

Third Wave Feminism. Sexualities, and the Adventures of the Posts

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In engaging the issue of contemporary feminism and sexuality, we begin by situating contemporary debates within feminism in the United States in the context of so-called feminist waves, with emphasis on what some are calling the “Third Wave” of feminism. Next, we discuss key feminist debates on sexuality as presented in the 1982 Barnard conference on women and sexuality articulated around the themes of “pleasure and danger” and the 1983 book *Powers of Desire. The Politics of Sexuality*.² Finally, we take on the issue of so-called “postsexuality” in the context of French and U.S. debates over postmodernism and posthumanism and the proliferation of discourses of the “post.”

Waves of Feminism

While doing research on violence against women, children and the elderly for my book *Antifeminism and Family Terrorism*,¹ I continued to come across a group of women, who called themselves feminist, postfeminists or third wave feminists. Yet these so-called feminists were in actuality attacking and demonizing feminisms. In fact, most of these women seemed to be assailing feminisms which addressed issues of sexuality, the social construction of gender, and, especially, violence against women and children. For example, Camille Paglia — who calls herself a feminist, but should be seen as an antifeminist or feminist impersonator — employed an essentialist and biologically determined approach to celebrate masculinity, and attack feminisms. As she describes it in her 1991 best selling book, *Sexual Personae*

Lust and aggression are fused in male hormones....The more testosterone, the more elevated the libido. The more dominant the male, the more frequent his contributions to the genetic pool. Even on the microscopic level, male fertility is a function not only of sperm but of their mobility, that is, their restless movement, which increases the chance of conception. Sperm are miniature assault troops, and the ovum is a solitary citadel that must be breached....Nature rewards energy and aggression....Feminism, arguing from the milder woman's view, completely misses the blood-lust in rape, the joy of violation and destruction....Women may be less prone to such fantasies because they physically lack the equipment for sexual violence. They do not know the temptation of forcibly invading the sanctuary of another body (Paglia, 1991, 24).

It was within this context, that I began to investigate the ideas and interventions of this so-called feminist third wave, a term that has been used by a number of women, as well as popular media, to describe contemporary versions of feminisms that evolved from the early 1980s to the present. Some have associated this term with young feminists who were influenced by the legacies of feminism's second wave, which began in the mid-1960s. Yet the term is highly contested and has been employed to describe a number of diverse feminist and anti-feminist theories and practices. Like "feminism" in general, there is no definitive description or agreed upon consensus of what constitutes a feminist Third Wave.

Within this loose category of feminism's third wave are a multiplicity of movements, philosophies and practices. However, to even talk about a feminist third wave necessitates an understanding of what characterizes those periods and/or

movements that have been identified as first and second wave feminisms. And it is also essential to recognize that young women, girls and/or radical youth cultural dissidents have always been central to feminisms on-going local and global developments before, within and between these hypothetical waves.

The feminist "first wave" is generally identified with the mobilization of strong feminist movements in the mid nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in Europe and North America which were concerned with a number of egalitarian and radical issues which included equal rights for women, educational and legal reform, abolition of slavery, and "suffrage" (the right to vote). Although the first wave is often characterized as the struggle for women's suffrage, a plethora of feminist, humanitarian and radical politics were advanced during this period--especially those which were identified as falling under the rubric of "the tyranny of men." Issues of sexuality and pleasure, for women, as well as reproductive rights and birth control, for example, were highly contentious dimensions of the first wave. It is within this context that many young women, in particular, began to question the institution of marriage, in which women and children were literally the property of men.

During the initial rise of western feminisms, pro-feminist philosopher and feminist writer and partners John Stuart Mill (1806-1873) and Harriet Taylor (1807-1858) penned a number of essays apart and together, including Taylor's *the Enfranchisement of Women* (1851) and Mills *The Subjection of Women* (1869) which advocated more egalitarian partnerships in marriage, based on full citizenship, voting rights and equal educational opportunities for women. Taylor, especially, supported the rights of women to work outside of the home in the "public domain," but asserted that

working wives with children could only do so with a number of servants to look after her domestic responsibilities. This kind of perspective characterized the more elitist attitudes of some of the first wave. Regardless, it is hardly surprising then that numbers of first wave feminists not only demanded the right to vote, but also fought for massive reforms in the arenas of property rights, labor, education, divorce laws, child custody, prison conditions and sexual liberation, to name a few. Numerous first-wavers also addressed the mostly legal, inhumane practices of rape and the abuse of women and children, especially by husbands and fathers.

Radical cultural reforms in the arenas of women's art, dance, literature, journalism and music were also a large part of the feminist first wave (Isadora Duncan, Virginia Wolf and Josephine Baker, to name a few). Although much of the European first wave feminisms' finds its rudiments in the libertarian and enlightenment principles and practices of the French Revolution, the anti-slavery movement, especially in the United States, is identified as one of the most important influences in the development of this feminist first wave. It was the anti-slavery movement, many contend, that inspired numerous white women and women of color to politically organize against their own oppression.

In fact, the first U.S. women's rights convention, in Seneca Falls New York, in 1848 -- which demanded an end to all discrimination based on sex -- was initiated in response to the prohibition of women's participation in the 1840 World's Anti-Slavery convention in London (an organization which supported equal rights for black men, but not for women). Many of the most powerful and influential first wave feminists were black women, some of whom were ex-slaves like Sojourner Truth (1797-1883) and

Harriet Tubman (1843-1913), who were also involved in abolitionist movements and the Underground Railroad (a covert escape route to the North and Canada from the Southern slave states)(Watkins, et al. 1992).

Indeed, ex-slave, teacher, feminist and civil rights advocate, Ida B. Wells (1862-1931) was also a famous journalist who wrote biting condemnations of the common practice of lynching of black men and women and the injustice of segregation in the United States. She, like so many other first-wave women of color, understood that issues of emancipation had to be pursued within the intersections of race and gender. (It is interesting to note, however, that some U.S. first wave feminists, like Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1815-1902), who was one of the major organizers of the Seneca Falls women's right convention and had co-authored the famous 1848 *Seneca Falls Declaration of Sentiments*, did not support the ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment to the American constitution because it only provided citizenship and voting rights to black men) (Tong, 1998, 22).

The end of the first wave is often associated with the periods in the early twentieth century during and after World War One (1914-1918), when most women, in the Western world, were granted the rights to vote.

Although feminist, human rights and social justice struggles continued throughout the early 1920s to the mid 1960s, it is not until the 1960s that what is called the "second wave" of feminisms rolls in. One of the most contested debates, concerning the feminist second wave, involves the false characterization of the second wave as a predominantly white, middle-class liberal movement. Although numerous second wavers, followed in the footsteps of some of their first-wave "grandmothers," and continued to press for

reformist/liberal agendas, many more advocated far more radical ideas, actions and programs (Tong, 1998: 23). Indeed, the multifarious dimensions of feminisms are reflected in the highly diverse philosophies, practices and politics embraced by what has been identified as the feminist second wave.

A large majority of second wave feminists were young women and girls who were part of the massive baby boom generation (1946-1964) born during the period of economic prosperity that followed the Second World War. Many were the first in their families to receive university educations and were highly influenced and/or involved in civil rights struggles and radical youth cultural movements. Others were disenchanted with social conventions following the war that had forced women back into traditional roles, especially those that idealized women as full-time wives and mothers. At the same time, there were limited opportunities for employment outside of the home, for those in the usual feminized low-waged arenas.

Consequently, many women's dissatisfaction with their societal and economic positions, as well as with a host of sexually discriminatory attitudes and policies provoked what many refer to as a new feminist wave of awareness and protest. Moreover, unlike the first wave, the politics of the family, reproduction, and sexual liberation of women became central concerns of second wave feminisms. In fact, the controversial "sex wars" which addressed "political and cultural battles over sexuality" in the 1980's also characterized some of the key feminist debates (Duggan, 1995, 1).

Initially the term "third wave feminisms" characterized a feminism mediated by the terrains of race and multicultural alliances, rather than age. Often it "talked back to" and challenged dominant and exclusionary forms of white feminisms, while

incorporating dimensions of "consciousness raising" in powerful narrative and autobiographical style. This "coming to voice," many explained, was a unique mode of "everyday theorizing" which made apparent the importance of a central feminist idea: that "the personal is political."

It is this kind of insurgent feminisms, which exploded in the 1980s, and examined not only the intersections between race, class, culture, sexuality, but also the celebration - - and coalition politics - of difference. Within this context, the relevance of what has been called the "politics of hybridity" was of central concern. Indeed, the "new hybridity" is a term used to express the "multiple identities" of many contemporary girls and women, especially in the United States. This concept has been central to describing a new generation of critical insurgent feminists -- primarily women of color -- with multiple ethnicities, cultural and class experiences whom, in the early 1990s, began to describe their work as third wave. Many of these younger feminists had grown up during or after the 60s and 70s era of social movements and consequently had the advantages of either formal or informal feminist education. Translating from the theories and writings of their insurgent feminist predecessors, their own particular personal, socio-political and economic contexts are taken into account and mediate their feminist perspectives.

For example, contemporary issues related to immigration, class conflicts, multiculturalism, globalization and coalition politics as well as environmental matters, social activisms for national and global human rights underlie much of their feminist theory and practice. Further, more radical notions of gender and sexuality have become a significant dimension of this kind of resistant feminisms. The incorporation and advancement of "queer theory" (which argues that sexual identities are not fixed, and

questions the social construction of heterosexuality as the norm) has also become an important part of much of these kinds of critical feminist thought. As Alice Echols describes it: "Queer theory calls into question the conditions by which binary oppositions (male/female, heterosexual/homosexual) are produced" (Echols, 2002, 132).

However, many conservative women, some who were blatantly antifeminist, as well as a number of self-serving women who attained celebrity status, adopted the term "third wave feminist," (which was often used interchangeably with "postfeminist") to promote their own political interests. This popularized so-called third wave or postfeminism often one-dimensionalized and demonized other feminisms, and feminists associated with the second wave.

Susan Faludi has identified those who have been popularly misclassified as third wave feminists as media-made "pseudo-feminists" or "pod feminists" planted by the right. The "pod" metaphor is one which Faludi cleverly borrowed and translated from the classic 1956 science fiction film Invasion of The Body Snatchers which is a frightening and prophetic parable about the residents of a small town who are being mysteriously replaced by identical replicas of themselves, hatched by plant-like alien pods. As she describes her rendition:

What is being celebrated is no natural birth of a movement -- and the press that originated the celebration is no benign midwife. It would be more accurate to describe this drama as a media-assisted invasion of the body of the women's movement: the Invasion of the Feminist Snatchers, intent on repopulating the ranks with Pod Feminists (Faludi, 1995: 32).

Indeed, the invasion of these "pod feminists" is part of an alarmingly escalating movement of transparently self-serving women, who are inventing a generic "straw-dog" type of feminism (composed of euphemistically "dog/matic" women, I might add) which they, criticize, under a so-called feminist guise. Although their attacks center on a diversity of feminist dimensions (ranging from issues of date rape to university women's studies programs) their shared deep-structural discourse is based on a one-dimensional, reductionist, binary, simplistic, mode of thought which reduces complex relations to either-or imaginary dilemmas which are treated as oppositions and/or opponents.

The false stereotype of feminists as anti-male, humorless, unattractive and out of touch with young women's needs and values was actively promoted. An imaginary picture of an ultra leftist, evil feminist cult, which brainwashed young women through women's studies programs, was invented and aggressively promulgated. Feminists involved in violence against women movements were especially attacked and accused of exaggerating these realities and promoting what was called "victim feminism." Popularized media marketed feminisms became a euphemism for what many feminists describe as "lifestyle" or "sex and shopping" fake feminism which advocates ultra capitalist and consumerist values, self-centered materialism, and western ideals.

In fact, some of what is currently called "third wave feminism" is indistinguishable from the popularized media marketed, atheoretical postfeminism which Michelle Goldberg describes as "shopping-and-fucking feminism" (2001). As she explains it: "This new shopping-and-fucking feminism is so ubiquitous right now in part because it jibes precisely with the message of consumer society, that freedom means

more – hotter sex, better food, ever-multiplying pairs of Manolo Blahniks shoes, drawers full of Betsey Johnson skirts, Kate Spade bags and MAC lipsticks.”

Meanwhile, conservative women's groups and right-wing movements effected detrimental shifts in government policies directed at assisting battered women and children, reproductive freedom and abortion rights as well as social welfare programs (which continue to escalate well into the new millennium). Even within the bastions of power, women continue to be dramatically underrepresented and underpaid, and the domination of white men continues, although the myth about western women's empowerment persists (Dicker and Piepmeir, 2003, 6).

Although the notion of feminist waves is useful it is also contentious and the idea of a feminist third wave is especially complex and problematic. However, what an exploration of the so-called third wave reveals is that girls and young women are active in feminist theory and practice, and that feminisms – which is a plurality of visions, ideas and lived experiences -- is especially relevant to, and alive within, contemporary youth.

It is within this context that the notion of post-feminism becomes especially contested because it sometimes “refers to the challenges of current feminism theory and practices as informed by poststructuralist, postmodernist, and multiculturalist modes of analysis” (Siegal, 1977, p. 82, note 43). Yet the mainstream media’s appropriation, exploitation, and manipulation of the postfeminist label usually denotes the end of feminism and its irrelevance, and this notion of postfeminism as an exhausted force seems to prevail in the mainstream. This brings us to feminist controversies over sexuality in the contemporary era.

Feminism and the Sex Wars

Within both second and third wave feminism, debates about sexuality and women proliferated in feminist circles, often producing polarized feminist positions on issues of pornography, S&M, and the so-called perversions, as Alice Echols documents in her outstanding history *Daring to Be Bad. Radical Feminism in America 1967-1975*. Hot contested feminist debates on sexuality and women erupted in the April 1982 Barnard conference on women and sexuality articulated around the themes of “pleasure and danger.” The Barnard conference was a sensation, attended by over eight hundred women. According to Nan D. Hunter in the book Sex Wars, the organizers of the conference hoped to avoid on the East Coast polarizations that had taken place over sexuality on the West Coast, but this goal was not to be attained. According to the summary in *Sex Wars*: “WAP (Women Against Pornography) stages a protest wearing T-shirts that read ‘For Feminist Sexuality’ on one side and ‘Against S/M’ on the other. WAP also circulates leaflets criticizing selected participants by name on the basis of their alleged sexual behavior. Barnard College officials confiscate the *Diary of the Conference* produced by conference organizers. The Helena Rubenstein Foundation withdraws its funding from future conferences. The Lesbian Sex Mafia, a New York City based support group for ‘politically incorrect sex,’ holds a speakout the day after the conference. Reporting of the conference and letters to the editor condemning or extolling it are printed for months in *off our backs*” (1995: 24-25).

In *Shaky Ground: The Sixties and Its Aftershocks*, Alice Echols tells of how, when still a graduate student, she was asked to give a keynote note and was initially “thrilled to be part of this effort to open up for debate the gnarly question of feminism’s relationships to sexual desire. The day of the conference, however, all my bad-girl bravado failed me. I

felt only stomach-churning terror as I realized that some of the very feminists I took to task in my talk were bound to be in the audience” (2002: 5).

The 1983 book, edited by women who helped organize the Barnard conference, *Powers of Desire: The Politics of Sexuality* provided an extremely comprehensive anthology of women’s writings on sexuality and the key debates over it in a 489 page magnum opus in *Monthly Review*’s “New Feminist Library” series. The text opens with a detailed and illuminating history that begins with Michel Foucault’s warnings that the established order elicits speaking about sex rather than closeting it and concludes with Roland Barthes’ extolling of pleasure with overviews of “sex and socialism” and “sex and feminism” in between.

References to Foucault and Barthes indicated how North American feminism was beginning to appropriate French thought, although the editors of *Powers of Desire* had an ambitious relation to Foucault, as their project was to articulate sexuality with class, gender, and race in specific historical contexts and to promote both women’s liberation and sexual liberation. The years following exhibited a complexification of feminism, partly inflected by the growing influence of postmodern theory, difference, and hybridity in US culture, recalling a day in the 1980s when in a Washington D.C. bookstore I saw a black male worker in the store wearing a T-shirt labeled “Black Feminist Pomo Homo,” showing the growing complexity and hybridization of identity politics. But in the 1980s there continued to be fierce polarizations within feminism around issues like pornography, and I recall a cab ride in New York during this period when I sat between Gail Dines, an anti-pornography activist, and Elayne Rapping, a pro-sex and

anticensorship feminist, when a debate about pornography erupted and it was clear to me that there was no Hegelian mediation possible in this case.

Discussing the period recently with Sandra Harding, she recalls that divisions around sexuality became so polarized that for some time there was a reluctance to take these issues up, inducing a turn towards other, less contentious issues within broad currents of feminism. But Sandra believed that more recently the full range of issues concerning feminism and sexuality are again being debated and that continuing polarizations but also new positions are emerging.

Looking backwards, I personally think that the Barnard conference theme of discussing sexuality in terms of pleasure and danger was appropriate. For, while sexuality from Freud through Foucault has been discussed in terms of pleasure, in an age of AIDS, escalating rape and violence against women, sexual slavery and enforced prostitution, fierce battles over abortion and gay-lesbian rights, and new genetic technologies, who could deny that sexuality is a terrain of danger as well as pleasure.

As I male theorist, I think its appropriate to thank at this point feminism and gays and lesbians in the US for illuminating the pleasures and dangers of sex through discussions of such previously closeted pleasure organs such as the clitoris, anus, and so-called “perversions,” thus helping to expand the pleasures of sexuality beyond genital sex, while at the same time warning of dangers in sexuality, imbrications with violence and domination, and the eruption of deadly diseases like AIDS, necessitating safe sex. This deadly virus appeared during the Reagan era when politicians, the media, and others refused to confront it and it was largely gays, lesbians, and feminists, at least here in the US, who called attention to this problem and demanded solutions.

I would agree with Rhonda Hammer that characterizing feminists as “victim feminism” is a highly reductive stereotype of feminism and occludes the many currents of feminism who have debated a wide range of important issues concerning sexuality and human life (Hammer 2002). Further, Alice Echol’s *Daring to be Bad* demonstrates that within so-called “radical feminism” there were a wealth of positions, differences, and debates, rendering reductive stereotypes of feminism to be utterly false.

From Postmodernism to Posthumanism to Postsexuality(?)

Next, I’ll take on the issue of postsexuality in the context of French and U.S. debates over postmodernism and posthumanism and the proliferation of discourses of the “post.” While working on the first volume of what became a postmodern trilogy co-authored with Steven Best, we distinguished between two senses of the “post” in the postmodern in which the first sense emphasizes the modern and sees the post as a latter stage of the modern, thus indicating continuities between the modern and the postmodern and not a radical break (this would be a moderate postmodern theory such as one finds with Rorty in the US). The other more extreme position would emphasize the break between the modern and the postmodern, thus emphasizing the post and what comes after the modern and affirming a radical discontinuity in a postmodern rupture.

Before attempting to come to terms with the term postsexuality, however, I wish to contextualize it in terms of the discourse of posthumanism (and in this analysis I’m drawing on my 2001 book with Steven Best, *The Postmodern Adventure*.)

For French structuralist and poststructuralist thought, humanism is dramatically decentered and recast in a posthumanist framework. The first theorists to move toward a posthumanist moment rejected humanism as a philosophical illusion and submerged the

sovereign Subject within systems of language and desire (Levi-Strauss, Barthes, Foucault, and Lacan), socioeconomic structures (Althusser) and media and technology (Baudrillard).² Baudrillard perhaps went further than anyone in pulverizing the subject and deflating humanism, not only describing its collapse in an empire of signs, images, and technologies, but also advocating a "fatal strategy" where he calls upon subjects to abandon their futile efforts to control objects and surrender to their creations (1990 [1983]).

But Baudrillard appears conservative and cautious next to a new generation of posthumanists who, writing in the midst of rapidly developing computer technologies, transform his fatal strategy from an ironic and deconstructive gesture into a literal tactic. Emphasizing the limitations of the flesh, the frailties of the body, and the deficiencies of the human senses, they advocate the merger of human beings with machines, a going "beyond humanity" to download consciousness into computers (Moravec 1998; and Kurzweil 1999).

For these cybercentric theorists, the most decisive changes are happening in the realm of the interaction between humans and computers. With the inexorable unfolding of Moore's Law, we have reached a stage in technoevolution, they argue, where computers will eclipse our intelligence in every way by the mid-21st century. As anticipated by Asimov's robot stories, a new mind may arise, one that like us is self-aware, but outstrips our cognitive abilities and develops a agenda of its own. The impact of this, as Kurzweil emphasizes, would be momentous, leading to a break in human history and a major watershed in the adventure of evolution itself:

Evolution has been seen as a billion-year drama that led inexorably to its grandest creation: human intelligence. The emergence in the early twenty-first century of a new form of intelligence on Earth that can compete with, and ultimately

significantly exceed, human intelligence will be a development of greater import than any of the events that have shaped human history. It will be no less important than the creation of the intelligence that created it, and will have profound implications for all aspects of human endeavor, including the nature of work, human learning, government, warfare, the arts, and our concept of ourselves (1999: 5).

In the "age of spiritual machines," Kurzweil feels, the role and "destiny" of human beings in history comes under intense questioning. Human beings have the options of resisting this change, of acknowledging our obsolescence and downloading our minds into the new digital cranium, or of trying to merge with our machines in a complementary way, thereby retaining some control over computers and other technologies, as Kevin Kelly (1999), for example seeks. Commentators like Samuel Butler, Marshal McLuhan, and Manuel De Landa devilishly subvert humanist premises in a narrative that endows human beings with an innovative role of being midwives for a machine world, acting as pollinators for a new eunuch-intelligence. In McLuhan's words, "Man becomes, as it were, the sex organs of the machine world, enabling it to fecundate and to evolve ever new forms" (1964: 56). Both Butler (1998 [1872]) and de Landa (1991) suggest that the evolutionary function of human beings is to make a superior form of life, machines, that exponentially will advance intelligence. On this techonarrative, all the glories of the human throughout history must be given a new purpose and meaning, that of creating a superior progeny, our own "mind children" (Moravec). Thus, where the humanist narrative assigns creative eminence to "Man," prehumanist and many posthumanist narratives subordinate humans to a greater intelligence, be it God or Machines.

Some of the most interesting reconstructive thinking stems from the "transhumanists" and "extropians" who identify themselves as posthumanists, but are hardly antihuman or antimodern. Rather, they extend the optimistic spirit of the Enlightenment, fervently embrace science and technology as positive forces for quantum leaps in human evolution, as they seek enhanced minds, bodies, and improved control over nature. Extreme transhumanists go so far as to affirm Condorcet's vision of immortality as one of the greatest potential achievements of science and technology. They therefore espouse telomerase therapy (which studies how to maintain youth through endless cell division), life extension programs, and cryogenics.

Resisting the translation of brain states into data bytes, however, these transhumanists cling to the raptures of embodied experience, but they seek a "new flesh" enhanced through all technology has to offer. In their vision, the future human is a cyborg whose consciousness and physical reality are dramatically expanded by pharmaceutical and nutrition therapy, rigorous exercise programs, computer chips, memory implants, surgical alteration, and genetic modification. The "Hedweb" group, for instance, urges us to discard the "wetware" of our evolutionary past that brings us so much misery, and utilize new nano and genetic technologies to create a radically different human architecture: "We can rewrite the vertebrate genome, redesign our global ecosystem, and abolish suffering throughout the living world" (www.hedweb.com/hedweb.htm).

This brings us finally to postsexuality. If postsexuality is merely a latter stage of sexuality in an era of technological explosion, the concept is implied in many versions of posthumanism. Obviously, sexuality is heavily mediated by technology, ranging from birth control, to artificial insemination, to cloning and artificial wombs on the horizon. If

reproduction and birth were detached from sexuality we could arguably enter a new era of sexuality marked by a post.

But even in this situation, not yet realized, what happens to that realm of pleasure and danger associated from Freud and beyond with attaining pleasure from erogenous zones of the body and sexual interactions between people? Will technology eliminate that now central domain of human being or, as Huxley imagined in *Brave New World*, provide technological substitutes for human sexual interaction, desire, and need? And who would want this sort of sterile and asexual existence, although it might well be desirable to be rid of some of its dangers.

For Marcella Iacub and Patrice Maniglier (2005) in their *Anti-manuel d'éducation sexuelle*, their concept of postsexuality is illustrated in a utopian vision of a Postsexopolis, an imaginary society of the future. Their Postsexopolis allows public displays of sexuality, centers of sexual pleasure where one can purchase or pursue a full range of sexual pleasures and other sensory delights, and a society in which individuals and groups define the explore the field of sexuality and not the law. However, this Postsexopolis looks to me like I imagine a Sexopolis might be figured, updating for the contemporary moment the sexual utopia of a Charles Fourier who is cited throughout their work. Or, I could also read it as a concretization of the view of Herbert Marcuse in *Eros and Civilization* (1955) who sketched out a non-repressive civilization and proposed moving from sexuality to Eros. So to me their Postsexopolis looks like a Fourier-Marcusean sexual utopia, and not a post one, although I may be too much of a Eroophile to make the post turn in this case.

As a card-carrying Marcusean, I have no problem in moving from sexuality (in the narrower and classical Freudian sense) to Eros, in which we expand our erotic energies beyond genital coupling or release and enter into a new stage of being that Marcuse recognized as a utopian non-repressive civilization. Or is sexuality itself so integrally connected with pleasure and danger so that attempting to enter a postsexual utopia is an impossible and perhaps even undesirable fantasy? In Marcusean terms, are Eros and Thanatos so bound up with each other that a postsexual or utopia of Eros is impossible?

There are thus two major obstacles toward moving into a (post)sexual utopia, one theoretical and the other sociological. For Freud, Marcuse, and many theorists, sexuality is bound up with power, violence, and domination, hence until gender hierarchies are equalized or least diminished, human violence is reduced, individuals are freed from the lust to dominate, genuine values of equality and reciprocity are internalized and lived, and non-destructive outlets are found for aggressive energies, future sexuality will have the same problems, hierarchies and destructive elements that have persisted for centuries.

This brings us to sociological obstacles to a (post)sexual utopia in the present day North American context (and similar constraints exist, albeit perhaps in different forms throughout the world). Currently, male culture is so tied up with violence and dominance that runs through media culture, sports culture, gun culture, military culture, and male fraternity and public culture that tendencies toward control and domination of women could easily be reproduced in an attempted sexual utopia. In particular, pornography, strip clubs, advertising, and various forms of media culture objectify women and provide such problematic representations of women and sexuality that it would take a massive education and cultural revolution to attempt to free men from their attitudes and behavior of the

present — an out-of-control macho culture that has become visible in the Duke university alleged rape case that erupted in March 2006.³

In any case, sexuality in its present construction can be viewed as a field between pleasure and danger mediated by social discourses, cultural representations, medical discourse and practices, technological innovations, and an always contested and contradictory politics and legal institutions. In this situation, we should be grateful that feminists, queer theorists, and theorists of the post have provided provocations and insight over the past decades that have helped us navigate and occasionally enjoy this mine-field of pleasures and dangers.

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Notes

¹ The first section of the paper was written by Rhonda Hammer and will occasionally use her first person voice, while the second half of the paper was written by Douglas Kellner and will at times speak in his first person.

2. One of the main limitations of Foucault's discussion of posthumanism in *The Order of Things* (1973) is his idealist limiting of the shift to a merely conceptual transformation from one "episteme" to another, whereas the shift to posthumanism is also a material matter of new technologies that have imploding effects that erase boundaries between biology and technology. Foucault considers both the enmeshment of the body in systems of discipline and surveillance, and (ethical) "technologies of the self" which cultivate "new passions and new pleasures." But there is no analysis of communication technologies and little consideration of the imploded landscape of technobodies.

³ For a diagnosis of the virulence of macho male culture and paths toward liberating men from their cultural socialization and macho attitudes and behavior, see Katz 2006.