

# 'Any performer you pick!' Playful manifestations of porn spectatorship

Sexualities

0(0) 1–16

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DOI: 10.1177/1363460720967649

journals.sagepub.com/home/sex



Ihsan C Asman 

University of Turku, Finland

## Abstract

This article presents a qualitative study of 18 porn spectators' selfreflective sexual narratives. It asks how porn spectatorship shapes one's sexual self and how it connects to transformations in sexual desires, fantasies, and pleasures. Applying theorizations of play into thinking through the relationship between sexual norms and the uses of porn, the article further conceptualizes online porn as a toy – an object to play with and to use for pleasure. Also, it offers to frame porn spectatorship as a finite province of meaning, namely a sub reality and a particular realm of experience, and thus it sets out to develop a more nuanced understanding of the ecology of play at hand.

## Keywords

Porn, play, toys, phenomenology, Turkey

## Introduction

This article examines experiences of porn spectatorship through 18 Turkish porn spectators' self-reflective sexual narratives. It asks how porn spectatorship shapes one's sexual self and how it connects to transformations in sexual desires, fantasies, and pleasures. Applying theorizations of play into thinking through the relationship between sexual norms and the uses of porn, the article further conceptualizes online porn as a *toy* – an object to play with and to use for pleasure. By framing porn spectatorship<sup>1</sup> as a finite province of meaning, namely a sub reality and a

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### Corresponding author:

Ihsan C Asman, Department of Media Studies (School of History, Culture and Arts Studies) in University of Turku, Kaivokatu 12, 20520 Turku, Finland.

Email: [ihsan.c.asman@utu.fi](mailto:ihsan.c.asman@utu.fi)

particular realm of experience, it sets out to develop a more nuanced understanding of the ecology of play at hand. I argue that this framework allows for thinking about the uses of porn as individuated and rule-free play and makes it easier to understand the connections established between spectators and performers in acts of play.

Following Miguel Sicart (2014: 3), play can be seen as variations of pleasure that can be dark and deep. Applying such conceptualization of play to thinking about sex makes it possible to focus on contingency over repetition and sameness without considering a priori distinction between different identity categories, and to situate enjoyment and bodily pleasures at the very core of sexual research, as they often tend to be left out (Paasonen, 2018: 6; also Plummer, 2003: 525). Empirical porn inquiry has already documented the complexity of audience engagement with porn (Attwood et al., 2019; Barker, 2014; Neville, 2018; Robards, 2018; Smith, 2007). Bringing such inquiry together with theorizations of play helps to see porn use as a substantially complex issue involving bodily desires, visceral connections, sensations, and unexpectedness. Expanding empirical focus beyond Western examples to the Turkish context (see also Tzankova, 2015) also helps to avoid simplifying interpretations reducing individual sexual likes and practices to the power and decisiveness of social norms.

For Alan Levinovitz (2017), it is crucial in terms of play's explanatory power to specify the form of play a researcher deploys in her/his research. He advocates for different types of play emerging in two main forms: as constrained ludic activities, which have a certain set of rules like games; and as toy-related ones, which can be considered as forms of free play. The latter ones have more emphasis on individual agency and are not restricted by any type of rules (or norms). Therefore, I argue that porn can be thought of as toys in that they are exempt of structuring tendencies and involve large degrees of player agency. Both toys and porn can be seen as an "embodiment of the play's freedoms" (Sicart, 2014: 42), which becomes intensified through individuals' imagination. Put differently, play's freedoms incarnate in toys' ambiguousness and openness for interpretations: "toys are empty vessels with which stories, worlds, and actions are constructed" (Sicart, 2014: 42). Finally, this article builds on Alfred Schütz's (1962, 1970) phenomenological account of musical performances: just like their musical counterparts, porn performers "flux of experiences in inner time<sup>2</sup> also encompasses the spectators." Schütz's framework then makes it possible to conceptualize how my informants relate and empathize with porn performers when connected to them through screens. Also, throughout the article, his concept of finite province of the meaning helps to frame porn spectatorship as a distinct realm with its own sense of logic.

In what follows, I first offer a brief discussion of method and research data before moving on to a closer discussion of porn as a toy, as well as aspects of Schütz's sociological phenomenology. The analysis is divided into two separate yet interconnected sections focusing on how my study participants play with porn. The article addresses different and ambivalent ways of obtaining pleasure by

highlighting playful experimentations with online porn and the ways in which spectators connect with performers on-screen.

## Research data and recruitment strategies

This article builds on 18 semi-constructed in-depth interviews (Johnson, 2001: 103–119) conducted between 2015 and 2019. In terms of recruitment, I tried to find people within Turkey willing to openly talk about and discuss their porn consumption. Being explicit and open about one's porn spectatorship (in this case to the researcher) was the minimum requirement. After contacting the initial informants, I proceeded with a combination of purposive sampling and the snowball method. In total, I made multiple interviews with one genderfluid, eight cisgender women and nine cisgender men of different sexual orientations. Among the men, four self-identified as homosexual and five as heterosexual. Among the women, three self-identified bisexual and one who had previously self-identified as heterosexual later told me that “she had discovered that she was bisexual”. Plus, one person who had multiple times identified herself as cis woman, later defined herself as gender-fluid. The informants were between 20 and 30 of age and from relatively privileged backgrounds in terms of socioeconomic status and education. They were mostly located in Istanbul, but some others have also moved to other big cities like Izmir and Ankara or abroad during the interview process.

The interviews were spread over a fairly long period (from 2015 onwards along with some pauses) as they were first being conducted to provide data for my MA thesis. Following my relocation to Turku, Finland in 2018 for my PhD research, I continued to conduct new interviews. The interview guide was also modified for a few times and therefore some participants went through follow-up interviews. The interview guide starts with open-ended questions on sexuality, then moves on to the informants' histories of porn spectatorship, porn preferences and their connection (in terms of continuity/discontinuity) within their lived realities. Through these different themes, I investigated the everyday uses of porn in relation to certain contextual cues, such as age, gender, sexual orientation and meanings attributed to sexuality. Initial interviews mostly took place in real-time locations such as cafes or university canteens, while follow-ups have been conducted through apps like Skype, Facetime or WhatsApp. This shift from face-to-face interviews to webcam was first and foremost practical.<sup>3</sup> The interviews were semi-structured, tape-recorded, transcribed verbatim, and anonymized.<sup>4</sup>

It could be asked whether or how one's openness, as a minimum requirement for recruitment, is relevant, yet this is key in terms of Turkish context. According to Nilüfer Göle (1996: 50), the Westernization movement that took place in the Ottoman Empire almost 200 years ago dissolved the social patterns determined by Islam and resulted in the reregulation of social space and intergender relations. This reregulation and further Kemalist reforms<sup>5</sup> did not however happen smoothly as women's choices of being in public spaces, adopting Western manners and lifestyles have triggered societal and political debates ever since, both in Imperial

and Republican era. For Göle (1996: 7), notion of mahrem, which refers to “intimacy, domesticity, secrecy, women’s space, what is forbidden to a foreigner’s gaze and a man’s family”, is central in these debates. She argues that such debates often reflect an asymmetry between

The invisibility of mahrem space, which comes with a nonverbalization of the (sexual) affairs taking place in it and the sphere of confession, in which, as Foucault argues for the Western civilization (not only its Catholic part but as a whole in Göle’s reading), every possible intimate and private affair is explicitly verbalized.

From a similar perspective, Veronika Tzankova and Thecla Schiphorst (2009) note a long-running tension between the effect of the behavioral codes of the West and those of the (Islamic) East on the visible social surface in Turkey. Currently, the conservative government of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) also contributes to this asymmetry by imposing its own (Sunni) Islamic morality in a top-down fashion (Ozyegin, 2018), which includes a widespread ban on porn sites as well.

I contend that the same asymmetry and tensions are present here, especially for female informants, when it comes to speaking openly about one’s porn preferences, masturbation routines and sexual desires in general, even to a researcher (and in this case to a male researcher). Most of my study participants share a sex positive stance further strengthened by their openness: this becomes significant and relevant for the Turkish context. It should be also noted that sexual stories told to a researcher are part of “the informants’ quotidian” (Plummer, 1995: 15) or appear as “a performance of a preferred self, selected from the multiplicity of selves or personas that individuals switch among as they go about their lives” (Riessman, 2012: 701). In short, openness comes up as a distinct positioning on informants’ part in the Turkish context.

Although the asymmetry that Göle underlines is important for understanding what it means to have a sex positive stance in the Turkish context, my analysis does not focus on the social tensions and conflicts in contemporary Turkey. As Levent Ünsaldı (2019: 23) remarks, certain words like “Kemalist,” “Islamist,” or “modern” possess a “somniferous quality” in most sociological research on Turkey. During the interview process, very little of Islam and/or its clash with secularism was however uttered. There was a similar lack of concern on the part of the informants on the censorship mechanisms of the Turkish government against porn and sexuality. Some Islamic norms, i.e. the veil and other conservative cultural aspects in Turkey, provide thrills for at least some interviewees, or increase excitement through their ambivalence concerning porn spectatorship. They are nevertheless complementary rather than central to the research data as a whole and foregrounding them would come at the expense of exploring enjoyment and bodily pleasures.

### **Porn as toy**

For Sicart (2014: 40), a toy is “an opening for appropriation,” “an element for getting the fantasy started, a gate to the world of imagination,” and “an extension

of the playful mind, an exploration of both who we are and what we do.” While reading this, I was simultaneously contemplating my informants’ particular ways of thinking, describing, and discussing their wide range of experiences with porn, leading me to consider porn as a (digital) toy. Online porn allows for my study participants to roleplay “the voyeuristic pervert” (Ertunç, male heterosexual, 27 year old), to step inside “an environment where fantasies are being built” (Orhan, gay male, 29 year old), to exploit the possibilities afforded by imaginative play and to discover new sexual niches and tastes through categories and tags. This can happen, for example, by getting to know the porn performers by “stalking” their social media accounts (Bihter, bisexual female, 27 year old), by creating “unusual encounters by opening different clips simultaneously or pausing, fast-forwarding, and running the video back” (Hasan, gay male, 30 year old) and, sometimes even, by establishing a direct-yet-imaginary conversation with a performer as is the case in JOI (abbreviation for jerk-off-instruction) videos (Cenk, straight male, 28 year old).

To me, the ways how Sicart defines toys are convincingly resonating with the examples just mentioned: For instance, Hasan pointed out these “unusual encounters” as substantial differences between his use of porn and finding real partners to have sex with. When I asked to him to detail these differences, he told that they are not just a matter of comfort, but also, a matter of control. By means of this control, he is able to explore further who and what he likes, without any social constraints like being naked in front of a stranger or having an adequate sexual performance that could easily ruin his pleasure. From a different perspective, Bihter’s efforts to get to know performers more, stem not only from her desire to validate performers’ pleasure, but also to position herself together with performers in that particular clip. By knowing someone’s backstory, it is easier for her to imagine herself having sex with those particular performers. Thus, porn moves beyond being a mere depiction of sexual acts for her; it becomes an ignitor for her further imagining.

Katriina Irja Heljakka (2018) deploys the term “toyification” for “communicating the idea of an entity being reinforced with toyish elements/aesthetic; an object, technology or a technological device, a character or a human being acquiring a toyish appearance, form, or function through intentional behavior.” There is a similar understanding in Levinovitz’s account (2017: 271) where he defines toy-play as “moments in time.” More specifically, in his words, as “a unique moment of interaction between subject, object, and context with identifiable characteristics” (Levinovitz, 2017: 271). I similarly suggest that contemporary porn plays with toyish elements of media and communication technology. Put differently, there is a “toyification” of computers, tablets, smart-phones, and other smart devices. The toyification of these technologies then underscores the right moments in time for intensifying the pleasures derived from porn spectatorship. In brief, I claim that online porn shares characteristics with toys as a means of sexual exploration, expressivity, creativity, and appropriation.

## **Porn spectatorship as a finite province of meaning**

I propose considering porn spectatorship as a finite province of meaning, as this allows us for depicting the modality and dynamics of online porn use (see also: Vörös, 2015: 139). According to Schütz (1970: 252–256), the everyday lifeworld “contains gateways and transitions to other realities.” These other realities, termed finite province of meaning by Schütz, make realities of their own and, together with the everyday world, constitute a universe of multiple realities<sup>6</sup> (Ayaß, 2017: 520). He gives numerous examples for these different worlds: “the world of dreams, of imageries and phantasms, especially the world of art, the world of religious experience, the world of scientific contemplation, the play world of the child, and the world of the insane” (Schütz, 1962: 232). Framing porn spectatorship through Schütz’s conceptualization of finite provinces means conceiving of porn spectatorship as a different reality, a world of toys which comes with its very own logic; yet which still connects to the everyday world.

Every finite province of meaning also has its own “specific cognitive style”<sup>7</sup> (Schütz, 1962: 230). The cognitive style of watching online porn crystalizes as a degree of hygienic distance and synesthetic traces and echoes: “experiences of watching porn shape and influence one’s contingent somatic reservoirs (as resonance, titillation, dislike, curiosity, or exercises of imagination), while these archives in return orient ways of looking at and sensing pornography” (Paasonen, 2011: 203). Schütz (1962: 342) similarly addresses certain finite province of meanings, such as the play world of a children, where intersubjective participation and interaction in terms of shared fantasms occur. I argue that the play world of porn spectators is no different in relation to the intersubjective participation and interaction through various fantasms, or in terms of the mutual tuning ins of a musical performance.

## **Empathizing with the performer in the realm of porn spectatorship**

According to some informant, the empathy they experienced toward porn performers was quite salient. It mostly took the form of speculating about the authenticity of their pleasures, be they enjoyable/submissive, hurtful, offensive, teasing, disgusting and/or any of these things simultaneously (Sicart, 2014). The following comments are culled from informants’ descriptions of these ambivalent connections:

As a spectator, I witness how hard performers are trying to address us or to give pleasure to us. This might also be the reason why porn is this much in demand. It’s like providing you with a place where you can live any pleasure with any performer you pick. As long as it makes me excited and horny, I feel fine, but after the masturbation it equally makes me feel weird. I often question if performers get the same pleasure as I do because I get that pleasure through thinking they get the same; but

what if they didn't? What if they were doing it mechanically, which is a more probable possibility? (Serap, bisexual female, 27-y-old)

Do you consider that porn stars may also enjoy what they're doing?

I do. I've thought about this a lot while watching Alex Legend<sup>8</sup>. I've already told you, I started following his Twitter account. From what I understood, he has this porn star partner, they shoot clips together, but he also has some clips with others. I mean, this is what I realized after stalking him on Twitter for some time: Yeah, there is some level of fiction and even when they get pleasure out of it, they aren't getting as much as we think. But the pleasure also exists. (Bihter)

You know, at that moment (during the masturbation) I mostly play with my clit, and I think the lesbian and other women to women stuff, in general, are more focused on that. I don't like seeing penetration because what I feel down there is something different. Even when I watch penetration orientated stuff, I still look for women's clit. But in any case, I can't do such stuff in my real life, it makes me feel grossed out! I'm not into women, believe me. (Reyhan, straight female, 24-y-old)

Schütz's phenomenological analysis of musical performances (1970: 209–217) can provide a deeper understanding of such connections between porn spectators and the performers they watch. For him, the non-representative characteristics and qualities of music bind it to the inner temporality of composers, musicians, and listeners alike, establishing a non-linguistic, non-conceptual tuning-in relationship between the parties involved. For Schütz, the simultaneous streams of consciousness between the performer and listener are mutually experienced in their inner time:

The flux of (musical) tones unrolling in inner time is an arrangement meaningful to both the composer and the beholder, because and in so far as it evokes in the stream of consciousness participating in it an interplay of recollections, retentions, protentions, and anticipations which interrelate the successive elements. (Schütz, 1970: 210)

In the interview excerpts cited above, it is similarly assumed that the performer is aware that she or he is being watched by the viewers and that his/her pleasures commingle with the observers' pleasure within a shared flux of experience. A mutual tuning in which bodies can hold on to each other through seemingly contradicting affects, desires, visceral connections, and sensations that easily flow in and out. Performers' presumed exhibitionist intentions are also part of the play, and they emerge as a prerequisite for the mutual play between these parties. As the informants relate, what happens in porn performances does not always seem to be fun (here in the first two excerpts, authenticity reveals itself as a safeguard for fun), yet they manage to pleasure themselves without delving too much on these related thoughts, at least not until the play is over.



Once toy-play is finalized, mostly through orgasm (although this is not always the case), negative affective registers start to be contemplated. A little fiction does not nevertheless spoil the play entirely, as Bihter puts it. Nor does the very doubt about performers pleasures' intensity, which as Serap articulates, dismantles the foundations of play: "Well, it's probably mechanical more than improvisational, yet it's ok as long as it makes me horny." For Schütz (1962: 230), a specific epoché, i.e. the suspension/bracketing of doubt, is one of the peculiarities of a finite province of meaning. Reyhan, again, puts into question not only a form of doubt, but a specific way of experiencing herself. She empathizes with and "feels what is down there" through the clitoris of the performer on the screen, and it is not significant whether she is into women or not, as the clitoral pleasures are being shared. At the same time, she suspends her very thoughts and doubts on same-sex activities among women, while focusing on their mutual pleasures. It seems that Reyhan and the performer share the same flux of experiences in that particular moment of toy-play, no matter what their sexual identities or orientations are.

### *Attention*

I do not think it is at all coincidental that these excerpts above come from non-men. It is crucial to highlight how people orient themselves when using porn. Following Schütz and Luckmann's description of orientation as a question of one's starting point, Sara Ahmed (2006: 545) brings the political economy of attention forward and asks: "Who arrives to which starting point which affects what they can do once they arrive (and of course, many do not even make it)" (Ahmed, 2006: 547)? In my analysis, the same questions weigh heavily, and an excerpt from Esra's (gender fluid bisexual, 28 year old) interview can be treated as an initial answer:

I belong to the most exploited group in porn movies and similar products. I don't believe that these are made for me. They're for white straight males, that's for sure. There's an incredible area of gay porn which I respect sincerely; but porn, in general, is made for the enjoyment of a group which constantly creates problems and troubles for me in my life. Yeah, it's very likely to take pleasure from it, like listening to terrible but catchy songs or as watching poor-quality soap operas. So yes, you can enjoy it, but you shouldn't think about it.

Non-men in my sample often complain about the generic conventions of hetero-porn and I suggest that is why they tend to empathize with female performers and validate their desire through a mutual tuning of bodies and thoughts in their inner time, to have a "fun play," even if this does not always occur. This connects to how "Play, according to Agamben, 'tends to break the connection between past and present,' emptying the object of all previous meanings, all previous evaluations" (Levinovitz, 2017: 278). As long as you are not "really" thinking about what you see on the screen, there is no importance as to what meanings and evaluations it



contains, “you are good to go for playing with it.” However, it is also possible to be hurt, to find things disgusting or to be offended in ways that render the experience of play somewhat opposite to “fun.”

In contrast, the men in my sample do not always necessarily empathize with performers like non-men do; yet this does not mean that their toy-play is always fun and recreational. Playing with porn may also harm, offend or produce feelings of guilt in men:

Porn had a very negative effect on my self-body image. I mean, penis sizes, muscly bodies on the screen... They were all affecting me deeply, maybe they still do, but nowadays I'm way more at peace with my body.

Then how do/did you handle this while you're watching porn?

I don't! It's more like a self-driven process. While I'm masturbating, I guess some parts of my brain start to shut down. I only think about these body issues after reaching orgasm. I don't know, it's hurting me in a way, but I still can't help myself but watching it over and over. (Erdoğan, gay male, 29-y-old)

You can go out and start asking people about abusive porn. Most of them will react very negatively. While watching this stuff, I was enjoying but later I was also feeling guilty like I was doing something that I shouldn't be doing. It shouldn't be watched kinda feeling. (Ataol, straight male, 27-y-old)

Erdoğan says that he turns his attention to the physicality of the bodies of different men, rather than voicing a shared inner time flow. Performers' large penises and muscular bodies threaten and spoil his contentment with his own body, yet he still engages in the activity of play – even as “some parts of his brain effectively shut down.” Ataol's account is also dissimilar to those of the non-male informants cited above: The physical pain of female performers in abusive/brutal porn is that which makes his toy-play enduringly pleasurable. In this regard, he is neither questioning the authenticity of the pleasure nor empathizing with the pain of the performers, even though he later feels guilty getting pleasure from other individuals' pain. Nevertheless, to a certain extent, he still arguably partakes in the same flux of experiences as the male performers.

## **Thrilling experiments and contingencies in porn**

In the previous section, I focused on the connection between performers and spectators within the finite province of the meaning of online porn use. Here, I move to addressing contingent arousals and potential discoveries within experiences of porn spectatorship. Affective intensities, amplified through play, may occur within certain repeatable patterns that can solidify into routines. However, while repeatability is one of the defining features of play, sexual play

also encompasses variation, improvisation and change. Even though there might be some identicalities in each sexual play, like partners and settings etc., no moment in time is exactly the same and the previous motions and sensations, along with the degrees of mutual attunement and resonance, are being accumulated (Paasonen, 2018: 37). Orhan similarly describes the appeal of porn:

Let's say today you're in for foot fetish, and you can work on this, you can watch that kind of stuff as long as you want, but then, two days later you can start to seek for something completely new and the best place that'd provide you with the necessary means, for searching something new, is porn. It's the best place for sure.

These features of toy-play, which become apparent for its yearning for variation, create unexpectedness and fortuitousness. Likewise, they open different ways for imagination, often crystalize in the interviews, be it with some other "playmates" involved or without the frame of human interaction at all (Paasonen, 2018: 21). For example, the handjob skills of Alev (bisexual female, 28-y-old) originate from a random porn clip:

For example, there was this video where the guy was laying down in a flat field and the woman was giving him a handjob. It was unnecessarily long but still, I watched this video till its very end, I tried to understand its every possible aspect. Of course, I don't have a penis, so I don't know how exactly it makes you feel, I mean, which spot makes you hornier, etc. but there were some things I've already learned from my previous experiences. Anyway, I've counted on that woman's knowledge, memorized all of her moves and combined it all with my previous knowledge. I was very excited about my partner's possible reaction. Well, I've tried it, and he's reacted wonderfully (she laughs)!

While testing her handjob skills and her partners' bodily capacities and responses, Alev calls upon her somatic reservoirs: she reanimates a porn scene in which she mimics the performer, embodies her competence, and even dares to compete with her while also relying on "some things she has already learned". Without knowing her partner's ultimate reaction, she playfully explores the ways of enhancing pleasures for both of them, and although it is a planned event, there is still a certain level of spontaneity. Thus, porn as a toy becomes the physical embodiment of her "play's freedoms". She constructs her experimental actions with porn.

### *The territory of disgust and bizarreness*

In addition to her handjob experiment through her use of porn, Alev experienced more of these kinds of thrills. For instance, while she was browsing the shock site [efukt.com](http://efukt.com)<sup>9</sup> with one of her partners, they suddenly started to have sex:

Do you watch porn with your partners?

Not too much, but a couple of times I did, yes. But it's never like, let's watch something then make love. There is a site called efukt.com, they make videos through cutting some weird and disturbing stuff. Once, while hanging out in this efukt, we've suddenly started to have sex, but it's not something of our routine. It's a weird site too.

What do you mean by weird?

For instance, there was this video that was based on an interview made with a porn performer. They ask her like "what is the most awkward stuff that you want people to do you?", and she says, "that somebody opens a hole randomly on my body and fucks that hole." You see, very weird. Also, there are other pieces of stuff like 2 girls 1 cup, etc.

There are many others like Alev, who are fascinated with porn and then move in abrupt directions:

Sometimes you discover stuff very randomly and coincidentally. Here you go, I just remembered a good example: I usually say that I like male bodies, I mean I'm gay after all, right? I always say I'm not interested in a vagina. Yet I saw this very interesting porn: there were men, but they all had vaginas. They had gone through some sort of operation I guess, but you know, their appearance, I mean physical characteristics, all that stuff, they are complete men. Some of them are hairy, some of them muscly, but you know, they have vaginas. This is how I learned that I could actually like vaginas. (Hasan)

Once I've watched this peeing stuff. I'm not sure about shitting though. However, I was turned on by peeing. I mean I won't like it personally, but maybe that humiliation made me horny. I don't know how to describe it. I have some ideas though: My first girlfriend and I had some kind of complicated relationship; she was even getting disturbed by touching. Maybe that's why I like when there are no limitations in sex. Hmm let me put it this way: I also find my sperm disgusting, but you know when I see a woman who swallows somebody else's sperm, it drives me crazy. Piss is kinda like that, I mean the fact that woman doesn't abhor from piss, sperm, the things I think that is disgusting, makes me very horny. (Yiğit, straight male, 28-y-old)

Informants open themselves to the unknown, unimagined and unwanted, from the "the weird stuff" that leads to sex – to dazzling men with vaginas who manage to fascinate "a guy who has never thought that he would be yearning for vaginas." Like others, Yiğit, while being repulsed by his cum and piss, realizes that he might see it differently if they were swallowed by potential partners. Thus, through the emergence of what is fortuitous, informants find themselves reaching into an uncharted territory of undiscovered pleasures while renewing their somatic

reservoirs as well. As Tiidenberg and Paasonen (2019: 391) also note in their investigation of age-play,

Negative affective intensities like shame, fear, disgust, or guilt can—perhaps counter-intuitively— intensify and amplify sexual desire and arousal. They add an edge of transgression to the encounters at hand, be it from enjoyments taken in humiliation or variations of edge-play.

The afore cited excerpts provide supportive evidence for their finding in many ways: Disgust at one's own piss/cum, disturbance and weirdness that nevertheless hook the viewer, “bizarre” physical appearances intensify and amplify the sexual desire of the informants. At the same time, negative affective intensities can render play somewhat non-arousing and unfunny.

## **Conclusion**

This article has proposed for conceptualizing online porn and the technologies it relies on as toyish: as a phenomenon with toyish effects during time of play. I argue that examining porn spectatorship as a finite province of meaning opens up new analytical possibilities for addressing the complexity of pleasure in online porn spectatorship. The conceptualization of online porn as a toy and porn spectatorship as a finite province of meaning then allow for a more complete and nuanced comprehension of the ecology of play.

Performers and spectators connect to each other in specific ways within the finite province of meaning in porn spectatorship. Concerning this connection between porn performers and especially female spectators in my sample, they share the same flux of experience. Male spectators' ways of connecting to performers remained somewhat different. This peculiar connection, I argue, unveils how pleasures and desires are discovered, shared and flow within time and space.

Moreover, this article has documented contingencies that constitute an integral part of porn spectatorship and that invite spectators to uncharted realms that can be experienced as disgusting and bizarre. The interviews make evident that porn spectatorship does not always guarantee enjoyment: toy-play can separately or simultaneously hurt, offend, tease, disgust, and yet, despite this, it may still yield thrills.

Finally, analyzing the informants' sexual narratives through theorizations of play shows that it is not always productive to position them within a priori identity categories, as these can hinder theoretical/analytical access to pleasure, as voiced by the study participants. In this article, we find that people identifying gay male yearn for depictions of vulvas, or that straight women search for lesbian orgasm for masturbation, and so on, and so forth. These unvested identifications point to difficulties in of executing fixed-identity categories within the (sexual) research

context, as already highlighted by various scholars (see Albury, 2015; Carrillo and Hoffman, 2018; Scoats et al., 2018; Scott and Dawson, 2015).

A focus on pleasures and their contingent aspects in order to better understand how sexualities are lived, and the transformations they involve, do not however rule out the power of social norms, for “the emphasis on sex and porn consumption as types of play should not be taken to suggest that these are not intimately related to political and social issues” (Attwood et al., 2018: 3756). In Schütz’s thinking, different realities and everyday life-worlds are similarly connected through various transitions and gateways. Within my research data, such multiple entries and openings mostly concern Islam and other features of conservative cultures in Turkey. While being secondary to the pleasures articulated, they remain present and demand another scheme of analysis for future research.

### **Acknowledgements**

I thank two anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments. I also thank Susanna Paasonen and Caroline Bem for their valuable suggestions on the earlier versions of this paper.

### **Declaration of conflicting interests**

The author declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

### **Funding**

The author disclosed receipt of the following financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article: This work was supported by the Finnish National Agency for Education and Finnish Cultural Foundation under one-year grants for doctoral dissertation.

### **ORCID iD**

İhsan C Asman  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5581-1420>

### **Notes**

1. It is important to highlight here that informants’ porn spectatorship always comes intermingled with masturbation.
2. Schütz uses inner time in the same sense that Henri Bergson perceives duration/durée (Ayaß, 2017: 521) “within which our actual experiences are connected with the past by recollections and retentions and with the future by pretensions and anticipations.” Inner time opposes to outer time, which is basically the “spatialized, homogeneous time” that can be registered by appropriate devices, e.g. clock (Embree, 1998: 57).
3. Time and location-related problems have come into play, as I moved from Turkey to Turku, Finland. All the interviews were conducted in Turkish and the translations are mine.

4. The research has not gone through an ethics review as the research design does not necessitate a review in Finland, as it has been designed to minimize and mitigate any potential harm. The participants have given informed consent and have had the right to withdraw from the research if so desired; the material is fully anonymized so that no research register has been established.
5. Kemalist reforms are a series of social, cultural, legal, and economic policy implementations during the transition from the theocratic and multinational Ottoman Empire to the secular nation-state of Turkey and also, throughout the first years of the Republic. Abolition of sultanate (1922), proclamation of the republic (1932), abolition of caliphate (1924), introduction of new penal law – based on the Italian penal code – and civil code – based on the Swiss civil code (1926), adoption of the Latin script (1928), full political rights for women to vote and elected (1934), the inclusion of the principle of laicism in the constitution (1937) are the most prominent examples.
6. Although Schütz lived several decades before the spread and popularization of internet, life-world conceptualization and its temporal-spatial structures have also been adapted to the current state by several researchers (see Ollinaho, 2018; Zhao, 2004, 2015).
7. For Schütz, specific cognitive style of finite province of meanings is accompanied by: 1- a specific tension of consciousness, 2- a specific epoche (namely suspension of doubt), 3- a prevalent form of spontaneity, 4- a specific form of experiencing one's self, 5- a specific form of sociality, and finally, 6- a specific time-perspective.
8. <https://twitter.com/alexlegendxxx>.
9. <https://efukt.com/>.

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**İhsan C Asman** is a PhD candidate at the University of Turku, Finland. His research interests include porn studies, sexuality studies, and microsociology. Currently he is investigating how pornography is experienced and understood by its spectators in Turkey, and in what distinct ways this peculiar spectatorship can be framed.