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New Members and Organs: The Politics of Porn

Helena Goscilo

Pornographers are the secret police of male supremacy. — Andrea Dworkin

The wenches don’t do anything for my prong, ... but when I get ready to really put the screws hard to a man, with all the authority vested in me by the state ... it looks up at the sky, and sometimes I get so worked up that I spatter my britches all over. — Viktor Erofeyev

Until perestroika, finding pornography in Moscow was less likely than encountering a singing nun at a bazaar. Yet by 1990 Moscow News reported a lively trade in girlie magazines at newsstands, an adolescent complained in print about the pornographic videos inundating the city, and metro stations and dashboards of taxis routinely displayed pictures of women wearing only a pout or a smile.¹ Public reactions to the relentless omnipresence of naked flesh pressured Gorbachev, in fact, on 5 December 1990 to establish a commission charged with elaborating measures to safeguard the country’s morality. Anyone curious about the effectiveness of that official body may consult reflections on the topic by one of its members — published in the glossy Playboy clone Andrei² By mid-1992 pornography was thriving as a mainstay of the novelties introduced, along with kiwis and deodorants, into Russia’s capital. Amidst the all-pervasive renewed Petrine drive to “catch up” with the West, such an influx of

164
NEWMEMBERSANDORGANS165

ostensibly liberating, uncensored materials might appear as an exercise in freedom according to the modern Western model. As the editors of Andrei announced in their second issue: "We’re certain that Andrei and its battle helped strengthen democratic tendencies in the area of social awareness and rights" (Andrei 2: 3).

Their certainty is, I contend, misguided. It originates in the fallacy of phallic “freedom,” which merely exchanges one form of political enslavement for another. What purportedly furthers the cause of democracy is a publication that specifically targets only the male half of the population, presumably justifying its abusive exploitation of the other (female) half via body instrumentalization on the following grotesque grounds: “The first Russian journal for men . . . is essential today, for it is precisely men who more than anything need liberation from stressful aggressiveness and lack of satisfaction.”13 As the apostle of a new, true Word, the editor vows to combat the psychology of “a slavish sexuality” — rigid, crude, hypocritical, and blind,” thus unwittingly delineating the profile of his own journal. What — after decades of censorship and regimented puritanism — impresses Russians as hard-won delivery from restraints merely enacts a substitution: the sexual Stallion replaces Stalin, institutionalizing a kindred mode of ritualized repression.

What potential repercussions does the tidal wave of porn that inundated Moscow from 1990 to 1992 have for women’s status in Russian society? On what grounds can one legitimately designate pornography a gendered issue? Russians increasingly speak of the widespread current unemployment as a dilemma predominantly affecting women. 4 May the same be said of pornography? Since the materials energetically hawked in Russia’s capital and elsewhere rely on Western models or originate in the West, a brief glance at the Western sociocultural framework of porn production and consumption provides a useful point of reference.

BORTOPORNINTHEWEST

In England, Canada, and America, pornography automatically raises several interrelated issues that fuel impassioned controversy on a recurrent basis: those of definition (porn vs. erotica), legality (constitutional freedom of expression), and morality (motivation and effects of porn). Feminist scholarship (especially by Andrea Dworkin and Catharine MacKinnon)5 and concerted political action have decisively shifted the focus of
discussion in recent years by radically gendering the debate on pornography. That debate shows little sign of slackening, for the voluminous official reports and scholarly studies intended to curb or comprehend the production, dissemination, and consumption of pornography (as well as extensive press coverage of incidents like the Mapplethorpe case) have unwittingly abetted its publicity. The profits of the current American pornography industry reportedly exceed those of the conventional film and record industries combined. Although Denmark may boast of being the first country to legalize all pornography (1967), the United States now holds pride of place as the modern muck Mecca.

Astute in identifying and exploiting new markets, the porn industry has expanded from a low-yield, covert business to "a highly visible multi-billion dollar industry," branching out into multiple categories of products and services, including film, videos, books and magazines, mail-order sales, under-the-counter materials, sexually explicit computer communications (e.g., SEXTEX), "Dial-A-Porn" recordings, and "sexual devices" and paraphernalia — such as artificial vaginas and penises, lotions, potions, elixirs, whips, and chains — usually stocked in "adult" bookstores and sex or S/M shops. Analyses of porn that confine themselves to written texts of the Fanny Hill and Story of O variety smack of an earlier, monolithic era predating the current porn boom. Their purview does not take into account "water sports," rectal inflation, and the administration of enemas, for example, as techniques for sexual arousal. Resorting to esoteric models from High Culture, these earlier studies theorize titillation, whereas the ultimate aphrodisiac in today's porn is, patently, annihilation. Yet even commentators who have waded through the entire range of "soft core" and "hard core" pornographic genres confess defeat in pinpointing the constitutive features of porn.

Definition. As Catharine MacKinnon has remarked, the dilemma of definition disturbs only those who attempt to legislate or combat pornography: "No pornographer has any trouble knowing what to make; no adult bookstore or theatre has any trouble knowing what to stock; no consumer has any trouble knowing what to buy." Clearly, like Justice Potter Stewart, they "know it when they see it." Yet scholars, critics, journalists, and various government commissions appointed to investigate the nature and consequences of pornography have struggled unavailingly to arrive at an uncontested definition. Anthony Burgess's concept of a pornographic
work as a substitute sexual partner enabling the attainment of sexual
catharsis without an “act of erotic congress” — that is, as a “harmless”
onanistic device within an Aristotelian sexual drama — is shared by the
majority of self-professed intellectual liberals, but not by the official
commissions on pornography and censorship, which have failed to reach
a terminological consensus.

For the most part, scholarly works, the press, and everyday usage treat
“erótica” and “pornografía” as synonymous. Among those who draw a
distinction, the criteria for differentiating between the two vary signifi-
cantly. Informal conversations reveal that for many, the degree of explicit-
ness draws the (inevitably blurred) dividing line between erotica and
porn. By contrast, those trained in High Culture studies credit erotica
(especially in written form) with artistic skill, often teasing out of a text
a philosophy of principled rebellion or tragic “thanatic sexuality” that
“redeems” it from the ignominy of the “unartistic” — porn. For femi-
nists making the distinction, egalitarianism and mutuality between sexual
partners are the decisive factors. The widespread acceptance of a purely
stylistic hierarchy, which equates erotica with sophistication (a “higher-
class,” less crude presentation of the same materials) may explain the
preference in recent Russian porn for subtitling any narrative devoted
exclusively to graphic copulation, tireless fellatio, and comparable acts “an
erotic story” and to adopt such coy titles as Cupid (Kupidon) — the Roman
Eros — for its pricier porn magazines. (As a guide to contents, the labeling
on both is superfluous, for the naked women on the covers and their
porn-coded stance instantly signal the genre.) Alain Robbe-Grillet wittily
summed up the psychology governing nomenclature in the aphorism: “La
pornographie, c’est l’érotisme des autres.”

Legality. Whereas most detractors of pornography base their objections
on moral grounds, opponents of censorship advance the civil liberties
argument. The latter camp posits an all-or-nothing scenario, whereby
limiting a pornographer’s freedom of expression sets the society on the
slippery slope leading to fascism (Cole, 162). The texts regularly invoked
to buttress this apocalyptic prediction are novels by Joyce, Lawrence, and
Miller, not Playboy, Hustler, and OUI, or films like Deep Throat and
Snuff. The commonplace that censorship of phenomena offensive to
some violates the First Amendment may be countered by the argument
that dissemination of material abusive to women constitutes a form of
defamation and warrants injunction against “group libel.” Whether such a restraint is feasible remains moot, while the nature of materials currently accessible to practically anyone interested in porn suggests the impotence of censorship in overseeing its publication.

Marketing Psychology and Morality. The motivation for pornography, on the one hand, and its effects, on the other, have generated considerable heat in the ongoing debate. Even those who do not share the Marxist view of porn as intrinsic to the commodity culture of capitalism acknowledge that the capitalist system of supply and demand regulates the porn market. A desire for sexual stimulation prompts the purchase of porn, while the reward of financial profit drives its production. For that dynamic to operate, sex must be accorded the primacy it enjoys in the United States. Yet anyone who attributes Americans’ obsession with sex and porn to their inherently greater sexuality overlooks the commodification of (1) sexual desire and (2) its promised fulfillment via advertising. Both are mythical products promoted by the very same forces that satisfy the needs they artfully create: big business.

As various studies of subliminal seduction have demonstrated, finely tuned strategies of “consumer engineering” have enabled manufacturers to sell everything from cars and furniture to clothes, cosmetics, and alcohol by projecting flattering, illusory self-images onto the potential buyer — as someone subject to that special sexual hunger which, not coincidentally, will be appeased through the acquisition of whatever product is being featured. All media, with varying degrees of sophistry and sophistication, convey the message that sexual desire and desirability (of a visible, marketable sort) are critical to a full life, to popularity, happiness, and so forth. Cleverly packaged, manipulative ads that play and prey upon “illicit” wish-fulfillment fantasies have sold the public, in fact, on a pseudo-normative sexuality shared by those marked for success. That sexuality has become naturalized, in other words, through techniques of psychological suggestion. To consolidate, verify, and propagate national standards of sexual taste, publications like People sponsor surveys that elect, for example, The Sexiest Man of the Year. These processes of collusion between power and pleasure and the institutionalization of the resultant identities instantiate what Michel Foucault has called an “implantation of perversions.”

Although psychologists, anthropologists, and sociologists increasingly
recognize that sexuality is subject to shifting social constructions (its configuration and dynamics reinforced through interest groups operating behind the scenes), die-hard skeptics continue to lyricize sex as the “spontaneous surge” of “natural impulses” — a perception carefully cultivated by the very ads that belie it. Of all forms of mass culture, advertising most clearly testifies to the mainstreaming of pornographic values (Cole, 41). Given advertising’s attested manipulative power, that symbiosis surely complicates (if not undermines) the notion that pornography enhances and flourishes amidst liberty — civil or any other.

While few dispute the incentives for the sale and purchase of porn, opinions diverge dramatically about its effects, both on participants and consumers. Proponents of porn endorse it mainly as innocuous, even culturally enriching (“it extends the boundaries of the permissible”) or therapeutic (enabling a healthy release of “tension” that otherwise might erupt in physical violence). The antipornography contingent maintains exactly the reverse, adducing if not causal, then at least correlational links between porn and violent crime. Whereas findings strike some (e.g., Williams) as inconclusive, others (e.g., Dworkin and MacKinnon) firmly believe that porn conduces to violence or, at the very least, desensitizes men, intensifies their callousness to women, increases rape myths, and entrenches misogynistic stereotyping.

This notion has been challenged as prescribing an artless “realist” aesthetic to pornography that posits no disjunction or area of negotiability between screen and text on the one hand and everyday life on the other — essentially the same grounds on which the West traditionally has faulted the aesthetic of Socialist Realism (SR). Yet the genre of porn itself adopts realism as its guiding principle. And, just as countless Russian readers “identified” with SR heroes, so do many Americans extrapolate real-life scenarios from screen and page. To abstract the transaction between viewer/reader and his porn materials is to divorce arousal from everyday reality. Theorists may invoke Kant, but porn users want “cunt.”

Feminist Perspectives. Feminists have fundamentally revised the pornography debate by spotlighting what until the advent of feminism seemed to have escaped everyone else’s attention: the gendered nature of porn. The fact that film, videos, magazines, “fiction,” and other categories of porn typically depict naked women as disposable instruments of male pleasure, ready and eager to perform any kind of sexual service, led feminists to
reassess the genre in terms of political power. Accordingly, feminists define porn as a practice and presentation of sexual subordination, whereby female submission to male dominance (and violence) is played out in sexually explicit terms degrading to women, for the purpose of arousing a (preponderantly male) audience.\textsuperscript{31} In porn, woman fulfills the depersonalized function of stimulating and gratifying men’s desires (both within and outside the form); she endures or performs whatever act will ensure male orgasm, from submitting to anal penetration to being whipped or snuffed out, for pornography mandates that women be whores. The feminist critique of porn, then, not only defines it as sexist in content, but deplores its production as exploitative, its effects as misogynistic-fostering, and its consumption as destructive to men.\textsuperscript{32} In the last decade, however, feminists who fear “runaway” censorship and the consequences of perceived alignment with the New Right have emphasized the liberating and pleasure-giving aspects of pornography, which they characterize as diversified and amenable to female use.\textsuperscript{33}

As an East European raised in England and specializing in Russian culture, I fully appreciate the potential hazards of official censorship. As a long-time resident in America, however, I am also bemused by its patriots’ naiveté regarding covert censorship — the coercive impositions and prohibitions exerted by the forces of a “free” market economy. Skepticism distances me, then, from both the repressiveness of the unsexy New Right and the self-delusions of the politically correct Left whose identity is currently in garrulous crisis. Inasmuch as my essay examines the Russian porn market (which presupposes exclusively heterosexual male consumers) from the standpoint of gender, it provisionally embraces the feminist definition of pornography disavowed by those who decry any and all censorship.

THE ETYMOLOGICAL VARIANT AND INTERGIRL
(A QUASI-EXCURSUS)

The etymology of “pornography” points to the debasement of women that inheres in the genre. Derived from the Greek, the term combines graphos — depiction or writing, with porne — prostitute or whore (normally the lowest of slaves in Greece),\textsuperscript{34} with the important proviso that the material of “literary” Greek pornography concentrated on aspects of
the prostitute's life other than her professional exertions. Otto Brendel defines these early treatments as "novelistic written biographies of celebrated courtesans." In modern times, in fact, the amateur, unofficial status of women's prostitution is crucial to pornography, which rarely concerns itself with paid professionals.

In this respect Vladimir Kunin's *Intergirl* (Interdevochka, 1988) is a curious case of hybridization, whereby a text that is pornographic only according to the etymological definition (we learn mainly about Tania's nonprofessional activities) relies on the titillation attaching to prostitution and sexually transmitted diseases to preach High Culture myths about Russia while sounding the social alarm about the dangers of AIDS. *Intergirl* is Valentin Rasputin's Fire (Pozhar) transplanted to Leningrad's sexual market during extensive Russian emigration. Its implications fully accord with the Marxist view that pornography represents the commodification of sexuality under capitalism.

Issued by the establishment publishing house of Young Guard (Mолодая Гвардия) in 100,000 copies, *Intergirl* contains two forewords: a brief endorsement by the influential sexologist Igor' Kon, who correctly singles out for emphasis the work's admonitory function; and an essay by a journalist from the Literary Gazette (Literaturnaiia gazeta), which itself fulfills that function, as indicated in his title, "In the Group at Risk" (V gruppe riska), referring to AIDS. Tellingly, the text of the novel proper contains no explicit descriptions of sexual acts (a must for porn) and whenever it incorporates expletives or vulgarisms, it opts for such largely desexed terms as "svoloch'," "mraz'," and "podonok" over sexually derived "obscenities" of the "okhuets'" (verb from "khui" — prick) and "pizdet'" (verb from "pizda" — cunt) type. While asexual, the text nonetheless is vulgar in the manner once ridiculed by Tatiana Tolstaya in an interview: in its preoccupation with various brands and names of commodities, which relentlessly repeat themselves whenever clothes, cars, makeup, perfumes, and so on, are mentioned. Needless to say, these are all Western imports, weapons with which the corrupt materialist West invades innocent Russia to tempt and degrade it.

The dominant lexicon of *Intergirl* is that of economics (not sex), of capital (we learn varieties of slang for money in general, for foreign currency, etc.), which makes sense in light of the work's agenda — to propagate traditional Russian/Soviet (i.e., anti-capitalist) myths: (1) the
moral superiority of Russians’ vaunted generosity, spirituality, and emotional intensity to Western materialist values (the heroine’s, the truck-driver Vitiia’s, the reformed schoolboy Kozlov’s); (2) the sacrosanct nature of motherhood — a mother’s love, like love for one’s mother, transcends all other ties (exemplified in Tania and her mother Alla Sergeevna); (3) the sacrosanct nature of the Motherland, which proselytizes the unique inseparability of Russians from their native land (note the sentimental nationalism of Tania, her mother, and Verka, the Moscow ex-prostitute living in Stockholm); (4) and the apparently deathless stereotypes of “whore with a heart of gold” and “woman as nurse,” which converge in the person of Tania, who simultaneously is a “warm-hearted” prostitute and an efficient, compassionate, nurturing nurse. A tender, loving daughter, she will go to any lengths to vouchsafe her mother’s comfort and happiness; she cares about her patients, loves animals, quotes Pasternak from memory, and so forth. In short, Kunin revives Nikolai Karamzin’s bathetic scenario — “Poor Tania,” showing that, “prostitutes, too, know how to love!” (“ibo i prostitutki liubit’ umeiut!”).

Kunin operates both sides of the street, so to speak: he treats such provocative topics as prostitution, rape, AIDS, and suicide, in the process dropping an endless trail of brand names of products calculated to stimulate cupidity (not arousal). Yet he wraps everything in a moralistic tract on the level of comic book simplicity. As a solution to Russia’s highly complex dilemmas, the work delivers simplistic homilies, such as “death over dishonor,” “happiness cannot be found in wealth/possessions,” “home [i.e., mother and Russia] is best.” It would be difficult to find a less erotic text than this clutch of recipes for safe and sanctioned conduct founded primarily on a rejection of the reductively perceived values of the West. In fact, the porn and pornographic transactions overrunning Moscow in 1991–92 seemed to instantiate the very dangers that Kunin’s premonitory parable tried to avert.

THE FIRST GASP: MEAT COMES IN/TO MOSCOW

By a masterstroke of associated pseudo-coincidences, Russia lacks not only effective condoms, but also a developed national tradition of porn. It imports the bulk of its current pornography from Latvia (Riga) and “borrows” from Western sources for its own (re)products, as well as
modeling its "original" creations on foreign paradigms. Probably the most subversive aspect of these semi-pirated publications is their infringement of copyright law. In all other respects they conform faithfully to the stringent rules of the genre.

The suddenness of porn's acceptability in Russia has forced its production and circulation into patterns that are simultaneously centripetal and centrifugal. Owing to the scarcity of available materials, the same shots are reproduced randomly on various covers of translated and original fiction (e.g., the identical picture graces the covers of Fortune (Fortuna) No. 2 [1991, pd. in Riga] and of the story "Holidays in California" (Kanikuly v Kalifornii); the same nude women reappear thoughout entire issues of a magazine (e.g., Nos. 3 and 6 of Cupid [pd. in Riga]); the same item surfaces in several different packages (e.g., the story "Weather Station" [Meteostantsiia], printed separately and also in Sex-Hit, No. 2). Concurrent with this frugality is a profligacy that presupposes readers' voraciousness for anything vaguely related to sex or the body: certain publications offer a potpourri of wildly heterogeneous items, some of which acquire a risqué coloration or alteration of status by virtue of arbitrary juxtaposition with radically different pieces. How "neutrally" does a reader absorb "scientific" information about biological processes or dictionary definitions of such basic terms as "deviancy" and "frigidity" in a column printed alongside a bared pudendum or pneumatic breast clutched in a male hand?

Such chaotic inclusiveness especially prevails in papers like More (Eshche, pd. in Riga), Sex-Hit (pd. in Riga), Entirely Intimate (Sovershenno intimno, pd. in Riga) AIDS-Info (Spid-info, pd. in Moscow), and sex digests. These throw together a dizzyingly mixed assortment of standard porn shots, reports on sexual diseases, illustrations of possible positions for sexual play, personal ads (incomparably more down-to-earth and practical than in the United States), letters from readers seeking advice or sharing their "sexual" experiences (the naïveté of some is extraterrestrial), purely pedagogical or "how to" items, "scandals" gleaned from the Western press, and much more. Particularly jarring for proponents of High Culture is the lack of differentiation between comic book nudes in suggestive poses and reproductions of famous paintings by Rubens and other representatives of Art. Within Russian porn, then, the Venus de Milo is likely to rub elbows, metaphorically speaking, with a Playboy centerfold,
their sole common denominator being their gendered nudity. For the purposes of the genre, however, both are merely undressed female bodies, artfully “presented.”

Apart from films and videos (which my essay excludes from discussion), the categories of porn that have flooded Moscow may be broken down into (1) “static” visual, that is, pinups of individual women on posters or within magazines and newspapers; (2) “dynamic” visual or narrative visual, that is, “action” shots of a couple or series of such, grouped so as to suggest narrative development within a temporal flow; (3) verbal narrative, that is, texts that elaborate a plot (the covers of these normally designate the genre of the contents, via one or more nude bodies, sometimes accompanied by the tautological classification “erotic story” and the revelatory declaration of caution cum exclusion, “for men only”); and (4) anecdotes (anekdoty) about “sex.” The first three categories both recycle Western forms and slavishly imitate their conventions, which are strictly coded to suggest a single overdetermined scenario.

Static Visual: The Hole as Whole. Pinups by definition are of woman, offered up according to a number of time-tested formulas calculated to commodify her as a generalized object for male use. Completely undressed or with breasts, bottom, and/or vagina exposed and highlighted, she becomes reduced to parts, in what Alan Soble and other Marxists have called the “dismemberment syndrome” that ensures women’s alienation. She invariably assumes a position that emanates passivity, submission, languor, or insatiability, and invites sexual possession or violation (e.g., on her knees; crouching, with buttocks thrust out at the camera; supine, with thighs spread wide). Boots pulled up to her naked thighs may be used to evoke the standard sexualized image of horseback riding (Tolstoy lives!), while the leather/suede conjures up bondage or S/M paraphernalia.

Although static in form, the pinup anticipates narration by imaging woman as a hole waiting to be filled, for porn tells and sells the timeless “story of O.” Hence the highlighting of her anus, vagina, and mouth—the last, inevitably pouting and moist, sometimes licking, sucking, or encircling a surrogate penis (fruit, bottle, etc). If her face is visible (not mandatory for a genre that works to erase identity), her eyes are either closed in anticipated ecstasy or fixed directly on the viewer, “soliciting” him.

In accordance with porn’s privileging of size, pinups favor generous
breasts (with nipples darkened and perky — like Lenin, always "on watch" ["na postu"]) — and lush pubic hair, which intimate comparable proportions in sexual appetite and apertures that promise a pornucopia of orgasmic delights. If healthy and robust, the woman exudes a capacity for insatiability and epic exertions (the Amazonian "sex machines" fantasized as "women robots, inflated savages" ["zhenshchiny roboty, nakachannye dikarki", Andrei 2: 89]). If delicate or frail, she is sooner coded for S/M pain, accentuated by smudged, dark eye makeup that connotes a bruised sexuality (Cole, 41).

The genre carefully orchestrates appurtenances and setting: animals — especially dogs, cats, and horses — hint at the woman’s animal nature (evident in the synonyms of “pussy” and “beaver” for a woman’s pudendum) and have specific cultural associations with sex: Dogs, as is well known, have been (ab)used for intercourse with women in porn films. Cats are ambulatory realized metaphors (or hyperbolized metonyms) for a woman’s “pussy” (a visual rhetoric exploited in the first issue of Andrei, where the centerfold nestles a cat between her legs, her face rapt with pleasure). The horse, especially the stallion, is a traditional symbol of male potency, hence the shot of Katia Volkova, the centerfold in Andrei (2: 42), on horseback, arranged so that the neck of the horse resembles an enormous phallus emerging from between her gripping thighs. The purple prose explicating the sexual narrative, however, is transposed to another, less obvious, visual representation of Katia straddling a chair: “She wants to squeeze the hot racer with her legs, give him the spur, feel the ticklish velvet of his brown coat. She feels that she is both a rider and a strong, flexible mare, and a spoiled woman of the world — the one to whom they race along a dangerous road” (2: 43). “They,” of course, encompasses the entire male readership of the magazine.

Settings likewise are carefully selected for their associative qualities, with the showcased “goods” sprawled on luxurious sheets, stretched out on the floor, or lolling in abandonment out in the “natural, untamed” outdoors, often beside water (the promise of other liquids). Their pose and environment advert to the women’s readiness for “no holds barred” intercourse.

The meticulous choreography that organizes the components of pornography transforms women’s nakedness into highly self-conscious nudity, according to John Berger’s by now classic insightful distinction. Pornography’s display of woman in the “uniform” of nudity objectifies
her so that man may perceive himself as the complementary opposite, the invading conqueror of this coded territory ("woman as land"), equipped "to penetrate the mystery within." Submission implies assertion (or violation); passivity invites activity (or violence); "large holes" can be filled only by large penises, and so forth. These aggrandizing devices generate an ego-stroking, cock-inflating image of the implied (omni)potent man that facilitates the male consumer's projection of himself into the picture, so to speak, as the active participant in the implied scenario.

The alternative of voyeurism is built into the cultural disposition of gender roles. According to Penthouse publisher Bob Guccione, women are natural (sic) exhibitionists, whereas men are natural voyeurs (Cole, 36–37). Berger's formulation echoes Guccione's, but in a context that denaturalizes the role assignment and illuminates the origins of female self-voyeurism: "Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at. This determines . . . the relation of women to themselves. The surveyor of woman in herself is male; the surveyed female. Thus she turns herself into an object — and most particularly an object of vision" (47). Hence the profusion of mirrors for women's alienating, voyeuristic self-examination in pornographic art, film, and writing. Although pinups literally feature only women, in a more meaningful sense women are ontologically absent, while the dominant presence is male. The male buyer and his desires determine not only the manufacture of the product, but the "layout" of the "parts" that collectively comprise the object — that is, "woman."

*Dynamic Visual: The Metaphysics of Absence.* In visual pornographic scenarios with two or more players, the male viewer may exercise essentially the same options — identification with the actual male portrayed, voyeurism, or a combination of the two. While this category may appear more even-handed insofar as it incorporates men alongside women into the representation, that impression of gender parity is quickly dispelled. The balance of power between the heterosexual couple (or group members) engaged for example in intercourse, preliminary fondling, or exchange of meaningful looks, duplicates the gender conventions that regulate pinup aesthetics.

Since women are the user-friendly disposables, multiple-participant groupings constellate several woman around one male, for, as Cole remarks, "the dynamic between pin-up and consumers is that of a gang
bang” (36). Shots of couples contrast the woman’s nudity or her exposure of one or more “key areas” (breasts, buttocks, vagina) with the man’s fully or partly dressed state. Like the Godhead, the male penis in pornography tends to be invisible — underlit, so that its contours remain shrouded in darkness, hidden by the man’s careful posture, or strategically shielded by the woman’s body, which, of course, is fully revealed. As the symbol of male identity (“manhood”), the penis remains largely “unpresentable.” Its mode is action (the active male subject), not contemplation (the passive female object). Just as any shot of an erect penis is prohibited as obscene by Canadian law and discouraged as unsettling by mainstream American custom, so among the publications sold in Russia the ratio of exposed (flaccid) male organs to bared pudenda is approximately 1:100.

The rigid conventions of porn militate against turning men into objects for display, as Bob Guccione discovered when he experimented with Viva magazine (1972). Reversing gender roles, Viva featured explicit accounts of women’s sexual adventures, punctuated with photos of nude men (penises at rest). To emphasize the men’s virility, the magazine placed them in forest settings (“man in control of wide expanses”), on ski slopes (“the intrepid sportsman”), and on horseback (“the Marlboro cowboy”). Readers’ objections that the men “looked like homosexuals” (which presumably explained the poor sales) forced the magazine to close down. The lesson in lower mathematics? Boobs + butt = quintessentially a woman; pecs + penis = less than a man (Cole, 37–38). Hence their respective bodies appear in postures and at levels emblematic of their unequal image and power: the woman photographed prone, supine, or in some recognizably supplicating position, whereas the man, as the ringmaster in control, sits or stands.

A photograph published in the second issue of Andrei condenses a host of genre topoi that beg for closer analysis along these lines. The carefully arranged tableau shows a white (possibly marble) statue of Napoleon on a red tablecloth (coded to suggest blood and passion), standing, arms folded, between a seated woman’s spread thighs. The military figure of Napoleon, instantly recognizable through his uniform, universalizes malehood as arrogant conqueror. A monument (literally and figuratively) to boundless power, Napoleon for Russians is the violent invader who confidently enters unknown terrain and by whatever methods necessary imposes sovereignty over it. An unstoppable force, on the one hand, Napoleon nonetheless exudes an aura of Olympian calm, on the other,
because he is immobilized (and desexed) through the cool, "tamed" medium of marble or stone that immortalizes him and his historical role. Strategically stationed at the picture's center, he instantly dominates the viewer's attention as the man of action whose garb and pose suffice to establish his unique identity. The land to be forcibly entered and subdued looms behind him as "the field of his activity," where he can "prove himself." It is the anonymous expectant vagina, bared but blocked off from the viewer, who sees only the pubic hair surrounding Napoleon as background. Thus, while physically reduced by compositional proportions to modest (unaroused) penis-size, Napoleon is symbolically inflated to cosmic proportions as historical referent (a cultural monument celebrated by the Western world).

Fragmented, genre-coded as "every man's land," woman here is nothing more than spread legs. A black lacy garter on her otherwise nude right thigh and her black-gloved left hand, resting "protectively" against the left groin and pubic hair, respectively signal frivolity and helplessness in the face of aggression. Faceless, lacking all identity, woman is generalized into "cunt," the fetishized body part that defines her role in the universe of male activity and values. The "hole" of her vagina (i.e., zero of her being) obstructed by Napoleon's figure is transposed onto the enormous ring decorating the gloved finger of her hand (a convention borrowed from striptease routines), playing on the immemorial association between jewels and women's genitals. The picture, then, erases the live woman photographed and dismembered in it, while installing the presence of the man via inert facsimile. Both function as cultural objects — invested, however, with unequal political power.

**Verbal Narrative: Hype, Hyperbole, and Taboo.** If, as Linda Williams contends, visual pornography strives to make the invisible (i.e., pleasure) visible, then the goal of its Gutenberg counterpart is to print the unprintable. Critics have emphasized the more visceral appeal of the visual, which tends not only to elicit stronger and more immediate audience reactions, but also can function more economically, as acknowledged by the cliché "A picture's worth a thousand words." This may especially obtain when the nude body and its acts are represented, for verbal mediation tends to dilute the instant impact normally attributed to a directly apprehended visual image. Viktor Erofeyev, in an interview on eroticism, declared:
"The power of bare flesh is such that once you've seen it you can forget about what a person is saying." Yet words may strongly affect our perception of the visible nude (the difference between silent and sound film), just as the ability of the written word to conjure up visual images is crucial to published texts. In fact, printed pornography appropriates a number of authentication techniques from film as well as sharing the gender stereotyping that reinforces unequal distribution of power in visual genres.

Porn fiction sold as a separate item in contemporary Moscow has a specific look: a compilation of twelve to fifty-odd pages folded in half and stapled together to form a slim booklet, it usually has a randomly selected cover sporting a naked or near-naked woman in a suggestive pose or couples positioned in some form of sexual readiness, or beyond. Runs of the computer-typed texts vary from 500 to 50,000 copies, offered most frequently for a negotiable price ("tsena dogovornaia" — a pimp eager to make a deal). Barter and exchangeability rule the packaging, in fact, for the identical cover may appear on several different texts or, conversely, the same story may have several different covers, just as it may bear various titles (e.g., "Family Completion" [Rodovee okonchanie] by S. Khalyi surfaces elsewhere as simply "Completion" [Okonchanie]). The narratives belong to one of three categories, not always easy to distinguish because of hurried, sloppy production:

1. Translations from Western sources that retain authors’ names: (e.g., Jeanette Rich-Paterson’s "Summer Vacation" [Letnie kanikuly] and Michelle de Clercq’s "Southern Romance" [Iuzhnyi roman]). Intentionally marketed by its purveyors as a Western commodity for the status that attaches to foreign goods, this category dominates the porn market.

2. Anonymous texts, where the only clue to the country of origin is the characters’ names (e.g., Iolanthe de St. Ives in "Adventures in the 'Bright Moon' Hotel" [Prikliuchenii v otele "Svetlaia luna"]), which may not offer completely reliable evidence, since American and English names often mix with Russian ones, without explanation.

3. Original Russian creations, with author’s name attached. The likelihood of a market-oriented adoption of pseudonyms seems strong, however, particularly in such cases as “Three-Way” (Shvedskai troika). Although an indisputably Russian text, it purports to be the inspiration of O. Konner (American or Irish O’Connor?), which not only has a Western
ring (a significant selling point), but evokes the French “con” (not for its current primary meaning of “dumb bastard,” but for its earlier one of “cunt.”

Both translated and domestic Russian pornography adheres fairly closely to standard precepts of the genre. Action in pornography is the act of sex (the single indispensable element), presented in such a way as to stimulate readers’ arousal. In a sense the genre presupposes an impotent as its most “difficult” or resistant reader, for its choices rest on the premise that “regular” sex alone is “insufficient cause” for excitement. To elicit the necessary frisson, what is prohibited must be exhibited. Now, interdictions depend on a hypothetical norm validated by a social community. Thus porn necessarily violates taboos and breaches boundaries in those areas of sexual activity that, according to communal standards, symptomatize deviation from normalcy: (1) location and frequency of act, and; (2) number, age, and position of participants. In other words, non-stop, non-missionary sex, outside of bed, with adolescents and pensioners, preferably in groups. Hence in “Three-Way,” Sasha and Vitya have three-way sex with Lilia, a woman in her sixties devoted to masturbating men to orgasm; Viktor in “Out of Hunger” (S golodu) performs cunnilingus on Lin [Lynn?] during her menstruation, extracts her tampon for intensification of pleasure, and finally climaxes together with her son’s girlfriend Kim when she urinates on his testicles as they both straddle a toilet seat. D. Harber’s “A Ten-Year Sleep” (Desiat’ let vo sne) (elsewhere called “A Young Woman’s Recollections” [Vospominaniia molodoi zhenshchiny]) condenses perhaps the greatest number of generic topoi: Mutual onanism (hetero and homo), group sex with the aid of aphrodisiacs, fellatio, voyeurism, sodomy, and incest (between father and daughter).

In the narrative structure of porn, sex is the masterplot, with orgasm as its “natural” culminating point. The importance of quantity in porn’s economics of pleasure builds repetition into the genre, which is why those who decry porn on other than moral grounds typically complain of boredom at witnessing one mini-odyssey of ejaculations after another. Yet, while the experience of pleasure is iterated, the means of achieving it must vary, which explains why the principle of escalation structures the genre. If the first orgasm is attained through conventional sex, the second must involve either an increased number of partners or some less orthodox route to climax. How the rule of escalation operates is nicely (and
nastily) illustrated by Jeanette Rich-Paterson’s “Summer Vacation,” a classic text of sexual initiation. The fifteen-year-old virgin Ania enjoys her first sexual discharge in the woods when her 25-year-old distant relative Robert manually brings her to orgasm, her second when he actually deflowers her. She then progresses to intercourse with a thirty-five-year-old monk, “brother” Petr, inside a room on church grounds. If at first blush her next coupling—with twenty-year-old “brother” Klement—seems to contradict the imperative of augmentation, the formidable dimensions of his instrument (“23–25 centimeters,” she notes in appreciative awe) and the confessional as his Sadean choice of setting dispel that impression. Size and site compensate for reduction of age. Ania next succumbs to forty-five-year-old “uncle” Jim, before moving on to three-way sex and fellatio with both “uncle” and “brother” (the pseudo-familial mode of reference capitalizing on the incest taboo).

The auditory accompaniment is also subject to escalation: heavy, irregular breathing and gasps expand to moans and groans, and reach a crescendo of shrieks and shouts that would put the Hallelujah Chorus to shame, even as the female voice continues to plea for “harder, faster, more.” What this text artlessly exposes, then, is the mathematical organization of unappeasable appetite. Not development but increment extends the narrative, which ends only when the author’s imagination (masquerading as the protagonists’ sexual energy) runs out of steam.

Of course, the performance principle that informs the construction of male sexuality demands tangible evidence of capacity. Consequently, a mainstay of porn is the mathematical formulas invoked regarding size (where male organs are concerned, biggest is still best), frequency (males seem capable of epically heroic reprisals, which correspond to women’s constant voracity), and quantity (people virtually bathe in each other’s sexual emissions—in a convention doubtless appropriated from the “money shot” in film [authentication via a close-up of external ejaculation]). In short, hyperbole is porn’s privileged trope.

What most eloquently testifies to the formulaic nature of porn, like that of the Harlequin Romance, is the “how to” manuals in the West that catalogue the genre’s essential ingredients and the recipes for mixing them. Yet, for all their mechanical predictability, over the last decade both genres have pushed back the limits of acceptability. That is why one reads Stephen Zilpov’s *Film Makers Guide to Pornography* (1977) with a
certain nostalgia for the “gentler, kinder” brand of porn whose definitive features his checklist inventories. Stressing the supremacy of the “money shot,” Ziplow also includes masturbation, conventional sex (heterosexual, penis in vagina), lesbianism, oral sex (cunnilingus and fellatio), orgies, three-way sex (heterosexual), and anal sex (the recipient presumed to be female). Sadomasochistic rituals (affectionately called “sadie-max”) and thanatic sex, now a commonplace in all categories of porn, are conspicuously absent from Ziplow’s list. The rule of escalation, then, affects not only the internal structure of the genre, but also the evolution of the genre itself, which inevitably responds to changes in social values. Yet one constant persists, whatever the permutations: male supremacy. Texts that showcase the sadistic dominatrix merely invert a formula of contrasts at the male masochist’s behest.

*Hard Lessons and Softening Devices.* Not unlike Socialist Realism and the Bildungsroman, some of the porn fiction sold in Moscow has a pedagogical cast, most pronounced in narratives of initiation, which trace the induction of a naif into the mysteries of “forbidden” sex acts by a seasoned specialist. Curiously, the lesson seems also directed at the reader, for many texts resort to a terminology for bodily equipment and (re)actions more likely to inform the ignorant than inflame the excitable. “Western” words with Greek or Latin roots, instead of a purely Slavic lexicon, preponderate in what I would call a purely functional naming: “fallos,” “vagina,” “sperma,” “klitor,” “orgazm.” The dearth of a rich Russian vocabulary for body parts and sexual activities partly accounts for this reliance on “dictionary” nomenclature, which effectively distances the reader.

Even more curious is the slippage into euphemism and periphrasis—canonical rhetoric within soft porn. Michelle D’Clercq’s “Southern Romance” offers a fascinating instance of periphrasis that, nonetheless, installs the paradigm of visual porn analyzed above. In describing his sexual congress with a woman he meets at the beach, the narrator (a married father and experienced sexual athlete) conjures up the image of sex as warfare by repeatedly referring to his penis as “weapon” (oruzhie) and “instrument” (orudie), while words applied to the woman advert to her animal nature: she is “a rider” (naezdnitsa), her vagina a “secret burrow-hole” (zavetnaia iama-norka), her clitoris a “rather strange little animal”
(dovol'no strannyi zverek); when she performs fellatio, he analogizes her licking motions with a cat's. The invocation of two distinct sets of associations (military vs. zoological) underscores the author's inscription of those gendered differences that likewise structure the Napoleon-statue porn piece discussed earlier.

If in "Southern Romance" porn's reputed liberating function is belied by gender stereotyping, in "Weather Station" and elsewhere the conformist aspects of the genre manifest themselves in self-censorship. Although this "erotic" novella brims with such generic commonplace as three-way sex, lesbianism, rape, fellatio, and implement-aided onanism, it either employs coy euphemisms for sexual parts and acts (e.g., "mound" [kholmik], "introduces the 'friend' into the 'little house'" [vvesti 'drugu' v 'domik']) or replaces them with ellipses (e.g., "Alesha came up, spread my buttocks and introduced his member into my..."; "I started... Natasha anew"; "after this, do with me what you will, only... me"). Prudery wreaks havoc on narrative continuity when, for instance, a series of question marks and ellipses substitutes for the description of Liia's rape, occasioning a bewildering shift in point of view that makes the ensuing passage incomprehensible. Such devices signal not license, but suppression in a genre touted as promoting and betokening freedom.

Anecdotes: Loss of Oral Potency. Subversive license, by contrast, inheres in the genre of the anecdote (anekdot), which Andrei Siniavskii has conceptualized as a peculiarly Russian form of contemporary folklore. In a remarkable operation that evokes the transsexuality motif in pornography (e.g., "Family Completion"), the logic of the current popular culture market has transplanted the anecdote onto the pages of porn and sex publications. In so doing it has transformed an authentic oral art form whose success depends on the individual "teller's" skill in delivery — on a live performance in which timing, tone, accent, and emphasis play a crucial role — into an inert item, mechanically reproducible and reproduced.

Anecdotes not only appear alongside other materials in magazines and papers devoted to sex (e.g., "No-holds-barred SEX" [SEX-bespredel]), but also comprise the entire contents of slim digests (e.g., "Digest of SEX Anecdotes" [Daidzhest SEX anekdotov]) and more substantial collections (e.g., "SEX Anekdoty"), invariably featuring a nude and/or suggestively
posed woman on the cover. If Siniavskii's notion that the genre lives by suppression has any legitimacy, this sudden rash of "anecdotitis" may well prove fatal to its survival. For, as Siniavskii maintains:

What lies at the basis of the genre [of the anecdote] and the conditions in which it works, develops, and exists is a violation of certain conventional norms of behavior and speech. It's as if the anecdote wants to be prohibited, liquidated on the spot, and it lives on just this supposition and expectation. Give it freedom, remove the prohibition, and it will die. (Terts, 78)

It would be myopic to deduce publishers' awareness of the transgressive nature of anecdotes from such titles as "Grin and Sin: 72 Anecdotes" ["Smekh i grekh: 72 anekdota" [pd. in Kiev]), for these compilers patently locate transgression not in the genre per se, but in the theme of sex. This much is evident from such packaging techniques as highlighting the "a" "k" and "t" in "anekdot" to stress the sexual act implicitly offered by the nudes scattered throughout the paper's pages.

Most collections group anecdotes according to a familiar situational typology (e.g., a gynecological appointment; a spouse's unexpected return home; a visit to a brothel; a trip abroad) that explores sexually related themes, usually cast in a problematic mode: fears of impotence, anxieties about performance, sexual incompatibility, adultery, and the like. While such topics and their treatment might reveal something about prevailing attitudes and mores in Russian society, the specifics of the genre are hardly conducive to reader arousal. The climax to which the anecdote moves is the pointe that brings a release of plot tension through laughter prompted by the witty closure. That is why, as Siniavskii correctly argues, "as an authentically folkloric, oral form of poetry, it fades on paper, losing the live voice, mimicry and gestures that accompany it, and sometimes practically reifies it completely, like pantomime" (91). To present this quintessentially oral genre in written form, then, is to castrate it (the Greek etymology of "anekdotos," in fact, means "unpublished"). Without the performance component that is inseparable from its subversive gesture, the anecdote becomes reaccented, drawing attention to its thematic concerns, its significance as social document. Read (as opposed to heard) from this shifted perspective, anecdotes reveal the ubiquity of adultery, mistrust between the sexes, and the currency of the rape myth — at least among the male population. But anyone seeking "porn pleasure" from these pseudo-literary eunuchs is doomed to disappointment.
THE POLITICS OF PORN: AIRBRUSHING A MYTH

If Western pornography is the political product of the capitalist economic system, in Soviet Russia politics has been the pornographic product of a utopian imagination unrestrained by ethics. Whereas Western billboards typically advertise commodities by implicating them in a sexual mystique, Soviet Russian slogans and signs invariably advertise(d) ideology through promises of a future paradise. According to the wish-fulfillment scripts of the politico-socioeconomic structures that have produced them, the larger-than-life symbolic ideals of both advertising campaigns capture (indeed, master) the public imagination. For these carefully elaborated figures suggest the tangible realization of their societies' dominant dreams. Through their visible example, they validate the possibility of formidable achievements in those arenas which collective fantasy invests with significance. If the pinup (or her "tamed" relative, the model) represents the "ideal" of the Western billboard, her Soviet analogue was, unquestionably, Stalin.

Recent Russian scholarship has begun examining the selling strategies used to fashion the image of Stalin along semi-divine lines (a procedure earlier mapped out by the prototyrant Nero). Under Stalin's own supervision, film, fiction, and the press orchestrated a comprehensive drive that enabled Stalin to emerge (like the pinup) as "all things to all men." Stalin's omnipotence, according to this script, derived not from his readiness to murder when expedient (the reality), but from his omniscience in all spheres: His prophetic vision, military prowess, artistic genius, democratic convictions, compassion, and self-abnegation (the illusion). It is undoubtedly the irreconcilable discrepancy between the claims and the reality of Stalinism that prompted Liudmila Petrushevskai a to adduce the following passage from P. Proskurin's Your Name (Imia tvoe) as a sample of Russian pornography:

This evening, to his annoyance, Stalin, who loved this very opera with a . . . morbid passion, . . . didn't feel the satisfaction he always anticipated. . . . Briukhanov privately registered Stalin's barely noticeable movement as he abandoned himself with his whole body to what was happening on stage, and Briukhanov realized that he'd been waiting for precisely that moment. . . . From very close Briukhanov saw Stalin's eyes and he was startled at their youthful brilliance.

The perfect congruence between this account and the voyeuristic strain of porn derives from their common transparent deceit: A prear-
ranged scene, with every detail calculated in advance, is presented as the viewer’s chance intrusion upon an individual during a moment of private self-oblivion. In porn, the unwary woman might be undressing, bathing, or masturbating; in Proskurin, Stalin is anticipating a “total” pleasure enabled by his musical sensitivity. Both versions of purportedly unwitting self-exposure rely on illusion (the woman’s “innocent” sexuality, Stalin’s sublime love of the arts) that may be manipulated through lies. Both exact a high price from their consumers, who seek one thing, pay for another, and receive a third. Both mask brutality of sorts through aestheticizing myths.

The homology emerges most clearly in the iconography of sexuality and political power as regards dress, pose, proportion or perspective, setting, props, and facial expression of the subject (i.e., object “on sale”). Shots of the pinup coordinate all details so as to convey sexuality: Her mandatory nudity and suggestive pose (often supine or prone) of intimate invitation, often accentuated by “frivolous” items like see-through lingerie, lacy garter, even toys, and often photographed from above so as to seem powerless. By inverse contrast, Stalin wears his perennial military uniform (even during peacetime), always buttoned up to the throat, so as to project simultaneously his “eagle eye” for detail and his readiness to defend “Mother Russia” and her/his “children.” To emphasize his imperturbable control and inspired leadership, he either stands upright above the “teeming masses” or is seated over a map, both variants implying that he controls all he surveys (people, territory, and nature). In group pictures he holds center stage, his “presence” conveyed by the reactions of those surrounding him, its force augmented by the angle of the camera, which captures him from below. Gerasimov’s cult painting of him with Voroshilov shows Stalin towering symbolically over the country’s capital; in the Stalin statue at the Paris World Fair (1937) the Napoleonic placement of his right hand and the forward movement of his body project Stalin’s “cosmic” power. If the pinup’s setting and props evoke “naughty” pleasures, Stalin’s emblematize power, duty, and competence; hence he is depicted in a battlefield or beside tanks, sporting military boots and reassuringly puffing on a pipe (the Father of all Russia as phallic authority). The centerfold’s bushy mound as a promise of sexual bounty has its desired equivalent in the luxurious fullness of Stalin’s mustache, which connotes a military (controlled) rather than sexual viril-
ity. And finally, because both pinup and Stalin, as visual incarnations of an ideal, must transcend their physical reality, photographers obligingly airbrush their portraits so as to erase all imperfections. In short, although the power relations they construct for the beholder are polar opposites, the (desexed) Kul’t image and the (sexed) pinup image are structured by the same pornographic aesthetic.

To posit such a convergence between pornography and Stalin may strike skeptics as perverse. Yet Moscow’s truckdrivers subliminally recognized and celebrated their commonality during glasnost by displacing the portraits of Stalin on their dashboards with pinups. Those who welcome pornography as a long-delayed access to freedom of expression, then, would benefit from reading J. S. Mill’s essay “On Liberty,” which cautions against freedoms that impinge upon the liberty and selfhood of others. Readers of Russian pornography might ask themselves why, if pornography sings freedom’s song, it does so only in male chorus. Why, if scopophilic pleasures are so natural and liberating, they are limited to only half of the country’s population and constructed according to musty formulas from the West. Meanwhile, from the vantage point of a Westerner trained in dismantling self-serving constructs, the porn revolution in Moscow has merely ushered in yet another Party, with different organs and members, but an all too familiar agenda of domination.

POSTSCRIPT

By spring 1993 the porn that had overrun bookstalls (lotki) throughout Moscow had virtually disappeared from the streets. Andrei was defunct, and the only porn items readily available in the city were the three issues of the Russian edition of Penthouse. Ironically, owing to recent market forces, the fate of “Russian” porn now coincides with that of Russian literature. The dynamics of supply and demand determining the sale of printed matter have relegated both to specialty stores. Volumes of such venerated classics as Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, and Mandelshtam prove as rare finds at streetstalls as “Three-Way” or “Summer Vacation.” The future of porn in Russia, then, depends on the pleasures and perils sought by its consumer populace and the patterns of a culture and economy that still await stabilization.
NOTES

I thank (1) my procurers of the Russian porn examined in this essay: Vladimir Padunov, Valeria Sajez, Emily Tall, Ol'ga Lipovskaia, and Peter Scotto, who provided my Last Gasp; and (2) Bozena Gosciilo and Martha Snodgrass, the "gentle readers" who offered astute critiques of earlier drafts.

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2. The article, in the form of a diary, is by Leonid Konovalov, "Narod trebuet reshitel'nykh mer," *Andrei* 2 (1991): 16–18. Hereafter references to this issue of *Andrei* are identified parenthetically in the text, as are all citations from works first documented in the notes.

3. This profession de foi launched the inaugural issue of Andrei in 1991. By 1993 Andrei was defunct, much of its staff having transferred to the Russian edition of *Penthouse*.

4. According to statistics cited by Moscow's Gender Center, by early 1993, women comprised approximately 80 percent of the unemployed in Moscow and St. Petersburg.

5. The transcript of the public hearings accompanying Dworkin and MacKinnon's work for the City Council in Minneapolis (1983) may be found in *Pornography and Sexual Violence: Evidence of the Links* (London: Everywoman, 1988), hereafter cited parenthetically in the text as PaSV.


7. Andrea Dworkin, *Pornography: Men Possessing Women* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1989), unnumbered page of Preface, following p. xl. At the Minneapolis hearings, Dworkin cited an article claiming that pornography annually accures about seven billion dollars, which would place it fortieith in the list of
Fortune 500 largest companies in terms of profit (PaSV, 10-11). She has come under fire from partisans of pornography for making unsubstantiated assertions.


11. See, for instance, the influential essay by Susan Sontag, “The Pornographic Imagination,” in Hughes, Perspectives on Pornography, 131–69. To viewers of such porn classics as Deep Throat and purchasers of “under-the-counter” publications, Sontag’s ruminations on aesthetics, philosophical speculation, Henry James, and Bataille must have an inter-galactic ring.


13. “Hard core” originally referred to the actual perpetration of the acts represented in the porn materials as part of their production, whereas “soft core” simulated them. Nowadays “soft core” tends to designate less explicit treatments of sexual acts, often euphemized through a romantic haze. This designation has led to analyses of Harlequin romances, for example, as soft porn. Indeed, that genre polarizes gender along lines of dominance, control, power, and violence for men, and submission, helplessness, disempowerment, and acceptance of brutalization by women.


Susan Cole has validly objected that to accept the so-called cathartic value of pornography is difficult “when murder victims’ bodies are strewn with pornographs, or when the dresser drawers of child-killers like Clifford Olson are crammed with pornographic magazines” (Cole, 45).

16. The 1980s’ emphasis on pleasure merely plays variations on the older liberal claim: “The true defense of pornography and obscenity, as they encourage sexuality, is that they are harmless or beneficial.” Stanley Edgar Hyman, “In Defense of Pornography,” in Hughes, Perspectives on Pornography, 40.


19. Works by the Marquis de Sade, Henry Miller, John Cleland (Fanny Hill [1749]), Pauline Réage (The Story of O [1954]), and Erica Jong belong to the conventional corpus of "erotic" texts. Commentators such as Susan Sontag, for example, often with the aid of Georges Bataille (Death and Sensuality: A Study of Eroticism and the Taboo [1969]), analyze these texts in terms of "artistic superiority." See Sontag, 131–69.


21. See their essays in the collection edited by Hughes.

22. At the Minneapolis hearings on pornography, Linda Marciano, the Linda Lovelace of Gerard Damiano's Deep Throat, testified that throughout the shooting of the film its agent Charles Traynor imprisoned, physically brutalized, and forced her at gunpoint to have sex with animals. See her autobiography, titled Ordeal; see also Anthony Crabbe, "Feature-Length Sex Films," in Day and Bloom, Perspectives on Pornography, 44–68.

The feature-length commercial film by the husband and wife team of Michael and Roberta Findlay titled Snuff (1976) popularized evisceration of women and their death (they are "snuffed out") as a "turn on." In her book on porn film, Linda Williams argues, with unpersuasive logic, that the film is not pornographic, but a variant on the slasher film. Yet the capacity of porn to assimilate elements from the slasher genre, which also favors female victims, is self-evident. What Williams calls "the replacement of orgasm's 'little death' by real death" actually elides the two. See Linda Williams, Hard Core: Power, Pleasure, and the "Frenzy of the Visible" (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 189–95.

23. That has been proposed by Rosemarie Tong, "Feminism, Pornography, and Censorship," Social Theory and Practice 8, no. 1 (Spring 1982): 1–18, especially 10–12.


NEW MEMBERS AND ORGANS 191


27. See, for example, the unsigned article in Sex-Hit, which makes the “naturalist” argument for pornography: “Pornography simply shows people as they’re made, including their sexual organs.” “What’s Good and What’s Bad?” Sex-Hit 2: 3.

28. See Williams, Hard Core, 184–228.

29. On this and the formative role of André Bazin in the realist theory of film, see Williams, Hard Core, 184–96.

30. Indeed, as Susanne Kappeler justly points out, Kant’s theory of aesthetics, which lists women among the “soulless” products of fine art, makes woman an object of aesthetic perception awaiting “animation” by the perceiver’s genius. Susanne Kappeler, The Pornography of Representation (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 45–46.

31. Susan Cole stresses the importance of viewing porn not as a concept or a representation, but as a practice (Cole 7–12, 24–25). For a more extended, particularized definition, see Dworkin, xxxiii.

32. Indeed, as Susanne Kappeler justly points out, Kant’s theory of aesthetics, which lists women among the “soulless” products of fine art, makes woman an object of aesthetic perception awaiting “animation” by the perceiver’s genius. Susanne Kappeler, The Pornography of Representation (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 45–46.

33. Even when feminists agree on the definition of heterosexual pornography they are divided as to the means of combating its possible repercussions. Whereas radicals like Dworkin and MacKinnon unwaveringly opt for strict censorship with a view to elimination, feminists advocating liberal values hesitate to endorse a solution that would compromise their broader political allegiances through cooptation by Fundamentalists. See Varda Burstyn, ed., Women Against Censorship (Vancouver & Toronto: Douglas & McIntyre, 1985). Yet another group of feminists is reluctant to adopt a position that would imperil erotica produced by and for women. In short, the pornography controversy continues to divide feminists. See Lynne Segal and Mary McIntosh, eds., Sex Exposed. Sexuality and the Pornography Debate (London: Virago Press, 1992).

34. In the ancient world, “pornographos” reportedly referred to inspiring depictions of varieties of sexual intercourse that decorated the walls of a house of prostitution in Pompeii, for instance (Tong, “Feminism, Pornography, and Censorship,” 2).


37. According to "Red Stripe Books," however, several "erotic" texts have merely been suppressed. The publisher, housed in New Jersey, so far has released two novel-length books in English translation: (1) the purported *Memoirs of a Russian Princess: Gleaned from her Secret Diary*, anonymous and, according to the editor's conjecture, "penned about the year 1796"; and (2) from the mid-eighteenth century, *The Russian Serf Girl: The Story of Grushenka*, based on a 1933 Paris edition.

38. The ads supply information not usually found in their Western counterparts: references to men's excessive drinking, assurances of economic health, frank admissions of having children who will have to be reckoned with in any relationship that might eventuate, and the like. They also imply certain trends, e.g., young men's eagerness to meet older women and, in the case of gays, older men; a concern with physical fitness; men's expressed conviction of their ability to bring any woman full satisfaction.

39. Of course, publications of a serious informational nature have also proliferated in recent years: Igor' Kon's articles, reporting on Western trends and offering data à la Kinsey; Aleksandr Nezhdanov's sexological primer, *Popular Sexology* (Populiarnaia seksologiia, Riga, 1990); a book-length examination by various sexologists of typical sexual-emotional problems between heterosexual couples, based on scores of received letters, *Mysteries of a Twosome* (Tainy dvoikh, M., 1990); translations from the Kamasutra, etc.

The third issue of Cupid has advertised a forthcoming sex encyclopedia by Sergei Mamulov, from which it extracts a rundown of various "authorities" recommended normative doses of sexual activity (the frequencies stipulated indicate that people prefer to watch and talk about sex to engaging in it!). See *Kupidon* 3: 14.

40. Through lack of information about what kind of porn circulates in other Russian cities, my comments pertain to Moscow, since I do not wish to generalize on the basis of materials sold there (and in some cases Petersburg) but possibly unavailable elsewhere.

41. As Soble justly observes, the images of woman perpetuated through porn subject her to alienation through the "dismemberment syndrome" that manifests itself in physical, linguistic, and photographic modes: through the separation of limbs from the trunk of her body during violent sexual or nonsexual assault (and, in the East, through clitoridectomy); through the practice of depersonalizing women by referring to them via "lower" body parts ("cunt," "twat," "piece of ass"); through advertisements that anatomize women's bodies by picturing only their hands, feet, and especially breasts, hips, and buttocks. Pornography merely carries the last a step further by spotlighting their breasts, legs, rears, and genitals. See Soble, *The Manipulators*, 56–58.

42. Women coded for specialists in "woman as child," however, are apt to have small breasts and shaved mounds. According to Florence Rush, the woman-
child is fast becoming the sexual ideal in the States. See Florence Rush, *The Best Kept Secret: Sexual Abuse of Children* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1980). In the second issue of *Andrei*, among the comic book images of women drawn by Svetlana Borisova is that of Zosia, lush of body (if emphatically weak of mind), with hair in girlish pigtails, white socks, and a teddy bear beside her (91).


44. Cole points out that the law (e.g., in Canada) treats the penis as "sacred, scary or profane," to be "hidden at all costs" (32).

45. The grammatical usage of the vulgar Russian equivalent for "to fuck" makes the distinction between the two modes crystal clear. When used transitively (and not reflexively), "ebat" may only have a female object: men "fuck" women, who may only "be fucked."

46. These figures represent a rough estimate of the number of exposed vaginas, as opposed to the precise count of the five uncovered male penises (four at rest, one at attention).

47. There is an ambivalence, however, in the photograph, which simultaneously expresses the male fear of losing the self in the vastness of the overwhelming mother (in Napoleon's case, Mother Russia), of "falling through the crack." My thanks to Bozenna Goscilo for her insight in this area.


On the connection between jewels and female genitals, and Diderot's play with that link in his *Les Bijoux indiscrets*, see Williams, *Hard Core*, 1.

49. For the validity and limitations of this view, see Williams, *Hard Core*.


51. The polysemous title is difficult to render into English, for the adjective "rodovoe" means "birth-related," "ancestral," and "family," while "okonchannie" has the meaning of "completion" and "termination" — which, in this context, suggests sexual "coming." The playful text does not help in arriving at a satisfactory word choice that would yield a "natural-sounding" English title.

52. Contained in an issue of the paper *Sex-Hit*, printed in Riga, where, judging by the number of publications, the porn industry must keep the city's entire population employed.


54. These aspects of pornography particularly disturb anti-porn feminists, who
have been reprimanded by "liberals" for generalizing about all porn on their basis. Yet the (largely legitimate, though not unproblematic) point feminists try to make is that sadomasochism and thanatic porn only make explicit and carry to a violent extreme what in implicit and more restrained form makes up "regular" pornography. On this, see Dworkin and Cole.


57. For an intelligent survey of the methods used and the image cultivated in these efforts, see Evgenii Dobrenko, "Sdelat' by zhizn' s kogo? (Obraz vozhdia v sovetskoj literature)," *Voprosy literatury* 9 (1990): 3-34.
