

Call for Papers

***Porn Studies*, special issue, “Porn on the Couch: Sex, Psychoanalysis, and Screen Cultures/Memories”**

Edited by Ricky Varghese

In a letter he penned to his friend Wilhelm Fliess, dated August 1, 1899, Sigmund Freud made an uncanny observation: “I am accustoming myself to the idea of regarding every sexual act as a process involving four persons.” What could he have meant by this suggestive remark regarding how a sexual act mediates desire between subjects and objects? How might we expand upon it as having something of importance to say about the complex relationship between sex and its mediation in the form of pornography?

This special issue of *Porn Studies* will focus on the complex and layered relationship between pornography and psychoanalysis. As can be seen from Freud’s remark, theories of sexuality have always preoccupied psychoanalytic scholars. As such, it seems precisely urgent to consider the ways by which psychoanalytic theory could be applied to the study of pornography as an object given over to rigorous examination. To think psychoanalytically about pornography would mean to both explore and address how categories such as desire and pleasure come to influence the very means of pornographic production, the very modes by which it comes to be distributed, and how it mediates sex and sexual practices.

What is the position of desire in relation to pornographic authorship and viewership/consumption? How do we reconcile the experience of pleasure with the complicated field of the visual that pornography represents? What would it look like to redeem pornographic consumption from the negative connotations of perversion and pathology? In other words, following Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, might there be the possibility for a reparative or redemptive reading of pornography that is informed by a psychoanalytic emphasis on the study of desire? Who or what are the subjects and objects of desire in the visual field of pornography? What sorts of psychoanalytic readings are possible of pornographic texts (in any media) and to what end might we endeavor at undertaking such an interpretative approach? How do well-worn psychoanalytic categories, such as that of loss, lack, mourning, melancholia, attachment, trauma, and the fetish, to name a few, inform pornographic interpellation in both the producer and viewer? What are the ethical and methodological implications connected to thinking psychoanalytically about pornography?

Pornography could also be considered as a bridge between screen cultures and screen memories. The screen as a conceptual apparatus, in both pornographic production/viewership and psychoanalysis, becomes important to consider here – what does the screen hold in with respect to desire and pleasure? What does it keep out? Would it be correct to assume that memory and sex, in how it is mediated and/or consumed, might be interconnected? If so, what is the position of memory as it informs sexual choices, practices, and fantasies and, thereby, inform the use of porn?

Fundamentally, this issue will attempt to stage a psychoanalytic interpretation (as opposed to an intervention) of pornography to critically delineate the ways in which the study of the representation of sex, sexuality, and sexual practice cannot be fully rendered or possible if the question of unconscious desire remains unanswered.

This special issue invites papers exploring such questions across a range of media including, but not limited to films, internet videos, pornographic literature, and pulp fiction.

Possible topics might include:

- Pornography and theories of sexuality.
- Psychoanalytic concepts (like attachment, investment, transference) and their relationship to porn.
- Fetishes.
- Screens and boundaries.
- Subject/object, producer/consumer relationality
- Porn and feminist psychoanalytic theory.
- Mediation – production, distribution, circulation, use/consumption – and porn.
- Porn, analysis, and queer(ing) sex and sexuality.
- Trauma, memory, and pornography.
- Ethics and politics of sex, porn, and psychoanalysis.
- Pornography and the clinic.
- Reception and affect.

Submission Details

Articles for peer-review should be between **6000-7000 words**. Shorter thought pieces of approximately **1500-2000 words** may also be submitted, and the editor will make a selection for the Forum section. All articles must include bibliographic information. For details about formatting and style please see Instructions for Authors.

How to Submit

All the manuscripts must be submitted online here.

Submission Deadlines

Please send abstracts of up to 350 words and a biographical note to ricky.r.varghese@gmail.com by **Saturday, April 1st, 2017**. The deadline for the full manuscripts is **Sunday, October 1st, 2017**. This special issue will be published in **2019**.

Editorial information

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