

## A READING ON FEMINISM AND PORNOGRAPHY THROUGH JURI LOTMAN'S CULTURE AND EXPLOSION: REFLECTIONS

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### **Abstract**

We endeavor through this research paper to read the feminist movements, in particular countries in order to understand its dynamics and at the same time to foresee its future directions. To achieve this, as an adequate tool, Juri Lotman's *Culture and Explosion* (2009) provides us a model for reading the different dynamics within feminism, as a cultural text, as well as its interconnection to other sign systems within the same semiotic sphere. Thus we can understand the interconnection of feminism with politics and society, and with its plurality of discourses makes it in constant change and exposed to explosions which would change its course in the future. These explosions are displayed through the political acts which were passed in favour of the women as a result of the feminist dynamics. Besides, the feminist movement has the capacity to integrate into other movements and also can be transformed into other movements, and thus, new realities and discourses are created. Within this arena, among these realities is the anti-feminist pornography as opposed to pro-sex feminists. From our stand point, pornography, and especially that in the digital age, is the dark side of the feminist movement.

Semiotically, in Lotman's (2009) model, pornography is abnormal, sick or non-existent because it is different from the norm. In the light of this, we are able to expose different views about the harms of pornography both on women and even men.

**Keywords:** feminism, culture, semiotics, pornography, norm

## 1. Introduction

We endeavor through this research paper to expose our reflections on feminism as a universal movement, as the woman's experience is similar even in different times, places, and cultures; women react to the injustices of a patriarchal society. On the other hand, in parallel with women's substantial achievements, we question the merits of digital pornography which we consider to be the dark side of feminism. As a means to read the achievements and failures of this movement, we make use of Juri Lotman's model of cultural interpretation, namely, "Culture and Explosion" (2009). We have chosen to talk about feminism in light of this very representative of cultural semiotics because his views on culture in "Culture and Explosion" afford ways of reading the different dynamics within feminism as cultural text, as well its interconnection to other sign systems within the same semiotic space.

However, the relevance of Lotman's cultural semiotic approach to the reading of the feminist movements lies in its consideration of the historical change of feminism as culture. As a matter of fact, for Lotman, the historical development and background of a culture shapes its present and gives foresight of its evolution in the future. And thus, this may enable us not only to understand the present state of feminism but also to predict or foresee the image of feminism in the future (Ibrus & Torop 2014). Therefore this research paper will examine feminist movements through Lotman's approach. In the same vein, by using this theoretical insight we will get closer to the inevitable triadic relation between feminism, politics and society, feminism and other movements, feminism and pornography and finally, we conclude by our suggestions on feminism and cultural norms.

## 2. Importance of Lotman's Approach

Juri Lotman (1922–1993), a prominent literary scholar, cultural theorist and semiotician established the Tartu (Tartu-Moscow) school of semiotics in the 1960s. Through this school, and with his Moscow colleagues, namely B. A. Uspensky, V. V. Ivanov, V. N. Toporov, and A. M. Pjatigorskij, Lotman founded the "Theses on the Semiotic Study of Cultures" in 1973. In it, he defines cultural semiotics as the science which studies the functional correlation of sign systems and how they correlate with language. Under the

realm of cultural semiotics, Lotman was able to publish tremendous essays and books about the semiotics of culture like; “On the Semiosphere” (2005), “Universe of the Mind” (2000), “Culture and Explosion” (2009), “The Unpredictable Workings of Culture” (2013; see Garmigna 2013). In these texts Lotman sees culture as being immersed in the semiotic space (the semiosphere), which is a heterogenous reservoir of dynamic processes with explosive potential. Moreover, he asserts the multidimensionality of sign systems as well as their interconnectivity. Therefore, within this semiotic space, culture is in interconnectivity with other sign systems, and he also cites the interactions and interrelations between the elements within culture itself (ibid.).

According to many scholars, his theories were workable. For example, Indrek Ibrus and Peeter Torop (2014) cite that many scholars used his theories to interpret a variety of cultural issues like the Australian mediasphere, computer games, comic books, theme-park attractions as forms of postmodern entertainment, learning processes in multimedia classrooms, dynamics of mobile web-media forms and cross-or transmedialities. See also the seminal volume “Lotman and Cultural studies” (edited by Andreas Schonle in 2007) in which authors made efforts to link Lotman’s work to the dominant themes of cultural studies, a very rewarding and noteworthy effort (Indrek & Torop 2014).

For Lotman (2009), culture is always in dynamic processes with itself as a result of gradual processes and predictability, as well its connection with the other sign systems in a semiotic space. Furthermore, these gradual processes and unpredictability is what creates movement within culture. And to understand the history of any culture is to view it from two perspectives; as an immanent development, and as a result of a variety of external factors. Consequently, we see Lotman’s “Culture and Explosion” (2009) as appropriate for describing the feminist movement, because feminism as a complex system cannot be identified in isolation from the other sign systems within a society. This requires the existence of two other sign systems to define its existence and movement, usually society and politics. Moreover, tracing the history of the feminist movement is essential for understanding its present shape and to predict its future.

On the other hand, we see that feminism and pornography are related to each other in some way. We can claim that pornography is the dark side of women’s liberation. The call for women’s liberation culminated in USA and Britain in the 60s where feminists called for the rejection of male dominance in sex. In addition, talking about feminism and pornography under the light of Lotman’s approach enable us to account for this sick side of culture, for this non-existent individual behaviour as opposed to the normal, acceptable, and collective behaviour.

### 3. Feminism, Society and Politics: A Triadic Relation

#### 3.1. Definition of Feminism

There is a common feature attributed to feminism found in all the literature we have reviewed. They all target the empowerment of women to have equal rights and opportunities with men in society, politics, economy, profession and education. Feminism is to believe that the two sexes are equal in society in the fields of politics, education and profession.<sup>1</sup> Or, in other words, it is the consideration that both men and women have the same rights and opportunities in power, as it is the kind of activities that are targeted to achieve this goal (Online Cambridge dictionary 2018). And finally, feminism can be seen in the political movements, ideologies, and social movements that share the same objectives displayed in the political, economic, personal and social equality between the sexes.<sup>2</sup>

However, it is illuminating to note that the concept of feminism in post-modernity took on rather ambiguous connotations. It is claimed that the postmodern feminism is characterized by its plurality in discourse, its destruction of all kinds of discourse which perpetuate gender inequities, its acknowledgment of the individual differences among women themselves, and thus the consideration of a woman's social location would shape the discourse of feminist movements (McDougal 2012). Whether in Third World Countries or Western ones, women reacted against the oppressive dominant patriarchal society. It is an agreed fact among scholars that women's fight against inequalities and the demand for legal reforms in most parts in the world began in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century (Molyneux 2018).

From the view of Lotman (2009), any semiotic event has a relation to the extra-system, to a world that lies beyond its borders. Indeed, it is admitted by Yihan (2018) that from a social perspective, the feminist movement is shaped by the stock of meanings existing within a society, in its beliefs, art forms, ideologies, language, and narratives, among others. Consequently, as a cultural movement, feminism is in a position to intersect with many elements within the society. McCarthy *et al.* (1991: 46) remind us that "*when people come together to pursue collective action in the context of the modern state they enter a complex and multifaceted social, political and economic environment.*" (Yihan 2018: 1).

<sup>1</sup> <https://cathyreisnwitz-com/the-definition-of-feminism-what-does-feminism-mean> (last visited 31/3/2019).

<sup>2</sup> (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/feminism> (last visited 31/3/2019)).

### 3.2. America and Britain

In America and Britain, the feminist movement knew three distinguished waves in three different periods of times. In each period, there were moments of unpredictability or explosions where women, through the feminist movement, were able to change the course of history. Lotman (2009: 14) explains that this unpredictability is a change which occurs in the form of explosion, and adds that “*the moment of explosion is also the place where a sharp increase in the informativity of the entire system takes place.*” To explain this through Lotman’s model, the unpredictability or explosion marks a turning point in the history of cultural movements, and is connected with novelty and originality. That is, we identify a new phase in its history.

Also, it is important to note that according to Yihan (2018), these social movements work better and become more influential within political cultures which have “*strong egalitarian and liberal commitment*” (13). Therefore, she notes that the first feminist movement appeared simultaneously with the political changes that occurred after the first world war in addition to the influences of the liberal and democratic parties in Europe, which provided political opportunities for women (Huang 2018). Therefore, in the first wave, from 1860 to 1920 the feminists were able to obtain equal rights in votes, education, divorce, property and equal pay (Khan 2018). This was achieved through public demonstration, feminine gathering and presenting declaration (Huang 2018).

The Second wave, from 1960s to 1990s, comes to establish the political landmark in the history of feminism. It was also through consciousness-raising groups, direct action and radical campaigns that the feminists emphasized issues of reproductive rights, women’s education, equality in the workplace, and family issues to gain further liberation (Huang 2018). Thus, many political acts have been passed in favor of women’s rights such as Educational Equity Act and the Equal Credit Opportunity Act (1974) which expelled discrimination in schools and lending respectively (Freedman 2007, in Khan 2018). Moreover, in 1975, the Sex Discrimination Act was passed in Britain which made illegal any discrimination against women (Yihan 2018). It is to be noted here that second wave feminism was highly influenced by the Civil Rights Movement and its non-violent tools. Through the surveyed literature, many Civil Rights Women activists became feminists and brought with them the tactics of their movement like marches, sit-ins and non-violent direct action. Particularly in the first two waves, the feminist movement was not an easy process. It took many forms in its revolt; from moderate to militant action; signing petitions, boycotts, illegal but non-violent acts like unofficial strikes or even personal injury (Yihan 2018).

And the last wave in the 1990s to the present time, it empowered women in politics, business and in pursuing personal career development (Khan 2018). In addition to this, the third movement embraces other perspectives in its discourse that relate to race, color, homosexuality, class, transgender, age and gender. As a mode for its expression it differs from the two last waves; it uses the social web, mass media, music, and art among others (Huang 2018).

Through the lens of Lotman (2009), these distinctive waves reflect a change and a continuity which signals a dynamic social structure. According to Lotman's thought, the continuity that we see in these three waves can be the result of a stimulus. This stimulus can be political, social, cultural; achievements and failures on these fronts all impact the feminist movement. For example, after the First World War, Europe saw many changes which created the adequate atmosphere for feminists to take action. Fraser (2014) states the following changes: the decline of the upper class, the introduction of broad general suffrage, the extension of the franchise, coupled with an explosion in trade unionism, afforded the working classes greater political and social representation. Women found themselves in jobs which were previously predominantly male, and found themselves unwilling to give up their new independence through their work, supporting demands for women's emancipation.

More importantly, we can extrapolate from these three successive waves, of course out of Lotman's model, graduality and unpredictability; both are integral in the feminist movement, and appear simultaneously, because the moment of unpredictability leads to future developments. This is a neverending process.

Through Lotman's approach, continuity within the feminist movements lies in their engagement with wider political and socioeconomic contexts. Moreover, while each wave is featured by distinct attitudes and objectives, they all share the same form. That is the author Victoria Bowne (2014) considers Julia Kristeva's views about the feminist waves. She states Kristeva's perception that she wrote in her essay 'Women's Time' (1979–1981): the first wave was egalitarian; the second wave was Freudian, and reflected aspirations for incorporation into the social contract; and the third wave was post-feminist, brings into discussion the woman's singularities and their plural languages. In other words, this continuity within the feminist movements is reflected in their linguistic similarity and in their general content.

Moreover, we see Lotman's concept of unpredictability or explosion within these feminist waves. That is, the legal acts that were passed in favour of improving the situation of women constitute a change, a novelty and a turning point in the feminist movement; thus they are moments of unpredictabil-

ity. These acts are the result of many years of effort and hard work on the part of feminists, representing gradual process within this system.

To illustrate: in America, the first wave was marked by the Women's Rights Convention Seneca Falls, New York, 1848. The second Wave featured the establishment of the Center of Women Policy Studies in 1972 which promotes justice and equality for women, and brings into debates diverse women's issues like women and AIDS, violence against women and girls, welfare reforms, access to health care, educational equity, reproductive rights and workplace diversity policies, among others. As further examples, we see the rise of the Civil Rights Movements and counter-cultural protests even in Britain and the passing of the Equal Rights Amendment (Bowne 2014; Thomson 2001). Thus, this new political image is the result of explosions within the waves of the feminist movement.

Being in a reciprocal relation with both society and politics, feminism is in intersection with these apparent systems, and thus, is in a dynamic state: "*The intersection of a variety of structural organizations forms the source of dynamics*" (Lotman 2009: 13). These intersections would leave their impact on feminist discourse.

On the light of this, part of the dynamism of the feminist movement lies in its intersection with society, its culture, and the ideologies that also contribute to its shaping. For example, there existed in American society two broad types of discourse that would shape women's movements in the future. These are individualistic and relational thought. In relational feminism, out of a vision that believes in the complementarity between men and women, there is a recognition of both men and women side by side, each with their distinguished biological and cultural features as a couple and as a basic unit in the society. It adopts an egalitarian gender-based outlook, whereas in individualistic feminism the individual is the focus irrespective of sex or gender. It defends individual human rights and personal independence in all aspects of life. Therefore, it is admitted that individualistic feminism was the route to fostering single, independent women, or the appearance of the non-family existence that was enhanced through 19<sup>th</sup> century industrial and commercial capitalism (Offen 1988). Such a kind of discourse was behind the different theories of feminism that appeared like liberal feminism, socialist feminism or the radical feminism (Huang 2018).

In America, too, politics has supported the relational feminist movement. The writer Karen Offen (1988) discusses actions undertaken by American policy makers; the enactment of protective legislation for women workers and state sponsored maternity house wives' unions, demands for compensation of housework unions for employed women and equal pay for equal work,



the elaboration of the welfare state so as to serve women's needs as wives and mothers, the elimination of state control over women's bodies (contesting anti-abortion laws and regulated prostitution), and the alleviation of men's violence. Therefore, as an example of unpredictability I have presented the establishment of the Women's Bureau, a federal agency created to craft policy according to women's workers' needs in 1920s America.

Furthermore, during the 1970s, in both the US and Britain, a political climate prevailed which empowered the feminist movement, demonstrated in the establishment of the international development agencies in the USA and the foundation of the Women in Development (WID) in Britain. This is again a moment of unpredictability that led to increased women's involvement in development, or in political decisions, extending education, increasing employment opportunities, and decreasing gender discrimination and oppression. The foundation of such organizations opened the way for the creation of NGOs (Non-Governmental Organizations). More importantly, within this period, there was a change in the political discourse, a move towards the consideration of gender in development rather than women, and thus a new social identity rises; an identity that is not given by sex and is free from biological determinism (Pearson Ruth and Jackson Cecile, 1998). In the light of this, this new gender discourse comes to foster individualistic feminism. By the 1980s, women's movements became an important political concern in the US, as they begin to incorporate into political life as members of trade unions, political parties, nationalist movements, and reform and revolutionary organizations.

### **3.3. In France**

This image of the intersection between society, politics and feminism is also reflected in France. Women in the 19<sup>th</sup> century revolted against the patriarchal society and the patriarchal family, as well as what is referred to as sexual dimorphism. In fact, the conditions that favored such thought were the dominance of ideas like freedom from the restrictions in politics and economy (Offen 2018). Indeed, these ideas reflect a form of feminism termed Materialist feminism, which fought against the social and economic oppression of women. In France, political discourse nurtured the feminist movement particularly from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. As an example, the easing of censorship laws made it possible for female intellectuals to publish periodicals with political and feminist leanings (Huang 2018).

French feminism was not too far from the relational feminism of America. It adopted the republican nationalism discourse which was in favor



of the family. It took into consideration the differences between the sexes, education for motherhood, state subsidies for mothers, vote for women, equal pay for equal work, as well as enhanced legal, educational and economic rights (Huang 2018). However, another opposing trend of thought came into being by the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, led by Simone de Beauvoir (1908–1986) who rejected the role imposed on women due to their biological features. At the same time, she insisted on the consideration of the individual in society regardless of sex differences (Huang 2018). In her book, *The Second Sex* (1949), she expressed her individualistic feminism rejecting all forms of sex discrimination (Hamdaoui 2011). Therefore, adding to De Beauvoir's ideas, the intellectual climate nurtured by Derrida's ideas and the spread of American feminist ideas in France also contributed to the growth of French feminism (Khan 2018).

In addition to these varied trends in French feminism, there was also the Psychoanalytic Feminist tradition (2018) that is concerned with the results of the patriarchal practices of the society on the psychology of women.

### 3.4. In Algeria

In another context, in a developing country like Algeria the actual appearance of the feminist movement dates back to the early 1980s. The movement acted on a variety of grounds, including the following: at the academic level through the foundation of the 'Committee of Women Workers of the University of Algiers'; at the level of the 'combat or struggle councils'; and at the level of students' activities. Later, these activities were strengthened and increased by the involvement and the efforts of women workers and syndicates from different sectors in order to fight against some texts in the *Code of Civil Status*, which indirectly empowers the patriarchal society in its violent practices towards women, hinders their participation in political life, and puts them in a difficult economic and security situation. Having such a powerful feminist movement is the result of policies undertaken by the government from the early independence period which mandate democratic learning. This kind of policy fostered elite women who are aware of their right to ask for complete citizenship and to consider all types of violence as illegal (Djazeiress 2010). From Lotman's theory, we can read the period from independence to the eighties as a period of gradual process in the Algerian feminist movement. The year 2010 saw many conferences either at the national or international level designated for exposing and discussing such feminist issues as violent laws, sexual harassment and feminist discourse (Djazeiress 2010).

Some claim that feminism emerged for several broad objectives, namely women's improved involvement in social, economic, and political life. This

was accomplished through raising awareness, campaigns, demonstrations, and finding allies in society and politics (Ramoune 2018). In addition, these feminist movements organized demonstrations asking for democratic liberties. They were able to found the first three organizations: the *Organization for the Liberation of the Woman*, *The Organization of the Women Right to Equality in Front of the Law*, and *the Organization for the Defense and Promotion of Women Rights*. These organizations and efforts constitute, in accordance with Lotman's theory, a continuity in the movement which resulted in the explosion of many changes to the law on behalf of the woman. The last one was in 2005, at which time many laws were enacted to consider various types of violence as crimes, whether at home, in society, or sexual harassment at work. (Alamraoui 2018). In addition, in light of Lotman's theory, we see in some unpredictable moments other events that are produced as a consequence of the explosions. In this context, it is worth mentioning the efforts of the president Abdelaziz Bouteflika who helped to create a favourable political atmosphere for feminist activists to act. Thanks to his attention to women's issues, many changes were enacted in the *Code of Civil Status* in favor of women rights.

#### **4. Feminism and other movements**

Again, coming back to America, and within Lotman's model (2009), explosion itself becomes a source that generates other chains of events. As such, we can read the Nesiah's claims (2018) about the United Nations Security Council's Resolution 1325 (meant to incorporate women in peace-making and to emphasize the impact of war on gender put into light International Conflict Feminism ICF) as a participant in universal politics. Moreover, this resolution led most of the world's powerful countries to consider the impact of wars on women. Then, new international institutions were created to address issues such as sexual violence. This was followed by more resolutions by the Security Council that targeted the problems of women in war, and urged states to take action to end impunity for sexual violence in times of conflict. All these chains of resolutions and decisions are the result of many years of activism by feminist activists, who worked to address women's experiences of war, issues of development, environment, health, population and indigenous rights through their international networks. This situation exemplifies new events being generated by explosions.

As a dynamic construct and cultural phenomenon, feminism comes to intersect with other cultural movements. That is, the literature shows a shift to a broader focus in feminist activism to include issues such as peace,

environment, climate change, terrorism, and AIDS. Many feminists in America were part of the Anti-Vietnam movement, Chicago Rights movement, Asian-American Civil Rights movement or gay and lesbian movements. Moreover, they worked even at the international level and contributed in world policies. Therefore, we see states of combination, states of a birth within the feminist system or states of mergence with other systems which all relate to the dynamics of the feminist movement. For example, we can understand the appearance of lesbian feminism in the light of Lotman's view (2009: 14) which states:

The moment of explosion is also the place where a sharp increase in the informativity of the entire system takes place. The developmental curve jumps, here, to a completely new, unpredictable and much more complex path. The dominant element, which appears as a result of explosion and which determines future movement, can come from any element of the system or may even be an element of another system, randomly pulled by the explosion into the web of possibilities of future movement.

Thus, during second wave feminism in the 1970s, Lesbian feminism appeared as a sub-genre within feminism as a reaction to the exclusion of lesbians. That is, lesbians were within the Women's Liberation Movement WLM and also within the Gay Liberation Front, but later created a distinctive feminist lesbian movement. And even within the lesbian movement lesbian feminists of color have organized around the neglect of issues such as race, class and heterosexuality.

In the USA, the mutual and reciprocal interaction and movement of women from the feminist movement to the Civil Rights Movement resulted in the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibited not only race discrimination at work but also sex discrimination, a gradual process which ended in explosion. Also, In the light of Lotman's (2009) model, feminism, as a dynamic semiotic system, displays an ability to be transformed. This manifests in the collaboration or synthesis between feminism and the radical movement in ecology, a new movement which is featured by its new look to nature, i.e., examining the connection between the domination of man and the destruction of nature. This ecological movement demonstrates a new development in feminist thought.

In conclusion, we can deduce that unpredictability in the feminist movement occurs also at the level of its convergence with other movements or its expansion into other issues, because new realities and discourses that have been created.

### 5. Feminism and Pornography

The following literature about pornography exhibits a common definition of pornography. Ana J. Bridges et al. (2010) admit the Attorney General Commission on Pornography (1986) definition of pornography as sexually explicit material intended for sexual arousal. The authors add that this material is limited to adults only (Bridges et al. 2010, Drabek 2016). Drabek adds that pornography is also a means for commercial purposes. And therefore, between sexual arousal and its commercial profits, the dignity and the humanity of the individual is lost or under question.

It happens in many cultures, in addition to their bright achievements, i.e., explosions, there are moments of downfall or failures. Therefore, we believe that in order to fully describe a cultural phenomenon, a deep consideration of its downfall side permits a comprehensive reading. How does this reflect the case of feminism and women in pornography?

When we apply Lotman's (2009) cultural model, pornography comes to be something that is different from the norm because he considers collective behavior to be the norm and as evaluative of the individual. And since the individual's behavior is different from the collective, that is from the norm, it is thus regarded as destructive, abnormal, sick, or non-existent semiotically. In addition, for Lotman (2009), the case of the individual who differs from the norm is like 'folly' or a norm of 'stupidity'.

We know that out of our personal cultural background, we are taking an opposing standpoint regarding pornography, and representing the differences between cultures. However, Lotman's cultural semiotics enables the researcher to consider his own personal and cultural position. In most Western countries, pornography is legal as any other kind of jobs, whereas in the Arab and Muslim countries it is forbidden legally and religiously. Nevertheless, what is noted here is that within the Western world, there are some feminists who have shown their opposing standpoint to it and fought against it, i.e., anti-pornography feminists as opposed to those who admit it, i.e., pro-sex feminists.

In this context, Drabek (2016) sees pornography as a subordination of a woman's existence and identity which might fit the patriarchal society and leads to the confirmation of gender subordination.

However, talking about the harms of pornography on women does not exclude men from being also affected by it. And in this field, there are tremendous studies on the harmful effects of pornography on men, like sexual dysfunction, the subordination of women by men and his consequent exercising of sexual violence over her, and finally, the dehumanization of the female by the male which enhances that sexual violence (Foubert 2017). As

a result of this, a huge number of men were noted to look for therapy and treatment from addiction to erotic images. ( Mateusz et al. 2016).

In America, the feminist Shay Welch (2012), for example, has criticized political theorists for not sufficiently accounting for a comprehensive freedom of women within the social contract, and thus the individual is still not fully free and can be exposed to social oppression like the neglect of the private sphere. The author considers how sexuality is a key aspect of gender hierarchy, and how women are reduced to sexual entertainment in many forms including pornography, depictions that show women as submissive to sexual subjugation and violence, a fact which legitimates male power in society. Thus pornography becomes an important impediment to women's sexual freedom.

With these highly contested views within feminism on pornography, the feminist movement is in constant flux. These opposing standpoints create opposing discourses or languages which might lead to future trajectories and intersections with other sign systems in the future of the feminist movement, thus creating new semantics.

Among the leading figures of the anti-pornography feminists are Andrea Dworkin, Catharine McKinnon, Robin Morgan, Diana Russell, Alice Schawarzer, Gail Dines and Robert Jensen. They consider that pornography is harmful and exploitative to the woman, that women are turned into sex-objects as an indirect form of women's oppression. These ideas supported by Dworkin and McKinnon's publication of *Pornography and Civil Rights*, which was seen as a manifesto of the movement against pornography (Wikipedia).

In her article, 'A Feminist Overview of Pornography: Ending in a Defense Thereof' (2018), Mc Elroy considers that pornography is an expression of male culture through which women are commodified and exploited; it is also an identification with their oppressors and an act of sexual violence:

*Men construct women sexuality through the words and images of society which the French Philosopher Foucault called the 'text' of society. After such construction, men commercialize women sexuality and market it back to her in the form of pornography (Mc Elroy 2018).*

In fact, campaigns against pornography started in the US by the mid-1970s into the early 1980s, where anti-pornography radical feminists founded organizations like Women Against Pornography, Women Against Violence in Pornography and Media, and Feminists Fighting Pornography, among others. This gradual process of feminists' fight against pornography led to the legislation of the Civil Rights Ordinance Laws in (1983) which defined por-

nography as a civil rights harm, and allowed women to sue pornographers in civil court. In addition, the Pornography Victims' Compensation Act (1991) allowed the victims of pornography to sue pornographers (Wikipedia).

As a conclusion, this semiotic reading of pornography shows that it is an abnormal behavior, and that the woman is not yet fully liberated. It is an indirect return to the patriarchal dominance, and is the other side of the downfall of the morals of feminism, because feminism came to liberate the woman from man's exploitation, from being abused morally or physically, to have equal rights and opportunities as men, and to protect her dignity and not to be a seller of enjoyment to men. With pornography, the woman is brought back to a kind of *civilized slavery*.

### **6. Feminism and the Norm**

Being a sociopolitical cultural construct and at the same time heterogeneous, to talk of a norm in the tenets of feminism is beyond reach. Even though feminism is a universal movement, the particularities of each culture come to add some attributes peculiar to it arising from its own culture and society.

On the other hand, Lepik (2008) points out that Lotman, in his paper 'On the Problem of Cultural Typology' (1967), considers the universal features of cultures for the purposes of creating a typology, a unified system or a 'cultural grammar' of the basic types of the cultures. And to some extent, all feminist movements are alike in their connection with the society and politics in a continuous dynamic process, in their fights, achievements and even failures: that is, they share a 'cultural grammar'. From this perspective, it is possible to talk about a typology in the feminist movement.

In addition, according to Lotman (2009), behavior that is destructive to the norm is considered as 'non-existent semiotically'. In light of this view, we can extrapolate that for Lotman, a norm is set in the feminist cultural system, and therefore, pornography comes to be excluded from feminism semiotically. This means that there is a universal norm that exists and should be taken into account when we read any cultural system from a semiotic standpoint.

### **7. Conclusion**

From this short overview about feminism in America, Britain, France and Algeria, politics and society are very powerful grounds for the development of this movement. And thus, working on the political and societal levels to raise awareness, increase women's self-esteem and empower women education is crucial. We think that the protection of the woman's dignity is the norm that should be taken into consideration globally when establishing feminist tenets. Therefore, in a world of globalization, we think

that as far as feminism is concerned, it is high time to address the question of the norm and logic throughout all feminist movements across the world, in order to free women from this new form of enslavement.

Finally, Lotman's model of cultural interpretation (2009) was a semiotic tool that helped us interpret and understand the dynamics of feminist movements in any part of the world. This dynamic feature of the feminist movement allows us to make predictions about its future, particularly with the plurality of discourses it is engendering within an inescapable commercial and economic world. That is, the feminist movement will take new trajectories and inevitable intersections controlled by the type of discourse adopted and also effected by prevailing commercial and economic discourses. For example, the concept of *genre* in the postmodern era is taking new complex and elusive connotations that will probably shed light on the tenets of feminism in the Western world.

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