

“asylum seeker” was invented. Those who had fled their country before the date were called refugees and only had to settle in another country; however, after that date they were called asylum seekers who had to be interviewed to be recognised as genuine refugees. Bribery and corruption broke out as a result: “[i]n some desperate cases parents offered their own daughters, and husbands their wives, to buy passages to resettlement” (193).

Criticism

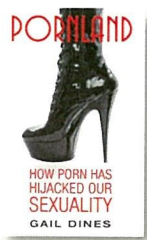
Although Malaysia was the first arrival destination for most Vietnamese (254,495 refugees), the stories do not represent this in balance. The major reminiscences of Malaysia is the image of its armed border guards shoving the boats back to the open sea. However, the tiny desolate Indonesian island of Kuku where a few thousand were sheltered is given substantial coverage. This might be because the editor herself had spent a few years of her youth as a refugee there and she was also on a mission to help other diaspora Vietnamese to locate their loved ones who died on the Kuku camp.

Conclusion

Saigon Hoang’s words sums up the situation on the boats: “We were cramped like sardines, suffocating from the putrid, dense air... sitting in top of each other’s vomit and urine, legs crossing, with barely enough room for our backsides” (202). The breathless space of the under dock left many Vietnamese refugees with a deep life-long appreciation for fresh air.

Boat People: Personal Stories from the Vietnamese Exodus 1975-1996 (Edited by Carina Hoang (2011) is published by Carina

Hoang Communications. RRP \$45.00 AUD
ISBN-10: 0646542915.



PORNLAND: HOW PORN HAS HIJACKED OUR SEXUALITY

Review of Gail Dines’s *Pornland: How Porn has Hijacked our Sexuality*.
by Jamilla Rosdahl

In the porn world, women are never concerned about pregnancy, STD’s, or damage to their bodies, and are astonishingly immune to being called cunts, whores, cumdumpsters, sluts, bitches, hot slits, fuck-tubes, squirty skanks, and stupid hoers. They seem comfortable with the idea that their partner(s) views their sexuality as something unclean (as in “dirty cunt,” “filthy little whore,” or “nasty cum dumpster”) and often refer to themselves in these ways. Indeed, women of the porn world seem to enjoy having sex with men who express nothing but contempt and hatred for them, and often the greater the insults, the better the orgasm for all involved. This is an uncomplicated world where women don’t need equal pay, health care, day care, retirement plans, good schools for their children, or safe housing. It is

a world filled with one-dimensional women who are nothing more than a collection of holes (xxiv).

In the world of porn, women don't want to become teachers or doctors. What women really want is to be urinated on, smeared with semen and faeces or to be called sluts or dirty cunts. In her book *Pornland*, Professor, activist and social critic Gail Dines delivers an authoritative and immensely powerful attack on the pornography industry. According to Dines, today's mainstream pornography looks nothing like the "scrubbed, sanitised world" of *Playboy* and its fluffy-pink centrefold bunnies. Internet porn has become so violent and so aggressive and racist that even the porn producers themselves are surprised by the level of brutality (xvi). The rise of communications media and global digital technologies such as the internet has become the staging ground for the negotiation and representation of gendered identities, and it is quickly developing an authority on gender relations, values, behaviours, and relationships. What we are experiencing and witnessing, argues Dines, is a "media saturated", "hypersexualised", spin and seduction culture held in place by the economic order of capitalism. Commercialised images, ideologies and messages of porn have seeped into mainstream popular culture and are profoundly reshaping our experiences of sex and intimacy including our very deepest thoughts, feelings and desires.

Through a detailed and critical examination of the changing culture of porn, Dines sets out to expose "the cruel

and dark underbelly" of commercial and popular culture. The central thread of Dines' argument is that the destructive effects of pornography have their roots in already-existing patterns of economic, political, and cultural dominations of contemporary life, and involves the anchoring of pop-culture images of sex on our thoughts and desires. Men and women's ideas and experiences of sex in conditions of a "hypersexualised" culture are for Dines, increasingly "plasticised, generic and formulaic", and this shapes and limits our sexual imaginations (164). As she expands on this position, Dines asks:

What does it mean to grow up in a society where the average age of first viewing porn is 11 for boys, and where girls are being inundated with images of themselves as wannabe porn stars? How does a boy develop his sexual identity when porn is often his first introduction into sex? What does it mean for a girl or young woman to see herself as a desired object rather than a desiring subject? What do heterosexual relationships look like when sexual identity is constructed within this porn culture? (Dines and Doherty, 2010).

Dines argues that many people have an outdated view of what internet porn actually looks like. The content of today's porn that is available on sites such as 'Altered Assholes', 'Gag Factor', 'Anal Suffering', 'Fuck the Babysitter', 'First Time With Daddy', and 'Ghetto Gaggers', looks nothing like yesterday's porn of "coy smiles, provocative poses, and glimpses of semi-

shaved female genitalia" (xvii). Boys today are invited into a world of "ravaged anuses, distended vaginas, and semen-smearred faces" and when they masturbate to these images in a heightened state of arousal, "a cornucopia of messages about women, men, relationships, and sex are sent to the brain" (xvii). The position that Dines develops is clear - pornography not only reshapes our cultural values about sex but it also penetrates to our very core of selfhood and to the very texture of every-day (and night) life.

Images surrounding the meanings of "woman" and "sex" in our current commodified and fetishised culture are increasingly degrading, dehumanising, one-dimensional and void, contaminated by the functional logic of late capitalism (Dines and Doherty, 2010). In the opening chapter of *Pornland*, Dines introduces us to a few of the images and words on the most accessible and free websites that are now considered ordinary in mainstream internet porn. The introductory text on one of these sites reads:

Do you know what we say to things like romance and foreplay? We say fuck off! This is not another site with half-erect weenies trying to impress bold sluts. We take gorgeous young bitches and do what every man would REALLY like to do. We make them gag till their makeup starts running, and then they get all other holes sore-vaginal, anal, double penetrations, anything brutal involving a cock and an orifice. And then we give them a sticky bath! (xix).

Just a few more clicks and we are whisked away to the Anal Suffering site, which guarantees, "Every week, we'll bring you a new suffering slut. Weak, Destroyed, Agonizing in Anal Pain and Totally Fucked Up right in her ass. And you'll have all the glory of watching them" (xxi). In formulating her account of *Pornland*, on the ways in which porn is both a capitalist enterprise and a producer of ideas that legitimise, glamourise, and sexualise violence on women, Dines offers the reader an unflinching and intimate tour of the porn industry. With thematic chapters such as, "Leaky Images: How Porn Seeps into Men's Lives", "Visible or Invisible: Growing up Female in a Porn Culture", and "Children: The Final Taboo", Dines reveals shocking and disturbing narrative accounts that, in very graphic detail, depict the exploitation and degradation of young girls and women.

What we are witnessing and experiencing is the invasion of economic and profit-driven thinking on sex, designed and manufactured as an industrial product (xxix). What is more disturbing than this perhaps is that pornography has become a blueprint for how media culture depicts girls and women's bodies. Young girls and women are told that these representations of a white, idealised femininity will offer women choices and empowerment in the form of "a hypersexualised, young, thin, toned, hairless, and in many cases surgically enhanced woman" (102). We are told that our power rests 'not in our ability to shape the institutions that determine our life chances but in having a hot body that men desire and women envy' (102). Now if you are not yet convinced by the argument that porn culture has seeped

into women's everyday lives, delivering its messages and images via popular culture, ask yourself this: why are we currently seeing such an increase in genital waxing for women? This is just but one example, says Dines, where porn has filtered down into women's media through mediums such as *Cosmopolitan* and *Sex and the City*, sending messages on 'personal grooming', 'attractiveness' and ideas about a 'real' woman being 'neat, clean and tidy' (100). These ideas are consistent with a wealth of other dominant images that childify women and adultify children (162). *Pornland* has seeped into our everyday lives and is no longer just a fantasy world.

According to Dines, economic and cultural forces influence the social construction of gender and are actively involved in the cultural production of images and social practices that help shape our ideas about personal identity, sexuality, intimacy, masculinity and femininity. Dines builds her position within a loosely defined radical and feminist anti-porn perspective arguing that women are oppressed, in part, through sexual subordination that influences their choices to perform in pornography (xxx). For Dines, the production of pornography is the result of patriarchal power that sexualises the inequality of women in a social order dominated by men. From this perspective, the organisation of women's oppression centres on a fixed base of social power established around the principles of economic and sexual division. Despite her stress on providing alternative political visions however, Dines offers only a limited response to more recent socio-theoretical accounts on gender representation, identity formations, and cultural difference

with reference to women's experiences.

Poststructuralist feminist critiques in particular, have highlighted the experiences of gender formations as relational, contradictory, shifting and ambivalent. In approaching a critique of society, they argue that the production of knowledge that structures social, political and technological life has been shaped and organised over the centuries by dominant bodies of text, doctrines, and discourses. Language and cultural conventions have therefore served to legitimise certain western ideas and knowledges on sex, gender, and sexuality. When we speak of power we must therefore see it as much more complex and begin to think about it relationally. In this view of contemporary social transformations, we need to explore the interconnectedness of multiple relations of power such as gender, ethnicity, class, and sexuality to generate more comprehensive accounts of women's lives and to combat experiences of exclusion and domination.

The topic of internet pornography in *Pornland* contributes to some of the most complex and demanding challenges facing gender theorists, feminist activists, and educators engaged in the task of theorising and researching women's rights issues. This is a valuable resource for undergraduate studies in disciplines such as gender or women's studies and sociology, as well as for researchers and professionals working in related areas. *Pornland* is a deeply disturbing and important book.

Pornland: How Porn has Hijacked our Sexuality. Printed by North Melbourne:

Spinifex Press, 2010. ISBN-10: 0807044520.
RRP: \$ 19.74. pp.256

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Dines, Gail. *Pornland. How Porn has Hijacked our Sexuality*. North Melbourne: Spinifex Press, 2010.

WORST OF DAYS - INSIDE THE BLACK SATURDAY FIRESTORM

Review of *Karen Kissane's Worst of Days -
Inside the Black Saturday Firestorm*
by Hazel Menehira

Worst of Days - Inside the Black Saturday Firestorm is destined to be regarded internationally as an iconic work of historical significance as well as an accomplished piece of Australian writing.

Karen Kissane's multi-dimensional coverage of Victoria's Black Saturday, February 7, 2009 bush fires is a masterly achievement of narrative journalism and the worthy winner of the 2011 Colin Roderick Award.

From the opening chapter, Kissane questions, explains, and tells true stories which power her positive dedication to honour, "those who died, those who mourn, and those who fought".

A senior journalist and writer with *The Age* newspaper in Melbourne, Kissane was perfectly positioned to leave no burnt gumnut unturned writing this inside

story. She covered both the aftermath of the Kinglake fires, 65 kms north east of Melbourne and one of the worst areas to be hit, and later reported on the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission hearings. Her comprehensive coverage includes countless interviews and accounts from individuals, families, heroes, and previously unheard of survivors.

Some chapters are headed with quotes from previous bushfires like the Black Thursday, fire of 1851 or the Black Friday fires of 1939. This underpins the historical significance of the Black Saturday tragedy when 121 died in the Kilmore fire that devastated the Kinglake Ranges. This was the deadliest fire on a day when 173 people died in fires across the state.

It also points to the importance of an opportunity to learn from history because tragedies are invariably followed by soul searching, scrutinised inquiry, recriminations, and analysis of support structure efficiency.

Burnt gum nut by gum nut, Kissane has pursued and revealed the bureaucratic bungling of the IECC (Integrated Emergency Coordination Centre), of the Victoria Country Fire Authority, and the DSF in its first untried fire season. February 2009 was a season when an understaffed, under resourced system was overloaded and unable to cope with a radical firestorm the power of many Hiroshimas. It was a firestorm fuelled by a heatwave desiccated forest environment.

Whatever the recriminations, the stark fact remains that an electrical spark fire ignition officially tagged at 11.49 am on