



From *Suck* magazine to *Corporate Paedophilia*. Feminism and pornography – Remembering the Australian way[☆]

Kate Gleeson

School of Modern History, Politics and International Relations, Macquarie University, Australia



ARTICLE INFO

Available online 9 April 2013

SYNOPSIS

In the context of recent anti 'pornification' campaigns, this article charts the history of Australian feminist engagement with pornography from the 1970s to the 1990s. It argues that a lack of significant, enduring feminist engagement with pornography in Australia throughout this period has meant that contemporary women-centred objections to pornography have been received by the media and many in society as feminist, when they appear to contradict the Australian feminist libertarian tradition. Focusing on the work of lobbyist Melinda Tankard Reist, the article highlights an important feature of Australian anti-pornography campaigns of the past 40 years. That is, the consistent centrality of fears mobilised about children, to the detriment of nuanced debate about the meanings of men, women, sex and censorship and the relationship of these meanings to feminism.

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Introduction

In early 2012 an Australian newspaper profiled anti-'pornification' campaigner Melinda Tankard Reist as one of Australia's 'best known feminist voices' (Hills, 2012). The world of social media was instantly atwitter with the exposé of long-held frustrations about the commandeering of the public debate over pornography and women's sexual status by Tankard Reist and her collaborators. Blogger and social commentator Jennifer Wilson publicly criticised the article's author, Rachel Hills, for failing to inquire of Tankard Reist about her faith and its motivation for her work, describing Tankard Reist as 'deceptive and duplicitous' about her religious agenda (Hall, 2012). Wilson's claims were met with the threat of various lawsuits from Tankard Reist's lawyers alleging defamation (Hall, 2012). The mainstream press was much taken with the idea of a spat within the sisterhood and framed the issue not one of the nuances of public image and the threatened use of law to quell public debate, but as a demarcation dispute concerning the proper title-holders to the identity of 'feminist'. Summoned to pass judgement,

Anne Summers decreed that Tankard Reist was not entitled to the mantle because although some brands of conservative feminism (such as Margaret Thatcher's) made the grade, the pro-life agenda of Tankard Reist was beyond the pale (Summers, 2012). While much attention was given to the question of the centrality of the pro-choice position to contemporary feminism, questions of Tankard Reist's positions on pornography, sexual representation and censorship slipped beneath the radar of the mainstream media. Given the bitter divisions over pornography that wracked and decimated the women's movement in countries such as America in the 1980s, this might appear to be a surprising state of affairs. But the lack of scrutiny paid to contemporary Australian anti-pornography movements in fact speaks volumes about the unique history of local feminist engagement with this agenda over the past 40 years.

An absence of significant, enduring feminist engagement with pornography in Australia has meant that recently, women-centred objections to pornography have been received by the media and by many in society as *feminist*, despite less well-publicised objections to these campaigns by some feminists, such as Wilson (2012) and Eva Cox (2012b). In this climate, the nuances of feminist positions on pornography have been understated, or forgotten. Most accounts of Australian pornography debates focus on American-style arguments and

[☆] Earlier versions of this paper were presented to the Sydney Feminist History Group in March 2012 and the Australian Women and Gender Studies Conference in November 2012.

campaigns opposed to pornography (e.g. Lumby, 1997) or the current, arguably conservative, 'pornification' campaigns, with no significant discussion of *Australian feminism* (e.g. Sparrow, 2012b). In particular, publicity given to the anti-pornography arguments of Americans Catharine MacKinnon and Andrea Dworkin has overshadowed alternative feminist treatments of pornography, especially Australian approaches opposed to censorship in the libertarian tradition, both radical for their times and enduring in their influence. Contrary to Tankard Reist (and MacKinnon and co.) for some feminists the ethos of the sexual revolution, although never realised, holds the key to women's liberation. And for many Australian feminists in particular, censorship is unconscionable. Unfortunately, however, feminist ambivalence about (or defence of) pornography has meant that a significant lacuna in Australian feminist theory and activism has been assumed to be filled by contemporary 'pornification' arguments. Tankard Reist's activism represents a reaction to the 'massive developments in online porn' (Krohn, 2011), but with no acknowledgement of how this issue has plagued and divided feminists. This is despite having studied in the United States in 1987, the year following the dramatic fallout from feminist cooperation with Reagan's conservative Meese Commission on pornography in 1986 (Tankard Reist, 1994, p. 56). She has significantly shaped public debate in Australia by claiming that women and girls have been gullible in buying an anti-woman myth that hyper-sexualisation equates to their empowerment (Tankard Reist, 2008), but offers no explanation of how her arguments might differ from the conservative fear of women's sexual licence that drove past censorship regimes. Nor does she offer an explanation of what alternative expressions of female sexuality under capitalism should be, or any acknowledgement of the centrality to feminism of allowing women to be sexual on their own terms.

Accordingly, my aims in this article are threefold. First I want to document the rich creative pedigree of Australian second-wave feminist treatments of pornography, relative to American campaigns, and to the Australian political climate, so that this might not be forgotten. Second, I want to briefly explain the Australian regulatory environment governing pornography and the political arguments that have contributed to its formulation, to illustrate the nexus between feminist engagement with select issues and the 'realpolitik' in which feminists reside and work. Third, I aim to document the efforts of Melinda Tankard Reist in lobbying the government on the combined issues of pornography and the 'sexualisation of children' to clarify the nature and efficacy of her political agenda since 2008. I am not concerned with entering into debate about whether or not the work of Tankard Reist is 'feminist'. Instead I hope to illustrate an important observation about Australian anti-pornography campaigns of the past 40 years, including those of Tankard Reist. That is, the consistent centrality of fears mobilised about *children* to the detriment of nuanced, intelligent debate about the meanings of *men, women, sex* and *censorship* and the relationship of these meanings to feminism.

At the outset, I should define what I mean by 'pornography', which is a vexed issue itself. The Australian National Classification Scheme (NCS) does not refer to 'pornography', but details the types of materials that require special classification processes making them legally available to be sold and exhibited only to adults. NCS guidelines appear as helpful as any,

for my current purposes. These stipulate that publications (such as magazines, and potentially literature) that would be classified as Restricted (Categories 1 and 2) may depict and describe a range of sexual activities and themes, from 'obvious sexual excitement to detailed depictions of actual sexual activity'. Movies (videos and films) that would be classified as X rated, may contain 'real depictions of actual sexual intercourse and other sexual activity between consenting adults'. This is the type of material I have in mind. Historically, understandings of pornography changed as media developed. Feminist treatments of pornography reflect these changes as well. However one of my main arguments in this article is that contemporary 'pornification' campaigns function by blurring a range of issues including pornography as I have described it, as well as fashion, art, culture, advertising and popular entertainment.

Melinda Tankard Reist and 'raunch culture'

After training as a journalist and working for over a decade as 'bioethics advisor' to conservative anti-abortion Senator Brian Harradine, at the height of a national abortion debate in 2004 Tankard Reist founded the anti-abortion lobby *Women's Forum Australia* (WFA) (WFA website). After the fall of the conservative Howard government (with anti-abortion sympathies), Tankard Reist resigned as director of WFA to focus on the 'sexualisation of children' an issue on the public agenda since the 2006 release of the discussion paper *Corporate Paedophilia* by the purportedly left-leaning think tank, The Australia Institute. In 2008 Tankard Reist formed CollectiveShout, 'a grassroots campaigning movement against the objectification of women and sexualisation of girls in media, advertising and popular culture' (CollectiveShout.org). She then published *Getting Real: Challenging the Sexualisation of Girls* (Tankard Reist, 2009), the edited book that set the tone for a national debate about sexualisation and consolidated her profile as one of the nation's leading feminist voices and well known social commentators (Simic, 2011). Tankard Reist has since presented herself as a 'pro-woman' warrior to combat the global pornography and sex industries. In 2011 she edited *Big Porn Inc: Exposing the Harms of the Global Porn Industry* with academic Abigail Bray, including contributions from MacKinnon and Gail Dines. Arguments that Tankard Reist had applied to children and the media were expanded to apply to women and pornography and the term 'pornification' exploded onto the public stage in Australia, with Tankard Reist referring obliquely and somewhat strangely to the 'pornification of everything' in 2011 (Sydney Institute, 2011). All the while her public profile has ascended as an advocate for women and girls and an expert on girls' development, sexualisation, marketing, the media and pornography. While most of CollectiveShout's publicly lauded strategies involve lobbying corporations to discontinue products said to be marketed inappropriately to children, such as 'tweenage push-up bras', Tankard Reist has continued to lobby the government, taking numerous opportunities to 'recommend' a ban on adult sex movies (e.g. CollectiveShout, 2011a).

Tankard Reist describes herself as an activist, 'pro-woman' and 'pro-girl'. While at times she has described herself as a 'pro-life feminist' (ABC News, 2011), at other times she has demurred from the feminist identity. 'Call me whatever the hell you want, I don't care', was her response to Hills (Hills,

2012). She is a Christian motivated 'by the global suffering and inequality of women and girls' (Mumamia blog, 2012) but believes any discussion of her faith would detract from her agenda (ABC News, 2011). Tankard Reist was never able to escape her associations with Harradine to be addressed seriously as a 'feminist' abortion campaigner beyond the anti-abortion lobby. However, her campaigns against pornography have, curiously, mostly eluded these connotations, although Harradine is one of the most influential conservative Christians to have shaped policy and law restricting Australians' access to pornography (Vnuk, 2003). In 2008 Tankard Reist outlined her arguments about the 'pornification of girlhood' as follows. The 'trends in popular culture, the insidious creep of the cult of bodily perfection, the dominance of fad diets, billboards and magazines depicting flawless female forms', has led today's girls to believe that their 'bodies are the most valuable thing that they have to offer the world' (Tankard Reist, 2008, p.10). This, and the 'commercial interests of companies' marketing to children have led to eating disorders and low self esteem among girls (Tankard Reist, 2008, p.10). At the heart of this problem is the mainstreaming of sex, the outcome of the sexual revolution of the 1960s and 1970s. The 'movement for women's equality was overtaken by the movement for sexual licence – the sexual revolution. To be free has come to mean the freedom to wrap your legs around a pole, flash your breasts in public, girls-gone-wild style, or perform acts of the oral variety on school boys at weekend parties in lieu of the (as traditionally understood) goodnight kiss' (Tankard Reist, 2008, p.10). Her analysis of adults is similar – 'we live in a world that is shaped by pornography. The signs are everywhere' (Tankard Reist & Bray, 2011, p. xiii). The 'largely unregulated pornography industry has colonised private and public spaces at a rate that presents significant challenges to women's and children's rights' (Tankard Reist & Bray, 2011, p. xiiv). And, 'pornography is producing a more de-personalised, alienated and transactional sexuality'. It 'draws every one into its extremely callous and hate-filled version of masculinity; it damages women and girls with its hyper-plasticised, pain filled and vapid images of female sexuality; it colonises and destroys real intimacy and human connection' (Krohn, 2011). Her solution to this situation is no pornography, for men or women (Hills, 2012).

Tankard Reist's rhetoric owes much to American journalist Pamela Paul who publicised the term 'pornified' in 2005 (Paul, 2005), while her analysis of contemporary society and culture is indebted to Ariel Levy, journalist and author of *Female Chauvinist Pigs* (2005), a sensational book that announced the arrival of 'raunch culture'. Addressing urban American culture in particular, the book found international salience. Levy's observations about the proliferation and mainstreaming of culture and fashion once the province of the sex industry aimed at women and teenagers, and more so, their apparent rapacious championing of it themselves, led her to conclude that women are their own worst enemies. Young, 'post feminist' women are the new chauvinists, celebrating among themselves a 'tawdry, cartoonlike version of female sexuality [that] has become so ubiquitous, it no longer seems particular. What we once regarded as a kind of sexual expression we now view as sexuality' (Levy, 2010, p. 5). Most insidious for Levy is the idea that for some young women, this experience of their sexuality is also experienced as their

feminism, and their liberation. Levy is nostalgic for the certainty of the world inhabited by her mother, the 1970s, when feminists knew what they were fighting for, when women like New York feminist heroine Susan Brownmiller knew that 'pornography was the "undiluted essence of anti-female propaganda" that fed [rapists]', and perhaps all men (Levy, 2010, p.62). Levy's analysis is similar to Tankard Reist's in identifying the sexual revolution as having hijacked women's liberation: her irritation that *Playboy* founder Hugh Hefner touts himself as a feminist hero of the 'post feminist world' is palpable (Levy, 2010, p.5). However Levy does not concern herself with agendas of censorship or children, as does Tankard Reist, who tends to portray women less as active participants and more as passive victims in their relentless personal and cultural sexualisation.

It is Levy's analysis that is most nuanced, alluding to the fact that the ubiquitous ascendancy of 'Playboy values', reigning supreme over those of 'combat boot wearing' 70s feminists (Levy, 2010, p.50), is as much the product of fractures within the American women's movement as the drive of individual men like Hefner. Despite her simple nostalgia, Levy hints at the toll taken by what Brownmiller describes as the 'terrible pornography wars' that hastened the decline of the women's movement (Brownmiller, 2000, p.295). It is the very issue of pornography that many identify as having brought about what MacKinnon calls the point at which the women's movement, as she had known it, came to an end in the USA (MacKinnon, 1990, p.9). From the late 1960s, American feminists disenchanted with the sexism of the New Left and the failed promises of the sexual revolution formulated pungent analyses of pornography and heterosexuality. These corresponded with the relaxation of obscenity provisions and the mainstream popularity of films such as *Deep Throat*, released in 1972. Robin Morgan coined the anthem for a generation of select radical feminists in 'pornography is the theory, rape is the practice'. While abortion campaigners found it impossible to rally large numbers after *Roe v Wade* in 1973, pornography captured the hearts, minds and rage of a phenomenal number of women. But from the time of the first Take Back the Night March in 1978, divisions among feminists over tactics of collaborating with the state, the perils of censorship and the meaning of sadomasochistic practices and images intensified, culminating famously at the Barnard Conference in 1982 where Carole Vance, Gayle Rubin and others were targeted by anti-pornography feminists picketing the conference. The point of no return came in 1983 when Dworkin and MacKinnon designed and worked to implement a (failed) civil rights remedy to address pornography as sex discrimination and then cooperated with the 1986 Meese Commission, which recommended heightened obscenity prohibitions (Bronstein, 2011).

Antipodean feminism: Suck magazine and Norman Mailer?

In contrast, the significance of pornography to feminism in Australia might be gauged from the fact that there is no dedicated essay on the subject included in the *Oxford Companion to Australian Feminism* (Caine, 1998). The Australian Women's Liberation Movement (WLM) was characterised by demands concerning childcare, abortion, contraception, free and equitable education, equal pay and equal employment opportunity,

and the establishment of women's health services, rape and domestic violence shelters (Burgmann, 2003). The widespread strategies of the Women's Electoral Lobby (WEL) and the sympathies of reformist Labor governments at State and federal levels combined to produce the unique Australian phenomenon of the Femocrats – women who channelled their agendas through the portfolios of the state. While revolutionising institutions such as the family and heterosexual sex and celebrating lesbian sexuality was also high on the agenda in the 1970s, the curtailing of pornography arguably was not. Any state regulation of sexual information was highly suspect for feminists who had grown up under one of the most draconian censorship regimes in the western world. Even conservatives who supported censorship in principle conceded that Australia had perpetrated a 'long series of almost entirely indefensible prohibitions and prosecutions' of literature (Coleman, 1974, preface). Author Frank Moorhouse lamented that the prohibition on sexual information was so pervasive that 'if Martians had arrived in Australia before 1972 and read our literature, they would not have had any clue about how human beings reproduced. No wonder our population was going down' (in Meacham, 2004). This is not to suggest that pornography was unavailable, but the province of organised crime. Inner city clubs such as those in Sydney's Kings Cross flouted the law, screening 'blue movies', selling sexual services and pornography (Reeves, 2007, p. 67).

Germaine Greer is neither the mother of Australian feminism, nor its sole designated harpie. But her example is instructive. *The Female Eunuch* was received with massive popularity among women in Australia and abroad, selling millions of copies in eleven languages, and never falling out of print. *Life* magazine sycophantically christened Greer the 'saucy feminist that even men like' (1971). But the book received a mixed response among active feminists, with many noting Greer's outsider status and animosity to the women's movement and her contempt for its texts other than her own. In the 1960s Greer was a member of the Sydney libertarian group The Push – men and women steeped in the quintessentially Sydney ideology of resident philosopher John Anderson. Mentored from the start by Anderson at the University of Sydney, the amorphous Push membership developed its own anarchist and libertarian agenda liberated from Andersonianism and determined to resist the tyranny of totalitarianism. The outlooks of Push women – such as Greer and Lynne Segal – on sex and censorship were characterised by Push legacies of libertarianism and an innate suspicion of the totalitarian state as dictated by the unanointed godfather of the sexual revolution, Wilhelm Reich. While for some Push members, sex was political, for others it was not. But sexual repression, especially that directed by the state, was indisputably diabolical for all (Coombs, 1996, pp.61–62). The WLM with its pedigree of identifying the sexism of men of the New Left was influential to the Push, which in turn influenced Sydney (and Australian) feminism. Eva Cox identifies the sexism of the male libertarians as central to the creation of a generation of feminists among Push women such as herself, Wendy Bacon, Greer and Liz Fell (Cox, 2012a).

The Female Eunuch is unabashedly libertarian and owes much to Reich in its premise of the manifold possibilities of a simple sexual freedom for women, at a time when much feminist thought reflected its origins in the structuralism of

the New Left. While liberals like Betty Friedan were fighting for equality, Greer championed freedom. While radicals like Morgan and Kate Millett were focused on exposing the misogyny of male sexual licence, Greer demanded that licence for herself, and perhaps for any woman who cared to join her. When it came to the question of pornography, the contrast between Morgan and Greer could not have been starker. Morgan led the feminist takeover of *Rat* magazine by members of New York's WLM, in protest of a special porn edition with a cover depicting a woman lifting her skirt to hitch a ride (Morgan, 1977). At this time, Greer was doing more than collaborating with the enemy and his 'porny' photos. She was posing and editorialising for him. After writing for the new London *Oz Magazine* on 'groupie-dom' and 'cunt power', in 1969 Greer helped establish the more straightforwardly pornographic *Suck Magazine*, billed by the editors as 'The First European Sex Paper', and by Greer as what should have been 'the first non sado-masochistic sex paper' (Greer, 1986c, p.74). Greer saw *Suck* as an opportunity to provide an 'antidote to the exploitative papers like *Screw* and *Hustler*' by depicting men as often as women and 'developing a new kind of erotic art, away from the tits 'n' ass and the peep-show syndrome' (Greer, 1986c, p.74).

In a full-page photo too risqué for the magazine's cover, Greer posed naked in a pose that would have been the target of both Take Back the Night and MacKinnon's legalese a decade later in America. She 'got a friend to photograph me stripped to the buff, looking at the lens through my thighs. Face, pubes and anus framed by vast buttocks, nothing decorative about it. Nothing sexy about it either. Confrontation was the name of the game. Not so much kiss my arse as kiss my arsehole – a different matter entirely' (Greer, 2007). Greer editorialised that ladies should love their cunts and invited women to submit photographs of their genitals to be published (Greer, 1986a, p. 77). She also acted as a judge to the Dutch Wet Dream Film Festival of 1970 and 1971, staged by the Sexual Egalitarian and Libertarian Fraternity as 'an attack on paternalism because it asks why people can't see any image they want'. The inaugural winner was the Danish film *A Summer's Day*, documenting a woman's erotic love of her farm animals (Art & Popular Culture website). Greer's relationship with the magazine and festival soured once it was apparent that she was the only editor using pornography to expound 'utopian sexual theories' (Greer, 1986c, p.74). At the core of the conflict between Greer's feminism and that of many others was her belief that (hetero) sexual power was there for the taking and could benefit women, even in a male dominated society, and her lack of a coherent theory of women's structural oppression including men's role within that structure. While Millett was forensically dissecting misogyny in the works of Norman Mailer and Henry Miller for her doctoral thesis that would become a tome of the feminist zeitgeist, *Sexual Politics*, Greer was fantasizing about Mailer's genitalia in *Oz* (Wallace, 2000, p.144).

After a series of significant censorship trials in the 1960s driven by counter-culture icons, the editors of the original *Oz* magazine, in 1971 the Liberal McMahon government announced new principles for censorship guidelines: 'community standards' rather than 'obscenity'. The government also introduced the new R classification for (non-sexual) adult films shown at the cinema (Sullivan, 1997, p.130). The Whitlam Labor government further relaxed the censorship regime in

1972, essentially to allow adults to read and view what they wished. Although this constituted a profound shift in policy and ideology in place by 1974, it did not open the floodgates to the extent of Scandinavian nations. Some publications remained restricted in their display and others were available only on mail order, while publications advocating or inciting crime, violence or the use of illegal drugs were prohibited (Moore, 2012). Nonetheless, counter-culture and New Left activists interpreted the reforms as a personal victory, the outcome of the actions of 'a few rebels grabbing the moment in a broader sea change of popular culture' (Meacham, 2004). In Australia it was religious conservatives who promoted arguments about rape and pornography. Inspired by Malcolm Muggeridge, Dr. John Court formed the Festival of Light to promote 'true family values in the light of the wisdom of God'. Psychologist Court was preoccupied with pornography and although he used this in his practice of aversion therapy for homosexual men, he campaigned for decades trying to prove causal links between pornography and men's violence against women. Court's theories were apparently based on a belief informed by Freud's hydraulic model of sexuality, that once the male sexual drive was aroused by women there was no diminishing it and its disastrous effects on society (Court, 1972). While the American feminist campaign claimed that pornography revealed and exacerbated men's extant sexual hatred of women, the conservative case was that pornography aroused in men a dangerous lust that might otherwise have no conscious (or troublesome) outlet. But it was the fear of pornography's effects on women that motivated conservatives most passionately. Women traditionally were understood as the guardians of morality, restraint and all things good. Their co-option to the ethic of pornography was potentially devastating for all of society. Similar to abortion, Muggeridge warned that the ethos of free sexual expression diverted impressionable women from the joys and duties of motherhood, the only 'true alternative to the indignities of female involvement in the gilded pigsty of prevailing erotomania' (in Spongberg, 1993, p.419).

While feminists were concerned about the objectification of women in all aspects of life, conservatives feared spirituality and love being decoupled from sex and pleasure among women, for free sex and its representation denied to women the truth about human relationships, that 'love and fulfilment begin where the exigencies of the body end' (Muggeridge in Spongberg, 1993, p.419). What Greer identified as women severed of their libidos in a process of neutering and domestication, conservatives cherished as a broader form of social control. The idea that pornography unleashed an ugly sexual drive in men was one with which Greer grappled as she ventured into its publication at a time when much pornography was preoccupied with sadomasochism, 'women bound, women gagged, women lashed to bedsteads, to wracks with whips, scourges, knouts, by other women' (Greer, 1986b, p.65). But in her Reichian analysis, the will to sadism was the result of 'a repressive upbringing', for 'nothing corrupts like virtue', and censorship itself. In her characteristically evocative prose Greer captured the dilemma of modern stunted sexuality as she understood it, that

censorship is the outward and continuing expression of this distortion of the human erotic faculty. It is the one public point at which we can join battle with what enslaves us.

Defiance of censorship is an emblem of the removal of the swaddling bands that have deformed our sexual personalities and it is our faith that they must be removed as absolutely as a first prerequisite of freedom and new growth. *But when leg-irons are first removed the prisoner cannot walk*

[Greer (1986a, p.57). Emphasis added.]

The child

In 1976 arguments about pornography changed radically, reflecting a newfound international concern for children, and this was one arena in which the American treatment of pornography held sway in Australia. The problem of child sexual abuse was named by feminist psychologist Florence Rush at a 1971 New York Radical Feminist conference on rape where most women were still grappling with the political and social meaning of the rape of adult women (Rush, 1980). Rush's theories about children were revolutionary and by the 1980s had come to shape mainstream understandings of child abuse as the 'best kept secret' of the family (Rush, 1980). The feminist identification of the sexual abuse of children aimed to rectify the damage of Freud who had influentially dismissed child abuse as fantasy, and to complicate the ascendancy of male-driven, Reichian inspired children's rights discourses promoting children's sexuality as ideally uninhibited. Books such as *The Erotic Minorities* (Ullerstam, 1967), *Sex Without Shame* (Yeats, 1978), *Your Child's Right to Sex* (Wells, 1976) and Richard Farson's *Birthrights* (Farson, 1974) argued for a child's right to sexual freedom, equal to adults, including the right to pornography (Farson, 1974, p.135), while the American Rene Guyon Society promoted its motto, 'sex before eight, or else it's too late' (Guyon, 1974).

In 1975 a clean-up of New York's Times Square in preparation for the Democrat Convention netted purveyors of child pornography, mostly selling Danish magazines, but with evidence America was involved in the international trade of photographs and films (O'Donnell & Milner, 2007, p.16). The combined effects of the recession of 1973–1975 and the influx of illegal drugs following the Vietnam-American War created a new class of children living on the streets of American cities. Journalist Robin Lloyd published a study of boy's prostitution, *For Money or Love?* claiming without verification that 300,000 American boys were engaged in commercial sex (Lloyd, 1976). The figure was seized on by Judianne Densen Gerber, founder of drug rehabilitation centre Odyssey House, who had been campaigning for years to draw attention to the physical abuse of children. Densen Gerber speculated that the number of girls engaged in prostitution must be double that of boys (Jenkins, 1998, pp.121–122). Within months *Time* magazine, *60 Minutes*, *Newsweek* and *Ms Magazine* ran stories about children and pornography, and the US federal government passed the Protection of Children Against Sexual Exploitation Act 1978 (Jenkins, 1998, p.122).

In the mainstream media girls' prostitution and under-age sex was explored with unprecedented interest, such as in the 1976 Scorsese film *Taxi Driver* starring Jodie Foster as a 12 year-old street-walker. In 1977 the French film *Bilitis* depicted a steamy lesbian coming of age drama about a teenage girl seduced by an adult woman, while in 1978 eleven

year-old Brooke Shields appeared nude as a child prostitute in *Pretty Baby*. *Christiane F*, the bestselling 1978 memoir of a West German teen addict and prostitute was published in America in 1982 in time for the cinematic adaptation featuring David Bowie as himself (*Christiane F*, 1982). In an indication that the interest extended beyond the screen, in 1978 fêted film director Roman Polanski fled America to avoid gaol after pleading guilty to unlawful sexual intercourse with a minor — 13 year-old Samantha Geimer, whom he seduced with drugs during a photo shoot for French *Vogue* magazine (*Romney*, 2008). Perceptions of the sexual climate were such that in 2010 Pope Benedict XVI attempted partly to explain abuse of children by Catholic clergy in the 1970s as occurring at a time when 'paedophilia was seen as a natural thing for men and children' (in *Kingston*, 2010). The media's 'discovery' of child pornography focused disproportionately on boys, however, leading Pat Califia to describe the 'great Kiddy-Porn panic of 1977' as part of a backlash against gains made by gays and lesbians throughout the decade, when the 'march towards civil rights was met by a tidal wave of hysteria over the issue of gay sex and kids', including a 'terrorist campaign' launched by the police against gay youths and their adult lovers (*Califia*, 1998, p.41). 1977 was also the year that Anita Bryant formed Save Our Children to overturn antidiscrimination legislation protecting gays and lesbians in the US.

In 1977 Densen Gerber toured Australia to promote Odyssey House and warn of the harms of child prostitution, drugs and the child pornography she identified as rampant in Australia, which the new Festival of Light Director, the Reverend Fred Nile, had been campaigning against since 1973 (*Sullivan*, 1997, pp.166–167). Densen Gerber's observations seemed to complement those of the new feminist-run women's shelters reporting young girls presenting as victims of sexual abuse, often within the family. And, while marginal when compared to the scale of America, Australia had its own problems with drugs and child homelessness. Police investigating Kings Cross establishments in 1977 reported that child prostitution involving boys and girls was openly practised by organised rings run out of clubs specialising in sex and drugs (*Reeves*, 2007, p.76). Child pornography was not explicitly addressed by the federal regime and in 1977 State ministers passed coordinated legislation to prohibit its distribution, display and production, signifying the first pro-censorship moves of the state since the regime had begun to fall apart in the 1960s (*Sullivan*, 1997, p.167). Nile assumed credit for the laws as part of his campaign to 'torpedo the plans of the "child liberation movement"' (*Nile*, 2001, p.111). In 1979, however, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) TV programme *Four Corners* reported that child pornography was still widespread, with some of it produced locally (*ABC TV*, 1979).

Traditional conservative arguments against pornography for adults, that it diminished loving sexual relationships between men and women thereby loosening the bonds of social control, were marginalised once conservatives realised that the child was key to their success. The 'discovery' of child pornography in 1976 coincided with the birth of home video, with both Beta and VHS systems introduced to the international market that year, although videos did not become popular in Australia until the 1980s. Festival of Light campaigners such as Nile and Mary Whitehouse of the UK swiftly appropriated widespread emotional concerns about children

in pornography to arguments against *all* pornography which might be accessible to children in their homes. More sophisticated arguments about pornography and the effects of public sex were further ignored by both the Left and the Right as the Festival of Light assumed the role of the guardians of public morality, intent on securing 'quality control' of culture and society. By 1978, the International Year of the Child when Whitehouse toured Australia to warn of 'video nasties', it was almost impossible to discuss pornography politically without reference to children. But the other campaigns of the Festival condemning homosexuality and abortion alienated many in the community. Professor of Political Science Henry Mayer lamented that the Festival's commandeering of the issue of pornography had made the 'whole debate about standards and possible censorship absurd and has made it harder for any reasonable literate person who lives in Australia and knows its work to take up the issues such as pornography, exploitation, violence and sadism' (*Mayer*, 1978, p.13).

Pornography as a state of injury

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s many Australian feminists remained sceptical about the anti-pornography campaigns of their American sisters and were busy protesting Nile and Whitehouse and their moralistic campaigns against gays and lesbians. Small groups of feminist activists staged actions outside sex shops and demonstrated against a *Playboy* exhibition at the Hogarth Gallery, while the organisers of the first Sydney Reclaim the Night march in 1979, mostly political lesbians, protested that pornography lay 'at the heart of women's oppression' (*O'Sullivan*, 1997, p.117). But those who debated the issue in the mainstream media and feminist press refused to accept the American case about the connections between pornography, rape and violence against women. In 1979 the ABC feminist radio programme *Coming out*, produced by Liz Fell, discussed the American campaigns but disparaged local Festival of Light agendas, concluding that the women's movement was 'about women expressing their own sexuality and not just about censoring' (*Plate*, 1995, p.193). The Sydney Scarlet Woman Collective hosted pornography viewing nights to explore the issues (*Jones*, 1999, pp.102–103) and in 1980 women's liberationists Sue Wills and Joyce Stevens undertook a tour of Kings Cross to investigate pornography and assess the American feminist critique of it. After watching a number of films including *Behind the Green Door* the pair concluded that while they differed in what they found erotic, they were united in their surprise at their mutual boredom and total absence of anger. The portrayal of women in television programmes and commercials angered them more. They found the American anti-pornography critique too simplistic, and insincere, because 'we must be sufficiently honest to admit that we are not always able to understand, let alone control, what or who we find sexually stimulating' (*Wills & Stevens*, 1980, p.6). Rosemary Pringle agreed that the relationship between fantasy and reality was complex and required further exploration before a feminist position on pornography could be formed, and warned against portraying women as victims of men's sexuality, or presenting feminism as anti-sex or in any way aligned with the politics of the Festival of Light (*Pringle*, 1981, p.3). Feminist philosopher

Elizabeth Gross noted that one the most frequent comments she encountered in Australian feminist discussions of pornography was a 'confession on the part of a number of women that, despite the fact that they know pornography is "ideologically unsound" they still feel turned on or vaguely aroused' by it (Gross, 1981, p.16).

It is a fact that pornography was not as widespread or overt in Australia as it was in America. Wills and Stevens observed that Sydney was 'not like New York. You cannot walk off the street into a publicly advertised movie house and see a snuff movie or pornographic movies that involve explicit violence against women' (1980, p.6). The pair also did not encounter any child pornography on their tour, although it was apparently available. But there was more to the Australian feminist ambivalence about pornography than its proliferation. The differences between much Australian and American feminism can be intimated from an occasion spoken of variously in bemused and hushed tones as 'The Mary Daly Incident', when in 1981 the American radical feminist toured Australia to promote her book *Gyn/Ecology*, one of the most influential of all American feminist texts. Daly's feminism assumed essential and innate differences between men and women, inspiring a strand of political lesbianism condemning pornography. Daly undoubtedly had a number of Australian fans, especially among women who eschewed men and heterosexuality, some of whom Dennis Altman identified as criticising gay men for a range of sexual practices including 'cruising, "anonymous sex" sadomasochistic games and pederasty, claiming that they are part of a patriarchal and objectifying approach to sex' (Altman, 1982, p.546). To socialist feminist academic Anne Curthoys, and many others, however, Daly appeared to position all men as the enemy and elevate women's 'nature' as spiritual if not divine (Curthoys, 1988, p.89), while dismissing the women's movement as 'male-designed, male-orchestrated, male-legitimated, male-assimilated' (Matthews, 1981, p.18). Daly's previous career as a theologian was not lost on many Australian women suspicious of religious arguments against sex and pornography.

Of the 700 women who attended Daly's presentation in Sydney, a number questioned her in a robust Australian style with which, by all accounts, she was unfamiliar. As a visiting American, Hester Eisenstein explained, 'hearing Mary Daly speak in the United States, I was accustomed to the kind of reverence that she invariably received from audiences there. The Sydney audience took a different approach, asking her tough questions.... The end result was explosive, with Daly losing her temper and the audience responding in kind' (in Genovese, 1996, p.146). The Australian interrogation of Mary Daly reflected the structuralist origins of much local feminism derived from socialism and libertarianism. For example, Curthoys characterised both Daly's and Brownmiller's theses about women, men, sex and rape, as ahistorical and irreparably hampered by the absence of class analysis or any engagement with the central question of feminism as she understood it — 'why do sexual division, inequality and power struggles occur?' (Curthoys, 1988, p.89). In London, ex-Push member, academic psychologist Lynne Segal wrote that she feared for the entirety of the women's movement because of the influence of American feminists extolling sexual difference such as Dworkin and Daly (Segal, 1987). Segal was so disturbed by feminist fascinations with pornography that

she published the anthology *Sex Exposed* (Segal, 1992, p.69) to warn that feminists were losing control of the 'setting of sexual agendas' to the conservative right, which had become more successful 'precisely through focusing on pornography and, especially in the USA, using the rhetoric and tactics of the feminist anti-pornography project'.

A Londoner since 1970, Segal's feminism bore the hallmarks of its Sydney origins. In its focus on anxiety, Segal's analysis of heterosexual pornography was reminiscent of Greer's evocative metaphor of a sexuality in leg irons. Segal described pornography as probably the image that meshed 'least, if at all' with men's actual experience of women. If this were so, 'then surely we cannot begin to address the appeal of and revulsion towards pornography without first grappling with the longings and discontents of both men and women around desire, especially as they connect with and disconnect from heterosexual desire' (Segal, 1992, p.69). It is telling that the only prominent Australian feminist expression of biological determinism at this time was one that argued for women's pornography — Beatrice Faust's eccentric and original *Women, Sex and Pornography* (Faust, 1980). Faust wrote of women's innate differences to men and therefore their need for their own forms of sexually explicit representation. Faust's biological determination was probably no more persuasive to local feminists than the theories of Daly, but her book provided a unique contribution to an already polarised and predictable international debate and, again, highlighted the radical libertarian vision of women's sexuality informing much Australian feminism.

Essentially, the feminism of Mary Daly and other Americans reflected a culturally specific hostility toward the state that mostly did not resonate in Australia — a contradiction that was implicated significantly in the treatment of pornography in each country. Daly warned of 'token feminists' pursuing reformist gains through the mechanism of the state, such as abortion rights and equal pay, who were undermining feminism by 'squellch[ing] the instinct to revolt and create radical change among women' (in Segal, 1987, pp.20–21). To use the words of Mandy Rice Davies, 'well she would say that, wouldn't she?', at a time when American feminist engagement with the state was flailing under concerted attack. In the USA anti-pornography feminism arose in the aftermath of economic recession impacting on women and significant conservative backlash in response to modest feminist gains made in the first half of the 1970s. In 1977 the Hyde Amendment disallowed the use of federal funds for abortion and the Equal Rights Amendment which would have 'made hundreds of discriminatory laws illegal' came under systematic attack ending in its defeat (Snitow, 1988, p.12). Reagan's 1980 election with the support of the new Moral Majority appeared terminal for state feminism, which had never had the opportunities to flourish forged by Australian women. Daly's contempt for feminists working with government, Dworkin and Brownmiller's rage on the streets, and MacKinnon's recourse to claims of individual redress for the harm of pornography all reflected the hostile state American feminists were forced to negotiate. The palpable outpouring of rage of American women directed at pornography might in part be understood as the rage of civil impotence and frustration. Hence anti-pornography feminism travelled more readily across the Atlantic to Thatcher's economically bedevilled Britain, than it did across the Pacific.

In contrast, in 1977 Australia was remarkably inured of the worst of the international recession and feminists appeared to continue to make headway with responsive governments. The Royal Commission into Human Relationships recommending free abortion and comprehensive sex education was handed down the same year that the NSW government introduced anti-discrimination legislation. Although Queensland remained a hostile conservative state, in South Australia the radical Dunstan Labor government was returned, while in NSW Premier Neville Wran staged a revolutionary forum on 'victimless crime' inviting women to testify about prostitution and other aspects of the Summary Offences Act. The treatment of prostitution by Wran and Australian feminists in the 1970s provides a compelling contrast to America where women were targeted and incarcerated for soliciting and feminists argued viciously over the nature of sex work, mirroring debates over pornography. Wran, in contrast, invited women to speak about their experiences of prostitution including police corruption, thereby giving rise to the birth of the prostitute's rights movement internationally, before agreeing to decriminalise soliciting – a move that set NSW apart from rest of the world. Australian feminists as diverse as sex workers, members of WEL, the NSW Women's Advisory Council and Women's Liberation testified in support of decriminalisation, many inspired by Anne Summers' argument that the continued colonisation of Australian women was perpetuated through the stereotype of 'damned whores', which women must resist (Francis & Gray, 2007, pp.307–324).

Wendy Brown's thesis about identities of 'states of injury' assumed by marginalised groups was developed in response to MacKinnon's anti-pornography arguments and remedies. Brown feared that in seeking legal recognition for pornography 'harms' and other products of women's 'historical deprivation of freedom', women might 'sustain the psychic residues of these histories as the animus of political institutions constitutive of our future' (Brown, 1995, p.29). That is, anti-pornography remedies *delivered by the state* might ascribe pornographic identities (as 'always and only sexually violable') to women – identities not only of sexuality, but of injury and victimhood (Brown, 1995, p.29). The reverse implication of this could be that women who deploy the state in an exercise of power might assume identities of empowerment. What is apparent is that feminists' engagement with the state informs the specifics of feminist agendas and outlooks. Clearly, the *identity* of American anti-pornography feminism had little currency in Australia, where much feminism was associated with affecting the state for change while avoiding where possible the conservative paternalism identified in policies such as censorship. The corresponding failure of religious conservatives to substantially capture the agenda of the state in Australia also contributed to the identity of local feminists not as *injured*, but as *victors*, such as when the Lusher motion to disallow Medibank Funds for abortion was defeated in 1979. In the 1980s Fred Nile and his associates had greater success in agenda setting, especially on the issue of pornography. But even so, there was no denying the ascendancy of the Femocrat throughout this decade during which, if anyone's 'state of injury' identity was heightened, it was those conservatives who perceived Armageddon looming in the 1984 passage of the Sex Discrimination Act and the 1986 liberalisation of abortion laws in 'God's own' Queensland.

Video regulation and beyond

The boom in home video sales changed the terms of the censorship debate again and in 1983 Labor Attorney General Gareth Evans agreed to video regulation, acknowledging that 'an absolute flood of this material, of varying degrees of salaciousness, unattractiveness and unacceptability, was circulating in the country and rapidly exploding' (Evans, 1984, p.1179). On consultation with the Minister assisting the Prime Minister for the Status of Women, Susan Ryan, and State women's advisers, Evans devised a compulsory classification scheme to make videos legally available to adults while providing consumer protection and prohibiting child pornography, bestiality and 'all sexual violence against non-consenting persons' (Evans, 1984, p.1182). An ordinance providing for the new X classification to apply to the sale of videos in the Commonwealth Territories was passed in 1984, with the understanding that the States would implement complementary systems to make sex videos available to adults nationwide. The conservative lobbies, uncharacteristically unprepared for the federal outcome, quickly organised to target the States. Conservative State parliamentarians, using the tactics of radical feminists, hosted pornography viewing nights, which would appear to have shown violent and therefore illegal videos as examples of mainstream pornography, 'sickening' MPs who mostly preferred to stare at the floor than watch (Thornton, 1985). One by one, each State Premier reneged on the agreement reached with the Commonwealth and banned the sale (although not the possession) of X rated videos (Thornton, 1985).

The introduction of the X classification galvanised local feminist opposition to pornography. The radical Women Against Violence and Exploitation held pornography information nights showing excerpts from films, including sadomasochism, but were dismissed as 'puritans' by feminists writing in the mainstream press (Horin, 1984, p.12). Feminist lawyer and deputy chair of the Victorian Law Reform Commission, Jocelyne Scutt returned from America to promote a 'human rights approach' to pornography inspired by MacKinnon (Scutt, 1998). The NSW Women's Advisory Council partly informed Wran's decision to ban X rated videos, based on concerns about depictions of sex and violence, and a number of academic accounts have therefore suggested that women's groups drove this censorship (e.g. McKee, Albury, & Lumby, 2008; Sullivan, 1997). But feminist arguments situating pornography in a broad analysis of the sexism of the media and advertising were utterly unpersuasive to government. Scutt shaped some rhetoric of the political debate as she published numerous press articles and addressed a number of public meetings including one of over 2000 people in Canberra (Reid, 1984, p.1222). But her approach was never considered seriously by the government or feminist parliamentarians. Susan Ryan was keenly aware that censorship was not an ALP position, or one that she personally supported (Ryan, 2012). Instead Ryan acknowledged the concerns of many women in the community when she agreed that the outcomes of the new video regime should be monitored. A flourishing mail-order business developed from the Territories supplying residents of the States legal X rated videos, which also proliferated in blackmarket conditions in all States, whereby prohibited content is regularly

sold alongside (illegal) X classified material with little guidance for consumers (Vnuk, 2003).

Under the Keating Labor government (1992–1996) technological advancements drove censorship reforms and recommendations as committees were formed to address phone sex, Pay TV and computer games, with some commentators noting a creeping conservatism in government decisions and appointments during this time (e.g. Vnuk, 2003). In 1996 Keating changed the name of the Censorship Board to the Classification Board and introduced the National Classification Scheme (NCS) as a cooperative arrangement between the federal, state and territory governments to enable the Classification Board to classify films, computer games and certain publications for sale and display. In parliament, from 1984 Harradine and other conservatives intensified their campaign against pornography, arguing it 'ought to be wiped out. It should not exist' (Harradine, 1984, p.1168). In 2000 Harradine sabotaged the government's policy to replace the X classification with that of NVE (nonviolent erotica), aimed to be more representative of content. He also succeeded in tightening the guidelines for permissible content in X and was implicated in the Howard government's decision to ban Australian hosted phone sex lines and X rated internet sites (Vnuk, 2003), both of which immediately moved offshore, earning Australia the tag of 'global village idiot' from American Civil Liberties Union president Nadine Strossen (Taggart, 1999).

The early 1990s marked a peak in grassroots feminist activism against sexist imagery in advertising and magazines, culminating in the 1993 decision by NSW magistrate Pat O'Shane to dismiss criminal charges against four women for defacing a billboard depicting a woman sawn in half (Salsinszky, 2007). Theatrical 'girl power' actions and women's revenge fantasies such as those immortalised in the 1991 movie *Thelma and Louise* were the order of the day, and a number of contemporary accounts of pornography in Australia focus on this fleeting historical moment (e.g. Lumby, 1997; Sparrow, 2012b; Vnuk, 2003). The migration of Sheila Jeffreys from the UK to Australia saw a minor migration of British political lesbian activism, evident in Jeffreys protesting, along with Renate Klein and Denise Thompson, the 1993 visit of Gayle Rubin and Carole Vance to the Australian National University (Rubin, 2011, p.35). But for the most part, at this time Australian debates about sexism and feminism were subsumed into prevailing 'culture wars' about political correctness, while academic women's studies courses fell victim to post-structuralism and the new discipline of media studies assumed the position of the vanguard of pornography debates. The focus of academic feminism had 'shifted: language was the new battleground, theory was queen and the emphasis was squarely on the triumvirate of bodies, sex and power' (Dux & Simic, 2008, p.9). From 1996 state feminism also came under assault, from the Howard government under the guise of 'governing for the mainstream' and the dismantling of federal women's bureaus and services (Summers, 2003).

Australia arguably never had a 'pornography debate'. Early struggles against censorship championed a free press, including sexual expression, but mainly as a symbol of broader defiance (Bacon, 2011, p.17). Ambivalence about pornography and a mortal fear of censorship meant that feminists did not drive a debate in Australia. Although some in the women's

movement grappled thoughtfully with questions about the meaning of sex and its representation, it is notable that Greer and Segal's contributions were made after both had emigrated to the UK. The Festival of Light's commandeering of the issue also stymied debate among feminists and reflective conservatives and academics who, like Henry Mayer, found the prevailing apocalyptic discourses alienating and embarrassing. Since the 1990s academic pornography debates have taken place mostly within media studies, informed by post-structuralist accounts of the diffusion of meanings in images, and intent on establishing distance from American feminist dichotomies. In 2008 media expert Catharine Lumby and colleagues published *The Porn Report*, based on a study of consumers of X rated videos, but did not address the question of the proliferation of pornography (or 'pornification') driving current concerns (McKee et al., 2008). Any contemporary political debate about pornography must come to terms with the phenomenon described variously as the 'mainstreaming of sex' and the 'sexualisation of western culture' (Attwood, 2009). This mainstreaming may be inferred from the fashions and posturing of some young women documented by Ariel Levy; the proliferation of online pornography, both 'home grown' and commercial and the accompanying de-stigmatisation of pornographic motifs in media such as music videos. It also includes the normalisation of the sex industry; the intrusion of deregulated advertising into public spaces such as billboards; and the application of advertising standards to commercial media.

The question of mainstreamed sex and pornography is ultimately a very complex question about market regulation amid the hegemony of neoliberalism in the age of the internet and mobile imaging technology. Essentially, pornography effectively distills one fundamental question of neoliberal governance, which is, 'who may sell what to whom?'. However, a lack of significant feminist theoretical engagement with pornography in Australia has meant that governments have had little feminist analysis on which to draw, while rhetorical campaigns about 'pornification' blurring concerns about women, girls, marketing, pornography and child sexual abuse have overwhelmed the popular discourse. Unfortunately, debate over the meaning of ubiquitous sexual imagery and the proper role of the state in its regulation continues to be hampered by the distraction of concern for children, a related but separate political issue. Since the 1970s fears mobilised for children at the hands of capitalism and adult sexuality have proven effective at gaining hasty political responses, but this has come at the expense of nuanced debate about men, women and sexual representation. Children were the Trojan political horse of 1970s censorship debates and in the post September 11 epoch this trend intensified. Therefore, here I deviate briefly from discussions of pornography to a discussion of concerns about the 'sexualisation of children'.

Mainstreaming sex after September 11

The 2006 *Corporate Paedophilia* report was inspired by a concept developed by broadcaster Phillip Adams in 1995 to describe the 'abuse of children' in the 'targeting of ever-younger children by marketers determined to turn kids into customers' (Adams, 2006). But the Australia Institute at the direction of academic and public ethicist Clive Hamilton broadened the metaphor to implicate contemporary advertising

and marketing in the *sexual abuse of children*, claiming that commercial, 'sexualised' images of children might encourage children to initiate sexual behaviours at an early age, and could 'play a role in "grooming" children for paedophiles' (Rush & La Nauze, 2006). Main foci included magazines and products marketed to 'tweens' and clothing catalogues. Retailer David Jones initiated legal action against the Institute after being named in association with paedophilia, but the case did not proceed (Barlow, 2008). The alarmist tone of the Report mirrored that of a 2003 Australia Institute Report addressing children's access to internet pornography, *Regulating Youth Access to Pornography*, which first proposed mandatory filtering of all Australian Internet Service Providers (Flood & Hamilton, 2003), a policy that became a 2007 election promise of the Labor Party. Both reports appeared to reflect a growing anxiety within the community about portable imaging technology such as cameras in mobile phones and political deliberation about the policing of images of children taken in public spaces, which lacked a discursive framework, or common language, for public debate (Albury & Lumby, 2010). This anxiety crystallised in response to the use of a photograph of a naked 12 year-old girl taken by Australian artist Bill Henson to advertise an exhibition at the Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery in May 2008, when Henson's proper title as 'artist' or 'paedophile' was thrashed through tabloid driven debate (Albury & Lumby, 2010). For some, the naming of the problem as the 'sexualisation of children' appeared to complement observations of Levy's and others about adult women's sexuality in an age of deregulated capitalism and the hyper-media culture of the USA. In Australia, debates about technology such as mobile phones and the internet, marketing to children, pornography, women's sexual identity and practices, eating disorders and the sexual abuse of children were rolled into one sloganistic concern. That was the 'pornification of everything' – a fear promulgated most effectively by Melinda Tankard Reist, who continues Harradine's crusade to 'wipe out' pornography.

For Tankard Reist, fears about children, pornography, sexual abuse and violence were provided the opportunity to coalesce on the release of the 2007 *Little Children are Sacred Report* [Ampe Akelyernemane Meke Mekarle] documenting the sexual abuse of children in remote aboriginal communities. The report of the Board of Inquiry into the Protection of Aboriginal Children from Sexual Abuse was used as justification for the Howard government's Northern Territory National Emergency Response. The policy known as 'The Intervention' involved changes to welfare provision, law enforcement, land rights and other measures forced on residents of remote communities. It was passed with bipartisan support in parliament in the lead-up to the 2007 federal election, including amendments to the Racial Discrimination Act. Although many conditions outlined in the report had been known for years, Howard's rhetoric of emergency and the salvation of innocents had currency in the post September 11 era when the invasion of Afghanistan was justified as saving women and children from the barbarism of their own culture. A prohibition on the possession of pornography in communities was enforced as part of The Intervention because 'blue movies' were named by some residents as implicated in the abuse of children, girls' early sexualisation and prostitution (FaHCSIA, 2011). Large signs advertising alcohol and pornography bans erected at the entrance of prescribed communities reportedly shamed and

labelled aboriginal people as 'alcoholics and paedophiles', but have had 'no useful effect' on residents (FaHCSIA, 2011).

In response to *Little Children are Sacred*, Tankard Reist appropriated the testimonies of aboriginal women about children's exposure to pornography as evidence that 'pornography feeds and legitimises violence against women and children of all backgrounds' to demand that the federal government ban the distribution of X rated videos throughout Australia (Tankard Reist, 2007. Emphasis added). Publicity given to the revelations of *Little Children are Sacred* continued to fuel political anxiety about the arguably unrelated concern of the sexualisation of children in the media. In the month after its release, the Australian Democrats raised the issue of child sexualisation in the Senate, prompting the formation of the 2008 Senate Committee to inquire and report on the Sexualisation of Children in the Contemporary Media Environment. Questions about pornography, the sexual abuse of children and commercial marketing to children were further blurred in the public mind, while the fundamental question of the regulation of advertising and the media was debated by the Committee. Tankard Reist furthered confusion by publicly suggesting the Committee should focus not solely on children, but produce recommendations by which to 'stop the de-meaning of women, the objectification of women in the media and popular culture, which also impacts on sexualised views that children get of themselves, particularly of women' (ABC TV, 2008). WFA's submission to the Inquiry cited *Little Children are Sacred* to argue for the urgent implementation of internet filtering and a continued ban on pornography as part of The Intervention (WFA, 2008), but Tankard Reist's main target was the Advertising Standards Board. The Committee's recommendations in 2008, to continue to allow the media to self-regulate, were derided by Hamilton and Tankard Reist, with Hamilton describing them as 'thrash[ing] the advertising industry with a feather' (in Cowan, 2008). The voluntary adoption of prohibitions against sexualised depictions of children by the Australian Association of National Advertisers was similarly met with cynicism (ABC TV, 2008).

The proper role of government regulation of media continues to be contested. In the years following *Corporate Paedophilia* questions of media, information technology and entertainment regulation drove numerous government inquiries against the backdrop of debates over the government's planned internet filter, first proposed by Hamilton. Recent inquiries include those into the classification of computer games, billboard advertising, a review of the Refused Classification category for mandatory internet service provider filtering, and a Joint Select Committee on cyber safety. These culminated in the 2010 Senate Inquiry into the National Classification Scheme regulating film and publications (the NCS) – the product of conservative dissatisfaction with the government's response to the 2008 sexualisation of children inquiry. In June 2011 the Senate Committee headed by conservative Liberal Senator Guy Barnett made 30 recommendations including that the NCS be overhauled and, incidentally, that X rated movies be banned, as recommended by CollectiveShout (2011a). But the government had already handed the question of the NCS to the Australian Law Reform Commission (ALRC) for review and recommendations. CollectiveShout testified to the ALRC 'we are concerned about the lack of effective enforcement

through sufficiently serious penalties to deter those who are making a profit from the pornification of women and girls' and again recommended a ban on X rated movies (CollectiveShout, 2011b). CollectiveShout has apparently broadened its interests to include *literature*. It recommended the adoption of an NCS with the 'primary objective' of reducing the prevalence and availability of material 'in all media, which contains images or words that reduce women to sex objects....' (CollectiveShout, 2011b. Emphasis added). In March 2012 the ALRC reported its findings, recommending a new uniform classification system. But rather than banning X rated movies, it suggested some existing prohibitions in adult films (such as the depiction of sexual fetishes) be reviewed with a view to their relaxation (ALRC, 2012).

The campaign to 'wipe out' X rated movies begun by Harradine in 1984 has made little progress beyond the initial exiling of adult videos to the Territories (although now no longer within indigenous communities), a tightening of permissible content in 2000 and the periodic incarceration and fining of those who breach the regime (Sparrow, 2012a). However, in contrast, the nebulous contemporary discourse of 'pornification' has significantly shaped public debate and affected other arenas, such as changing the practices of retailers marketing to children, the content of advertising billboards, and most significantly, the ways restricted adult magazines are classified and displayed for sale (Gayle, 2009, pp.179–192) — a success that might be credited to Tankard Reist's strategy of coalition building. In a boost to her credibility, Tankard Reist has skilfully forged alliances, not so frequently with feminists, but to embrace men like Hamilton: credible, leftist, suspicious of the free market, self-described as once a 'card carrying member of the protest generation' but now regretful (Neil, 2010), and willing to blur concerns for children and women in pursuing an agenda. Collaborating with Tankard Reist in *Getting Real*, Hamilton identified the problem of child sexualisation as an outcome not of the market per se, but of the 'sexual freedom' once championed by baby-boomers such as himself under the aegis of the sexual revolution. Arguing for a reinstatement of 'sexual self restraint' among adults, Hamilton claims that the removal of 'most taboos and social prohibitions on sexual activity has led to a highly sexualised society in which erotic imagery and sex talk are to be found everywhere in both private and public life' (Hamilton, 2009, p.90).

Hamilton's analysis implicates a cult of individualism as the 'ethical basis of both free market libertarianism and the social demands of the sexual revolution' in children's sexualisation within the media (Hamilton, 2009, p.85). But his argument extends beyond questions of children and marketing to existential fears for meaning and identity for *adults* in the contemporary age, that unlimited sexual expression of *individuals* (not corporations) has become 'bound up with notions of freedom to the point where, for many people, it provides the path they follow in order to find and validate themselves' (Hamilton, 2009, p.85). It is this fear for human identity and meaning under capitalism that informs Ariel Levy's concerns about raunch culture providing social status for young women, and Tankard Reist's claim that today's girls believe that their 'bodies are the most valuable thing that they have to offer the world' (Tankard Reist, 2008, p.10). All three commentators share an unarticulated disquiet about

the *social meaning* of sex, particularly of women within the contemporary deregulated economy. But unfortunately, it is *this* important concern about identity and meaning that is lost in today's pornography debates which continue to be derailed by fears for children and the incoherent and unassailable slogan the 'pornification of everything'. A lack of significant Australian feminist engagement with pornography arguments has meant that this discourse has gone largely uninterrogated on feminist principles, especially in the media and within government inquiries.

One example of international feminist counter analysis that *could* be applied to Australia, to try to make sense of the relationships between sex and identity for women in today's 'post feminist society' is the work of Angela McRobbie. McRobbie identifies a new sexual contract crucial to the function of neoliberalism, facilitating women living as individual consumers and workers so they may perform as 'economically active female citizens' (McRobbie, 2010, p.85). This contract is dependent on the discourses of post-feminism that discourage women appealing to the state to provide for their equality, instead promoting the individualistic, materialistic ethos of consumption, acquisition and pleasure as a measure of personal social success and contentment. The aesthetic of a 'pornified' sexuality is also, arguably, central to the contract, which is supported by the promotion of contraception and 'responsible' (non procreative) sexual practices and the widespread vilification of young mothers. As McRobbie explains, so long as she 'does not procreate while enjoying casual and recreational sex, the young woman is entitled to pursue sexual desire seemingly without punishment. Indeed the appropriate uses of sexual pleasure are prescribed within the many manuals and forms of instruction which constitute the terms and conditions of this new sexual contract' (McRobbie, 2010, p.85). The proliferation of pornography and a 'pornified' sexual standard is not merely a function of men's 'sexual hatred', or the intrusion of the market into private practices in search of profit. It might also contribute to sustaining the marketplace in its entirety, in encouraging women's identities as sexually unencumbered and foremost free to work and consume. But as McRobbie asks, if feminists do not 'step into the public arena' to debate these issues, who other than conservative Christians will? (McRobbie, 2008, p.30).

Although unnamed, a fear of the new sexual contract of neoliberalism is evident in Tankard Reist's critique of abortion in today's society that is 'blasé about unfettered sexual intercourse', in which

its natural result, unplanned pregnancy, has become a social taboo and of itself a justification of abortion. The onus on a woman to keep herself out of this predicament has become, perversely, the only new sexual moral imperative. If she hasn't neutered herself with hormonal contraception or her contraception fails, then she must pay the price

[Tankard Reist (2001, p.11).]

Just as for Malcolm Muggeridge in the 1970s, for Tankard Reist the connections between pornography and abortion are clear in what each offers women — a deviation from motherhood and loving, procreative sexuality. But as with many conservatives preceding her, Tankard Reist's flamboyant

rhetoric of emergency, crisis, danger and pornography as necessarily 'hateful', and the authority with which she is received as speaking for women and children as one entity, has all but silenced debate about the role of sex and its representation under neoliberalism in Australia.

Conclusion

Many feminists remain critical of pornography, especially its proliferation. At the beginning of the American pornography wars Ellen Willis freely acknowledged that most existing pornography was abysmal for women, while vigorously opposing anti-pornography feminism and censorship (Willis, 1973). In 2000, as the mainstreaming of sex was becoming apparent, in one of her numerous recantations Greer described the spread of pornography as 'a poison in our culture'. She wrote, what 1960s sex reformers (presumably including herself) 'thought they were liberating was people's desire to pleasure each other; what they were not prepared for was the intensity of the need that many people have to hurt each other, and even to harm each other, if they are to get any closer to their own brain-sucking orgasm also known as "great sex"' (Greer, 2000). Naomi Wolf has warned that the 'onslaught of porn is responsible for deadening male libido in relation to real women, and leading men to see fewer and fewer women as "porn-worthy"' (Wolf, 2004). But neither Wolf nor Greer advocates censorship or Tankard Reist's argument that there is no 'safe degree' of pornography (ABC News, 2011). Nor do they conflate concerns for women and children. It is this tactic of apparently infantilising women that disturbs Australian feminists such as Jennifer Wilson who oppose the work of Tankard Reist (Wilson, 2012). Tankard Reist's habit of portraying those who disagree with her as having a 'vested interest' in the sex industry is also unhelpful (in Krohn, 2011).

Opposition to Tankard Reist often stems from an objection to her characterising the lives and activities of young women as terminally desecrated by pornography. Lynne Segal voiced this criticism of MacKinnon in 1992, that she denied the successes of women's liberation and risked appearing to urge 'all of us to crawl right back into our shells' because it is safer 'to stay put, to seek protection, because there is no change in men's eternal and ubiquitous oppression of women' (Segal, 1992, pp.353–365). Twenty years later, the many further gains of young women, especially in education and employment outcomes, are invisible in Tankard Reist's polemic. Some feminists also object to the apparent assumptions of Tankard Reist about men's sexuality and its easy corruption as 'hateful' by pornography — assumptions that appear to echo archaic conservative caricatures of dangerous hydraulic sex drives, extended now to suggest that men may be debauched by the sight of children in clothing catalogues. Still, Tankard Reist has forged productive alliances with some feminists including Renate Klein, MacKinnon and Gail Dines, who continue to perform radical rhetorical demolitions of heterosexuality under capitalism. But the capacity for this approach to make significant inroads in regulation remains doubtful. As Tankard Reist has experienced, bipartisan support for grassroots campaigns against 'sexualisation' comes to little when pitted against the dominant political religion of the profit imperative of industry self-regulation. In November 2012, after five years

of policy development, the Gillard Labor government announced that it would not proceed with mandatory internet filtering legislation (Coorey, 2012). While the legislative outcomes of the campaign against 'pornification' are few (within non-indigenous jurisdictions), what is lost in this climate is the discursive space for sophisticated analyses like those of Germaine Greer, Lynne Segal and Wendy Brown, asking what is it that pornography represents about sexuality and desire, their historic containment and its association with modern power structures such as neoliberalism. Despite the unique creative pedigree of Australian feminist approaches to pornography, such analyses appear fantastically out of reach in contemporary Australia.

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