WOMEN'S PORN SITES—SPACES OF FISSURE AND ERUPTION OR "I'M A LITTLE BIT OF EVERYTHING"

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The historically significant but superficial divide between public and private spaces and identities has shaped women's lives, subjectivities, and sexualities. In this article, I analyze women's self-sponsored and self-published porn sites. Specifically, I focus on sites that demonstrate complex articulations of identity and subjectivity—sites that can be read as identity projects that appropriate cultural expectations of sexuality.

To foreground this analysis, I first explore past work analyzing the public/private dichotomy and suggest that computers and virtual spaces are used to reinforce the flimsy separation between public and private. Using these discussions as scaffolding, I then read a selection of women's porn sites, arguing that these women Web authors are inserting their embodied subjectivities into public space, and forcing a remapping of the lines of the public and private in ways that rupture public representations of sexuality.

> 'Scarlet collar' workers are the feminists of the modern age, say psychologists, free from coercion and the dangers of the traditional, male dominated business. In the past two years they have moved away from traditional activities such as prostitution and lap dancing to become the majority of cyberporn owners.
>
> —Cherry Norton, 2000, online

> The woman's duty, as a member of the commonwealth, is to assist in the ordering, in the comforting, and in the beautiful adornment of the state.
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> —J. Ruskin, *Free and Ennobled*, 1983, p. 291

Introduction

The February 2001 British edition issue of *Cosmopolitan* contained an article titled "The Rise of the Web Mistress." The introductory paragraph proclaimed that "there's a revolution in the porn industry. A new wave of women are avoiding exploitation by going it alone—and they're making millions" (p. 28). The article reported on and shared the stories of a handful of women who have earned small fortunes by authoring and maintaining their own pornography sites, the majority of which feature pictures of themselves. Supposedly, beyond the appeal of making a great deal of money, women who create their own sites and include their own sexual content have power over their self-representations. These sites often provide representations of women that are much different from "typical" porn sites. The article author revealed her surprise at the perspective one such site allows: "Unlike most porn stars her hair is not dyed, her breasts are real, her bras ordinary but tasteful and she is often wearing glasses" (p. 29). When women take control of sexual representation, a different space and different perspective of bodies and sexuality are created. This space and these women's self-representations work against the victim-oriented, powerless, and abstract stereotypes of sex workers (Dank, 1999).

Although the objectification of women's faces, bodies, and subjectivities has historically formed a cornerstone of women's oppression and a constraint of their agency (Mann, 1994; Sullivan, 1997), some women's sites work toward turning this territorialization around. These sites work against condescending attitudes that view women sex workers always already as victims, thus denying any alternative possibilities. These sites reveal the complicated and sometimes problematic nature of sex work and sexually explicit imagery; these sites break through characterizations that label sex work as liberatory *or* exploitive and reveal that such work can, in fact, be both (Lerum, 1999). Viewers/readers are no longer able to simply territorialize or gaze upon without implication these women's bodies and sexualities. Instead, these women's sites become *identity projects*—spaces where they own and control their bodies and sexualities, spaces where they appropriate stereotypical notions of

pornography. These women deliberately transgress expected norms of sexuality, and they upset established conventions of representation (Foucault, 1988). Their expressions of identity and subjectivity help us to understand negotiations, crossings, and ruptures of established borders and boundaries of public and private. The often-negative implications of these sites, however, also reveal the repercussions of such self-expression, and the limits still imposed upon women as they negotiate the public and private.

Here, I explore how the stories—and pictures—from a small selection of women's porn sites allow an entryway into understanding women's representations of their sexual identities. I focus here on Web sites offering sexual content that may be labeled pornographic because women's sexual self-expression has historically been controlled or restricted, particularly in relation to the public/private divide. The sexual content of the Web has attracted and continues to attract much attention in the popular press.[1] The sexual content of the Web also shapes the way women are sexualized online and in our physical worlds. Thus, sexual self-expression as it intersects with identity, subjectivity, and agency requires our attention.

In this article, I further discuss feminist negotiations of the public and private, then address the maintenance of public and private through technological segregation. I continue by exploring women's negotiations of the public and private through a reading of women's self-sponsored and self-published porn sites. Not only does this virtual/visual sex work rupture traditional boundaries of the public and private, this work can explore and celebrate women's sexuality when read through principles often associated with postmodern thought. Specifically, I borrow from the work of Michel de Certeau to explore how women Web authors exploit the fissures and cracks in the virtual landscape of the Web to create trajectories that subvert the control of their identities and bodies.

The Public and the Private, the Public and the Privates

The distinction between public space and identities and private space and identities has occupied a privileged and often-debated

position in feminist studies and postmodern analysis. In western society, this divide is riddled with binary constructions; the public realm is and has historically been associated with the state, politics, science, citizenship, technology, and, generally, work (that is, paid work that is valued and socially recognized), whereas the private realm is associated with home, hearth, and family. Public signifies open, accessible, and community, whereas private implies closed and exclusive.

Further, Nancy Duncan (1995) noted that the "public/private dichotomy (both the political and spatial dimensions) is frequently employed to construct, control, discipline, confine, exclude, and suppress gender" (p. 128). Historically, the "public" is associated with individuals with action and agency, with subjects who can assert themselves in the public world (Elshtain, 1981). Women, not seen as political or public agents, are seen as "creatures through or to whom things simply happened" (Elshtain, p. 3), or as "beings without reason" (Le Doueff, 1987, p. 197). Within private space, women were—and sometimes continue to be—regarded as infantilized adults, as people requiring the protection of men and the seclusion of private space.

Ironically, however, the notion of "public man" excludes both the feminine and multiple masculinities and becomes emblematic of an abstract, dominant masculinity (Joseph, 1997). Thus, men with marginalized identities in society (e.g., working-class men) are restricted in their negotiations in the public realm. Notions of abstract citizenship likewise offer little to women negotiating their public and private identities (Mann, 1994).

The public sphere is a place of debate, of oppositional social movements where oppression and difference are open to challenge and to discussion. Identities can be formed and social and political connections made more broadly, both vertically and horizontally. Certainly, boundaries can be pushed and bent within the private realm, and certainly most women venture out in some way or another from the private realm, but without entry into the collective social and political space of the larger public realm, women face isolation and the continued seizure of their contributions by those who can easily travel back and forth between the public and the private.

This seizure includes, for example, women's participation with and contributions to certain technologies (Cockburn, 1985; Haraway, 1991, 1997; Lie, 1995; Jellison, 1993; Stanley, 1995; Wajcman, 1991; Webster, 1996). Women's contributions are excluded from, even written out of, the history of most high-status technologies. Historically, the more cultural capital a technology offers, the less chance there is of women's contributions being openly recognized. Although male-dominated fields such as engineering, computer programming, and computer science remain prestigious and exclusive fields—and fields in which women's work has historically been restricted or even usurped by men—historically female-dominated fields such as horticulture, midwifery and fertility practices, weaving, cooking, etc., are trivialized and relegated to servile status (Griffiths, 1985; Stanley, 1995). When work traditionally done by women is usurped by men, women are typically forced out and the work becomes higher status after their absence (see, for example, Jellison's example of egg harvesting in *Entitled to Power* [p. 159], or Giordano's [in Adam and Bruce, 1993] explanation of computer programming being seen as a clerical job until men took over programming duties and the role was redefined as a skilled professional job). As Michéle Le Doueff (1987) argued, "when a respected activity admits women, it loses value" (p. 191). Further, Arnold and Faulker posited that through science, men have appropriated methods of acquiring knowledge and then created a support system to perpetuate the male bias of those methods and the results of the acquisition of that knowledge (one need only turn to the history of contemporary medicine, especially reproductive care, to find many examples of this).

To more broadly define public space and action, Terrell Carver (1996) urged that "the gender-neutral but archetypically masculine 'subject' of political theory can no longer be unreflectively deployed" (p. 680). There is no need for "citizen" to be a generic marker, stripped of sexuality, class, or race, but instead citizenship can potentially be based on the multiplicity of our understandings of and approaches to the situations we face in private and public life (Prokovnik, 1998). To create and maintain an approach that recognizes the everyday public acts of postmodern life, we must

pay close attention to how individuals establish identity and assert agency. A space often characterized by democratizing rhetoric that requires much more scholarly attention is the World Wide Web.

Information and communciations technology—of which the Web is a part—has historically posed challenges to the regulation of social space. For example, telephones were considered a challenge to morality in the early 1900s, as they allowed girls and women access to strangers without the presence of a chaperone. Telephones were also accused of women's loose manners and scandalous habits. This technology-and-loose-morals equation is remediated within many popular-culture accounts of the "dangers" of the Web to women and children, and this rhetoric is embedded in much of the regulation directed toward the Internet (see, for example, the failed 1997 Communications Decency Act, a proposed amendment to the Communications Act of 1934). We need other tools and new language to understand identity, citizenship, the public, and the private—tools and language that attends to postmodern complexities and tensions between public and private space *and* between online and physical space.

A part of our identity is obviously our sexuality and how we choose to define, present, and represent it. The relegation of women's sexual lives—and their control over their sexual lives—is, obviously, very much culturally constructed and maintained. Michel Foucault explored how sex is put into discourse and outlined a genealogy of sexual history. In doing so, Foucault revealed a trajectory of socially appropriate sexual behavior—from more open approaches to sex and sexuality, to rigid expectations of sexually appropriate behavior, and, thus, to how acts or identities are labeled deviant (Foucault, 1988, 1990). Foucault associated sexual repression with the advent of capitalism, and connected repression to the control of the "bourgeois order" (1988, p. 5). Further, he suggested the development of a culturally proper sexuality, focused on perpetuating "the forms of social relation: in short, to constitute a public sexuality that is economically useful and politically conservative" (1988, p. 37).[2]

However, partly because of this cultural boundary construction, the line between public and private is porous: It has not nor has it ever been totally clear, and is regularly drawn and redrawn. Feminist analyses of the public and private extend our understanding of

"the historical, symbolic, and practical effects of the organization of public and private life" (Landes, 1998, p. 2). Feminists have called attention to the constant renegotiation of public and private space. Such renegotiation offers women great potential in reshaping the power and play of the public and private, but renegotiation does not exist without political struggle and social battle.

A progressive geography for pushing these issues further, viewing contemporary resistances related to the public/private divide, and analyzing new, postmodern notions of sexuality and of citizenship is the Web, where women bend the boundaries of public and private by constructing individual and collective spaces that morph the public and the private in particularly interesting ways.

Within the dynamic landscape of the Web, pages and entire sites disappear on a regular basis, leaving us to return to a once-robust page supplanted by a "404 error." Without carefully analyzing and preserving moments and the small, potent gestures of individuals within the Web's dynamic growth, we risk losing these moments and sacrificing key research possibilities. Further, the history of the Web and its related technologies—computers, various software, servers, and more—leave traces behind. Before I talk about the women's sites, it is important to survey how computers, computer technology generally, and virtual spaces have been used to regulate or limit women's participation in public space. If we forget the history of the cultural script in which these women are actors, we are in danger of, as Michel de Certeau (1984) warned us, removing "the traces of belonging to a network" (p. 44).

Computers and the (De)Regulation of Public and Private Space

The construction and policing of public and private space where computer technology is concerned has situated women as the exploitable know-nots of computer work. Technoscience, and, specifically, computer use, have historically been seen as part of the public realm. As Cheris Kramarae (1988) put it, "technology is usually considered 'big world' talk, connected in communication research with the 'public' sphere, men, mass media, machines, and market prices" (p. 5).

The control of public space to the disadvantage of women is seen on the Internet. The Internet itself began as a military-oriented space to protect the nation's secrets from ruin due to nuclear disaster. Ellen Ullman (1996) argued that "without the covers, the Internet is still the same old fusty place created by the Department of Defense and it retains its original motive: a place for the Eugenes of the world" (p. 7). And the Eugenes of the world have protected their turf: A variety of studies show male resistance to female participation on electronic discussion groups and in other online spaces (see, for example, Brail, 1996; Herring, Johnson & DiBendetto, 1995; Shade, 1994). Male censorship of female participation by such means as flaming, shutting down conversation, or even threatening results in women's self-censorship or even withdrawal from these spaces. As Stephanie Brail noted, men can reserve their energy to post and participate, whereas women expend their energy worrying about the potential negative effects of participating.

Nina Baym's (1985) literary criticism supports a historical read of the patterns of Web development and use. Analyzing the literary canon and trying to make sense of women's absence from it, Nina Baym (1985) suggested a "melodrama of beset manhood" (p. 70) whereby the American individual/citizen (male) is pressured by society, which is somehow secondary to supposedly inherent characteristics of freedom and individuality. Unfortunately, in this myth women are representative of the repressing powers of society. Women encroach and restrict; women provide men access to socialization as men take on roles of husband and father. The antithesis to the constrictive forces of women is the notion of unsettled space—the frontier. In eighteenth- and nineteenth-century literature, free, unencumbered space was emblematic of individuality and freedom. The "virgin" (and the feminization and sexualization of nature is important) forests and vast expanses were escapes for men, areas of free range of individuality, and power over nature.

The Web is the frontier of the late twentieth century—a space whereby early on, men had free range of individuality and power over technology. Emily Jessup (1991) referred to computing generally as "a frontier country"; furthermore, she argued that "as in the development of most frontier territories, there are many more

men than women" (p. 336). If we look at patterns of Web use, the numbers show us that men were predominantly the first to colonize this virtual space. The demographics and history of the Web show us an electronic space consisting of 95 percent men in 1994 and tell us a story of a male-populated realm of geeks, nerds, and programmers—the pizza-fed, bleary-eyed, late-night-working digital collective hunkered over their individual keyboards, staring into their lone monitors, as Ellen Ullman (1997), Sherry Turkle (1995), Sandy Stone (1995) and so many others have described.

Myriad metaphors, analogies, and labels applied to the Web characterized it as a "new frontier."[3] Fergus Murray (1993) tied the frontier narrative directly to science and technology when he argued that boys migrate toward science and technology "as compensation for early experiences of loss of control, of the overpowering chaos of the social," and, I would argue, the socializing forces of women (p. 65). Michele Le Doueff (1987) labeled this women's "kill-joy influence" (p. 194). Certainly, this causes a strong tension in our cultural protagonists—as Baym argued, "everybody has social and conventional instincts" (p. 73), and, because our protagonists are of course male and of course heterosexual, they are drawn to women and relationships with women. Thus, woman becomes "temptress, antagonist, obstacle" (Baym, p. 73). Women represent domesticating forces that somehow work against in-born desires of freedom and individuality.

The Web is barely eight years old, and its youth is easy to forget within a culture that accepts and absorbs this virtual space so readily. Although the ecology of the Web is improving slightly,[4] the representation of women in this space is often dictated and controlled by men. "Beautiful girl" sites and the more explicit pornography sites on the Web provide very public access to women's bodies. This isn't the private delivery space of the brown paper wrapped *Playboy* in one's mailbox. The territorialization of female bodies seemingly transfers quite easily from one media to another and "is everywhere the prerogative of males" (Sullivan, 1997, p. 195).

Before I focus on how women are remapping the boundaries of public and private with their sites, I want to briefly address the fact that these women have not sought to self-represent without reper-

cussion. Several of the women whose sites I analyzed had lost their jobs or been isolated in their community because of their Web sites. These are not generic, abstract citizens. These are not bodies without implication. These are women with names and identities and jobs, facing the implications of their Web sites as they experiment with the obviously policed margins of public and private, the virtual and the "real," the online and the physical.

JenDD notes that her "parents were NOT thrilled when they saw the website, and now the legal case against me" (JenDD, online). Betty Who includes a First Amendment area on her Web site, where she provides a narrative explaining how she lost her job. She notes:

> What gives another American the right to revoke the civil rights of another American? I did my job. I was one of the best. The very person who fired me stated that to my director. But, I miss my job—that, in itself, hurts. (Betty, online)

Becka Lynn includes a "lawyers page," where she shares pictures of her lawyers, their biographies, and briefly mentions the experiences of other women who also lost their jobs. At the top of her biography page (from which you can link to Becka Lynn's court papers), there is a fairly large image that reads: "THIS SITE PROTECTED BY Wasserman & Walters Attorneys at Law" (online).

The women are clearly negotiating their public and private identities at a time when women still don't have the freedom to openly express their sexuality. Women are still expected to be fairly pristine and proper in their expressions of sexuality. In the public sphere, women are often still expected to be emblematic of whatever versions of morality and virtue have current cultural value. Betty Who tells us that "the morality police strike again!!! Lost my job for how I choose to legally express myself..." (online).

Public Actors, Micro-Politics: Negotiating the Artificial Divide Between Private and Public

The struggles these women face are significant. However, women, through their Web sites generally, are succeeding in remapping the porous boundaries of the public and the private.

Through self-sponsored and self-published porn sites specifically, women are forcing their embodied sexualities and subjectivities into public light and attention. What I hope the analysis of Web pages here will show is border and boundary crossing in an electronic realm, where women represent their complicated and shifting identities and construct connections that bring together the public and the private in meaningful and important ways. In reading the sites, we see multiple identities and shifting roles—we see representations of women not only as porn providers, but as women with rich, cyborgian[5] identities and complex agencies.

The writing of Michel de Certeau (1984) is helpful to better understand the work these women do online, and the identities they assert. In *The Practice of Everyday Life*, de Certeau differentiated between *strategies* and *tactics*; strategies are the methods by which dominating and often repressive institutions assert control over time and place. Tactics, however, are used by the weak to exploit tiny fissures, to exploit the possibilities of resistance, and to create their own moments in time and place. As de Certeau argued, "these transverse *tactics* do not obey the law of the place, for they are not defined or identified by it" (p. 29). Tactics use, manipulate, and divert certain spaces. Here I focus specifically on tactics in a different orbit, on the tactics of these women Web authors as they warp electronic times and places. These women Web authors are bricoleurs who mix "rituals and makeshifts (*bricolages*)," they manipulate spaces and they become operators of complex networks (de Certeau, 1985, p. xvi).

These virtual sex workers first warp the space of the Web by putting bodies that we don't typically see online, and inserting an intimacy not representative of most porn. Myriad images of women's bodies exist online, but here we see a different sense of their *reality*, not just their corporeality. Obviously we see pictures of naked bodies, but porn sites often contain and exploit a level of unreality, where women are airbrushed and untouchable, where women's faces become blurs of heavy makeup and gaping mouths, where women don't have names or identities apart from their sexualization. It is difficult, however, to idealize these women Web authors and to strip them of their identities in order to objectify their bodies.

Their representations and their lives are closely intertwined with the pictures of themselves that they choose to post on their sites. This does create a sense of intimacy—upon which most porn is based—but it is an intimacy of identity, of knowing a person, rather than an intimacy based on the objectification of a generic woman, specifically her genitals and sexuality.

Further, these women project incredibly strong, independent, and competent personas, a deliberate tactic in avoiding any generalizations based solely upon their nudity. BeckaLynn notes that her female hero is "any Woman thats willing to stand up for herself" (online). She also continues to argue that "dreams arent just something you see in the night. …they are something You live to fulfill, they are your future, and its up to you to grab it and Run with em. YOU CONTROL YOUR OWN DESTINY" (BeckaLynn, online). Adina presents her long-term plans, which

> include working hard on my website to satisfy and excite as many people as possible and to continue my education to become an accountant. I am very business oriented but also strongly believe that choosing a career that makes you happy is more important than money.
>
> (Adina, online)

Another—and related—way in which these women warp typical notions of sex and sexuality is in the presentation of their multiple and complex identities. Pictures of Rachel best visually represent this multitude of roles and identities, and the expression of these roles and identities online. In one of the images on Rachel's site, we see Rachel competing in a marathon, a test of her body. In the picture, Rachel is wearing a sleeveless baggy t-shirt and nylon shorts; her hair is pushed back from her face in a ponytail; she is wearing sunglasses and a pouch secured around her waist; and she has her arms raised in victory. In another image (available on the same page of her site), Rachel sits upon a white velvet blanket, posing for the camera wearing revealing black lingerie, one of the straps sliding off her shoulder. Her hair and make-up are flawless, and she gazes directly at the camera. Both pictures reveal the multiple identities and interests of Rachel.

On Rachel's site, you can read more about her in her biography, which reads in part:

> Hello, I am a 39 year old wife and Mother , a marathon runner—camping, playing tennis, riding my mountain bike, and riding our horses in the mountains, modeling for pictures. I love showing off and...I love being a nudist.

You can also view a strip-tease video and more explicit pictures once you enter the site. In a world in which women's bodies are subjected to (and, admittedly, women subject their bodies to) strict diets, cosmetics, and cosmetic surgery, and shoes with three-inch heels, women are carving out a bigger space for their bodies. Although Moira Gatens (1999) suggested that "the body of a woman confined to the role of wife/mother/domestic worker...is invested with particular desires, capacities and forms that have little in common with the body of a female Olympic athlete" (p. 228), these pictures of Rachel show us that women are working against any rigid construction of their bodies and their desires.

Like Rachel, many of the women mentioned their status as wives and mothers, two roles that have typically served to make women sexually unavailable or undesirable. BeckaLynn narrates her failed marriage and the pride and joy of her three children. Robin, who has a Bachelor's and Master's degree and has worked as a teacher and as a nurse won't mention her age, but notes that she has "one wonderful son" and is married. Additionally, she loves to sunbathe in the nude, and notes "I love to play the piano and read. I am active with my family and have a strong sense of spirituality as well" (Robin, online). Mistee is a 31-year-old housewife with two children. Faith is 27 years old and is also a wife and mother. Autumn is a wife, mother, and also works; she won't reveal her age, but she does note that she's "older."

Betty Who sums up herself as: "Betty Who...a bit Glamorous as Miss Grable, a bit Mysterious as Miss Davis, a bit Sexually open as Miss Page, and a bit Fun-loving as Miss Boop. I'm as real as anyone of these lovely ladies and hope to help YOU fulfill a fantasy or two!" (online). The women's education, experiences, and backgrounds are incredibly diverse; there's no simple way to characterize these women Web designers.

Contrary to sexualized images where viewers are often presented with airbrushed, meticulously groomed bodies, the bodies of these self-published women force rupture and present bulges. These bodies become an exaggeration, in fact sometimes a caricature of what sexualized images of women are. There is an overabundance here—of gaping mouths, of painted faces, of heaving breasts. The improper is exaggerated and celebrated in a playful spirit. And the material body here has what Bakhtin calls a positive character. These bodies uncrown the seriousness of representations of the female body, and even of representations of women's bodies on other porn sites. As Bakhtin (1984) noted, the grotesque starts when exaggeration reaches fantastic dimensions (p. 315). Grotesque logic playfully bypasses the attempted closure of the smooth, closed body and presents an open, penetratable body. And these bodies play—they play with themselves, they play with the viewer, and they play with our expectations of the erotic. Henry Giroux (1990) argued that play is an element in a postmodern aesthetic, an element that "desacralizes" (p. 22). And these women are aware of this desacralizing element; in fact, they play upon it. Dawn openly plays with familiar elements and restrictions of the public and private, noting her status as "lady in public, slut behind closed doors." The main-page image of Dawn's site features a picture of Dawn. She is kneeling and bent over a chair; her dress is pulled up, revealing her bare buttocks and legs. The word "the Crack" appears next to her buttocks, and "of Dawn" appears on the other side of her body in the image. Clearly, she's usurping and playing with the reference to "the crack of dawn," referring not to a sunrise but to the cleft in her own naked derriere. Robin, likewise, shares a sexy picture of herself, warns that "if the neighbors only knew..." and invites us to find out what the neighbors might find so shocking.

These bodies are not the smooth, singular bodies related to modernism; instead they are bodies that recreate and that rupture. These sites present us with bodies and sexualities that work against any singular read of identity or agency. These bodies are "in the act of becoming"; they are playful bodies, bodies that parody, bodies that are "never finished, never completed; [are] continually built, created" (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 317), and these bodies build

and create as the sites are continually rebuilt, as more pictures are added, as galleries expand, and as the women modify their bodies. These are unstable and ambivalent images, presenting dualities of body and identity. These women are mothers and wives, horse riders, house cleaners, accountants, nurses, daughters, strippers, and more.

These sites offer a revealing, a transfer from the protected and invisible status of women's bodies (particularly white, middle-class women's bodies) to a very material representation of sexuality. These women are enacting a revealing—they are "taking control of the presentation" (Blair & Takayoshi, 1999, p. 8) of their own images online, and also taking control of how their identities are constructed and presented, sexually and otherwise. These sites "trace 'indeterminate trajectories' that are apparently meaningless, since they do not cohere with the constructed, written, and prefabricated space through which they move" (de Certeau, p. 34). In doing so—that is, in creating and mapping these alternate trajectories, these traverses—these women "sketch out the guileful ruses of *different* interests and desires" (de Certeau, p. 34).

Conclusion: "I Am My Own Commodity"

Both Manuel Castells (1997) and Anthony Giddens (1992) noted the process of sexual autonomization occurring within the postmodern context. This process includes the delinking of sexuality with heterosexuality, marriage, and the activities associated to the roles women historically have been resigned to within these institutions. Through the process of sexual autonomization,

> Feminists and sexual identity movements affirm the control of their most immediate spaces, their bodies, over their disembodiment in the space of flows, influenced by patriarchalism, where reconstructed images of the woman, and fetishes of sexuality, dissolve their humanity and deny their identity. (Castells, p. 358)

There are, however, absent bodies, bodies that do not create cracks in the public/private framework of the Web. This is not a complete cultural–virtual *coup*, but a partial one, a fragmented one, a victory that pulls back the curtain of the public and private, but the glimpse

we get is of certain bodies, certain faces, certain subjectivities. Perhaps these cracks in the technocratic system are superficial; perhaps they do not run deep enough to further rupture the multiple strategies of the public/private divide. What these cracks do offer, however, is a space from which we can view women's resistances and appropriation, where we can view women rewriting the narrative of the public and the private and asserting their identity and agency in virtual spaces.

Within these women's porn sites, we see the struggle over disembodiment—we are witness to women demanding that their bodies be paid attention to, that their bodies not be erased by some generic sense of citizenship or male-defined sexuality. Instead of allowing a gaze that has historically dissolved their humanity and denied their sexual and other identities, these women are putting the articulations of their multiple identities online and making them present within the virtual space of the Web. These women are courageous artists, writers, and designers. They express complex identities and demand attention to these identities without being reduced to a sexual part or sexuality. But, clearly, these women's bodies are part of a commodity or consumerist sexuality, where representations of bodies are products to be purchased. However, on their sites, these women are turning the economy of their bodies and sexualities around, and demanding that viewers/readers attend to their broader interests, agencies, and identities.

Notes

1. For examples in the mainstream press, see, for example, Dyar (2000, *The Washington Times*), Norland and Bartholet (2001, *Newsweek*), Perry (2001, *U.S. News & World Report*), Schwartz (2001, *New York Times*), Thomas (2001, *Time*), and Tresniowski (2001, *People*).
2. Foucault's work, however, is not without appropriate criticism from feminist scholars. He is often taken to task for ignoring the implications of gender in his work regarding sexuality. See, for example, Hekman (1996), McNay (1992), and Sawicki (1991).
3. For example, Harold Rheingold's (2000) *The Virtual Community: Homesteading on the Electronic Frontier*; Ravi Kalakota and Andrew B. Whinston's (1995) *Frontiers of Electronic Commerce*; Cerise Vablais' (1998) *How the Web Was Won: Conquering the Digital Frontier*; Bosah L. Ebo's (2000) *Cyberimperialism?: Global Relations in the New Frontier*; etc.

4. Partly, perhaps, due to more equal representation: The population of Internet users was approximately 25 percent female in 1995, 39 percent in 1997, 43 percent in 1998, and is anticipated to rise to 50 percent within the next year (CommerceNet ,1999; United States Internet Council, 1999).
5. By cyborg, I am referring specifically to Donna Haraway's (1985) work. Haraway defined a cyborg as "a cybernetic organism, a hybrid of machine and organism" that is as much a "creature of social reality" in the late 20th century as a "creature of fiction" (1985, p. 65). Haraway suggested that our certainty about what counts as nature is not only challenged by such technologies and devices, but fatally undermined. The figure of the cyborg—for Haraway and other feminist technology scholars—is meant to re-appropriate the confusion of postmodernity and to value, rather than fear, the conditions associated with destabilization, contradiction, and multiplicity.

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