

The Pop Culture of Sex: An Evolutionary Window on the Worlds of Pornography and Romance

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Pornography and romance, at first glance they seem to be two genres that are almost polar opposites. Yet both are the products of our evolved human sexuality and both have been the subjects of a variety of authors and researchers. Particularly in the case of pornography, some have argued strongly against its very existence, charging it, its creators and consumers with many of the evils in the world (real and imagined). In the case of romance, many have been derogatory and dismissive of the writers' skills and the readers' minds. In this article, I hope to introduce a different approach to these genres, through an evolutionary lens that serves to illuminate the way in which our sexual natures combined with modern technology to create such widespread distribution and sales. Romance and pornography are both multibillion dollar industries, and their stark contrasts reflect the deep divide at the heart of male and female erotic fantasies. These differences reflect the fact that the selection pressures males and females faced in the reproductive realm over human evolutionary history were not identical.

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Mention pornography in the United States, and in other countries as well, and you typically get a very strong opinion, either in favor or against. It is bad for men, it is bad for women, it is harmless, it is addictive, it is a waste of money, it is offensive . . . and the list goes on. Most of these claims are made without good data; some are made without any reliable data at all. And all of them are ignoring some more fundamental questions. Why is pornography appealing to men? And what aspects are essential to its appeal? Why is it not as interesting to women? After all, males and females are equally sexual in nature in a sexually reproducing species such as ourselves. Why do women prefer tales of romance (in their many different modern forms, not just novels published by Harlequin or Mills and Boon but *Sleepless in Seattle* or *Twilight*) and are there interesting individual differences here? To answer these questions requires a different approach than that taken by much of the literature on either genre.

These genres do have a significant cultural impact, even though they often do not receive much respect in an artistic sense. Commercial pornography exists in every industrialized society and in many developing ones as well. Worldwide sales of sexual explicit magazines, books, and DVDs/Internet pay sites are estimated at over \$97 billion (Ropelato, 2006). With the success of Netflix, adult versions of the DVD rental and streaming sites have sprung up all over the Internet. Pornography revenue in the United States (13.3 billion in 2006) is greater than the combined revenues of ABC, CBS, and NBC (Cronin, 2008). In 2005, Playboy Enterprises reported revenue of over \$338 million while Vivid Entertainment (one of the largest U.S. adult video producers) reported

revenues of \$100 million. Between 10,000 and 15,000 pornographic films are made annually in the United States (Cronin, 2008).

Arcand (1991) suggested that it is "essential to know whether there is such a thing as pornography consumed exclusively by women, and whether it is fundamentally different from that preferred by men" (p. 49). The answer to his question is, in a sense, yes, the romance novel is pornography consumed by women. Romance novels account for 13.2% of mass market paperback sales in the United States, more than twice that of science fiction/fantasy or mysteries. Over 9,000 new titles were published in 2009 alone and annual sales accounted for over \$1.3 billion that year (Norris & Pawlowski, 2010). Romances are also a leading category in the rapidly expanding e-book format. In the United States, there are 29 million regular romance readers (http://www.rwa.org/cs/readership_stats). Toronto based Harlequin Enterprises Limited, the world's largest publisher of romance novels, publishes over 100 titles a month with books published in 32 languages sold around the world (Harlequin, 2010), which is a testament to the cross-cultural appeal of the genre.

Nonevolutionary Perspectives

Pornography

One common approach to explaining pornography is the feminist one, though there really is not one feminist approach. For simplicity's sake, I mention at least two at opposite ends of the spectrum of feminist perspectives, the traditional one (as seen in Dworkin, 1989; MacKinnon, 1989) and the neo-feminist one (McElroy, 1995; Paglia, 1994).

The aim of the traditional feminist perspective has clearly not been to examine why men enjoy pornography but to use it as "proof" of men oppressing women. The arguments are made that

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pornography is morally wrong, that it is degrading to women, and that it not only leads to violence against women, it is in itself violence against women. The point of this paper is not to refute these arguments though I discuss the issue of degradation later. It is worth pointing out that the arguments from this perspective do nothing to explain the popularity of pornography among men; they merely argue that it should be banned. In addition, with regard to violence against women, in all cases where it has been scientifically investigated, as pornography has increased in availability, sex crimes have either decreased or stayed at the same level, not increased (M. Diamond, 2009).

Neo-feminists Paglia (1994) and McElroy (1995) have held a different view of pornography from the traditional feminists. Rather than argue that pornography needs to be banned, McElroy argued that pornography actually benefits women both personally and politically. It does so through providing sexual information, allowing for a fantasy world where women are free to explore sex without the emotional baggage of the real world, it breaks down sexual stereotypes, and can provide sexual therapy. Paglia suggested that pornography empowers women, freeing them from social prudery and restrictions. In her book *Vamps and Tramps*, Paglia wrote,

MacKinnon and Dworkin detest pornography because it symbolized everything they did not understand and could not control about their own bodies. Current feminism, with its antiscience and social constructionist bias, never thinks about nature. Hence it cannot deal with sex, which begins in the body and is energized by instinctual drives. . . . Pornography, which erupts into the open in periods of personal freedom, shows the dark truth about nature, concealed by the artifices of civilization. Pornography is about lust, our animal reality that will never be fully tamed by love. Lust is elemental, aggressive, asocial. Pornography allows us to explore our deepest, most forbidden selves. (p. 108)

The debate between feminists has rarely focused on research data, rather it has focused on philosophical arguments. The question of whether viewing pornography leads to violence against women was first raised by feminists and taken up by researchers from a variety of disciplines. And it is still a debated question despite the amount of research done to date. There has been a great deal of work on the issue of negative attitudes toward women on the part of men after viewing pornography. However, in 1997, Davies (1997) claimed that men who viewed sexually explicit films did not have negative attitudes toward women's rights, nor were they more accepting of marital or date rape. At least one examination of convicted sex offenders' experiences with pornography concluded that they did not differ from those of other incarcerated males (Marshall, 1989). A recent review of the relationship between the availability of pornography, its acceptance, and sex crimes reported that as pornography has increased in availability in a wide variety of countries, sex crimes have either decreased or remained the same (M. Diamond, 2009). A recent Czech Republic study produced the same results (M. Diamond, Jozifova, & Weiss, 2011). It is also worth mentioning that sexual violence is fairly uncommon in pornography, despite the frequent claims of its detractors (Monk-Turner & Purcell, 1999). Sweden and Denmark, countries with high gender equality and low levels of violence against women, have some of the most liberal attitudes toward pornography (Kutchinsky, 1991). In the United States,

those states with the greatest gender inequality, also happen to have the lowest circulation of pornography (Baron, 1990). Other researchers have argued for (and demonstrated in experimental laboratory settings) an association between pornography consumption and attitudes supporting violence against women (Malamuth & Huppert, 2005), though that majority of such studies have suggested that these negative effects only occur in a small proportion of men who already have hostile attitudes toward women (in other words, the attitudes predate the pornography viewing and are perhaps exacerbated by it). Hald and Malamuth's (2008) study of young Danish men and women found that participants viewed pornography as beneficial to their sex lives and attitudes toward the opposite sex.

What all of these studies largely fail to attend to is why men find pornography appealing to watch in the first place. Paglia (1994) alluded to the fact that there is something elementary or basic in the appeal of pornography. What is the source of this appeal? What ancestral adaptations are being triggered or tapped into by modern day pornography? Without understanding the answers to these questions, we cannot truly understand the impact or relevance of pornography.

Romance

Much of the analysis of romance novels has been either social-cultural or traditional feminist inspired. Camp (1997) suggested that romance appeals to women because they teach about nurturing and achieving success or rewards, whereas feminist scholars such as Brownmiller (1976) claimed that male conditioning is responsible for women's enjoyment of romance, and in particular, the sex in romance novels. Others have claimed they are a venue for rebellion against male authority (Modleski, 1980). Other critics have focused on the impact the portrayal of women in romances has on readers. They have suggested that "romances don't help women to change their lives" and that "romances are subversive of women's lives, [they] encourage readers to succumb to stereotypical patterns that pacify and obscure women's legitimate frustrations in the performance of traditional roles . . . and encourage dependency on men and reinforce female passivity" (Mussell, 1984, p. 107). This is quite a different perspective from the female empowerment view, in which women are seen as seducing and transforming men.

Some researchers also have been interested in the romance readers themselves and if anything distinguishes them from women who do not read romances. Radway (1984) conducted an ethnography of an American romance readers club and found the female members were acutely aware of men's tastes for impersonal sex and sexual variety, and were unhappy with those tastes. They did not want to adopt men's standards, either in real life or in their erotica; they wanted men to adopt their standards. Coles and Shamp (1984) compared romance readers and nonreaders on a variety of personality and demographic traits and found no differences between the groups except that readers engaged in sexual intercourse more frequently than nonreaders and were more likely to use fantasies to enhance intercourse. Of course, these explanations and the few studies conducted with romance readers add relatively little to our understanding of why romance has been such a popular genre for women over time and in so many different cultures, as seen in the widespread distribution and translation of romances today. There is one exception—Helen Hazen's (1983)

underappreciated book *Endless Rapture* in which she argued that all women's fiction explores the same basic themes: the problems inherent in finding, acquiring, and retaining a suitable mate.

Why Take an Evolutionary Perspective?

There is great value in using an evolutionary lens to examine pornography and romance. Both are genres that involve the mating domain and the problem of choosing mates well was an adaptive problem faced by men and women across our history as a species. Potential mates vary in "mate value," or what they can contribute to a union. For example, an 18-year-old woman, on average, would have greater mate value than a 50-year-old woman. The 18-year-old has lots of child producing years ahead of her whereas the 50-year-old has little to none. Physically strong and skilled men would contribute more resources, and have higher mate value, than those that trip over their own feet and cannot catch dinner to save their life. As a result natural selection has shaped psychological adaptations specialized to process information about mate quality. And those adaptations are somewhat different for men and women because the specific information useful to mate choice is different between the sexes. For men, the attractiveness of a female is largely influenced by cues of fertility and reproductive value (Confer, Perilloux, & Buss, 2010; Symons, 1995) such as the shape of her body including both her waist-to-hip ratio and her body mass index (Platek & Singh, 2010; Schmalt, 2006; Singh, 1993), the quality of her hair and skin (Hinsz, Matz, & Patience, 2001; Sugiyama, 2005)—all cues of youth and fertility. When men are focused on long-term mating, other traits also come into play, such as indicators of sexual fidelity (Buss & Schmitt, 1993), so that they will not be faced with the problems of paternity uncertainty and raising another man's children as their own. However pornography, as I discuss later, is focused on short-term mating, where fertility and indicators of sexual promiscuity (in which men do not have to invest a great deal to obtain a variety of mates) are the cues males attend to. For short-term mating to be a successful strategy, which males have a generally greater desire for (Symons, 1979; Trivers, 1972) because of the possible reproductive pay-off, there must be a variety of young, willing women available.

For ancestral women, the fertility of their mates was not a primary concern. Rather, the greater minimal investment required by women (Trivers, 1972) in an offspring means that she must be highly selective in her choice of a long-term mate. In particular, the male who will be contributing his sperm must also be willing and capable of contributing the resources required to successfully raise any children produced. As a result, female mating adaptations are sensitive to cues that a male is capable of providing economic resources, or has good prospects for doing so in the future (Buss, Shackelford, Kirkpatrick, & Larsen, 2001; Kenrick, Sadalla, Groth, & Trost, 1990). They also exhibit preferences for men of high status (Li, 2007), which is typically associated with access to resources, as well as men who are dependable (Buss et al., 1990) and demonstrate a willingness to invest in children (La Cerra, 1994; Roney, Hanson, Durante, Maestripieri, 2006). Physical height and strength are also seen as desirable (Courtiol, Ramond, Godelle, & Ferdy, 2010; Hughes & Gallup, 2003), as well as indicators of genetic quality such as facial symmetry and masculinity (Gangestad & Thornhill, 1998; Rhodes, 2006; Thornhill & Gangestad, 2006). The romance novel, unlike male-oriented por-

nography, is focused on the domain of long-term mating and as such is focused on the selective nature of female choice.

Pornotopia: Its Appeal and Essential Nature

The male fantasy world that is depicted in mainstream pornography, dubbed *pornotopia* by Steven Marcus, has remained essentially unchanged over time. If you watch "vintage" pornography footage, you see pretty much the same activities as you do today. The biggest differences are in the production quality and hair and clothing styles. Sex in pornotopia is all about lust and physical gratification, without courtship, commitment, mating effort or long-term relationships. In pornotopia, women are eager to have sex with strangers, easily sexually aroused and always orgasmic. Pornographic films contain minimal plot development; rather the focus is on the sex acts themselves, with an emphasis on the display of female bodies, especially close-ups of sexually aroused facial expressions, breasts, and genitals. The content of the majority of the footage is pretty much entirely sex acts, including "lesbianism, group sex, anal intercourse, oral-genital contact, and visible ejaculation" (Hebditch & Anning, 1988, p. 49). Nonsexual interpersonal behavior is basically nonexistent. A content analysis of 50 random films reveals fellatio as the most frequent act, followed by vaginal intercourse, with cunnilingus a distant third (Brosius, Weaver, & Staab, 1993). Sex scenes typically culminate with a male ejaculating on a female's body (Salmon & Symons, 2001). The fact that videos and DVDs, as well as more recently the Internet, have so completely dominated male-oriented erotica reflects the deeply visual nature of male sexuality. Men tend to be easily aroused by visual stimuli, and as a consequence, pornography does not require the existence of a point of view character (a narrator through whose eyes we see the rest of the characters and interpret their actions) to be effective. Scenes of a woman masturbating alone or engaging in sexual activity with another woman are quite common. Female pornography stars exhibit cues of high mate value; they are young and physically attractive. In the end, pornotopia is a fantasy world of low cost, impersonal sex with an endless parade of lusty, gorgeous, always orgasmic women (Salmon, 2004).

Romance: A World of Female Mate Choice

Although the romance novel has been referred to as pornography for women, it is really in many ways the opposite of male-oriented pornography. The goal of the romance is never sex for its own sake, much less impersonal sex with strangers. At the heart of the romance novel plot is a love story in which the heroine overcomes obstacles to identify, win the heart of, and ultimately have a long-term relationship (or marriage) with the one man who is the right one for her. This is why there are no romantic series featuring the same heroine, as there have been numerous James Bond movies or, for that matter, John Stagliano's series of *Buttman* movies (*Buttman Goes to Rio*; *Buttman's Anal Divas*; *Buttman's European Vacation*). Each romance must end with the heroine and her hero united. Unlike male-oriented pornography, the existence of a point of view character (typically the heroine, though a number shift back and forth between hero and heroine) with whom the reader identifies is an essential feature of the genre.

Romances vary quite a bit in terms of how much sexual activity is described, from not at all to highly explicit descriptions of oral and genital intercourse. Although the emotionally intense description of sexual activities is common in romances, is not an essential ingredient. Romantic movies (the first *Twilight* movie, for example) often stop with kissing and full body contact, the sex itself is not described in explicit detail. When sex is described in romance, it serves the plot rather than dominating it. The intensity of the sexual and emotional connection that is made binds the hero to the heroine and ensures his future fidelity. Sex scenes depict the heroine's control of the hero (or at least his inability to resist her), not her sexual submissiveness. The sex itself is largely described subjectively, as opposed to objectively, filtered through the heroine's emotions, rather than by her physical responses or visual imagery. The emotional focus of a romance is on love and commitment (often seen through the "taming" of the hero). The end goal is the creation of permanent bond with the heroine's ideal mate, one who is strong yet caring and committed (Radway, 1984).

Why Such Sex Differences in Erotica?

If over the course of human evolutionary history most successful reproduction occurred within monogamous partnerships, how is it possible for male and female sexual psychologies to differ as substantially as commercial erotica would seem to suggest?

The answer is that the adaptive problems faced by ancestral men and women were qualitatively different, at least within the mating domain. However similar men's and women's typical parental investments may have been, the sexes differ dramatically in the minimum possible investments. The minimum possible for a man is a few minutes of his time (or more realistically, the time to get a woman to have sex with him and the time required to complete the sex act itself). If a man fathered a child and provided no parental investment, that reproduction would have been at almost no cost. Such opportunities were probably not very frequent in ancestral populations, but even so, capitalizing on them when they did come along was so adaptive that males evolved a sexual psychology that makes low cost sex with new women exciting to imagine and engage in. These arousing thoughts can motivate men to pursue such sexual opportunities. Pornotopia is a fantasy realm, made possible by evolutionarily novel technologies (film, DVDs, the Internet, things that did not exist for most of human history), in which impersonal sex with a variety of high mate value women is the norm rather than the rare exception.

Unlike males, ancestral females had little to gain and much to lose from having sexual encounters with random strangers or from pursuing sexual variety just for variety's sake (which does not change the fact that sometimes females did and do benefit from having more than one sexual partner at a time), and they had a great deal to gain from being picky about their choice of mates (Thornhill & Gangestad, 2008). The romance novel is a female mate choice saga in which the female protagonist focuses her efforts on finding and securing a mate who embodies the physical, psychological, and social characteristics that constituted high male mate value during the course of human evolutionary history (hence the oft seen preference in romance for tall, dark, and handsome). These characteristics have been well studied by evolutionary psychologists and include women's preferences for men with strong resource acquisition abilities, ambition or industriousness, and

high social status (Buss et al., 2001; Fisman, Iyengar, Kamenica, & Simonson, 2006; Li, 2007; Marlowe, 2004). Women also show a preference for (and romance heroes tend to be) dependable and stable men that they will be able to rely on (Buss et al., 1990; Buss & Shackelford, 1997), and tall, athletic, symmetrical, masculine men who, as such, display indicators of genetic quality (Barber, 1995; Gangestad & Thornhill, 1997; Rhodes, 2006). Such men would be good protectors and father good genetic quality children.

You can see the same sex differences (long-term/short-term) reflected in our personal private sexual fantasies. Female sexual fantasies are more likely than male ones to contain familiar partners (current, previous, hoped for, celebrity, etc.) and to strongly feature details of the setting (beach, own bedroom) and emotions connected to the sexual encounter. Female sexual fantasies exhibit a greater emphasis on context, emotions, and intimacy, while male sexual fantasies are more frequent, visual, specifically sexual, and promiscuous (Ellis & Symons, 1990; Okami & Shackelford, 2001). In Ellis and Symons's (1990) study, men reported fantasizing about twice as many different partners per day as did women. Sex differences in commercial erotica, unsurprisingly, mirror the sex differences in personal sexual fantasies.

Could a commercial erotic genre combine the main appeal of pornotopia and romantopia? One would imagine a large audience and commensurate profits if it could be done. After all, women are sexual as well as romantic beings, fully capable of being physically aroused by hard-core sex scenes (Chivers, Seto, Lalumiere, Laan, & Grimbos, 2010; Salmon & Symons, 2001). Romance novels themselves suggest that women, as well as men, prefer erotica in which the sexual partners are new to each other rather than being an "old married couple." And finding a quality mate and committing to a relationship were tasks faced by both sexes, not just females, throughout human evolutionary history.

Even if such a genre existed, it would be unlikely to eliminate the markets for pornography and romance as some of the essential features of pornotopia and romantopia are mutually exclusive. At the core of pornotopia is impersonal sex with beautiful strangers, a feature incompatible with romantopia. Unlike romance novels, pornography does not really have a "plot." Instead, they typically contain a loosely connected series of sex scenes, each of which usually ends with a visible ejaculation, the "money shot." As a result, pornography has as many climaxes as it does scenes (at least). A romance novel has only one climax, the moment when the hero and the heroine declare their mutual love for one another. Table 1 provides a clear picture of this conflict. It is rather unlikely that any of these adult DVD or romance titles would appear on the other list.

Evolutionary Insights Into Specific Features

The Appearance and Importance of the Female Pornography Star

The reality of the pornography industry is that the female stars have a lot of power and get paid much more than the men, which of course, is why most of them are in the business. They are the ones on the DVD covers, the ones the audience is there to see. As such, one would expect that their appearance and behavior would be an idealized version of male short-term sexual mate choice

Table 1
Successful Pornography DVDs for Men and Romance Novels for Women

Top pornography DVD rental titles	Top romance novels
<i>X Play</i>	<i>Out of the Rain</i>
<i>Digital Sin</i>	<i>Only Mine</i>
<i>Women Seeking Women</i>	<i>Love Will Find a Way</i>
<i>18 with Proof</i>	<i>Flirting with Disaster</i>
<i>Dreamgirls</i>	<i>Nelson's Brand</i>
<i>Ass Worship</i>	<i>Lakeside Cottage</i>
<i>Big Tits at School</i>	<i>Lord of Scoundrels</i>
<i>30 Rock: A XXX Parody</i>	<i>Hearts Aflame</i>
<i>Asian Fucking Nation</i>	<i>The Creed Legacy</i>
<i>Pirates 2: Stagnetti's Revenge</i>	<i>Awaken the Highland Warrior</i>

Note. The titles illustrate the differences between erotica produced for men and women. The pornography titles were obtained from *Adult Video News* (www.AVN.com); the romance titles were from *USA Today's Best-Selling Books Site* (<http://books.usatoday.com/list/index?f=20,0,132>).

preferences. Indeed, it is the case that female pornography stars epitomize the features desirable in a short-term mate.

Even a cursory examination of pornography stars reveals a list of physical features that are part of male short-term mate preferences. The majority are young (or mimic the features of younger women like MILFs, otherwise known as “mothers I’d like to f*ck”) and curvaceous, indicators of fertility. They typically have long hair, smooth firm skin, perky backsides, long legs (or use high heels to exaggerate leg length when standing), and full lips (naturally or with the help of fillers). All of these are cues of youth and fertility and especially attractive to males as a result (Etoeff, 1999; Grammer, Fink, Thornhill, Juetter, & Runzal, 2002; Symons, 1995; Voracek & Fisher, 2006). Breast size and shape is also relevant to female attractiveness. In ancestral populations, breasts would have been a better indicator of age and pregnancy status than in the current environment (Symons, 1979) as smaller breasts are associated with the start of puberty, larger with maturity, with firmer higher sitting breasts seen as more attractive when compared to those that are saggy or lack fullness, which are indicators of age (Manning, Scutt, Whitehouse, & Leinster, 1997; Singh & Young, 1995; Symons, 1979). Some studies also have suggested that large breasts (which are quite common in pornography) are especially appealing because, in the absence of plastic surgery, large symmetrical breasts are an honest signal of phenotypic quality (Grammer et al., 2002; Manning et al., 1997). Such studies also have reported a positive correlation between attractiveness and breast size. In pornography produced in North America, large breasts far outnumber smaller ones, and there are even some movie series that focus mainly on big breasts (e.g., *Busty Ones*; *Breast in Class: Naturally Gifted*; *Big Tits in Uniform*).

Pornography also contains solutions to a variety of adaptive problems men face in pursuing short-term mating strategies. These problems include partner number and variety, sexual accessibility, identifying fertile women, and avoiding commitment. A typical DVD contains a number of novel women, all willing to have sex at the drop of a hat, with no mating effort on the part of the male. Although some have suggested that the women in pornography are submissive, in fact they are often the initiators of sexual contact (Salmon & Diamond, in press). They are not only sexually acces-

sible, they are often sexually demanding. The female stars are relatively young (it is worth noting that one of the appeals of slightly older females, such as MILFs, may be that they still display indicators of fertility and yet are usually not sexually coy) and display (as previously mentioned) a number of indicators of fertility and do not require commitment to engage in a variety of sexual activities.

Is Pornography About Degrading Women?

S. Diamond (1985), among others, suggested that pornographic material demeans women by depicting them as easily influenced, sexually obsessed, and open to engaging in sexual acts with any partner that presents himself. In fact, like prostitution, pornography is often said to evidence male contempt for, or lack of respect for, women. However there exists an ideal test case for such claims: gay male pornography. If these claims were accurate, we would expect gay male pornography either not to exist at all, or, if it did exist, to differ in significant ways from straight male pornography (e.g., it might emphasize the development of enduring relationships or be less relentlessly focused on genitals). However, in fact, gay and straight pornography are essentially identical (Salmon & Diamond, in press), differing only in the sex of the actors. This should not be very surprising considering both are aimed at male audiences, differing only in their preferred choice of sexual partner. There are no more or less dominant acts (rough handling or language, kneeling to perform oral sex, etc.) in gay versus straight pornography for men, though obviously vaginal intercourse is typically replaced by anal intercourse (though of course, anal intercourse occurs in both genres). Unless you want to argue that every sex act should be identical/immediately reciprocal (all sex a “69” oral sex position presumably!), it seems rather odd to claim that acts that both performers engage in are degrading. It also raises the question of who decides which acts are degrading and based on which criteria.

The Money Shot

In the same vein, the so-called “money shot,” or external ejaculation, is also said to be evidence of male contempt for women. A better explanation for its ubiquitous presence should focus on the nature of male sexual arousal and the importance of visual proof of satisfaction. Facial expressions display sexual pleasure (one reason for the frequent close-ups of female faces in heterosexual pornography), but the only proof of male satisfaction and sexual completion is ejaculation; if the male ejaculates inside his female costar, the audience does not see that. As a result, climaxes in pornographic movies are typically external. There are many nonreproductive acts in pornography (oral sex, anal sex, etc.), but it is important to remember that finding pleasure in sexual behavior (especially intercourse) is what evolution would have selected for. Engaging in a variety of acts, as long as vaginal penetration and ejaculation was involved at some point, would not have been maladaptive. It is also possible that males are aroused by the sight of other males having intercourse and ejaculating as a result of adaptations designed to deal with sperm competition (because sometimes females do engage in short-term mating). Males, exposed to cues indicating the presence of rival males, may increase the volume of sperm present in their ejaculate (Pound, 2002;

Pound & Gage, 2004). This might also explain the popularity of scenes in pornography that contain multiple males and just one female. They may actually feel more arousing to watch because of the adaptive response to the scenario of male sperm competition.

The World of Internet Pornography

A question that is often asked about the Internet and pornography is what do men really look at and why? In many aspects, men's Internet choices are no different from their other commercial pornography choices. An examination of 400 million searches conducted through the Dogpile search engine (Ogas & Gaddam, 2011) reveals a top five listing of the most popular searches that includes the following categories and examples of searches, youth ("free teen nudes"), gay ("straight guys having gay sex"), MILFs ("my friend's hot mom"), breasts ("big tits"), and cheating wives ("cuckold porn"). All of these categories combine cues relevant to male short-term mating. Youth, as already mentioned, is a cue to reproductive potential and fertility. MILFs are attractive but mature women, already sexually experienced and perhaps more willing to engage in sexual relations without a lot of investment. Breasts, as discussed previously, are linked to female attractiveness and prominently featured in all pornography, whereas cheating wives may be arousing because of the trigger of sperm competition and promiscuity, another cue of the low cost sex desirable when pursuing a short-term mating strategy (seeing someone else's wife cheating is not disturbing in the same way as if it was one's own wife). And of course the gay category encompasses a variety of searches, from "twinks" to "daddies" to "hot black sex" and "gay college dicks." More interesting, many of the gay categories are basically the same as the nongay ones, the appeal of youths and daddies/MILFs, and so forth. This should not be surprising as the main difference between gay and straight men is simply their sexual orientation or the object of their attentions (Ogas & Gaddam, 2011; Salmon & Symons, 2001).

The Romance Hero

The characteristics of the romance hero are a reflection of female mate choice preferences. Several studies have examined the hero from an evolutionary perspective, including one that analyzed the titles of romance novels.

The descriptions of the heroes of 45 romance novels were analyzed by anthropologist Gorry (1999). Each of the novels sampled had been independently nominated for its excellence by at least three romance readers or writers. In all, or almost all, of the romances Gorry analyzed, the hero was older than the heroine, by an average of 7 years. Heroes were always described as taller than the heroine. The adjectives used most frequently to describe the physical characteristics of heroes were muscular, handsome, strong, large, tanned, masculine, and energetic. Gorry also reported romance heroes to exhibit cues of physical and social "competence." They were capable of handling whatever situations arose. Heroes were described as sexually bold, calm, confident, and impulsive. In most of the novels, the hero was described as "intelligent." All of these traits reflect female preferences for males of good genetic quality who will be good protectors and providers.

Another aspect of female mate choice is a man's willingness to commit to her and any resulting offspring. And, in fact, the feature of heroes most consistently described is their response to the heroine. It reliably includes not just sexual desire, but his declaration of love and devotion, that he loves her more than he has loved any other woman and wants her more than any other. He is preoccupied with thoughts of her, is sexually jealous and possessive, and yet treats her carefully and wants to protect her. It is basically a checklist of the experience of romantic love.

The fundamental traits of the hero focus on his physical appearance, physical and social competence, and intense love for the heroine. However, being rich and having high social status (often interpreted negatively by critics as aspects of his domination of the heroine), while common, are not essential. In Gorry's (1999) sample, heroes had a high social rank or occupation in about half the novels. However when looking at romance through an evolutionary lens, we are reminded to focus on the psychological adaptations that underpin human female mate choice. It is relevant to note that money, social classes, and formal education did not exist for the overwhelming majority of human evolutionary history. The heroes of successful romance novels may or may not be rich or aristocratic, but they consistently possess characteristics that would have made them highly desirable mates during the course of human evolutionary history.

Romance writer Robyn Donald (1992) summed up the appeal of the hero as follows:

Until very recently in our historic past, strong, successful, powerful men had the greatest prospects of fathering children who survived. If a woman formed a close bond with a man who was sensible, competent and quick-witted, one high up in the family or tribal pecking order, a man with the ability to provide for her and any children she might have, the chances of her children surviving were greater than those of a woman whose mate was inefficient. (p. 82)

The importance of a high mate quality hero is echoed in research by Maryanne Fisher and Anthony Cox who analyzed the titles of romance novels (Cox & Fisher, 2009) as well as the development of heroes and heroines (Fisher & Cox, 2010) in such novels. They predicted that the titles of the novels would reveal evidence of women's mate preferences. In particular, they predicted that titles would reflect female preferences for males that provide resources helpful in raising offspring, males that are willing to commit to a long-term relationship, as well as high genetic quality males. An examination of the 20 most frequently mentioned occupations in the titles reveals three typically held by the heroine (nurse, secretary, and midwife). The other 17 professions fell into two categories: resource-based (doctor, CEO, royalty) and athletic or protector (cowboys, lawmen, soldiers). The majority of heroes can provide a stable supply of resources, and be of high enough genetic quality and physical prowess to serve as a protector (not only of the female and any offspring but also of their resources). And of course, his falling in love with the heroine guarantees his long-term commitment to her; commitment and reproduction being two other themes reflected in the titles.

Ogas and Gaddam (2011) described female mate choice adaptations, in particular as seen in romance novel plots, as Miss Marple's detective agency. As the cost of choosing poorly in the mating market is higher for females than males, their mate choice adaptations are analogous to a detective agency, designed to pick

up any and all cues to the willingness and ability of a man to commit and provide. A great deal of effort in the romance (as well as real life) is expended in determining a potential mate's (the hero) true feelings and qualities. Attention is paid to how he treats others, to information from friends and acquaintances, and to his standing in his social circle.

Fisher and Cox (2010) also described the changes the hero goes through in the course of the novel as a way of a female getting a high genetic quality "cad" who turns into a high investing "dad" (see Kruger, Fisher, & Jobling, 2003, for a further discussion of dad and cad mating strategies in literature), perhaps the best of both worlds. They noted that although the heroine undergoes relatively little character development over the course of a typical romance, the hero changes a great deal, going from a typically aloof stranger to a kind and gentle (with the heroine at least) ideal mate. Fisher and Cox summed up the plot of a Harlequin in evolutionary terms:

Female meets potential mate and assesses him with respect to gene quality, earning potential, parental investment, personality characteristics (including kindness, honesty, sociality) and emotional loyalty. Being the one to undertake the majority of parental investment, the female is very selective about her potential mates and decides he needs to improve in certain aspects before he will be a viable choice. She also needs to determine with some certainty that he is interested in a long-term relationship with her The male ascertains that the female is not interested in a short-term mating strategy, and she seeks a mate with certain characteristics that he should express if he wants to engage in a sexually exclusive relationship with paternity certainty The female, at some point in their interactions, notices that he has these traits and decides that he is, after all, a viable mate, at which point she expresses her acceptance. The two of them then proceed and initiate a monogamous, committed relationship . . . the focus is on the woman choosing a mate, thus placing the heroine within an active role in the mating process. (pp. 308–309)

In the end, the heroine is typically the one in control, the hero, in a sense, a slave to his passion/love for her. Wendell and Tan (2009) referred to the power of the hero's passion for the heroine irreverently as the power of the "magic hoo hoo." Once the hero has a taste, he desires no other. This is a reflection of the female desire to be irresistible, to be secure in the belief that her choice of mate is the right one and that he will never stray. Ellis and Symons (1990) reported that more than half of female sexual fantasies revolved around the desire to be sexually irresistible and some also have argued that this is at the heart of the bodice-ripper style of romance (Hazen, 1983) and fantasies of submission (Hawley & Hensley, 2009).

Conclusions

Although many books and articles have been written on the topics of pornography and romance, the majority have failed to address the most basic questions about the deep-seated appeal to men and women across time and culture. Rather than focusing on issues of politics and morality, an evolutionary perspective allows us to examine how pornography and romance embody essential aspects of male and female mating psychology. Romance novels and pornographic DVDs were not part of our ancestral environment, but they trigger our ancestral mating adaptations all the same. Pornography is a male fantasy world of short-term mating

success while the romance is a female fantasy world of long-term mating success. At their hearts, that is what they are, fantasies that are reflections of the different ancestral problems faced by males and females in the mating domain.

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