated (1.2.4) before finally netporn, pornography on the Internet (1.2.5), will tie up this paragraph.

### 1.2.1 The early years of the discourse

The academic pornography discourse has up until the late 1980s largely consisted of utterances that can be labeled as either 'anti-pornography' or 'anti-censorship'. In her landmark publication *Hard Core* (1989) Linda Williams, currently the leading scholar in the field of porn studies, stated the following: "My point, however is simply to note that, for women, one constant of the history of sexuality has been a failure to imagine their pleasures outside a dominant male economy." (4) She quotes Peter Michelson who wrote in *The Aesthetics of Pornography* (1971) that pornography is "for better or for worse the imaginative record of man's sexual will." (5) For some radical feminists, most notably Andrea Dworkin, these acknowledgements are not enough. In *Pornography: Men possessing Women* (1979) she states that "[m]ale power is the *raison d'être* of pornography; the degradation of the female is the means of achieving this power." (24) A decade later (*Intercourse*, 1987) she even goes as far as to claim that the origin of sexual violence is heterosexual intercourse: the penetration-invasion of a passive object (female) by an active subject (male):

In the experience of intercourse, she [the woman, AB] loses the capacity for integrity because her body – the basis of privacy and freedom in the material world for all human beings – is entered and occupied; the boundaries of her physical body are – neutrally speaking – violated.

It is within this anti-pornography discourse that the slogan 'pornography is the theory, rape is the practice' was coined. Such sentiments were a reaction to the rise of cinematic hardcore pornography in the 1970s (pornography became a publicly accessible commodity) and were part of a broader feminist movement. Dworkin inspired publications with predictable titles and similar content, such as *Pornography: The Production and Consumption of Inequality* (1998) by Dines et al and *Making Violence Sexy: Feminist Views on Pornography* (1993) edited by Diana E.H. Russel. It is partly due to this predictability that over the last ten years the anti-pornography utterances, although they have not disappeared, have lost prominence within the academic debate; nowadays the 'battle' against pornography is fought by both evangelical Christians, most prominently in the United States of America, and in the public discourse by feminists such as Naomi Wolf and Ariel Levy.<sup>8</sup>

A second reason why feminists' anti-pornography stance lost relevance within the academic discourse is best illustrated by how Williams exposed them. She argues that the central fallacy of the anti-porn feminist position is "that a single, whole sexuality exists opposed to the supposed deviations and abnormalities of somebody else's fragmentation." (23) Williams sides with the anti-censorship feminist, although she does acknowledge "that pornography – especially the heterosexual film pornography (...) – offers exemplary symbolic representations of patriarchal power in heterosexual pleasure." (22)

Williams implicitly shows that there is a resemblance in the premises of both anti-pornography

<sup>8</sup> Naomi Wolf and Ariel Levy both published articles in New York magazine (for Wolf see paragraph 1.1.2). Levy wrote the popular critique of what she sees as modern American feminism, *Female Chauvinist Pigs* (2005). She asks: "How is resurrecting every stereotype of female sexuality that feminism endeavored to banish good for women? (...) And how is imitating a stripper or a porn star (...) going to render us sexually liberated?" (4) Furthermore the argument for censorship or a (partial) prohibition of pornography found little endorsement by Western legislators (apart from child pornography). A recent exception came after the murder of English teacher Jane Longhurst in 2003, which resulted in 2008 in a British law prohibiting the possession of "extreme pornography", because the murderer appeared to be watching this "excessively"; this law in return resulted in the fear that the possession of "kinky pornography" could be forbidden as well (Summers). The novelty about this law, so says member of House of Lords, Lord Wallace of Tankerness, is that it prohibits the possession of recorded acts that are not prohibited (Summers).

feminists and hardcore pornography itself. She explains that hardcore pornography also claims to know truths about sex, namely that sex is a purely biological act and that porn actors as a result only act according to nature, while this is in fact a fiction – in this sense the utterances from the popular discourse on Porn 2.0 make identical epistemological claims. Williams's goal is to unravel these disguised cultural constructions. In contrast to anti-pornography feminists Williams thinks that pornography actually could illuminate us on "power and pleasure that once seemed mystified and obscure." (266)

Besides posing truths about sex in general, a key feature of pornography is the speculation on the truth about the pleasure of women. This effort towards knowledge of pleasure is one of pornography's driving forces. This knowledge provides power, because it provides agency. It is relatively simple: if one knows what gives pleasure one automatically attains the ability to act according to this knowledge. There are many platforms within popular culture that conduct a similar line of reasoning; think especially of articles with archetypical headlines such as "10 tips for a better sex life" or "What he really likes: how to please your man" that appear in women's magazines like *Marie Claire* or *Cosmopolitan*. Ideally one would act in correspondence with what generates pleasure for both parties, but mainstream hardcore pornography is said to often miss this reciprocity. The fact that women's magazines speculate extensively on male pleasure and that there is no similar trend to speak of in men's magazines (generally these exist in far smaller numbers anyway) suggests that the asymmetry does not end with pornography itself.

However, in the conclusion of *Hard Core* Williams foresees a positive development in a growing diversity of pornography, which would improve women's sexual citizenship. (274) For Williams, by the end of the 1980s pornography had shown that it could represent female pleasure authentically and thereby step outside the phallic dominance, although she is very cautious not to attribute too much significance to this concept, to say the least. She claims that "[t]his male gaze model has given rise to the assumption that all visual eroticism and pornography is *for* men and *about* women". (1995, 22) This is a "model of a disembodied and distanced 'male gaze' that phallically masters the objects represented, rather than a plurality of differently disciplined spectators-observers seduced in different ways." (22) Therefore a vital question for Williams "is not "is the male gaze," but rather, when, where, and how has there been room for the corporeal presence of other spectator-observers?" This, however, makes clear that pleasure was at the core of the debate: it is either the absence of true female pleasure that evokes condemnation or its presence that generates hope.

### 1.2.2 Problematic binary

Susanna Paasonen thinks, rightly, that the binary opposition between disgust and pleasure that shapes the feminist discourse on pornography is much too narrow. She suggests that if we start to speak about affect (disgust, pleasure) we should also include other affective reactions (boredom for instance). But Paasonen signals a fundamental problem, namely that of close reading in relation to affect. Like Williams, Paasonen sees pornography as a 'body genre', as are slasher horror films and comedies. Referring to J.B. Bell's "Character and Cognition in Modern Pornography" (2001), she concludes that

[p]ornography functions with the logic of attraction, spectacle and affect that does not fully translate into semantic models of explanation. It relies on a spectacular display of genitalia and sexual acts while narrative development of character construction remains a secondary concern that tends to hinder, rather than facilitate, arousal (Bell, 20001: 41-2). (46)

This assessment is partly recognized by Williams when she acknowledges that pornography can create arousal to the scholar. Williams in fact mapped the historical roots of this aspect of pornography excellently in her article "Corporealized Observers" (1995). Here she opposes the "Cartesianism of the

camera obscura model of vision” and calls for the recognition of the “embodied, decentered sensations of present observers.” (15) But she does not connect this to her own subject position. This is where Paasonen refers to the way Michel Foucault argues the self is constructed and how assumed individual truth is found in the realm of sexuality. Admitting your desires is perceived to be the most intimate thing a person can do. (49) Therefore, a scholar who researches pornography is not only hesitant to admit pleasure because of the presumed loss of authority; even on a personal level every individual is very cautious to make one’s desire known publicly – in the next chapter we will see how people that are active on yuvutu are an exception on this.

### 1.2.3 Porn Studies

Paasonen is right in addressing affect and thereby problematising the position of the scholar when researching pornography, but elements of her argument – she perceives narrative as an obstruction rather than a stimulus of arousal and finds the traditional close reading inadequate – are unwelcome and unnecessary side-effects, as I will argue in the next sub-paragraph and paragraph 1.4 on method. For now the focus lies on her criticism on Williams.

It seems no coincidence that she ignores Williams’ *Porn Studies* (2004) even though it appeared three years before her article was published. Williams’ most important achievement is that she did gradually bring pornography past the binary of disgust versus pleasure, while not forgetting the ever-present issue of power, or more specifically: female agency.

Although *Hard Core* can perhaps be considered as the starting point of serious scholarly research on pornography, it was not until 2004 that Williams herself co-wrote and edited a book that can function as an relatively up-to-date guide in contemporary pornography: *Porn Studies*, in which she stepped out of the anti/pro paradigm and into a study of the construction of pornography.<sup>9</sup> Williams states:

*Porn Studies* differs from previous anthologies about pornography – including those that purport to legitimize its academic study – in its effort to take pornography seriously as an increasingly on/scene cultural form that impinges on the lives of a wide variety of Americans and that matters in the evaluation of who we are as a culture. (5)

In this culture pornography is not entirely obscene anymore. Williams argues that since the literal Latin meaning of the word ‘obscenus’ is “‘off-stage,’ or that which should be kept ‘out of public view’” we should start using the term “on/scenity”. (3) This is not to say that pornography is no longer experienced as offensive, but those images that are experienced as such are no longer containable.<sup>10</sup>

This notion functions as a foundation for an exploration of a wide range of pornographic phenomena from a variety of perspectives. For this thesis the reflections that are made on Internet porn, homemade porn, ethnic porn, and gay and lesbian porn are particularly relevant. The first two will in part be addressed in the next paragraph and other aspects will come up in the next chapter, where Williams’ *Porn Studies* functions as the most important secondary source in order to help elucidate the moving images. But as much as Williams’ reader is of use, one needs to be aware that Williams and the

<sup>9</sup> Pamela Church Gibson deserves some credit as well with her *Dirty Looks* (1993) and especially the sequel *More Dirty Looks* (2003), but the difference is that Church Gibson is, far more than Williams, trapped in the binary that Williams has overcome.

<sup>10</sup> The conferences “The Art and Politics of Netporn” (2005) and especially “C’Lick Me” (2007) (both organized by the Institute of Network Cultures of the University of Amsterdam (UvA)) as well as the reader that came out of the second conference position themselves beyond the perception of obscenity, and approach Internet pornography from a fan culture-, and even porn activism-perspective, for which they deserve credit as well.

majority of the other scholars in this reader perceive pornography as an American practice, as shown in Williams' quote above. Historically it has, of course, never been an exclusive American practice; it is much older than the country itself and mediated pornography that exists from modernity onwards is by no means an American practice either.<sup>11</sup> The question is whether pornography on yuvutu is a global practice remains a (in majority) Western practice, as Matthew Zook's research showed (112), with the proclaimed "Internet porn democracy", which implies a democracy on a global scale since the Internet is a global medium.<sup>12</sup>

#### 1.2.4 Narrative sets the tone

As said, before mapping out the consequences of pornography in an Internet age, we need to see to one of Paasonen's leftovers: the concept of narrative, of which the importance is an issue that I will also raise in my analyses. The professional genre called 'reality porn' needs to be discussed in relation to this issue, which also provides the opportunity to discuss the shady divide between 'amateur' and 'professional'.

The reality-genre came to bloom, at least economically, mainly on the Internet, parallel to the reality genre on mainstream television that can be exemplified by the (in)famous *BIG BROTHER* (since 1997). Reality pornography as a fictional genre often depicts professional amateurs (yes, a double *contradictio in terminis*) in an aesthetic mode that partly derives from the kind of amateur pornography that emerged most prominently with the rise of video technology in the 1980s. Video caused the first boom in amateur pornography, although this was in no way the emergence of amateur pornography; there has been amateur pornography from the moment people were able to record themselves. (Williams 1995, 3) Furthermore this boom is modest in comparison to the one that became possible with the arrival of digital cameras and of which the main topic of this thesis is a consequence. In contrast to celluloid technologies, lighting was a significantly smaller obstacle in video: one was not forced to film outside anymore; simply turning on the lights sufficed. Instant filming was made possible; cameras became lighter which made the tripod obsolete; and the relatively low cost of video material negated the necessity of carefully designing every shot and preparing every take. The most important features that survived and are now prominent in the reality genre on the Internet are little editing, handheld filming, and the point-of-view shot. Also influential are the fly-on-the-wall aesthetics of direct cinema, contributing to the sense of 'reality' that is constructed by the idea of a camera that constantly follows people until they 'forget' its presence, usually captured in long takes. The result is a parade of so-called girls-next-door, neighbours, housewives, secretaries and maids; it is just what they 'are', in contrast to cinematic hardcore pornography, where actors perform acts conform to their role or, roughly from the 1990s onwards, they generally remain the porn star above all: the constant glamour connotation of being extravagant (often reflected in their names: Lisa Sparxxx, Ava Devine, Bella Donna or Puma Swede, to name a few). Although this 'parade' creates the impression that one could speak of the 'usual' submissive position of the woman, the 'private' websites of amateurs gone professional especially prove that these women take an ambivalent position. Yes, their job or role is to suggest submission, but the interdependence of males towards them is remarkable: the power of these women can be found in their monopoly on facilitating pleasure. Furthermore many of these websites only contain solo performances;

11 Since the advent of cinematic pornography England, Sweden, Denmark, Germany and Italy and (since the 1990s) Hungary (amongst others) have had and in some cases still have a steady production of professional pornography. Still, one would think that in terms of quantity they are unable to compete with production in the U.S, but Matthew Zook came to the conclusion that in 2006 the U.S. only produce 42.7 % of the Internet adult industry. (111)

12 Global in relation to Internet crudely excludes the Third World, as Manuel Castells has pointed out (2001). Which is not to say that getting those parts of the world connected brings them prosperity by default, an impression that techno-optimists tend to raise.

often masturbation. These women often try to give the impression that they give you a peek into their private lives, analogous to the reality-soaps; the fact that they isolate themselves from the porn industry (you do not see any other porn actors) and the impression that they film constantly, constructed by the absence of editing, contribute to this.

The reality websites that the industry constructs originally contained unknown women of whom some became known porn stars that have sex with either an undisclosed porn actor or with the leading character (who searches for a woman every episode).<sup>13</sup> The role they play, that of an ordinary woman, gives them autonomy. These are women with a story: they are bored of their husbands, seek revenge for their spouses' adultery, or simply cannot resist the 'exiting' option of having extramarital sex. In all cases, it is portrayed as if they have an option; they are independent in this sense. The reference to reality is the starting point and determines the relationship between woman and man. So narrative is important, only in a more ritual way than Paasonen is perhaps used to: it sets the tone. It is the position from which you start to watch, from which you can try to understand the rest of this person's actions.

In this sense there are deliberate resemblances between 'professional amateur' pornography and 'real amateur' pornography, although the major difference is the absence of financial motivation for the real amateur. Not only does narrative function more or less in the same way (as we will see in the next chapter), the aesthetic devices are also somewhat comparable. However, for the commercial amateurs it is more a strategy to resemble real amateur pornography, in order to attain an aura of realness (the moving images on yuvutu are, as we will see, grittier because of their technical imperfections). This makes it possible to separate three categories within pornography: professional (porn that acknowledges itself as such), professional amateurs, and what I will call non-profit amateurs.<sup>14</sup> These non-profit amateurs profit highly from today's Internet, as will be shown next.

### 1.2.5 Internet and pornography

When the Internet became the primary medium for the consumption of pornography some things changed significantly. Although cable television started the trend, the physical possession of pornographic materials became definitively unnecessary with the arrival of the Internet. It is simply there, available 24/7. DVD revenues are still a substantial part of the turnover of the American porn industry, but the Internet has caught up and became equally important (Ackman).<sup>15</sup> Linda Williams is probably right when she argues in her revised edition of *Hard Core* (1999) that the most significant change in the history of pornography was when viewing pornography became possible for the "general

13 The BUTTMAN series (1991) - evolving around porn actor John Stagliano and his fetish for the female buttocks - is considered to be the first in what has become known as 'gonzo' pornography, that in its directness refers to Hunter S. Thompson's gonzo journalism.

14 It seemed a matter of time before professional-non-profit-amateurs surfaced on the Internet, and yes, on Rude.com (<http://www.rude.com>) they have. Rude.com is as much a hybrid Porn 2.0 website as for instance Xtube is, containing pay-per-view webcams, dating, chats, and a video sharing platform. The difference is that uploaders of private content share in the advertising revenues: the more popular you are, the more money you earn. Similarly, SellYourSexTape.com has emerged, offering "[no]t just clips, more than porn. Hours of documentary footage from every couple!" Couples are encouraged to send in their tape and get the following instruction: "Shoot for one hour everyday for one week. To earn \$1000 each we require lots of entertaining content. Guys should hold the camera most of the time. Give us [read 'men', AB] the POV experience of dating your girlfriend. Document your daily life too. (...) Sex scenes should be natural and loving and happy, no violence, but don't forget the money shots!" In May 2008 web statistics company Alexa (<http://www.alexa.com>) ranked the website in the global top 3000.

15 Although the industry notoriously exaggerates its results, research done by Dan Ackman for Forbes confirms that already in 2001 Internet and video revenues were equally big (around 1 billion dollars). Recently the porn entrepreneurs claim Internet is costing them money since it made competition significantly fiercer, yet the Newsweek journalist, Brian Braiker, failed to interview entrepreneurs who are solely active on the Internet and never have been in the pre-Internet era.

public" with the rise of cinematic pornography. (313) The Internet could be seen as a radical prolongation of this trend. But Anna Reading does not agree with Williams; she sees the Internet as the most radical shift in pornography and therefore argues that "pornography on the Internet or in video games [should not] simply be seen as part of a continuum or a remediation of the analogue." (2005, 125) This statement is problematic in two ways: her comment is imprecise, firstly because she merges two possibly very distinct categories: Internet pornography and pornographic videogames, and secondly because she raises the impression that 'remediation' excludes radical change by associating it with 'continuum'. Reading does not support her claim that remediation is an insufficient concept. Bolter and Grusin (1999), who distinctively elaborated on Marshall McLuhan's concept of remediation, argue that remediation is at the core of media practice; it is the unavoidable dynamic of a new medium, simultaneously referring to predecessors and emphasizing the significant improvements. When looking at the specific topic of this paper it is clear that some of these so-called Porn 2.0 websites present themselves as an efficiently organized collection of professional pornography that was largely also available on DVD, supplemented with the ability to rate and upload movies from your own collection (Redtube). Others explicitly note the opportunity to be part of a community (Xtube), and some offer predominantly amateur content that has an aesthetical resemblance to professional mainstream pornography, but solely performed by amateurs of which is argued that this is more real (yuvutu, the next chapter will hopefully elucidate the precise workings of this mechanism).

The Internet functions as a platform that for the first time enables producers of pornography outside the industry to distribute their products effectively, not only causing the boom in professional amateur websites, but also in non-profit amateurs. They gathered on the Internet, for instance on MSN (<http://groups.msn.com>), to exchange homemade pornographic materials. The key difference with the pornographic video sharing websites that are central to this article, is that these communities were often closed or offered only restricted access, only offering fragments, comparable to the previews on most pay-per-view professional porn websites. These previews often seem to be enough.<sup>16</sup> Zabet Patterson's description of key features of online pornography could actually be understood in this light: "The user constantly shifts on to new images - and in this process, new delays - in an endless slippage of desire in which part of the pleasure derives from habitual repetition and habitual deferral." (110)

The presence of pornography in everyday life has increased tremendously. In the early days of Internet, when search engines were not very accurate and there was less control over pop-ups, it was easy to surf into porn. Furthermore, easy accessibility has created a situation of instant satisfaction. Next to this immediacy Patterson claims that a "sense of interactivity, which brings with it a sense of shared space and a collapse or disavowal of distance" is the most important feature that the Internet has to offer to pornography. (110)

Like Patterson, Anna Reading points out the obvious but significant change in the production and use of pornography via new media: it has changed the "body of relations between text and user in shifting the dialectic between how sexuality is articulated within private and public spaces." (126) Again with the exception of cable television, in the pre-Internet era one could only encounter pornography in public space in the form of sex cinemas, sex shops, and (in some countries more explicitly than others, most notoriously in Amsterdam) prostitution. However, this still required some specific knowledge or coincidence in the sense that one had to find the way to a particular establishment. Both authors

<sup>16</sup> Porn entrepreneurs say that their so-called conversion rates are rarely above 1%; again, these figures are hard to verify. Top mainstream retail websites such as eBay have conversion rates between 10 and 15% (Marketing Charts, <http://www.marketingcharts.com>). In a discussion on Webmaster World (<http://www.webmasterworld.com>) web entrepreneurs claim to have conversion rates around 1%, but 0.1% can already be profitable as one claim is the average netporn conversion rate ("Ecommerce"). On a porn business forum, strikingly called Go Fuck Yourself.com (slogan "Where the industry meets") conversion rates around 0.2% are considered to be highly profitable (elron).

emphasize the ambiguous role that the computer plays in this change. Patterson states:

On-line amateur porn impels us to consider the newly hybrid space of the computer as it redraws the boundaries that operate within and around private, or domestic space. (...) [I]t has become a private enclave within the domestic or corporate sphere. This becomes evident in operating systems such as Windows (...), which allow multiple users to log in to their own space. In these systems, changes to the color scheme or the desktop pattern are meant to stand in for the 'ownership' or delimitation of a private space on the computer. This private space *within* a public environment (...) then opens out onto a larger space of the Internet, a space which is itself importantly both public and private. These interface technologies are transforming our received understanding about the very nature and division of what is private and what is public." (120)

This declining division between private and public goes hand in hand with the declining division between consumer and producer, which is represented in the term 'prosumer' that is used frequently within the discourse on new media. In an age when broadcasting was the dominant mode of transmission, what was aired was generally consciously made for the public domain and therefore obedient to consensus values, while it was consumed in the private domain. Now one has the opportunity to produce and consume independent of the consensus values, so that what once was private or only circulated in a small community can now be broadcasted to the world. This means that the Internet is not necessarily a private and public space at the same time, as Patterson claims above, but a dominantly public space filled with formerly private utterances made public. Of course the Internet still has several areas with restricted access, but the majority of these areas, social networking sites, are only partially restricted and function in largely the same way (collectively making the private public) for the millions of people that subscribe to them.

So the Internet as a non-place is public, but can be accessed from private spaces. The fact that the computer is generally seen as a private technology<sup>17</sup> with which one can connect to a community, is not only due to the development of technology itself in terms of size (for a long time computers filled entire rooms, even buildings), or for the individual as the current predominant consumer unit, but just as much as a result of its discursive construction, as Fred Turner shows. He traces the influential discourse wherein "computers and computer networks became linked to visions of peer-to-peer ad-hocracy, a leveled marketplace, and a more authentic self" back to Stewart Brand and the Whole Earth network. (3) Established upon an ideal of new communities in the 1960s (Turner calls them New Communalist), Brand formed a movement that in people like Kevin Kelly, Howard Rheingold, and John Perry Barlow had "some of the most-quoted spokespeople for a countercultural vision of the Internet. In 1993 all would help create the magazine that, more than any other depicted the emerging digital world in revolutionary terms: *Wired*." (3) Pornography did embrace the Internet very early on,<sup>18</sup> but the big Web 2.0 websites like MySpace and YouTube, pre-eminently embodying the (discourse of) utopian claims made by New Communalist, disallow pornographic content.

Thereby "netporn is cornered by a legalistic paranoiac or reactionary puritanical mindset." (Jacobs et al, 2007, 3) This partly explains the success in terms of reach of the pornographic video sharing websites: on the big platform was no room for them, so they started their own, still framing themselves

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17 Although the pc (which stands for personal computer) is largely perceived as a private technology it is also used to a great extent in the corporate sphere. This resulted in the code 'nsfw' ('not safe for work') referring to erotic or pornographic content (pornographic websites like TotallyNSFW (<http://www.totallynsfw.com>) and NSFW (<http://www.nsfw.com>) play on this). Here the private sphere and public sphere are mediated, a tension of which the laptop can be seen as the embodiment.

18 And is therefore called its killer application (Reynaert, 2002).

in roughly the same discourse. In her 2004 article Katrien Jacobs reports on earlier attempts of amateur pornographers to exchange their movies through the Internet; this was done peer-to-peer, in a pre YouTube era, not nearly as much aimed at presenting yourself to an audience far bigger (see paragraph 1.3) than only your fellow amateur producers (as we will also see in the next chapter). Jacobs showed that 2003 and early 2004 amateurs already explicitly tried to produce pornography that was different, in this context

pornography simply means a recording of a sexual act implemented for the excitement of others. Pornography thus breaks way from more current uses of the word, as profit-oriented entertainment industries that efficiently invade our senses (...).

Such a break remains unlikely to take place – both Jacobs case and Porn 2.0 – on a large scale in terms of aesthetics and (thereby) the stereotypical distribution of gender agency, because no matter what, the porn industry has provided the audience (including amateur producers) for years with their aesthetic mode – a supply that implies a demand.

So, to recapitulate: what is particularly new about Porn 2.0 *is* that it joined in with the popular and highly influential Web 2.0 discourse, that it is ultimately part of the (mainly) Western conception of the Internet: a free space, a frontier, where individual freedom should prevail. In relation to Web 2.0 this entails the freedom to gather and form communities and create and exchange content.<sup>19</sup>

### 1.3 The case

Which websites are we actually talking about here? Defining the research corpus for this thesis is not easy, as Internet pornography exists on a scale that seems immeasurable. Likewise, there are numerous pornographic video sharing websites, generally profiting from the ban on pornography by major Web 2.0 sites like YouTube and MySpace.<sup>20</sup> Probably already from September 2005 but certainly since March 2006 “Internet TV service” veoh.com hosted a lot of free pornography, which was a mix of so-called professional and amateur pornography, but in June 2006 they changed their terms of service, banning all pornography. By then yuvutu, Porntube (<http://www.porntube.com>, which soon changed to a pay-per-view website), Xtube, YouPorn, the homosexually oriented Lubeyourtube (and the more blog-structured Dudetube.com) and Megarotic.com just started running or were about to.<sup>21</sup> All these websites host a

19 It can hardly be stressed enough that this is a Western comprehension of the Internet. State or industry regulators have to adapt to this discourse if they want to pull anything off. In other, non-Western, non-democratic countries, take China, where ideologically the interest of the mass comes before that of the individual, or Singapore where welfare comes before freedom, regulators are far less concerned by this discourse. In these places Internet is not conceptualized in the line of the New Communalist’ ideology as a borderless space, a frontier ahead of any state interference. This is a nuance of the presumed placelessness of the Internet. In Singapore (where ‘out of protection of the youth’, for instance Youporn.com is blocked), regulation is, generally, accepted (Gunther and Peng Hwa). Furthermore, pornography is forbidden and mainly blocked in the majority of the Muslim countries and in China.

20 Porn 2.0 of course comprises more than these video sharing websites: Digg-like hyperlink rating sites such as Socialporn (<http://www.socialporn.com>); search engines like Askjolene (<http://www.askjolene.com>); and social networking sites like Xpeeps (<http://www.xpeeps.com>).

21 It is hard to determine the exact launching dates of these websites because of early, unknown beta versions (at least yuvutu and Pornotube had beta versions running at the end of 2005) and the lack of transparency of these sites. The sources I used are the “cache” function of Google, Wikipedia, fleshbot.com (a generally well-informed pornography orientated weblog, which is part of the successful online media company Gawker Media), and the websites themselves. Generally one can say that apart from industry-vehicles like Redtube and Pornhub all websites launched in 2006 and as said earlier: Alexa (the web statistics company) shows that their audiences are still growing. All sites are ranked between 571 and 33 of the globally best-visited websites according to Alexa on the 3<sup>rd</sup>

considerable amount of data and generate equally vast amounts of traffic, which implies large costs. To cover these costs and still make a profit multiple commercial strategies are utilized. Xtube and yuvutu present themselves as communities and offer their members privileges like better search options, chat rooms and high definition videos. Some sites target a specific sexual orientation, but most address all, while meticulously keeping these preferences separated. PornoTube (somewhat similar to Redtube and Pornhub) presents itself as a video sharing website, but essentially hosts previews and redirects to the industry.<sup>22</sup> All websites contain heavily integrated ads for industry-produced pornography, webcam sites, dating sites, and sextoy sites (they usually appear to be part of the design or the regular content, only to reveal themselves as ad when a new window pops up after clicking).<sup>23</sup>

Of all these websites, yuvutu is the one that positions itself most significantly as an amateur community and although it also contains professionally produced content this is carefully separated from the 'amateur' category. The videos from this section often turn up on the other websites mentioned above, confirming yuvutu as the forerunner. So if one of these websites could live up to the expectations conveyed, it should be yuvutu.<sup>24</sup>

#### 1.4 Method

My approach towards yuvutu is twofold, as described in paragraph 1.2. Following the utterances from the popular discourse on Porn 2.0 I will attempt to combine Mosco's idea of 'the promise of the sublime' and Landow's criticism of Mosco concerning the actual deliverance on this promise on yuvutu through a close reading of the videos on this website combined with other discursive acts like comments, tags, rating and even viewing.<sup>25</sup> This will result in assessing to what extent Porn 2.0 lives up to this promise as well as trying to understand how the content on yuvutu relates to these promises culturally. This relates to how Michel Foucault formulated the goal of his unfinished endeavor of mapping the history of sexuality:

The central issue (...) [is] to account for the fact that it is spoken about, to discover who does the speaking, the positions and viewpoints from which they speak, the institutions which prompt people to speak about it and which store and distribute the things that are said. What is at issue, briefly, is the over-all 'discursive fact,' the way in which sex is 'put into discourse'. (11)

of May 2008.

22 PornoTube is part of the Adult Entertainment Broadcasting Network (AEBN), which is specialized in distributing industry-produced content on the Internet, which effectively makes PornoTube the anticipation of the industry on Porn 2.0.

23 There is unfortunately no room in this paper to map the specifics of these websites in terms of ownership, location of servers (which determines jurisdiction), and data traffic (the derivative of the costs); as a consequence a political-economic perspective is largely absent. Given the colossal economic force that pornography is nowadays, a thorough study on the political economy is vital for understanding the dynamics of pornography as a massively sought-after commodity.

24 I have extensively studied yuvutu (and to a lesser extent its congeners) for five months (from December 2007 until May 2008). Between the 22nd of January and the 12th of March 2008 I studied almost all uploaded content in the 'heterosexual-amateur' section. This generally forms the corpus of this paper, but due to deleted content I have sought for similar videos outside this corpus when necessary.

25 Although the act of viewing at first would not appear to be a discursive act it has become one in Web 2.0, since sites automatically record every action of their visitors and in this case publish these actions (while other data is only used for business purposes). Every individual video has the current amount of views attached to it, thereby testifying popularity and consent (in contrast to shock websites where repeatedly watched videos often also indicate disgust).

As we have read earlier, Paasonen has formulated sensible objections to the conventional close reading of pornography, where the effect of affect is too often neglected. It is, however, vital to do close readings on yuvutu's pornography in order to understand the functioning of its aesthetics, how it puts sex into discourse. First of all the effect of affect is somewhat overstated by Paasonen in relation to close reading. It was semiotician Christian Metz who formulated an insightful analogy:

By breaking the toy one loses it, and that is the position of the semiotic discourse: it feeds on this loss, it puts in its place the hoped for advance of knowledge: it is an inconsolable discourse that consoles itself, that takes itself by the hand and goes to work. (80)

One could compare this to the consequence of close reading a horror or comedy film: when you start playing it in slow motion, pausing it, rewinding it, and playing it again, the text loses its initial functioning, it is not scary or funny anymore. This particular process of objectifying, or intersubjectifying, provides a deconstruction of the structure, the aesthetic matrix of a particular text, something that has been done too little. But if this all would prove to be impossible, Paasonen provides an alternative to reveal the way a text is encoded. Referring to Berlant and Warner, she wants researchers to be "open" and "vulnerable" towards a text, something that "goes against the logic of intimacy that aims to normalize sexuality as private, domestic and untouched by commercial sex." (53) She advocates "implicated analysis", which "does not withdraw to a position of removed distance or assumes the meanings of the texts as fixed." (55) I believe the simple consequence of close reading brings distance between the researcher and her or his object, but I acknowledge that there is no such thing as fixed meaning. In that sense the next chapter should be seen as a personal exploration of yuvutu. The connection between intimate truth and sexuality, especially when it comes to something that remains for a large part socially unaccepted such as pornography is something I have encountered when telling people about this article. They generally asked how this type of research could be justified. Initially I found it easier to (mis)use the feminist discourse of the suppression of women through pornography than to discuss my personal position. The reactions were twofold: either people acknowledged the relevance of my research after which I could elaborate on the topic or they (always men) would say: 'So you found yourself a way to watch porn all day!' And this is actually what I have been doing - and telling them so, once I felt more confident with the necessity of my research and grew accustomed to the discourse.

## 2. Case study

“Why not show the world your sexual prowess and upload a video now!” Thus yuvutu tries to motivate visitors to add their own homemade pornography on its age-confirmation and welcome-page, before one actually enters the website. Whether this ultimately results in pornography that “is real, not the simulacra you might be used to”, that is non-profit amateur pornography and not professional pornography, as student Krut-Landau claims, and is women friendly, as blogger dr. Menlo declares, will be investigated shortly.

But before these rather grotesque, at the very least unlikely claims will be compared to videos on yuvutu, an apparent detour is necessary to explore the aesthetic construction of pornography by looking at a short film that positions itself between the “simulacra” and the “real” (2.1) and thereby opens out the divide between ‘amateur’ and ‘pro’ and the debate on this on yuvutu - which also gives the opportunity to explore some key aspects of the website in relation to making meaning (2.1.1). This will be the start of an inquiry into what the metaphor Porn 2.0 actually eludes (to recall Marianne van den Boomen’s description) in the case of yuvutu. Paragraph 2.2 aims to lay bare the continuum of the larger discourse on sex in which the apparently quite dissimilar examples below reside, while identifying different categories and key concepts. Finally, in paragraph 2.3 an outline will be given of the most important findings of my close reading before relating these to the initial question of this thesis in the conclusion.

### 2.1 Representation versus real?

Mainstream pornography creates the illusion of continuity with the help of montage, as cinematographer Larry Clark shows in his short *DESTRICTED: IMPALED* (2006).<sup>26</sup> Clark is known for exploitative features such as his debut *KIDS* (1995) and *KEN PARK* (2002) and in *IMPALED* he continues to work with relatively young people in the same way. The film is presented as a documentary, but could easily be seen as a work of fiction. The plot is simple: young adult males come to Clark’s casting couch because they want to star in a porn movie, Clark interviews them and eventually chooses one of them; then professional porn actresses come to audition and the boy gets to pick his favourite, whom he then has sex with on camera. This last part is initially edited like a mainstream porn movie: one seamless flow of positions in which male pleasure is taken for granted and female pleasure is imagined. Everything seems to go so easy: the woman submits herself to the male desire and clearly acts like she enjoys it; her obvious acting is no problem as long as she performs it consistently so the illusion of continuity remains intact. But then Clark starts to show little cracks in the perfect world he just presented; more and more he starts to show what happens in between the different sexual positions. You see the performers prepare for the next position while Clark has switched to an aesthetic mode that resembles the familiar ‘behind the scenes’ images one can see of Hollywood productions. And if you think hardcore pornography is explicit, what is in between the shots is much more so. The actress has to prepare herself for the anal penetration that the boy desires but has never actually experienced, by inserting lubricant into her anus with a large hose-like device, called an enema. Clark also does not stop filming when the actress’ faeces start to leak on the boy’s penis, much to his disgust.

The boy’s desired pleasure, or better *jouissance*, what the boy until then only saw in ‘perfect’ representation, conflicts with the functioning of the human body.<sup>27</sup> Here Larry Clark makes a

<sup>26</sup> *DESTRICTED* is a collection of short films, each directed by a different filmmaker, which aims to explore the relations between art and sex and between art and pornography. The series premiered at the Cannes Film Festival in 2006.

<sup>27</sup> Alan Sheridan, writes of *jouissance* in his “Translator’s notes” to Jacques Lacan’s *Écrits: a Selection* that “[t]here is no adequate translation in English of this word.” (x) Sheridan explains that “[p]leasure obeys the law of homeo-

fundamental problem tangible: the perceived dichotomy between reality and representation. Pornography promises access to someone else's pleasure, while Krut-Landau dismisses the mainstream variant as simulacrum. Clark constructs an encounter of these apparently opposed categories: a boy meets a porn star, 'reality' meets 'representation', 'fact' meets 'fiction'. Yuvutu as a video sharing platform for amateurs does not merely profit from this divide, it exists because of it. This divide also lies at the heart of long-running debates about truth and media, and can be traced back to Plato's thesis that images deceive our senses and a long-lasting suspicion of rhetoric. The divide between representation and reality also forms the basis of modern media critique, as expressed by (among others) Baudrillard. The basic assumption is that with mediation, the process of constructing a representation of a physical entity that appeared before the camera (through editing, framing, etc.), pollutes reality. The implication is that there is an objective, empirical and knowable truth outside this process of mediation. Larry Clarke decided to show how the use of editing and framing (a close-up on faeces rather than ecstatic faces, or a wide shot that shows the crew and their equipment) contributes to the positioning of a pornographic text as truthful. The more immersive strategies of mainstream pornography or the 'transparent' aesthetics of 'reality pornography' are in a sense two paths towards the same destination. Yuvutu implicitly presents itself and is explicitly seen as a place where 'unspoiled' though hyper personal 'truth' can be found, but this naturally proves to be far easier said than done.

### 2.1.1 Shady divide

The anti-pornography movement could easily use Clark's movie to support their thesis that pornography is nothing more than the oppression of women by men, but that is just one of many possible readings. What is interesting is that in order to deconstruct pornography Clark had to make pornography that can still be watched as just pornography; in fact, it circulates as such on pornographic video sharing websites.<sup>28</sup> Furthermore this once again stresses Linda Williams' argument: pornography is often, in contrast to what many people would think, polysemic. Additionally the opposition of amateur versus professional rises again in a complex way, since the boy who says he admires the professional chooses the actress who presents herself as the utopian amateur – willing to do whatever he wants, casually acting as if it is just a hobby – while he dismisses the girls who say they leave the acting until the actual sex.<sup>29</sup>

This example shows the shady divide between non-profit amateurs and professionals that is a prominent issue on yuvutu. The website is divided first and foremost along the lines of this opposition, automatically opening with the amateur section as the default option. But when studying the content in both categories the divide is not that clear. One presumes that professionals are the people with what is currently seen as the perfect body: no pot bellies, no small penises, no pubic hair, tanned, only performing those positions that make the penetration and the female shape explicitly visible. Amateurs, on the other hand, are people who 'just have sex'. But again, as shown by Williams, such a thing as 'just sex', the normal or natural way, does not exist. It is possible that people who consume pornography, which is not an exclusively male activity, have sex in a way that is similar to mainstream pornographic

stasis that Freud evokes in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, whereby through discharge, the psyche seeks the lowest possible level of tension. 'Jouissance' transgresses this law and, in that respect, it is beyond the pleasure principle." (x) Similarly Bruce Fink, author of *The Lacanian Subject*, feels obliged to define jouissance in his preface: "a pleasure that is excessive, leading to a sense of being overwhelmed or disgusted, yet simultaneously providing a source of fascination." (xii)

28 This supports Jean Baudrillard's thesis that production and destruction have become interchangeable (1981, 59).

29 It seems no coincidence that the women are the ones that speak about their personal struggles and sometimes about their unpleasant sexual encounters.

performances; as the boy in *IMPALED* says: "I was raised on porn."

Moreover, the movies posted on yuvutu show obvious performances, amongst others reflected in the performers' explicit consciousness of the camera, and apparently 'objective' observations, presented as if the intercourse is filmed without the couple, only concentrating on each other, realizing it or seeming to care about it, form a minority of yuvutu's content. More often though there is a mix of these aesthetic and performative modes, and other factors distinguish between amateur and professional movies.<sup>30</sup> The most important feature by which one can distinguish the two categories is editing: very few yuvutu movies made by amateurs contain extensive editing; usually they are either an uninterrupted fragment or an integral report of the sexual activity. The second most telling factor is production value: lighting, high-resolution video (which not only implies a more professional camera, but also a server at one's disposal in order to upload big files) and set dressing. Sometimes it becomes clear that it is a professional production when it is filmed (smoothly) by a third (or fourth) person who does not participate in the sex. In addition to this, videos are often categorized as 'pro' when seemingly amateur content is uploaded by a person that did not have anything to do with the production of the content, even though of course he could easily claim otherwise. In general one could ascertain professional pornographers are skilled in adopting aesthetic modes employed by non-profit amateurs, be it the use of webcams, mimicking the spontaneity, or casting 'ordinary-looking' actors. In this sense there is a parallel with documentary film genre *direct cinema* that with its fly-on-the-wall filming has a connotation of being close to reality, but also became an aesthetic mode used frequently in fiction films.

An example of this faintly divide is the movie *GIVING A STRANGER A HEADJOB IN RETURN FOR A BIG LOAD OF CUM OVER HER FACE*, originally posted as 'pro' by WendyMast, a name that appears to be that of a woman. However, similar to the author of the title (a title that is notably less women friendly than the majority of the amateur videos), the camera is operated by a man. The aesthetics are the same as 'amateur' content (handheld, medium resolution, without editing), but from the fact that the video is no longer available (after being watched over a hundred thousand times) one could deduct that the rightful claimant (a professional producer) made yuvutu remove the video.<sup>31</sup> In case of doubt one can navigate to the page of the uploader, in this case resulting in videos with different performers each time.

The result of this ambiguity is that whether a movie is or is not actually an amateur movie, which as said before is supposed to be the norm at yuvutu, is debated in the comments beneath the posted movies. For instance, in reaction to the movie *AFTERPARTY FUCKS SEXYMF*, posted by Afterparty, commenter Bilko98 refers to the extensive editing and writes: "Surely this should be in the 'professional' category?" Implicitly, this seems to be a disqualification; the norm is that one should encounter what the label says it is, namely amateur pornography, but generally one is dependent on the honesty of fellow users. Another example of this are the reactions on the video *SEXY SQUIRTING WIFE WITH BIG DILDO* posted by Gotte, presumably a man from Sweden. The video contains a prominent house soundtrack, evoking reactions such as that by Mats1961:

I agree with most other posters! Partymusic is for parties!!! When I watch porn, I want to hear the people involved and NOT a stereo that blows my walls onto the street... After all - we DO have other

<sup>30</sup> I see the majority of people having sex as performers, regardless whether they 'act' to be or are less conscious of the camera. Movies in which a couple or single person seems absolutely unaware of the camera (often the woman) are rare on yuvutu.com. I see the subgenre of 'caught on tape' more as a genre invented by the industry, although of course amateurs act upon this convention.

<sup>31</sup> This is a common practice on pornographic video sharing websites. On Xtube, for instance, the message "We're sorry, the video you've requested is unavailable" pops-up numerous times, especially in the case of professional content. The sites more closely affiliated with the industry do not infringe copyrights and subsequently are not forced to remove content. At yuvutu "The video you requested does not exist" pops-up, usually because the uploader removed the video.

channels to promote music, don't we?

And indeed, very few movies contain a prominent soundtrack. Apparently there is a common taste that spreads largely tacitly, only to be uttered occasionally. This shows an important source of information outside the actual moving images: the comments, the description written by the one who posted the film and the title that this person has given the movie. To start with what the 'uploader' writes: it is often used as context for the people viewing the movies. Firstly, it tells who is who in the video: whether the people want to be seen as husband and wife, boyfriend and girlfriend or just friends, or who the person that is joining them is. Apart from this practical information it tells us what the preferred reading is, how it is encoded. At the same time the comments give hints to how the text is decoded.<sup>32</sup> Power in a Foucauldian sense here lies in the ability to attribute meaning to a text, something that is negotiated between the commenters amongst each other and between them and the 'uploader'. The second (and in the context of pornography more familiar) functioning of power lies within the text itself: what we actually get to see. Evidently these are two parts of the same discursive construction, one that within pornography has never been as explicit and welcome as on yuvutu. As a rule couples end their movies with a request for comments, this is put into words by homie\_luver\_fren:

[R]egardless of whether not you find the women attractive or the video to your liking or the selection of music i choose...either way thanks for stopping by :o) it takes a positive and a negative to generate light....SO LET ME SHINE!!!!

This feedback is apparently a major motivation for people to upload their movies; they get aroused by the comments. The French couple amateuranal, who posted the movie *EVEN YOURS REACTIONS ! PLEASE COMMENTS ALL !*, writes: "Thanks to these messages! more there will be incentives, there will be more videos!"

This feature of yuvutu embodies the transgression of the voyeur-exhibitionist dichotomy. Looking at other media may help formulating and contextualizing this transgression. In the case of cinema, the formulation of the relation between the voyeur and the exhibitionist of Christian Metz is well-known:

the actor was present when the spectator was not (= shooting), and the spectator is present when the actor is no longer (= projection): a failure to meet of the voyeur and the exhibitionist whose approaches no longer coincide (they have 'missed' one another). The cinema's voyeurism must (of necessity) do without any clear mark of consent on the part of the object. (63)

In cinema this of course also works the other way around: the object, the exhibitionist remains devoid of feedback from the voyeur. This leads Chiel Kattenbelt to state that the voyeur, who does not want to be seen and at most wants to experience the danger of getting caught, is best off with film and that the exhibitionist is best off with theatre. (99) Traditionally pornography could be seen as the quintessence of this divide, so argues Kattenbelt. Pornography's spectator was watching forbidden fruits; something that was unambiguously socially unaccepted, and if we recall the words of Foucault, quoted in the introduction of this thesis: sexual acts were confined to a private space. The pornographic performer could not meet its spectator, aside from that (professional) the performer probably would render this

<sup>32</sup> To a lesser extent the act of tagging functions in the same way. Because tagging is an anonymous practice – unless you are a member – it functions as collective decoding.

undesirable. Now, the amateur pornographer and the spectator have on yuvutu the opportunity to virtually meet each other, which is a convenient middle ground, because while they remain anonymous to some degree, they stop being clear cut voyeurs or exhibitionists, also because these roles can interchange.

## 2.2 Discerned and yet connected

What these encounters entail and how they could be understood is central to this paragraph, now that we mapped some basic principles of yuvutu. The aim is multiple: to (roughly) categorize the movies on yuvutu and identify important factors, while seeking both their mutuality as their ties to a larger discourse that surpasses pornography's relative isolation because of its explicitness. Through inserting slices of mainstream popular I will not only try to understand this particular case and larger phenomena, but also illustrate the nuanced differences between stereotypical beliefs and actual yuvutu videos and comments.

### 2.2.1 Continuity

Julie: You fucked me four times the other night. David, you've been inside me.

David: Julie...

Julie: I've swallowed your cum. That means something.

David: Slow down, huh!

Julie: Four times, it means something David.<sup>33</sup>

In *VANILLA SKY* everything goes wrong when Julie (Cameron Diaz) finds out that main character David (Tom Cruise) called her his "fuck buddy". Julie tries to kill David and herself by driving her car off an overpass at high speed. Sex is simultaneously perceived as a pleasure commodity and as what ideally is a non-commodity: love. It seems no coincidence that the man only 'reads' the pleasure meaning and the woman adds a dimension of love. This is also made clear by how Julie describes their sexual behaviour: she is the one that made a sacrifice, an emotional deed that makes David indebted to her, but the harsh thing is that David saw it as no more than pleasure. Another example of the popular discourse on sex, from the HBO hit series *ENTOURAGE*, shows a debate on the dichotomy between love and pleasure from an exclusively male perspective:

Eric: I'm not searching for a girl just to fuck her.

Johnny Drama: Why not?

Eric: Cause it is mean!

Johnny Drama: No, no, no, no. Mean is when I made Jess Mancini ride her bike home after I ass-fucked her.

[high fives are exchanged while laughing]<sup>34</sup>

Both somewhat stereotypical examples testify of men's perceived ability to have sex without emotional

33 Dialogue from *VANILLA SKY* (2001), remake of *ABRE LOS OJOS* (1997) written by Alejandro Amenábar and Mateo Gil, screenplay and directed by Cameron Crowe.

34 *ENTOURAGE* is created by Doug Ellin and started to run in 2004. The dialogue comes from the episode 44, season 4, called *The Day Fuckers*, first aired in July 2007, written by Rob Weiss and directed by Mark Mylod.

commitment. *ENTOURAGE* is actually entirely about that: the show revolves around fictional Hollywood star Vincent Chase and his entourage, and their main goal is to live in luxury and have as much sex with as little emotional commitment as possible. Both examples, belonging to the most explicit utterances in this discourse, emphasize sexual acts that generate more pleasure for men than for women. If these examples prove anything, it is that pornography does not stand outside the popular discourse on sex. The only difference is that within pornography in general and on yuvutu there is less attention for arguments that evolve around love.<sup>35</sup>

These dialogues can be compared with the ‘dialogue’ between OneLessFinger who ‘speaks’ his mind by posting a movie called *ME FUCKING MY PRETTY HOT FRIEND* in which a woman facilitates him, resulting in him covering her with sperm and the disapproval of commenters who call his behaviour egocentric and claiming that he should return the favour.<sup>36</sup> Also the movie *POV BLOWJOB* (figure 1) posted by Ohio\_Couple illustrates that pornography and sex are intermingled in one discourse: both time and again contain speculation on the pleasure of the other. The fact that the sexual act is explicitly mediated makes it pornographic, makes it into the visual counterpart of the verbal utterances such as those in *VANILLA SKY* and *ENTOURAGE*. In *POV BLOWJOB* a man is filming while sitting on the bed, a woman is on her knees while she pushes his penis with considerable force as far as possible into her throat. Although the name ‘Ohio\_Couple’ suggests they post it together, the descriptions of their videos are always



I. Capture from *POV BLOWJOB* (2008)

formulated from the point of view of the man. It is the man who mediates his sexual experiences and celebrates the submissive nature of his wife: “My wife is a hungry milf that just can’t get enough. Here is yet another blowjob vid of her showing her expertise.” During the video he shows that he is conscious of how power functions in their sexual relationship, when he says: “I’ll bet I’m having more fun than you are.” But she faintly denies and tries to smile; the movie ends with the woman – the obedient wife, whose goal is to please her man – swallowing the man’s sperm.

The term ‘milf’, an abbreviation of ‘Mom I’d like to fuck’, closely affiliated to the suburban classification ‘soccer mom’, sadly corners a woman as nothing more than the mother who is experienced in pleasing men and is always horny. The term was introduced to a large audience in 1999 in the highly popular movie *AMERICAN PIE* and was probably coined (at least in a pornographic context) by the website M.I.L.F.hunter (<http://www.milfhunter.com>), where mature women, presented as mothers, have

35 Utterances in the popular discourse have (explicit) language as their only resort when it comes to hardcore sex, since explicit images will rate them away from the big audience. Especially in the United States there are strict norms as to what can and cannot be shown, originating in a societal consensus and enforced by ratings by the MPAA for film and through the TV parental guidelines system for television, which is applied by the broadcast and cable networks on their programming (though cable networks officially endure less restrictions and are as a rule more explicit).

36 The video was only available on yuvutu for a couple of months but in the meantime it appeared again on other pornographic video sharing websites, likely without the authors consent.

sex with younger partners and by now has become a subgenre of the pornographic reality genre (as discussed in the previous chapter). The fact that the term has found its way into mainstream popular culture<sup>37</sup> not only shows how widespread pornography is, but also again stresses that there is a common discourse, confirming Linda Williams' concept of on/scenity.

So far (keeping in mind mainstream professional pornography) it appears as if there is nothing new under the sun: female agency seems absent. But a closer look shows that there are a few major differences. As said before, the pornographic text has opened up by creating an interaction between viewers and producers, producers who turn into viewers as well, often reacting to other movies. Of course a feedback loop has always existed; a pornographic mainstream text from lets say the 1980s was in no way oblivious to what its audience made of it. The big chance, however, is that where this feedback loop was previously driven by the economics of a male audience and operated opaquely, it is now highly transparent. In a certain sense it is even part of the text and the feedback contains explicit ethical arguments, as shown in the case of *OneLessFinger*, to whom male commenters point out the principle of reciprocity. Furthermore, recalling the words of Raphael Krut-Landau ("The new pornographer is the same kind of normal human being as the viewer") one can state that on yuvutu people certainly look more like your average neighbour than the average porn star does. Not only because of lower production values (the absence of professional lighting, extensive make up, and exotic location) but also simply on a physical level: people actually have wrinkles, bellies, pale faces, modest sized breasts and penises. Moreover, signs of everyday life seep through. This latter aspect is a key feature of the movies that use a fixed camera position (as opposed to the handheld aesthetics, more on both later on).

### 2.2.2 Home is where...

Usually these movies contain a relatively large distance between camera and subject(s) and as a result there is an (possibly unintentional) accent on space. Figure 2 and 3 show how the home and in particular the living room become a sexual arena, and temporally loses its original function. The couch, from which one would usually watch television, look into the world, becomes the stage for a sexual performance. Moreover, the home, for a long time perceived predominantly as a shelter for the nuclear family, a private space, a space run by the wife, is made public through the mediation of sexual activities. In this sense this is a prolongation of a long-running trend of another medium: television.

'Home' has from very early on been a central concept of television and the dissolve of the distinction between the public and domestic is one of its central dynamics (see for instance sitcoms or lifestyle television); it is the paradox of the home as a safe haven where you simultaneously let much that happens outside *into* the home. On yuvutu the home has now become a place where one not only consumes media safely, but also where one produces sexual media text securely, texts that, as Paasonen reminded us when referring to Foucault, are thought to reveal our most intimate truth.

The everyday of the household inevitably seeps through into the videos: attention is also drawn

<sup>37</sup> A selection of the evidence that supports this claim: characters in the earlier quoted popular show *ENTOURAGE* use the word frequently; Dutch daily newspaper *DAG* featured an article in November 2007 with the title "How do I hit on a Milf?" ("Hoe versier ik een Milf?"); Wikipedia's Wiktionary and the Urban Dictionary (<http://www.urban-dictionary.com>) have 'milf' entries; NBC's comedy series *30 ROCK* aired an episode called "MILF Island" in April 2008, both a reality television spoof and a comment on the popularity of the word 'milf'; Dutch website *Geenstijl*, by far the most popular and well-known weblog in The Netherlands, considers it to be part of their lexicon (Fleischbaum); on 16 May 2008 'milf' gave over 20.000 hits on YouTube and over 50 million on Google; the movie on YouTube with most view counts that word 'milf' generates is an intro of a pornographic 'milf' movie, it is watched close to 4 million times (*VERY SEXY STEPMOM DOING HER SON*); *The Village Voice* called it a "popular porn term" when discussing it at length in May 2006 (Kramer Bussel).

to the picture on the wall or to the flip-flop in the right corner (fig 3); both are traces of a life outside this mediation of sexual activity, and contrast with the non-places where mainstream pornography videos are often set. Surely this plays a role in the claims made about Porn 2.0, the living room denotes realness. In the comments beneath *MORE FUN*, Anonymous asks: "Did I see her watching the television in the beginning?" The uploader, Jollyroger77414, responds:

Actually she was looking at the screen where the image was from this footage while it was being filmed. I usually always have it where you can see what's being filmed. The TV is at the other end of the place. Anyhow hope you enjoyed

Perhaps Anonymous had a recently popular video in mind, appearing on nearly every video sharing website, wherein a girl looks bored and absent while having sex with a man.<sup>38</sup> In any case he shows awareness for the (perhaps already previous) dominant domestic medium, one that can bring your mind to other places. It further shows how very much aware people are when they are filming even when it is filmed in this apparently observatory way. The aura of realness does not refrain people from lighting their 'set', although perhaps in a more utilitarian way. In figure 2 the light from the window is compensated by turning on the shaded lamp and in figure 3 the shaded lamp in front the camera is switched off, while the light behind the camera is turned on.<sup>39</sup> The fact that the staging, the accurate recording of sexual acts, is consumed live, as the comment above shows and can be encountered in numerous films on yuvutu, shows that couples not merely record themselves so that other people can see them. They like to see themselves, which shows how complex the pleasure is that people take from this homemade pornography: it is a hypermedial experience. Take for instance the movie *WATCHING A PORNO FILM* uploaded by the Italian dildo25, wherein his wife lies on the couch and watches mainstream porno on television while masturbating (figure 4 and 5). Here someone who presents himself as her husband films the woman handheld. He not only found a creative way to conceal his wife's face, but he also emphasizes how (he at least imagines) she enjoys watching a porn movie by locking her vision into the screen. So here you have a situation where 1) she is enjoying watching pornography, 2) her husband enjoys filming her while she is watching pornography, 3) the yuvutu audience enjoys all of these pleasures and 4) the couple enjoys that the audience is enjoying them. This shows how much watching



2. Capture from *MORE FUN*  
(2008)



3. Capture from *FUCKING A BRAZILLIAN BITCH* (2008)

38 On YouPorn the video is called *MOST BORED GIRL EVER*, on Pornhub *BORED GIRL FUCKED*. Closer inspection shows that she is probably watching television as a remote control, faint television-noise and her gaze indicate.

39 Of course these couples could use nightvision, which has become one of the basic feature of your average digital camera, but on yuvutu this is very uncommon.

and making pornography are intertwined.

As said, these videos still have a narrative, which is just equally important as random. MORE FUN (fig 2) and FUCKING A BRAZILLIAN BITCH (fig 3) could bear each other's title, though this would, obviously, significantly alter the preferred reading. MORE FUN, with the description "Me and her again", has notably the connotation of realness: it is a unedited slice of sex, uploaded by the man. Bellomar tries (partly in vain) to construct a narrative which is reflected in the somewhat degrading title FUCKING A BRAZILLIAN BITCH. Bellomar writes: "I fucked this brazilian girl for 5 years or more...I am still do as her boyfriend does not pleasure her". Bellomar wants to give the impression that there is a risk of them being caught, that they are not only having sex in secret, but that he also dares to tape it and upload it to yuvutu. How does the painting fit in with this narrative, does it reveal anything about Bellomar or about the 'Brazilian bitch'? In general one could say that this living room has a 'feminine' touch in terms of decoration and in all the movies uploaded by Bellomar apparently the same woman appears, although he claims he has different partners. So one can conclude that – also bearing in mind that movies on yuvutu frequently contain role-playing – it could just as easily be the living room of Mr. and Mrs. Bellomar. Bellomar later reposted this movie describing it as "did everything possible with this MILF", leading to the comment "Isn't this the same dude who supposedly is fucking the chick from Sao Paulo???" Bellomar responded by changing it back to the Brazilian narrative, which not only shows narrative as being an invention, it is also a negotiation, a discursive construction. So similar videos can be attributed very different meanings ending up portraying equality or the same old masculine domination. Either representing the home as non-gender-specific, and in that sense women-friendly, or as a place of patriarchal power. The fact that Bellomar calls his movie FUCKING A BRAZILLIAN BITCH, implicates that he considers himself the only party with agency: he is fucking this exotic "bitch", it is not what they do together but what he is doing to her. In the case of Ohio\_Couple leisure for the man, and work for the woman ("inferior' labour of course, when compared to the man's job), as if time stood still. WATCHING A PORNO FILM in contrast, centers the woman's jouissance, partly reflected in the name that presumably the husband chose, dildo25, a device that will be discussed later on.



4. Capture from WATCHING A PORNO FILM (2008)



5. Capture from WATCHING A PORNO FILM (2008)

Bellomar profits from the invisibility of the faces, it gives him the opportunity to alter the narrative, and like dildo25 the face from the man from Ohio\_Couple is never visible. In this way the only thing that is made public are their bodies and more importantly the faces of their wives. In this respect at least the men do not give up much of their privacy and even if people decide to show their

face, they hardly give away more information: Ohio is as specific as geographical locations get (usually refrained to country), names are kept secret, and emotions are largely absent. Yuvutu seems to be a platform to present one's libido, sexual prowess, and (to a lesser extent) body in whichever context one prefers. Quite dualistically the mind is separated from the body, often reflected in the invisibility of the faces. And when faces are visible it is either to display arousal or to consume sperm, which exposes the predominantly male perspective of yuvutu. The most popular videos on the website are those where the woman is filmed by the man either through a point-of-view shot or the positioning of the camera and the sexual positions performed, in order for the male visitor to imagine himself having sex with the woman in question. In this respect yuvutu does not differ much from what mainstream pornography offers.

### 2.2.3 Money shot

With the facial, the ejaculation on the partner's face, yuvutu's amateur pornography adopts what is seen as the most degrading feature of professional pornography. Heather Butler describes this practice, in her article in *Williams' Porn Studies*:

Semen becomes more than glorified male piss; it becomes an alpha-hydroxy infused substance that replenishes, nourishes, soothes, healing dry, wrinkled female skin. And female protagonists in heterosexual pornography (...) turn, for the most part into cum-catchers, and there is little attempt to represent female pleasure in any form other than a smiling or ecstatic face dripping with semen. (185)

Mark Dery, in his essay in the *C'Lick Me Reader*, calls it "abject", when speaking of the multiple-facial, called 'bukake'. (140) So this is where anti-pornography feminist and most contemporary scholars agree: a 'facial' is a degrading act. On yuvutu facials and cum shots (a synonym for the 'money shot'<sup>40</sup>, when the man visibly ejaculates on the female, but not necessarily her face) are highly popular, sometimes resembling the worst pornography has to offer; not only the movies, but also the comments exemplify this. In reaction to CUMPRINCESS BLINDFOLDED BLOWJOB AND CUM TONGUE playy123 writes: "Nothing better than a blindfolded slut sucking and getting a cum bath...You know how to treat a slut and she knows how to take it..." But as shown before, other, more moderate voices, are just as easily presented, Macko99 shows to be aware of the 'offer' the woman has to make when he writes: "Some girls don't really enjoy facials but it's obvious that your girl loves them! Lucky you!"<sup>41</sup>

Recalling the words of Zabet Patterson (quoted in paragraph 1.2.5) the popularity of the cum shot could to a certain extent be understood as part of the "endless slippage of desire in which part of the pleasure derives from habitual repetition and habitual deferral." (110) In contrast to what Patterson writes, this endless slippage of deferral cannot go on forever, it has to end somewhere. If we link this up with the "sense of shared space and a collapse of disavowal of distance" that on the same time physically is very much alive, the cum shot could be not only an announcement of the end, but also a opportunity for consumer and desired person to virtually meet each other. This would make consuming pornography a teleological pastime which can end in imagining to ejaculate on the desired woman, which is, as Williams explained in *Hard Core*, a result of the frenzy of the visible; to ejaculate in a woman's vagina leaves too little empiric proof. On yuvutu men post movies of them literally ejaculating on these moving

40 'Shot' as a metaphor represents both 'the recorded image' and the 'act of shooting', therefore, it connotes (trying) scoring a goal or point and thus success, and plausibly for the anti-pornography stance it even connotes shooting with a gun and subsequently killing or wounding a person; in any case it seems to be about masculinity. 'Money' derives from the commercial pornography, where the audience was offered value for money.

41 Bearing in mind the dialogue from VANILLA SKY, Julie may also have hinted that she even sacrificed her dignity for David.

images, sometimes on a previously posted movie, more often on mainstream porn. The empiric function of ejaculating semen on a sexual partner is expressed by a commenter who writes: “your wife is hot but your movies end before anything happens, we just have to take your word that you came in her mouth.”

In his article on the mainstreaming of the money shot Greg Tuck argues that masculinity,

especially normative heterosexual ideology’s notion of masculinity (...) could be broadly described in economic terms; that is, to offer a conception of masculinity as a quality based on quantity (...) This effectively downgrades the notion of there being a masculine ontology, an open and non-excluding experience of being masculine, in favour of masculinity as an epistemological category, something known, excluding and countable. (263)

Tuck sees the money shot in this light, but neglects the fact that women can ejaculate as well and that men can enjoy being ejaculated on, as for instance can be seen in *GUSHING OVER MY BOYFRIENDS FACE*, posted by niff (evoking male reactions like: “If you ever want another face to gush on let me know, that’s very sexy!”). Tuck is not the only one perceiving the money shot as an exclusively male activity, he refers to Linda Williams’ claim that it “represents the climax of a heterosexual act in entirely phallic terms” (1989, 119). Tuck not only criticises Williams for aligning ejaculation with orgasm, for the real male orgasm remains as invisible and therefore as unknowable as the female orgasm, he also refutes Williams’ implication that ejaculation equals phallic pleasure, because if this were the case, male masturbatory practice would be a popular genre in heterosexual pornography. (271) This is confirmed by relative unpopularity of the category ‘cock shots’ on yuvutu, which is predominantly homosexual orientated, although there are also heterosexual men posting videos of them masturbating, on which occasionally women react. The fact that this is kept outside the ‘straight’ category shows that ‘straight’ on yuvutu means ‘male heterosexual’ and that the most important thing is that the desired party (women) generates the *jouissance*.<sup>42</sup> This, as will be discussed in the next paragraph, can also be a female solo performance.

The cum shot then functions as an indicator of the degree of *jouissance* experienced in the build-up. And in the case of the male cum shot: when the woman approves of being ejaculated on her body, on her face and in her mouth she shows that she gets aroused by doing something that does not sexually stimulate her. Not only emphasizing her submissiveness but also opening a window for the party that is separated from her because of a physical distance: the spectator is a *jouissance*-seeker, not giver.

#### 2.2.4 Female solo performance

Sally: It is just that all men are sure it never happened to them and most women, one time or another, have done it. So you do the math.

Harry: You don’t think that I can tell the difference?

Sally: No.

Harry: Get out of here.<sup>43</sup>

A majority of men, together with a minority of women, do not solely appreciate sexual interaction; the female solo performance is a hugely popular category on yuvutu. Where mainstream pornography and popular culture in general take advantage of the invisible and therefore unknowable female orgasm by credibly staging it, as in the famous example cited above, yuvutu contains a lot of movies where

<sup>42</sup> ‘Straight’, with its connotation of honesty and logic, is a metaphor of which its obvious discursive power, presenting heterosexuality as the norm, in general should not be underestimated.

<sup>43</sup> Dialogue from *WHEN HARRY MET SALLY* (1989), written by Nora Ephron and directed by Rob Reiner.

the perceived authenticity of female pleasure is the indicator of popularity. Performance is still present (often the woman shows to be very much aware of the presence of the camera), but pleasure is portrayed in a physically modest way; women scream rarely and if they do, they do not start screaming right away. The women on yuvutu are often lying on their bed in front of a fixed camera, regularly a webcam (recognizable by its generally low resolution), or sometimes in front of the person holding the camera (as seen in *WATCHING A PORNO FILM*, fig 4), while they masturbate, often with the help of dildo's and vibrators. In contrast to the bulk of movies posted on yuvutu, these movies are in their majority not filmed by men.

In the previous paragraph where we established that Greg Tuck neglects that women can ejaculate, here it is striking that it is overlooked that they can penetrate as well. Heather Butler addresses the issue of the dildo as a phallic object in relation to lesbian pornography, stating that

the dildo functions as a pleasure-giver, not a pleasure-seeker. Unlike its "male counterpart," the dildo does not ejaculate, does not lose its erection, can come in most any size, color and even shape and, *most important*, the dildo is detachable. (183)

She argues that the dildo is not phallic since it is disconnected from the male body, and that it is therefore "dependable, adjustable and controllable". (184) This forces us to reconsider the negative judgement that Tuck formulated when addressing the epistemological nature of masculinity: his problem is that it makes masculinity exclusive. However, if it actually functions as inclusive in the case of the dildo, than masculinity erodes because it is something one can obtain rather than an ontological matter that excludes women from this kind of agency. Therefore dildo's and vibrators used for this should be understood as McLuhanian media, as extensions of the body; they represent the ability to penetrate, women's physical independence of men. This also sheds new light on the practice of women penetrating men, which will be discussed in the next paragraph; first we will turn to women penetrating themselves.



**6. Capture from SQUIRTY WET AND LOVING IT (2007)**

Let us take a look at some examples. Take for instance the movie *GODAGE VAGINALE*, uploaded by sexylaura, which consists of a single shot which lasts seventeen seconds, in which a woman penetrates herself with a stylised dildo (apart from the general shape, there is no detailed physical resemblance to a penis). The uploader choses to distribute a fragment of a private moment, showing her agency through her control over every aspect of her mediation, including the penetration herself. Another example is the 11 minutes and 3 seconds long single-shot movie *SQUIRTY WET AND LOVING IT* (fig 6) posted by the oddly named nothatsmeinyourarse. The description which accompanies this video says "Apologies for the re-post of this, i accidentally deleted it this morning while reading my comments, sorry guys". The author hereby refers to how the act of posting is not the final objective, but a means to interact, to generate feedback, something that also came up in previous examples. Similar to *GODAGE VAGINALE*, there is only a close-up of the vagina and thighs, in this case quite blurry, which most likely is due to the use of a webcam. Hence a communication device that usually mediates faces (an image that is part of an identity) from one private location to the other in support of the spoken word, now mediates a woman's genitalia

that she penetrates with a pink dildo, generating jouissance represented not only by her moaning (reminding the viewer that there is an invisible head attached to this body) but also by her ejaculating and trembling body. She mediates a willingness to share her pleasure with not one decoder, but with tens of thousands, performing in the sense that she deliberately makes it as visible as possible, not only using her other hand but more importantly by the fact that she has no pubic hair. Hereby she shapes her body after her desire to mediate it, underwriting Linda Williams's thesis of the 'Frenzy of the Visible'.

On another note: the issue of pubic hair, or actually the absence of it, is another sign of the definitive farewell from the Victorian age, moving the genitals outside the realm of the fertile and utilitarian. The aesthetisation of the genitals could be compared with the fact that it is customary for most men to shave their facial hair, making a beard a conscious decision as well. yuvutu is one of the first sources that show how widespread this trend is; almost everyone has shaped his or her pubic hair in one way or another, apparently regardless of nationality. It is likely that this trend originated in mainstream pornography, driven by a need for visibility (not only in pubic hair, but also in features such as sex positions), as well as with explicit magazines such as *Playboy* and *Hustler* who contributed by distributing this trend outside the (explicit) pornographic (moving) image.

#### 2.2.5 Division of labour

Bobbi Sanfillipo: Why the big secret?

Corrado 'Junior' Soprano: About what?

Bobbi Sanfillipo: Oral sex. What's so terrible about pleasing a woman?

Corrado 'Junior' Soprano: You always have to talk about everything.

Bobbi Sanfillipo: Well, I wanna know why.

Corrado 'Junior' Soprano: It's complicated.

Bobbi Sanfillipo: Yeah, but why?

Corrado 'Junior' Soprano: Why? Because they think if you suck pussy you'll suck anything.

Bobbi Sanfillipo: Oh, you're kidding.

Corrado 'Junior' Soprano: It's a sign of weakness and possibly a sign that you're a finook [homosexual, AB].

Bobbi Sanfillipo: [chuckles] A fag? That's ridiculous. How would the two even translate?

Corrado 'Junior' Soprano: What are ya gonna do? I mean, I don't make the rules.<sup>44</sup>

This seemingly ludicrous dialogue comes from the acclaimed HBO drama series *THE SOPRANOS*, which is famous for exposing masculinity. Focusing on a mafia clan of ethnic American Italians in New Jersey, men are portrayed as those who perceive themselves as the providers and their women as guardians of the family life represented by the household. Men should be active, work hard and women should be caring, passive when it comes to earning money. It is within this context that sexual activity is framed as an activity where masculinity is celebrated, which means that sex scenes generally end with the male orgasm, and especially with the alpha-male character Tony Soprano. Although less theatrically, the larger part of videos on yuvutu are no different from this sketch. It is remarkable how little movies contain men performing cunnilingus.

It is not only the inability of focusing solely on giving pleasure while not receiving any direct physical stimulation that is at play here. The larger issue here is the refusal of taking a vulnerable position associated with the docile role women are assigned in this prejudiced casting. There is, however, a glimmer of hope on yuvutu, in the category of which *MY BF'S HORNY ASS* is exemplary (fig 7), wherein

<sup>44</sup> Dialogue from *THE SOPRANOS*, episode 9, season 1, first aired in March 1999 and directed by Andy Wolk.

the woman penetrates the man anally with a strap-on dildo, which is called pegging. In the video is a role reversal of stereotypical heterosexual pornographic texts: instead of the woman being called 'bitch', slapped on the ass and penetrated aggressively, it is the woman with the agency and the man who undergoes this willingly, lifting up his buttocks in order to receive. It seems no coincidence that the title is formulated from the woman's point of view; the agency is hers. Later on in the video the erect penis of



7. Capture from MY BF'S  
HORNY ASS (2007)

the man becomes visible and so does his muscled torso when they slightly reposition, but on this capture the 'penetrated' body is not even that easily recognized as that of a man. Here the epistemological nature, the cultural construction of masculinity and femininity becomes prevalent – partly enabled by the strap-on dildo. The movie contributes to the abolishment of the perception of the male anus as a homosexual sexual-organ, because these kinds of videos are highly popular, though not without debate. In contrast to most other uploaders, the uploaders of this movie, kinkyhotcouple, have not actively regulated the comments on their movie, which results in a debate between homophobic commenters and more open-minded ones. Mostly anonymous comments reject what they see: "Totally gay. Post where the gays post" or "a ha ha ha ha ha... please stop... this belongs on AFV [American Funniest Home Videos, AB]... did she call him a bitch? Say it isn't so... ha ha ha ha ha". Others approve, such as Theatena: "You LUCKY woman!! I have ALWAYS wanted to do that to my bf, but he won't let me any where near his cute little ass", or Malloves69, who also gives some advice:

love it ..once you have him opened up for you try fisting him next time ..even better i think ..once my lady fists me that feeling is amazing once she slides in me ..and yes enemas [as discussed in paragraph 2.1] are a must ..have fun ..every woman should have a turn with their mens asses ..bet the divorce rate would be lower ..great way to submit to a woman

Another anonymous comment attacks the adverse comments: "why do these haters watch these videos if they dislike them so much? They must be secretly gay." In October 2006 a similar video of a Dutch football player appeared on the web, which led to homophobic chants in the football stadiums. Clearly a football player, as an athlete the epitome of heterosexual masculinity, could not willingly undergo such acts without being maligned. The player gave out a statement wherein he said he felt sorry for his parents and was ashamed. ("ADO houdt keeper in de luwte.") On yuvutu in reaction to another heavily debated movie posted by kinkyhotcouple (STRAPON FUN) ignition wrote:

I think the guys who are quick to brand you gay are trying to avert people attention from their own tendencies. Over here in the UK all the girl mags suggest fingering a male's bum to hit the prostate. Most modern sex guides point it out. Most adult novelty sites sell products to support its discovery, and guess what, there are more nerve endings there than a cock or clit. Interesting eh.

This once again shows the scope of the discursive construction of pornography and even with this practice – by many people perceived as obscene. yuvutu functions within this debate as a platform where people get the opportunity to show their sexuality explicitly, reaching an audience of opponents and in majority supporters.

### 2.3 A long story short

I started this chapter ruminating on how both professional and non-profit amateur pornography relate to the concept of truth. One could say that mainstream professional pornography generally applies transparent immediacy (immersive, erasing all traces of (re)mediation), while yuvutu uses the strategy of hypermediacy (emphasizing its mediality, the fact that amateurs filmed themselves and its explicit combination of audiovisual and written texts) and in this way implicitly presents itself and is explicitly seen as a place where ‘unspoiled’ though hyper personal ‘truth’ can be found. However, in this chapter we also time and again showed how much these different kinds of pornography are connected, since professional pornography functions as point of reference (categorization, terminology and aesthetics). Furthermore, both professional and amateur pornography are part of the same overarching discourse of sex.

One feature in which yuvutu particularly differs from the professional pornography is the direct and explicit nature of its feedback loop constructed through comments. The big change is that where this feedback loop was previously driven by the economics of a male audience and operated opaquely, it is now highly transparent and gives room to a broad range of arguments.

The protagonists on yuvutu not only look different – less perfect, if you will – they also make use of different kind of locations. Compared to the non-places where mainstream pornography videos are often set, the homes of yuvutu pornographers are often quite prominently present, showing traces of a life outside this mediation of sexual activity. We saw that this place can just as easily represent as non-gender-specificity (and in that sense be female friendly), and as it can represent patriarchal power. Still, the location has proven to play a role in the audiences’ aura of realness of these movies. In addition, the recording and consumption is a more complex event when compared to mainstream hardcore pornography, leading to the situation where a masturbating woman who watches a (mainstream!) porn movie is 1) enjoying watching pornography, 2) her husband enjoys filming her while she is watching pornography, 3) the yuvutu audience enjoys all of these pleasures and 4) the couple enjoys that the audience is enjoying them. Also taking into account the fact that the staging, the accurate recording of sexual acts is often consumed live by the couples, as can be encountered in numerous films on yuvutu, shows how complex the pleasure is that people take from this homemade pornography: it is a hypermedial experience.

yuvutu seems to be a platform to present one’s libido, sexual prowess, and (to a lesser extend) body in whichever context one prefers. Quite dualistically the mind is separated from the body, often reflected in the invisibility of the faces. And when faces are visible it is either to display arousal or to consume sperm, which exposes the predominant male perspective of yuvutu. The most popular videos on the website are those where the woman is filmed by the man either through a point-of-view shot or the positioning of the camera and the sexual positions performed, in order for the male visitor to imagine himself having sex with the woman in question. In this respect yuvutu does not differ much from what mainstream pornography offers.

Also, with the popularity of the degrading cum shot yuvutu seems to be nothing different from

hardcore pornography. Apart from its empiric function, the cum shot functions as an indicator of the degree of *jouissance* experienced in the build-up. And in the case of the male cum shot: when the woman approves of being ejaculated on her body, on her face and in her mouth she shows that she gets aroused by doing something that does not sexually stimulate her. Not only emphasizing her submissiveness but also opening a window for the party that is separated from her because of a physical distance: the spectator is a *jouissance*-seeker, not giver.

Another hugely popular category on *yuvutu* is the female solo performance. Their main device, the dildo, proved to be not phallic since it is disconnected from the male body, and that it is therefore “dependable, adjustable and controllable”. (Patterson, 184) This forced us to reconsider the negative judgement that Greg Tuck formulated when addressing the epistemological nature of masculinity: his problem is that it makes masculinity exclusive. However, if it actually functions as inclusive in the case of the dildo, than masculinity erodes because it is something one can obtain rather than an ontological matter that excludes women from this kind of agency. Therefore dildos and vibrators used for this should be understood as McLuhanian media, as extensions of the body; they represent the ability to penetrate, women’s physical independence of men. This also sheds new light on the practice of women penetrating men.

It is remarkable how little movies contain men performing cunnilingus, it is not only the inability of focusing solely on giving pleasure while not receiving any direct physical stimulation that is at play here. The larger issue here is the refusal of taking a vulnerable position associated with the docile role women are assigned in this prejudiced casting, there is, however, hope, as shown in the previous paragraph. The example of the woman penetrating the man with a strap-on dildo shows the epistemological nature, the cultural construction of masculinity and femininity. The popularity of this movie and similar movies contributes to the abolishment of the perception of the male anus as a homosexual sexual-organ. It seems of no coincidence that the title is formulated from the woman’s perspective; this time the agency is hers: *MY BF’S HORNY ASS*.

### 3. Conclusion

So, with the end of this thesis in sight, we need to recall the questions that rose in the introduction: can the producers of Porn 2.0, in addition to the “chastising of the old order” by its fans, really mediate outside the box they (and we all?) know? The central question of this thesis therefore was: does the democratization of production and distribution of pornography and the opportunity for these amateurs to gather and form a community entail a democratization of gender agency? To answer this question, we must also ask ourselves how the ‘realness’ of which users testify should be understood: as myth, metaphor, metonym, or down right true (or a combination of these things)?

As the previous chapter has shown these questions cannot be answered clearly. Take for instance clothes: disregarding marginal instances of cross-dressing, yuvutu only shows dressed up women. A long dress, a nightgown, stockings, high heels, a push-up bra, a corset, or a thong: all are designed to present the woman as a gift waiting to be unwrapped, and complement the female shape, which is admired by the majority of the visitors of yuvutu. These men are often also the persons that are filming, admitting to Michelson’s judgement that pornography is “for better or for worse the imaginative record of man’s sexual will.”

The average amateur on yuvutu, however, is not in a relationship with a woman that has the physique of the average porn actress and considering the rating of videos on yuvutu, this does not necessarily have negative consequences in terms of popularity. The visitors of the website tend to appreciate *jouissance* over beauty – that is the dominant societal perception of beauty, which the porn star resembles to some extent. The visitors of yuvutu are constantly reminded of this contrast by the advertisements for predominantly mainstream pornography websites that frame the videos. These ads<sup>45</sup> present popular porn stars in movies that connote amateur pornography either in *mise-en-scène* or their use of the camera whereby the utopian porn star is linked to the everyday amateur. But when Brazzers.com is compared to yuvutu, it shows that yuvutu presents not only more ‘open’ texts, texts that merely modestly present a preferred reading, but that there is also more room to negotiate the meaning of the texts. This ‘openness’ of text is for a large part constructed through the limited use of editing: an uninterrupted chain of events is presented to the spectator for interpretation.

This for instance makes room for a discourse on the meaning of the penetration of the male anus, which results in a majority acknowledging it as just as much heterosexual as homosexual. This in return results in a blurring of boundaries of gender and sexual preference, boundaries that generally tend to be fortified more than broken-down. And then, to finally explicitly answer the central question: yes, the democratization of production and distribution of pornography and the opportunity for amateurs to gather and form a community can entail a democratization of gender agency, but obviously not by default. In short, yuvutu zigzags between conforming to the well-known flaws of mainstream pornography – most prominently the lack of female agency – and transcending mainstream pornography – most notably when women take matters into their own hands and start mediating themselves, wherein with the help of dildos and vibrators masculinity is exposed as a social construction, an attitude that is knowable apart from one’s sex, and thereby transgressing the culturally constructed gender division. Contrary to claims made in the popular discourse on Porn 2.0, non-profit amateur pornography is not the antonym of mainstream pornography, of the commercial “simulacra”. Both offer a representation that is far from the utopian objective, knowable reality and moreover they use similar aesthetic devices, which were developed over the course of more than a hundred years of filming explicit sexual acts.

45 Brazzers.com (<http://www.brazzers.com>) – a chain of websites such as MilfsLikeItBig.com (<http://www.milfslikeitbig.com>) MommyGotBoobs.com (<http://www.mommygotboobs.com>) and RealWifeStories.com (<http://www.realwifestories.com>) – is the most prominent of these advertisers.

The dichotomy between real and representation, and between amateur and professional are largely oppositions used for polemic purposes. See for instance Andrew Keens book *The Cult of the Amateur* and its popular reception, which resulted in a discussion about truth and expertise versus lies and amateurs, centring on Wikipedia. In the discourse on Porn 2.0 'real' is a metaphor, eluding the similarities with professional pornography and its own hypermediality, and representing a kind of pornography that at times is more truthful than the pornography that the industry has been producing for decennia. What is at the core of the desire for 'realness' seems a nostalgic longing for an unmediated society, one which has never existed; the only thing a hypermedial world lays bear is how observation equals perception and not reality, which is of course not to say that there is not truthfulness in perception. This brings us to the title of this thesis, which represents the never-ending imagining of the experience of the other that is central to all forms of pornography: "I'll bet I'm having more fun than you are." In this case, on yuvutu, it was uttered joyfully by an amateur while his wife pushed his penis with considerable force as far as possible into her throat, but it could just as easily have been said by a porn star. Yet a yuvutu pornographer is far less likely to get away with this egocentric statement, because of the consensus on reciprocity, compelled through the (desired) feedback. Then, if his wife would affirm, "Yes you are", he would not be satisfied.

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- SQUIRTY WET AND LOVING IT. uploaded by sexylaura. 12 October 2007. *yuvutu*. Accessed on 09 January 2008. <[http://www.yuvutu.com/modules.php?name=Video&op=view&video\\_id=111223](http://www.yuvutu.com/modules.php?name=Video&op=view&video_id=111223)>.

<sup>47</sup> Again, some of these movies may no longer be available at the given URL. However, since nothing really disappears on the Internet, movies could be encountered elsewhere.

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