Postposttranssexual
Key Concepts for a Twenty-First-Century Transgender Studies
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Pornography was famously defined by Judge Potter Stewart’s maxim, “I know it when I see it” (Jacobellis v. Ohio 1964, quoted in Williams 1999), highlighting its subjective, visual status and its political kinship to obscenity. The production and consumption of pornographic materials forms a major transnational economy, demonstrating capitalism’s uneven development and circulation of images. Porn in its various forms and niches can also be considered highly localized, personalized even, as evidenced by specific mail-order and online digital cultures. It signifies the apotheosis of Western confession culture in which the declaration of sexuality anchors the self in the social order (Foucault 1978).

*My penis is like a wart.* Trans bodies and identities are equally solicited to participate in “speaking sex.” However, the sexological histories that prefigure the sexual in a transsexual diagnosis (gender identity disorder, gender dysphoria) fasten desire onto the transition itself. The criteria in the *Diagnostic Standards and Procedure Manual* V seek statements of disgust with one’s sexed embodiment. Any potential eroticism of a trans body by and for the trans individual is supplanted by the necessity to state a desire to change one’s genitals. The construction of the monolithic transsexual reduces the heteroglossia of sexual experience to a whisper of secrets (Stone [1991] 2006).

*My sexuality is not dysfunctional.* Popular pornographies of so-called dysfunctional “trans sexualities” (Steinbock and Davy 2012) continue to involve forced feminization narratives and tribadism. With mass video accessibility, previously niche she-male/travestie fantasies entered the mainstream market. At the same time, transwomen filmmakers like Mirah-Soliel Ross and Stephanie Anne Lloyd as well as transmen Les Nichols and Chance Ryder began making porn addressed to the emerging transgender community. These works challenge the dominant imaginary by claiming erotic space and flirting with becoming fetishes for a cisgender or transgender gaze.

*"Look! No, Don’t!"* With the aspiration to appear in a sexual imaginary, but not as a freak, came a community backlash. Feared repercussions for self-sexualization were setbacks in the political gains of medical access and social tolerance. Jamison Green describes this reflex in the phrase “Look! No, Don’t!": to want political recognition but not social scrutiny (1999). Sexual representation was a key
problem for early trans activism; at issue was who would be a “good representative” for the community. Pornographic materials for trans communities, like for feminist camps, figured large in the war of identity politics. Claims for and against porn assume that the image transparently represents the real identity of the performer, collapsing visual realism into a “visual essentialism” of identity (Steinbock 2013).

Hard core is hard work. The political strategy of countering stereotyped images with more diverse images of trans sexuality has been championed by various organizations: Adult Video News Awards acknowledged the pioneering work of Buck Angel and Allanah Starr; the Feminist Porn Awards honors trans and genderqueer performers like Drew Deveaux and Jiz Lee; and the Berlin Porn Film Festival actively supports trans (post)pornographies. Film directors focusing on trans sexuality from within the community include Christopher Lee, Hans Scheirl, Cary Cronenwett, Tobaron Waxman, Morty Diamond, T-wood team, and Tobi Hill-Meyer.

We have hit the cotton ceiling. The new wave of queer pornography, creating a professional and accessible DVD and online alt-porn world, has swept along trans sexualities. Notably, Courtney Trouble’s “Queer Porn TV” and Shine Louise Houston’s queer-lesbian “Crash Pad Series” regularly include trans performers. However, the trans pornographic ideal appearing in most queer porn has become mainly aligned with either transmasculine or post-operative transfeminine bodies. The marginalization of transwomen in queer sex scenes echoes the status of transfemininity in queer erotic communities, which has been dubbed the “cotton ceiling.” A new queer normativity set by porn conventions continues to exclude certain forms of trans sexuality. The “productive disruption of structured sexuality and spectra of desire” (Stone 1991: 231) engendered by trans embodiments has yet to be fully explored in pornography.


Note

1. For trans porn, this means the major markets for sourcing she–male pornography for the global North are in Latin America. The alternative community pornographies mainly derive from the United Kingdom and North America. I have tried to indicate the diversity of porn cultures through the examples given of cultural workers, which I encourage the reader to explore further. For a post-Foucauldian analysis of pornography’s transnational flows in relation to gender, see Beatriz Preciado 2008.
Postmodernism

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For Jean Baudrillard, transsexuality symbolizes alienating postmodern transformations across economics, aesthetics, and politics. "We are all transsexuals symbolically," he argues, as the body is reduced to a mere canvas on which the traffic of gendered signs is grafted or torn in antipolitical play (2009: 23). Baudrillard understands the postmodern body as the extended site of integration into networks and circuits of superficial political action and cybernetic capitalist complicity. Similarly to Fredric Jameson, he employs the spatial metaphors of depthlessness and flattening to emphasize the subject's reduction to artifice. These metaphors reveal postmodern cultural production as underpinned by the disruption of mere appearance from identity or inner desire. The disruptive element