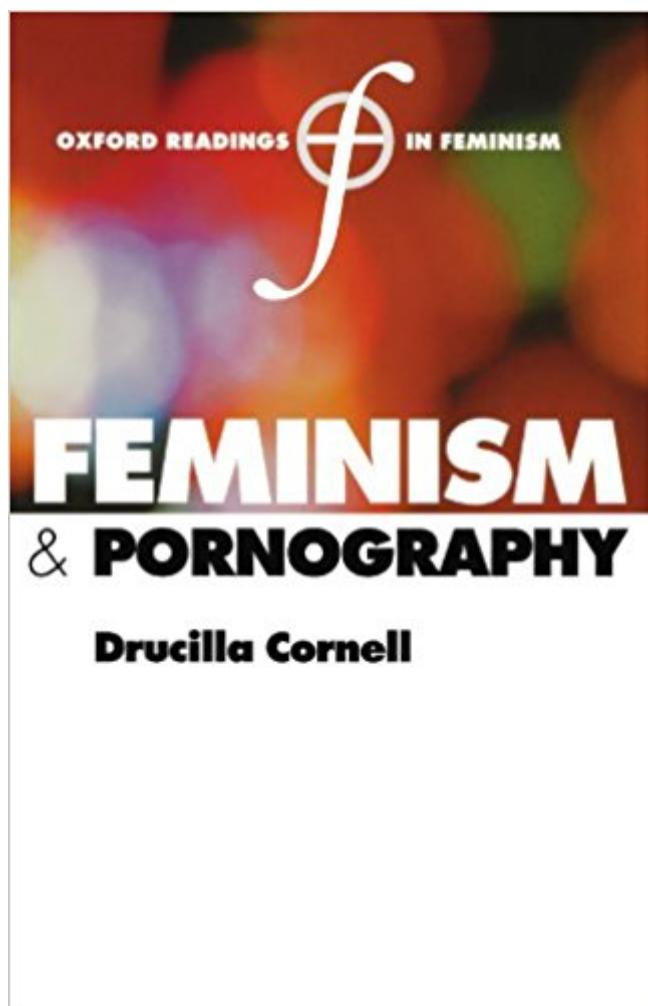


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# Feminism And Pornography (Oxford Readings In Feminism)



## **Synopsis**

This vibrant collection expands the parameters of the feminist debate on pornography. In an effort to move away from the divisive frameworks in feminist disputes over pornography, this volume seeks to understand what pornography means to those who consume it, fight against it, and work within it. By opening up a space for divergent points of view to address the complexity of sexual material, this book seeks to forge solidarity among academics, activists, and sex workers from diverse social and political contexts. *Feminism and Pornography* explores a wide range of contentious issues, including how the meaning of pornography is shaped by changing historical and political realities; the role law should play, if any, in the sex industry; whether union organizing can change the working conditions in the sex industry; and how sexually explicit literature, videos, art, and music can promote sexual freedom. Contributors include such influential writers as Alice Walker, Audre Lorde, bell hooks, Catherine MacKinnon, and Andrea Dworkin.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

Drucilla Cornell is Professor of Law, Political Science, and Women's Studies at Rutgers University.

Bought it for a class and was not disappointed. Came in great condition!

Drucilla Cornell has gathered immense quantities of essays in order to cover the relationship

between feminism (as academic discipline and political theory) and pornography. The essays cover a very broad aspect of pornography, which for many can only be pictures/films containing explicit sexual acts. The essays give the following aspects of pornography:1) prostitution (V. Ortiz' essay about Cuban policy)2) lesbian and gay erotic art and literature (A. Hollibaugh on Christian extremists and vaginal fisting and B L Ross' on the erotic magazine Bad Attitude and its closing down by law)3) the issue of ethnicity (K. Mercer on Mapplethorpe's exhibition on black men and homosexuality, L. Loots on South African policy and pornography or P. EsterhÁjzy on Hungarian pornographic industry)4) radical feminism (a whole part is devoted to the Dworkin & co and their antagonism towards pornography, more than 154 pages. From another part in the book, W. Brown's evaluation of the Dworkin's argumentation is worth reading! )5) Obscene language and subordination in literature (K. Grenshaw on 2 Live Crew and their music or R. Chow analysing a story about a Chinese girl)6) Female sexuality and pornography's role (a whole part is devoted to this issue, among others A. Lorde about erotica and power)7) Pornography as phenomenon in our sexuality (see 6), D. Cornell writes here about its temptation)The list can go on. As you can see I have chosen another way of categorise the book. It is divided in five parts and my division above can be seen as a cross section. I will present the five parts and describe how they tackle pornography. Two disclaimers though for those who buy this book:1) It is a highly academic and philosophical work and some essays do need to be re-read, like Mercer's and Brown's2) It DOES NOT contain any sort of pictures depicting sexual acts. There are some examples of 19th century photos of North African women and some excerpts from the Bad Attitude magazine (bondage). So there is nudity and semi-nudity of women only.Cornell has chosen to start with radical feminism and its anti-pornography stand. For most of the people in the industry or in general radical feminism has overshadowed all the rest of the feminismS, such as socialist, liberal etc. The first part essays, mostly by Dworkin and McKinnon are about the freedom of speech aspect and how it cannot be used for protecting pornography. It is also about the causality issue: that pornography leads to rape, abuse and killings. This part is very revolutionary, sombre and pessimistic about women's future, men's role and of course the society's responsibility. The solution is only to ban. The essays illuminate very well this standpoint. In Sweden pornography is legal and is sold in many stands. Prostitution is legal but not buying sex. In Sweden we believe that it is the DEMAND that is the problem and when that DEMAND has vanished, prostitution dies of itself. We have also laws against people dealing with trafficking - which today exists in minor scale in Sweden, because of the anti-buy law.The second part is the moralistic perspective, ie. moral conscious human beings cannot use pornography and of course the "popular" Christian ethic shines thru this discussion, in many

ways restricting "art". And the essays here are examples of this restriction, one of those is the Bad Attitude essay and 2 Live Crew. Brown's philosophical evaluation of Dworkins & co:s world view is a strong voice in this debate. The third part is more historical and societal. It is about the mentioned Cuban policy and also M. Alloulas chronicle about 19th century pictures of North African women - what do they really tell. The remarkable English of Alloula made me read the chapter again. A picture does say a lot - about the object, the invisible subject and its context. The fourth part focuses more about art and literature. The Mapplethorps exhibition becomes in both Mercer's and Butler's essay a massive package confirming racial prejudices and male power. It says a lot about how we as artists re-create tendencies, bad and good, and call it art - which it also becomes. The fifth part is perhaps what most of first time readers would have expected of this anthology - pornography's interaction with humans, what it promotes about women's sexuality and what women should promote about their own sexuality. As always different authors come into picture, the Hungarian and US industry are in focus - also the Thailandese. What these essay illuminate is the difficulty of the subject - its more grayish tones, and not so much its either-or standpoints. The fact that the authors are from different parts of the world, and cover all aspects of pornography makes the book holistic and worth reading. The normal Hollywood film or the ad about soaps and schampoos becomes a part of the pornographic system - and not only the typical nakedness. What is art - who decides what sexual expression is the right one and me owning my body - what does that mean? The following conclusions can be drawn: 1) the discussion of a broader definition of pornography is needed 2) the change should be made in the industry today 3) we, as passive or active consumers of pornography, should be aware of its complexity and not only take sides, against or for it. 4) We, as passive or active consumers of pornography, should be aware of the system behind pornography, our view of what is women and men, what is normal and abnormal, all becomes the device of the director, becomes the money of the women trafficker and of course .... Good luck reading it!

There is so much material here, I wanted to start with how the late great Andrea Dworkin contributed ideas on grief and suffering. Law has a wide range of legal fictions, like the idea of age or sex education introducing innocent students to forms of behavior that are not acceptable in communities bound together by a common shambolic order like religion. As secularization seeks a more primitive understanding of how desires are thwarted, the attempt to make new laws about pornography to punish those with wealth and power when victims of the last frontier discover your maxim won't get you very heavy in a soy hot dog scrape the bottom of the comedy barrel for no laughs. Thought police trying to stop people from having too much fun are sure to notice anything

which induces desire. The kind of testimony given to legislatures has to weigh what the lawyers for the mob respond with about the flow of big bucks for pleasure.

This was the textbook for a graduate course, "Issues Surrounding Pornography" at my university. I found it to be a thorough, multi-faceted exploration of the adult industry, feminist theory (both anti-porn and anti-censorship) and the wide range of opinions and thinking on this hot-button issue. This book also includes writings on the politics of sex work. Were I the editor, I would have included Laura Mulvey and I would have included more writings about sex workers lives from the point of view of the sex worker herself/himself, as well as more pro-sex work writings. The book seems to have mainly anti-sex work writings. I would have balanced it out more. This is easily corrected by a savvy professor who can assign extra readings from a book such as "Global Sex Workers" or "Whores and Other Feminists." Overall, it's a excellent resource, one I refer to again and again as I write on the subject.

This is the best collection of its kind, and perhaps the only one to deal directly with the issue of pornography from a feminist view-point. Sure, some of the same issues and perhaps even the same essays can be found in other feminist studies anthologies, but this 600 page book has everything written to date of importance on the subject in one neat package. Drucilla Cornell is a great writer, and its good to see an inclusion of Catharine MacKinnon-who started the whole idea of feminist inquiry into porn-in her anthology, despite epistemological differences between MacKinnon and Cornell (see Cornell's book Transformations for more about that).

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