

HARD CORE

POWER,
PLEASURE,
AND THE
"FRENZY
OF THE
VISIBLE"

LINDA WILLIAMS

Hard Core: Power, Pleasure, and the "frenzy of the Visible", Linda Williams, University of California Press, 1989, 0520066529, 9780520066526, 330 pages. In this unprecedented and brilliant study, Linda Williams moves beyond the impasse of anti-porn/anti-censorship position-taking to analyze what hard-core film pornography is and does--as a genre with a history, as a specific cinematic form, and as part of contemporary discourse on sexuality. Working against tendencies to oversimplify hard core--either as pure abusive power or pure liberatory pleasure--Williams sees the form as inherently contradictory. Hard core claims to speak confessional and involuntary "truths" of sex. However, analysis of its forms (including its spectacular "money shots" and sexual "numbers" parallel to those in musicals) reveals that sex in the sense of a natural, visible "doing what comes naturally" is in fact the supreme and deeply contradictory fiction of the genre. Gender, the social construction of the relation between the sexes, is what determines this fiction. For most of its history, pornography has been for men and about women. Yet in hard core's attempt to solve the riddles of sex with more, different, or better sex, the monolith of masculine pleasure breaks down and the possibility of women using pornography for their own purposes begins to emerge. To this end, Williams traces the roots of contemporary hard core's quest to see the "truth" of sex back to the origins of cinema itself--in motion studies of women's bodily movements. She then follows the generic development of hard core through its silent, primitive stag form and into feature-length narratives like Deep Throat and Behind the Green Door, up to its recent sadomasochistic and "couples market" permutations--showing how the form has begun to respond and react to changing gender relations. Neither a defense of what pornography has been nor a utopian dream of what it should be, this daring book refuses simply to scapegoat the form as the cause of all our ills. Instead, Williams utilizes the insights of recent studies of mass culture to show that hard core is a discourse, a genre, and a rhetoric that can only be understood through comparison with, rather than separation from, other forms..

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The Big Book of Porn: A Penetrating Look at the World of Dirty Movies , Seth Grahame-Smith, 2005, Performing Arts, 208 pages. An XXX Rated Celebration of Adult Movies According to film historians, the first motion picture was screened in December 1895. And the first dirty motion picture was screened

The Trouble with Normal Sex, Politics, and the Ethics of Queer Life, Michael Warner, 2000, Social Science, 227 pages. In this lively and surprising essay on the dangers of normalcy, Michael Warner sends a warning shot to the gay rights movement, which has cleaned up its image in order to blend

Nine and a Half Years Behind the Green Door , , 2007, Biography & Autobiography, 363 pages. It's the 80's just before the advent of AIDS, and we are behind the scenes at the entrancing Mitchell Brothers O'Farrell Theater, which gonzo journalist Hunter S. Thompson has

The Straight Mind and Other Essays , Monique Wittig, 1992, Literary Collections, 110 pages. Presents a collection of nine political and philosophical essays by the controversial feminist theorist and founder of the modern French women's movement.

Skinflicks The Inside Story of the X-Rated Video Industry, David Jennings, Jun 1, 2000, Performing Arts, 452 pages. .

Bad Subjects Political Education for Everyday Life, , 1998, History, 254 pages. Citizenship is generally viewed as the most desired legal status an individual can attain, invoking the belief that citizens hold full inclusion in a society, and can exercise

Dirty looks women, pornography, power, Pamela Church Gibson, Roma Gibson, 1993, , 238 pages.

Pornocopia , , , , .

They Must Be Represented The Politics of Documentary, Paula Rabinowitz, 1994, Performing Arts, 264 pages. "They Must Be Represented" examines documentary in print, photography, television and film from the 1930s through the 1980s, using the lens of recent feminist film theory as

Tristan Taormino's True Lust Adventures in Sex, Porn and Perversion, Tristan Taormino, Sep 1, 2002, Biography & Autobiography, 200 pages. Tristan Taormino has dished out sex advice to Howard Stern, Dick Clark, and the Playboy Advisor. Now the best-selling author of The Ultimate Guide to Anal Sex for Women

In this now-classic study, Linda Williams moves beyond the impasse of the anti-porn/anti-censorship debate to analyze what hard-core film pornography is and does as a genre with a history, as a specific cinematic form, and as part of contemporary discourse on sexuality. For the 1999 edition, Williams has written a new preface and a new epilogue, "On/scenities," illustrated with 25 photographs. She has also added a supplementary bibliography.

This is an easy to read, comprehensive analysis of visual pornography. Williams is thorough and openminded, and clearly shows that this isn't a homogenous and stereotypical genre. On the contrary, she maintains that all trends visible in other types of movies exist in pornography as well. An interesting read.

Linda Williams gives a scintillating evaluation of the politics of porn. Her detailed and insightful analysis goes beyond mere recitation of plot points and totaling of body parts to an in-depth engagement with the semiotics of pornographized couplings. The pictures were really helpful in conveying the cultural work done by this undervalued art form. Porn-tastic!

This book changed my mind about I saw pornography. This is a smart and sexy book that dispels many ideas we have about pornography and how the feminist anti-porn rhetoric not only endangers the First Amendment with their calls for taking this protection from porn, but retains the patriarchal concept of female purity that promotes a sexual double standard. This book opens a dialogue and forum for women to talk about pornography. I only wished I hadn't read it ten years earlier, because my copy doesn't have pictures.

I never thought that this would happen to me...but I must share my pleasure with "Hard Core" in an online review. The author takes up a discursive thread generally reserved to the letter columns of Adult Entertainment mags, and develops a unique analysis that provides the reader unfettered access into the manifold issues of power given in the presentation of human congress onscreen. If Max Weber had written on porn, this would have been his work!

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pornography has been nor a utopian dream of what it should be, this daring book refuses simply to scapegoat the form as the cause of all our ills. Instead, Williams utilizes the insights of recent studies of mass culture to show that hard core is a discourse, a genre, and a rhetoric that can only be understood through comparison with, rather than separation from, other forms.

"Hard Core is a brilliant demolition of the position that pornography represents one thing only. Arguing against the feminist case for censorship, Williams urges that we take pornography seriously, which does not mean that we like it, or that we believe it is art."--Alan Wolfe, "The New Republic"
--This text refers to an alternate Paperback edition.

At a time when the UK still banned films containing images of adults having sex, the publication of Hard Core showed how impoverished and prudish the British mindset was (and is), and of course, the middlebrow middle class still rail against the idea that any text can be studied at a high academic level.

Well if you really want to get a virtually pointless degree in some arty farty subject that will add nothing to your employability and £20,000 to your overdraft then this book sums up the sort of irrelevant intellectual popcorn you'll definitely need to read. Buy it second hand and you can re-sell it un-used.

Williams graduated from University of California, Berkeley with a B.A in Comparative Literature in 1969, and then gained a PhD at the University of Colorado for her dissertation subsequently published as *Figures of Desire: A Theory and Analysis of Surrealist Film*.^[1] Her main academic areas of interest are; film history, film genre, melodrama, pornography, feminist theory and visual culture; all with an emphasis on women, gender, race, and sexuality.^[1]

With respect to film genres, she argues that horror, melodrama, and pornography all fall into the category of "body genres", since they are each designed to elicit physical reactions on the part of viewers. Horror is designed to elicit spine-chilling, white-knuckled, eye-bulging terror (often through images of blood); melodramas are designed to elicit sympathy (often through images of tears); and pornography is designed to elicit sexual arousal (often through images of "money shots").^[2]

Linda Williams examines the theoretical and poetic writings of the Surrealists during the period from 1910 to 1930 and traces the emergence of a poetics of the cinematic image based upon the fluid associations of dreams and the unconscious. Incorporating both Lacanian psychoanalytic theory and Metz's methodology on film and dream rhetoric, she analyzes the structure of unconscious desire in four key Surrealist films by Luis Buuel: *Un chien andalou* and *l'ge d'or* (both co-scripted by Salvador Dalí) and *Phantom of Liberty* and *That Obscure Object of Desire*. Linda Williams examines the theoretical and poetic writings of the Surrealists during the period from 1910 to 1930 and traces the emergence of a poetics of the cinematic image based upon the fluid associations of dreams and the unconscious. Incorporating both Lacanian psychoanalytic theory and Metz's methodology on film and dream rhetoric, she analyzes the structure of unconscious desire in four key Surrealist films by Luis Buuel: *Un chien andalou* and *l'ge d'or* (both co-scripted by Salvador Dalí) and *Phantom of Liberty* and *That Obscure Object of Desire*.^[3]

Williams argues that "the money shot is thus an obvious perversion -in the literal sense of the term, as a swerving away from more "direct" forms of genital engagement- of the tactile sexual connection."^[5] Williams also explores similarly sensitive sexual subjects in the book, such as sadomasochism, rape, incest, and the role of a narrative in films that contain pornographic material. Joseph Slade, author and professor at Ohio University,^[6] wrote of her work that "Williams thinks of ejaculation as a leitmotif similar to those that punctuate musical comedy, a genre she thinks resembles the hard-core film. Although Williams' thesis tends to reduce porn films to a single heterosexual genre, *Hard Core* is remarkable because the author actually engages the subject instead of pontificating from distance and because she insists that feminists must learn to reevaluate sexual expression."^[7]

The black man suffering at the hands of whites, the white woman sexually threatened by the black

man. Both images have long been burned into the American conscience through popular entertainment, and today they exert a powerful and disturbing influence on Americans' understanding of race. So argues Linda Williams in this boldly inquisitive book, where she probes the bitterly divisive racial sentiments aroused by such recent events as O. J. Simpson's criminal trial. Williams, the author of *Hard Core*, explores how these images took root, beginning with melodramatic theater, where suffering characters acquire virtue through victimization.

The racial sympathies and hostilities that surfaced during the trial of the police in the beating of Rodney King and in the O. J. Simpson murder trial are grounded in the melodramatic forms of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and *The Birth of a Nation*. Williams finds that Stowe's beaten black man and Griffith's endangered white woman appear repeatedly throughout popular entertainment, promoting interracial understanding at one moment, interracial hate at another. The black and white racial melodrama has galvanized emotions and fueled the importance of new media forms, such as serious, "integrated" musicals of stage and film, including *The Jazz Singer* and *Show Boat*. It also helped create a major event out of the movie *Gone With the Wind*, while enabling television to assume new moral purpose with the broadcast of *Roots*. Williams demonstrates how such developments converged to make the televised race trial a form of national entertainment.

When prosecutor Christopher Darden accused Simpson's defense team of "playing the race card," which ultimately trumped his own team's gender card, he feared that the jury's sympathy for a targeted black man would be at the expense of the abused white wife. The jury's verdict, Williams concludes, was determined not so much by facts as by the cultural forces of racial melodrama long in the making. Revealing melodrama to be a key element in American culture, Williams argues that the race images it has promoted are deeply ingrained in our minds and that there can be no honest discussion about race until Americans recognize this predicament.[8]

For many years, kisses were the only sexual acts to be seen in mainstream American movies. Then, in the 1960s and 1970s, American cinema "grew up" in response to the sexual revolution, and movie audiences came to expect more knowledge about what happened between the sheets. In *Screening Sex*, the renowned film scholar Linda Williams investigates how sex acts have been represented on screen for more than a century and, just as important, how we have watched and experienced those representations. Whether examining the arch artistry of *Last Tango in Paris*, the on-screen orgasms of Jane Fonda, or the anal sex of two cowboys in *Brokeback Mountain*, Williams illuminates the forms of pleasure and vicarious knowledge derived from screening sex. Combining stories of her own coming of age as a moviegoer with film history, cultural history, and readings of significant films, Williams presents a fascinating history of the on-screen kiss, a look at the shift from adolescent kisses to more grown-up displays of sex, and a comparison of the "tasteful" Hollywood sexual interlude with sexuality as represented in sexploitation, Blaxploitation, and avant-garde films. She considers *Last Tango in Paris* and *Deep Throat*, two 1972 films unapologetically all about sex; *In the Realm of the Senses*, the only work of 1970s international cinema that combined hard-core sex with erotic art; and the sexual provocations of the mainstream movies *Blue Velvet* and *Brokeback Mountain*. She describes art films since the 1990s, in which the sex is aggressive, loveless, or alienated. Finally, Williams reflects on the experience of screening sex on small screens at home rather than on large screens in public. By understanding screening sex as both revelation and concealment, Williams has written the definitive study of sex at the movies.[9]

anti-pornography argues audience begins camera Candida Royalle Chapter cinema climax close-up confession cunnilingus dance Deep Throat desire different strokes dominant ejaculate example fantasy feature-length fellatio female body female pleasure feminist Femme fetish film pornography film's Foucault Freud function gender genital genre Gloria Green Door hard core hard-core feature hard-core film hard-core pornography heterosexual identification Insatiable Irigaray lesbian look male and female male viewer Marilyn Chambers masculine masochism masochistic masturbating Meese Commission Misty money shot motion movie musical Muybridge narrative pornography object obscenity offers orgasm penetration penis performance perversion phallic phallus play porn porno power and pleasure primitive problem production rape pornography represent representation role sadistic sadomasochism sadomasochistic scene seems sequences sexual acts sexual difference sexual

numbers sexual pleasure Seymour simply slasher film social solution sound spectator stag film straight sex suggest tion truth typical utopian victim violence visible voyeurism woman women

some of this has become REALLY dated, and some of this is REALLY psychoanalytic which just makes me want to throw the book at a wall (mostly the psychoanalysis) but i think it's a really important thing ~*~historically~*~ to look at how definitions/meanings/the production of pornography has evolved and how attempts to make "visible" pleasure is one of the challenges to this? this book may be best served excerpted in a film studies course although there is definately some reward to reading the wh...more some of this has become REALLY dated, and some of this is REALLY psychoanalytic which just makes me want to throw the book at a wall (mostly the psychoanalysis) but i think it's a really important thing ~*~historically~*~ to look at how definitions/meanings/the production of pornography has evolved and how attempts to make "visible" pleasure is one of the challenges to this? this book may be best served excerpted in a film studies course although there is definately some reward to reading the whole thing, if this was like... not 2013 i would give it much higher marks (90s: 4.5, early 90s: 5)?(less)

An impressive weaving together of feminist, Marxist and psychoanalytic theory to explore both the development and meaning of pornography-on-film that despite being written before the seeming normalisation of pornography via the internet and contemporary commercialisations of the objectification of women retains intense analytical power. Williams manages to make sense of the complexities of pornography without falling into the twin traps of sensationalist opposition or cynical resignation to its...more An impressive weaving together of feminist, Marxist and psychoanalytic theory to explore both the development and meaning of pornography-on-film that despite being written before the seeming normalisation of pornography via the internet and contemporary commercialisations of the objectification of women retains intense analytical power. Williams manages to make sense of the complexities of pornography without falling into the twin traps of sensationalist opposition or cynical resignation to its presence. Deservedly a classic.(less)

I grew up during a time when debate on pornography consisted of dire accusations that mainstream pornography was harmful to everybody- a view that was commonly espoused, despite a near complete lack of evidence supporting it. Linda Williams's book is a refreshingly frank and reasoned analysis of cinematic hard-core pornography- its history, censorship, how it was meant to be viewed, and how women viewing/making it has changed it.

But it's not all feminism and games- there's also some Freud-baiting (always fun), an examination of the way economic theory informs pornography, parallels with movie musicals and slasher films, a deliciously scathing indictment of "gaze-based" film analysis, and, in this edition, a very funny bit about CD-ROM based porn.

For all that the book was written before internet pornography really took off in the mid-to-late 1990s, Williams's analysis still feels fresh and relevant. Rather than being invalidated by current trends, the book, appropriately, leaves one desiring more. I look forward to reading more of Dr. Williams's work, and not just the stuff about dirty movies!(less)

I remember reading this book back in grad school when it was the go-to giggle for bookworms who found it provocative to speak of Foucault and Lovelace in the same sentence. It's actually a worthwhile read for those looking for a "grammar" of pornography. Since the early 90s, "adult entertainment" has become an accepted medium of study, with some schools even offering courses in its analysis---most of them heaily indebted to this study. If anything, the cultural pleasures that "hardcore" supposed...more I remember reading this book back in grad school when it was the go-to giggle for bookworms who found it provocative to speak of Foucault and Lovelace in the same sentence. It's actually a worthwhile read for those looking for a "grammar" of pornography. Since the early 90s, "adult entertainment" has become an accepted medium of study, with some schools even offering courses in its analysis---most of them heaily indebted to this study. If anything, the cultural pleasures that "hardcore" supposedly appeals to have become mindnumbingly obvious since the Clintonian age, somewhat lessening the impact of this study. Still, I swear Paul Thomas Anderson read this as he was writing BOOGIE NIGHTS....(less)