



## What's in a name? Why 'revenge porn' doesn't work as a term in Brazil

Que dit un nom ? Pourquoi "revenge porn" ne fonctionne pas comme énoncé au Brésil

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*They were used repeatedly until they became effective instruments for expressing what people experienced in common and wanted to communicate. They became fashionable words, concepts of common use in the daily language of a given society. This fact demonstrates that they do not represent only individual, but collective, needs for expression. The collective history in them has crystallized and resonates. The individual finds this crystallization already in his possibilities of use. He doesn't quite know why this meaning and this delimitation are implied in words, why, exactly, this nuance and that possibility from them can be derived. He uses them because it seems natural to him, because from childhood he learns to see the world through the lens of these concepts.*

Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process*, 1939.

*I feel bad about those terms, especially 'revenge porn'. It seems that it gives everything I've experienced an even more negative, weird, naughty charge...*

Maria, research interlocutor 2017.



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## “What happened to me has no name”

“Could you help coworker whose nudes were leaked?”. That was the message I received on *Facebook Messenger*<sup>1</sup>. The sender was an old acquaintance made *Facebook friend*<sup>2</sup> who upon reading some of my posts about the research<sup>3</sup> I had just started on unauthorized dissemination of erotic images over the internet<sup>4</sup>, decided to get in touch.

It was early 2015. I didn't know it yet, but this would be the first of many similar questions that would come to me from then on. Invariably from *social media* users and acquaintances who communicated via my personal profiles on *Facebook*, *Twitter* and *Instagram*. Advised by all sorts of friends, acquaintances and colleagues, several women and girls came to me during the five years I was conducting my doctoral research about online violence against women, with stories involving erotic nude images, mobile phones, men, conflicts, and considerable anguish.

Gabriela was the first of them. Armed with her coworker's go head and a lot of guts, she sent me a message. When we met, via *WhatsApp*, she was twenty-four years old. At the time, she worked as a saleswoman in a clothing store in a shopping mall in the south of São Paulo. We introduced ourselves, talked a little about our lives and our mutual friend. Without further ado, Gabriela told me the reason she reached for me: someone was posting her nudes on *Facebook*.

The story unfolded as follows: one day, Gabriela received several messages from an unknown mobile phone number. The sender demanded that she send him a sum of money in return for not having her nude photos *exposed*. Gabriela assumed that the person responsible for the messages was in possession of her old mobile (the device had been stolen during a Carnival parade), and accessed the images stored inside it. Among them, there were several *nudes*.

Faced with the intimidating approach, she refused to send any amount of money, both “on principle” (her words) and also because she did not trust that the photos would later be discarded. With the refusal, the “stranger” - she always assumed he was a man - changed the terms of the blackmail, asking now for new nudes as a reward for not posting her existing ones. Again, she refused.



So, the stranger created a new *Facebook profile*. Using the name Gabriela, he added friends of the girl's own contact network and began to publish the nudes photos in posts containing offensive sexual phrases. In a short time, most of Gabriela's family, friends and acquaintances had already seen her intimate pictures.

As a way of trying to stop the publications, Gabriela and her closest friends reported the content to *Facebook's administration*<sup>5</sup>, namely a space for users who wish to make requests and complaints to the platform. *Facebook* has a well-known strict internal policy, which supposedly bans and deletes any images of nudity and sex, a business - moral and political - decision that has already caused real public imbroglios, such as the cases of blocking images of women breastfeeding (Sibilia, 2015); the deletion of renowned works of art and even a famous quip involving the profile of the Brazilian Ministry of Culture, when a photograph of a couple of Botocudo Indians was summarily deleted<sup>6</sup>.

Despite the complaints made to Facebook and the clear nudity in the photos, neither Gabriela's *nudes* nor the fake profile were removed. At that moment, she vented to her co-worker, who suggested that she look for me. Being the first time something like this happened, I was surprised by the call for help. I explained to her that I had never acted directly in solving similar situations. Moved by her struggles, however, I offered my company in the search for possible solutions. Gabriela accepted.

I then activated the vast network of law and justice system professionals that I had gathered over the years I have dedicated myself to research on domestic and family violence against women. I got the contact of a lawyer specialized in crimes committed on the internet. Her services were private and the cost of a meeting was too high for Gabriela (about four hundred reais).

Although we did not schedule a visit, the lawyer suggested that I advise the girl to produce evidence in form of *prints*<sup>7</sup> of the vexatious publications as well as the conversations in which she was coerced. With this material, the professional mentioned, it could be possible to make a police report.

We decided to go together to the São Paulo Digital Crimes Police Station (also called DIG), located in the northern part of the city. At that stage of the research, I still imagined that it would be possible to carry out an ethnography of that police space, perhaps along similar lines to the work I had developed during my master's degree. I believed that this was the place where situations involving violence committed over the internet could be



legally disposed of and policed. The experience with Gabriela would soon show me otherwise.

Gabriela and I physically met for the first time on the day of the visit to the police station, although we didn't even pay attention to it. Throughout the research, my experience in the field has constantly led me to question the need to emphasize descriptive distinctions between interactions that take place on and offline. The fact that our previous interactions were mediated by technological platforms was not an impediment for us to feel comfortable with each other.

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Gabriela and I physically met for the first time on the day of the visit to the police station, although we didn't even pay attention to it. It felt like we were longtime pals. Throughout the research, my experience in the field has constantly led me to question the need to emphasize descriptive distinctions between interactions that take place on and offline. The fact that our previous interactions were mediated by technological platforms was not an impediment for us to feel comfortable with each other.

We left a place close to Gabriela's work. The Digital Crimes Police Station was relatively far, almost thirty kilometers away from our starting point. On the long journey, which included transfers by buses, trains and subways, we talked about the most diverse subjects. We chatted, for example, about the university course she was studying (advertising, at a private college), the difficulties she faced to pay the monthly fees, the distance between her residence and the mall where she worked, the time she "lost" in these transits, the anguish at the possibility of having to interrupt her studies as well as her relationship with her boyfriend.

Given my research interests, Gabriela was keen, above all, in talking about the fact that she considered herself an enthusiast of *selfies* and *nudes*. Excited, she showed me the almost endless amount of self-portraits she stored on her mobile phone. Gabriela was especially fond of her device, which she had purchased after huge savings so that she



could afford the high cost of the most advanced model possible (“the iPhone, with the best front camera, most importantly”), “my cell phone costs four times my salary, but I don’t care, it’s my everything”.

As she slid her fingers over the screen and the images in which she appeared adorning different poses, hairstyles and make-up, Gabriela talked about the techniques she used to record images of herself. For *nudes*, “side poses, from top to bottom”. In the face photos, “duck face” and “fish gape”, two tricks that would thin the cheeks, contributing to the sensual “carão” (a sort of self-confident face expression).

A true gestural aesthetic convention dear to those in the scene of *selfies* and *nudes*, “duck face” describes a way of, when posing for photographs, one presses lips and cheekbones resulting in a kind of discreet pout. The “fish gape”, in turn, is a variation of the previous pose in which the lips are kept slightly open. “A dead fish face, but sexy”, joked Gabriela.

When we arrived at the police station, two police officers - both men - told us that nothing could be done, since that space would only serve crimes to the consumer, “like when you buy something on a website and it doesn’t arrive”, he explained to us. Although the place was completely empty except for the professionals, the policemen were very impatient, complaining loudly about the number of women who were looking for the Digital Crimes Police Station: “I can’t stand this *nude* story anymore... Go to the Women’s Police Station, it’s not here!”.

Frustrated yet determined, Gabriela followed the police’s guidance. The following week, she asked me to accompany her to the Women’s Police Stations closest to her home, located in a neighboring municipality to the capital of São Paulo. I shared with her my memories about the situations of “mobile phone fights” that I had witnessed, between 2012 and 2013, during shifts in these precincts. In police language, the epithet indicated a certain disqualification of attempts at complaints involving technology, considered not to fit into criminal typifications specific to the available legal-criminal repertoire.

The point I made was not intended to discourage the girl. And indeed, she was not shaken. “Let’s wait and see”. As Women Police Stations are usually open on weekdays and during business hours, to be able to be there, Gabriela negotiated a rare break with her supervisor at the store, with whom she did not have a good relationship. Tensions had escalated even further after the *nudes* episode.



As we waited at the front desk, she told me about her bosses' different reactions to what had happened. The manager, after a conversation, tried to calm her down and told her that "if I were to fire everyone who takes nude photos, I would have to fire all the employees". The supervisor, on the other hand, reacted in the opposite way: "he asked me why I took the pictures, saying that I kind of exposed myself to this and that I deserved it. Now he is making jokes, pestering me and creating situations to offend me."

Similar to what I had feared, when it was our turn to talk to a police officer, we heard from the clerk at work that nothing could be done, since it was not a crime of "The Maria da Penha Law"<sup>8</sup>. I tried to argue, without success, that we had been referred by the Digital Crimes officers. "I have no way of registering leaks of naked photos in my system, there is no such option", said the officer, who also suggested that, to avoid inconvenience, Gabriela deactivate any profiles on social media for a while.

Gabriela found the recommendation absurd. "I left it on my phone, I didn't post it on Instagram, I didn't send it to anyone, I didn't expose myself. I will not stop taking nudes and selfies. So just living is exposing yourself?"

Emphasizing, in her indignant reaction to what she considered moralistic and antiquated censorship, that digital interactions were as important in her life than any other forms of communication and social relationships, Gabriela left the police station extremely vexed: "no one exists without a social anymore. Can you even imagine? Without *WhatsApp* and *Facebook*, how are we going to talk to other people?"<sup>9</sup>.

As we walked to the nearest bus stop, Gabriela confided in me that, despite her disappointment, she was already expecting something similar in the police responses to her case. She said that, as soon as the *nudes* were published on *Facebook*, she did a quick search on internet search engines trying to find out how to proceed. After reading some news and guidance from "feminist pages" (in her words), she concluded that:

Deep down, I kind of imagined that this would happen, that no one would help us or give us any answers. What happened to me is more complicated, it wasn't that 'revenge porn' thing. I don't even have an ex who wants to humiliate me. What happened to me doesn't even have a name.

Reactions similar to Gabriela's embarrassment when faced with the difficulty in finding a sufficiently adequate way to name her own experience with *nude leaks*, especially with



regard to the legal-police treatment of these situations, were commonplace during my research.

As a rule, those women who had gone through similar circumstances (at least those I interacted with) refused the terminology suggested and popularized by both the media and women's activism. Expressing intense dissatisfaction, their arguments questioned some of the semantic-political-moral assumptions implicit in those terms, also probing some norms and conventions of gender and sexuality triggered by words and expressions in transit through this scenario.

When I wrote my research project, in 2014, I chose *revenge porn* as the category that would guide the research already aware of different possible nomenclatures for identical or very similar situations, but during the fieldwork, pursuing it got even more difficult than I had ever imagined.

In this paper, I decided to make the anguish of many of my research interlocutors - especially those whose images had been unduly disseminated - inspiration for reflections, inflections and inquiries about the semantic, political, social and moral potentials and limits involved in the act of naming.

Therefore, I propose to think about the meanings triggered by some words and notions that gained centrality in discussions concerning the theme of nonconsensual online publishing of women's erotic and/or nude images, paying specific attention to gendered moralities that they may evoke. Also inspired by the work of Mary Douglas (1976), I bet on the analytical and political potential of the ambiguities and anomalies present in the interstices and borders of classification systems.

## **Why naming matters : words, meanings and morals**

In the famous essay *The civilizing process*, originally published in 1939, the German sociologist Norbert Elias elaborates a beautiful digression about the meaning and importance of words as tools that attribute collectively shared meanings to particular experiences, associating individual experiences with broader social contexts. Concepts, terms, and expressions function as semantic crystallizations, true embodiments of experiences, memories and social understandings responsible for covering circumstances that connect parts and all.



That being said, according to Elias, questioning oneself about words implies the need for rigorous attention to historical situations, particular emotional atmospheres as well as contextualized social and moral values; involving an elaborate investigative game that pays attention to both the nuances of the collective repertoire with which the words are articulated, as well as to the possible ways in which certain terms and notions are invested with particular and individual meanings.

One of the most canonical postulates of Anthropology, present even in the formulation written by Émile Durkheim and Marcel Mauss in one of the founding texts of the discipline, involves the conception that “the classification of things reproduces the classification of men” (1990 [1903], p. 184). That is, the classificatory dynamics of words are strictly linked to attributions of social places in the taxonomy of the world.

In other words, this means that, in addition to an effort to describe something well enough, creating a generalization that is able to simultaneously account for both common characteristics and particularities, the act of naming implies classifying, entangling something in systems of meaning and hierarchy that confer order and intelligibility to the social world (Lévi-Strauss, 1989).

No terminology is stripped of evaluative and qualitative meanings. *Pornography*, *revenge*, *exposure*, *intimacy* and their correlates are no exceptions. These terms, in the contexts of this research, directly allude to meanings, places and norms attributed to the sexuality of men and women, indicating ways in which we socially and morally conceive desires, bodies, behaviors, violence, crimes and rights.

Nomenclatures and terminologies are not neutral or inert; they have history, intentionality, meanings and contexts; constituting themselves as objects and subjects of intense semantic struggles. Notions and terms involved in naming are not self-evident, nor do they have consensual or homogeneous meanings, being constantly disputed, rearranged and tensioned by clashes, disagreements and diverse, contextual or even contradictory understandings.

In the course of my research, *revenge pornography* (or *revenge porn*) and *intimacy exposure* (or similar terms) were the terms that I came across, most frequently, in attempts to name, identify, describe and talk about the unauthorized dissemination of erotic images on the internet, popularized, in particular, by the media, legislative initiatives and feminist activists<sup>10</sup>.





Presented as a new facet of violence against women, revenge porn is enunciated as a combination of old-fashioned and moralistic sexual and gender norms with new interactive-communicational technologies that architecturally facilitate the *exposure* (unwanted disclosure of personal information) of *intimacy* (understood as synonymous with erotic desires, sexual practices or even naked bodies). Amalgamated as a technological syntagma, *exposure* and *intimacy* evoke the striking danger of public debauchery (involuntary and vexatious) of women's affective-sexual life on unprecedented scales.

Despite the capillarity with which they spread through various debates, the aforementioned expressions also generate great criticism and reservations, since they seem to limit, reduce, moralize and exclude the multiplicity and heterogeneity of behaviors and meanings involved in the relationships between women, technologies, images and eroticism.

*Intimacy exposure* and *revenge porn* circulated insistently among most of the interlocutors of this research, especially among those who spoke about the subject in the third person, that is, were involved in the construction of the theme as a public problem, and whose objective was to give visibility and relevance to the subject. In conversations about personal experiences, the same vocabulary did not flow as fluently. When speaking in the first person, women used euphemisms, such as “that story”, “that”, “this” or “the photos”, or used variations of the expression *leaked nudes*.

Listening to these women, I reflected upon the ways in which naming, and consequently classifying, social situations are more meaningful than we tend to assume. From then on, I did not take any term or phrase as self-evident and endowed with homogeneous or hegemonic meanings. The difficulty of naming a phenomenon, in the case of my research, was analytically stimulating to think about the limits of naming itself, acts that can mobilize, show, hide or exclude.

## 2013 : a key year for *revenge porn* in Brazil

In November 2013, the repercussion of the tragic suicides of two Brazilian teenagers that occurred after episodes of unauthorized dissemination of erotic images over the internet sparked a fervent media, activist, and legislative debate about online violence against women and girls. The girl's family's drama made headlines in magazines, printed



newspapers as well as nationally circulated TV news, being highlighted even in the Sunday “Fantástico”, of Rede Globo, one of the most popular TV show in the country.

To introduce the phenomenon, a term borrowed from the English language was used: *revenge porn*. Described as a global phenomenon, *revenge porn* was presented to the world as the online propagation of sexually suggestive images with the intention of demoralization. Directed, almost always, to condemn the behavior of women.

In an article published on 12/1/2013, the newspaper *Folha de São Paulo* carried the following headline: “Sexual exposure of women on the internet spreads and causes victims”. In the text, the journalist Cida Alves announced that Brazilians - or rather, Brazilian women - were facing a new danger arising from situations in which “videos and photos recorded in the intimacy of the couple are shared to cause public humiliation to one of the parties”.

In order to demonstrate the popularity of the practice and its potential danger in Brazil, the article cited data made available by “Safernet”<sup>11</sup>, which had carried out a survey with three thousand Brazilians aged between nine and twenty-three years old, whose results estimated that about 20% of respondents had already received erotic images from friends or acquaintances, and that 6% had already passed on this type of similar content onward.

Interviewed by the journalist, the president of “Safernet”, Thiago Tavares, pointed out that once this material was leaked, it would be almost impossible to stop its propagation. “When it goes online, it is impossible to control. There are websites that are specialized in disseminating this type of content. In minutes, thousands of people have access, save and share”, he said.

Between November and December of that year, videos and articles on the subject proliferated in major commercial and hegemonic communication vehicles. In the reports, attention was paid to legal and technological bottlenecks in preventing, combating and punishing these cases. The most common diagnosis was that Brazilian society, especially the justice system, was not equipped to deal with the challenges brought by the advances of the internet.

The topic also stirred the lively Brazilian feminist blogosphere. One of its most popular representatives, the blog “Write Lola Write”, authored by Lola Aronovich, was one of the first spaces to warn about the “new crime”. Mentioning both the suicide of the teenagers



and two other cases that became famous in the same period, Lola stated that “filming or photographing yourself having sex is not a crime. I don’t recommend it, due to this modality of revenge pornography”, warning her readers of the danger of “believing that nice guy won’t show his intimate images to anyone”<sup>12</sup>.

In October of 2013, a 19-year-old girl from the state of Goiás, had a video in which she had sex with her boyfriend published online by him without her authorization. Quickly, the material went *viral*, creating a harmful stir in the young woman’s life. The video came with and professional information on the girl, and even images of her family began to circulate. Reports at the time paid attention to the fact that the relationship was possibly a betrayal and/or an extramarital affair. Some of the images, especially those showing the naked girl making an “ok” symbol with her fingers, were turned into both memes and a campaign to support the girl.

The following month, Thamiris, then a college student, had “intimate photos” (in her words) published online by her ex-boyfriend. The case became even better known when the young woman wrote in a manifesto tone on her *Facebook* profile a text titled: “my outburst as a victim of revenge porn”. In two days, Thamiris’ post had more than two thousand shares.

It was also during this period that the blog of “Think Olga” manifested itself on the subject, posted links to news and texts that dealt with the dangers of revenge porn, including Thamiris’ outburst, Lola’s post and the interview given by the then deputy Romário to *Marie Claire* magazine, in which he presented the bill he had drafted to criminalize revenge pornography. Founded in 2013, “Think Olga” is a feminist project conceived by journalist Juliana de Faria, which gained significant visibility after launching an online campaign to fight street harassment called “Chega de Fiu-Fiu” (“No more catcalling”)<sup>13</sup>.

Between 2013 and 2016, several bills were submitted by members of parliament, dealing, in some way, with the theme. In most cases, the proposals agreed that this was a serious issue that, while increasingly common, would face considerable practical obstacles in the justice system. Due to this kind of legal-criminal gap, the need for legislative action would emerge.

The first related bill brought to the Chamber of Deputies was drafted by João Arruda (PMDB-MT), in May 2013, and later dubbed the “Maria da Penha Internet Law”. In order to respond to “offensive conduct against women” online, Bill 5555/2013 proposed the



inclusion of the “right to communication” in article 3 of Law 11.340/2006 (Maria da Penha Law) as well as the addition of “violation of intimacy” to article 7 of the same law.

To justify the need for the proposed changes, João Arruda’s project argued that, despite the Maria da Penha Law being “a landmark in public policies”, it did not address a relevant dimension of violence in contexts of affective-family proximity: the “violation of privacy”. According to the draft law, the conduct of “disseminating materials without consent” was more commonly practiced by “spouse or ex-spouses” with the aim of bringing “embarrassment” to women.

Altogether, twelve projects were submitted to the appreciation of the Brazilian legislative body, the National Congress. Eventually, all of them were appended, legal-legislative jargon that designates annexation, to the first project by João Arruda, which became the official proposal for the treatment of the theme.

There are significant differences between the Bills, whether in terms of attempts to describe the phenomenon or in the suggestions for a legal-criminal approach to the situations addressed, which are organized into three major trends. One part made direct associations between domestic and family violence against women and cases of dissemination of erotic images over the internet, proposing changes to the text of the Maria da Penha Law. Another suggested changes to the Brazilian Penal Code, considering the issue as a violation of sexual dignity. Only one of the projects, PL 4527/2016, proposed that the issue be addressed in both ways.

*Revenge porn* appeared in at least four of the projects. PL 6713, presented in November 2013, the month of the fateful cases involving teenagers, used it as an argument of authority, citing an article in the Rio Grande do Sul newspaper *Zero Hora*: “when domestic violence goes beyond the physical barriers of the home and exposes the intimate relationship of a couple through social networks”.

Almost without exception, however, the projects triggered notions of *intimacy* and *exposure*, citing item X of article 5 of the Brazilian Federal Constitution, according to which: “the intimacy, private life, honor and image of people are inviolable, ensuring the right to compensation for material or moral damage resulting from its violation” (CF, 1988).

## A transnational agenda



For now, let's talk a little about genealogy. It is difficult to trace the origins of the use of *revenge porn* in Brazil. Its use indicates an adaptation of the anglophile expression. British researchers Hall & Hearn (2018) date the first "official" record of the term *revenge porn* to 2007, when it was included in the "Urban Dictionnary" database, a collaborative online platform for descriptions and definitions of slang and idiomatic expressions, often popularized over the internet.

When it gained attraction in the Brazilian scenario, the topic was already one of the agendas of the time in several countries (such as the United States, United Kingdom, New Zealand, among others), generating movements, demands and discussions that indicated a growing collectively shared anxiety regarding the practice of registering and exchanging digital erotic images (often called "sexting"<sup>14</sup>) as well as the possible moral, political and legal consequences of their undue and harmful circulation.

In 2013, California became the first state to pass a specific law criminalizing *revenge porn*, and debates about how to control and punish this alleged new form of violence have spread to other territories. In July 2019, 46 states and the Federal District already had specific legislation against *revenge porn*. Canada, the Philippines, Israel, Japan and the United Kingdom are other countries with recent legislative initiatives specifically criminalizing such practices.

Indicating that the practice would be facilitated by the interactive-communicational technological advances of recent years, *revenge porn* is inserted in a socio-technical context in which internet users can act, with some ease, as content producers, culminating in a substantial increase in amateur materials placed online. All too often, such content is pornographic/ erotic/ sexual<sup>15</sup>.

Despite the recent nature of its terminological appearance and its fiduciary relationship to new technologies, the practice of unauthorized circulation of sensual and/or sexual content is nothing new. According to a genealogy commonly accepted for the American context, *revenge pornography* would be the direct heir of a pornographic subcategory made even more popular with the consolidation of the collaborative internet "Web 2.0": "amateur pornography".

Hall & Hearn (2018) - as well as Sydow & Castro (2017) - attribute to the magazine *Hustler*, published by the conglomerate of controversial editor Larry Flint, a certain pioneering spirit in both "amateur pornography" and *revenge porn*.



In the 1970s, the magazine created the section “Beaver Hunt” (slang loosely translated as “hunting for vaginas”), in which it invited readers to send photographs of women they had registered themselves, that is, “homemade” photos of “real women”. The images, published along with some information from the women photographed, quickly became popular, until the magazine was sued by some people - men and women - who had their images circulated and marketed without authorization<sup>16</sup>.

In the direction of the amateur section of “Hustler”, the “sex tapes” of the 1990s would also be responsible for increasing the popularity of “homemade pornography”<sup>17</sup>, albeit unintentionally (Hilyer, 2004). By-products of the popularization of camcorders and VCRs, the “sex tapes” brought scenes of sex and affective intimacy that, usually due to robberies and other shady forms of interception, were circulated or marketed to the public<sup>18</sup>.

With the spread of the internet, the category “home made pornography” (containing amateur photos and videos) emancipated itself from physical media, becoming a very popular pornographic subgenre online. The so-called “amateur porn” comprises several subcategories. Some of them even present themselves as transgressors and politically engaged (Parreiras, 2015). On popular international pornographic platforms (YouPorn, RedTube, XTube), it is under this heading that videos and images described as “ex-girlfriends” and “real pornography” are found.

Within this vast universe, however, lurked an unforeseen consequence. Concomitantly with the increase in popularity of the “realistic” niche of the online pornographic market, in the last decade, the considerable increase in complaints, lawsuits and requests for removals has exposed the infringing nature of many of these materials, indicating a problematic nexus between amateur pornography on the internet and the absence of consent in the production and/or exchange of these images.

There is no evidence to say that all “amateur pornography” should be thought of or identified in terms of violation. On large pornographic platforms, when we search for amateur, “homemade”, “real” or derivative subgenres, we come across various materials, many of them produced by people who present themselves as practitioners of “exhibitionism” and “voyeurism” (search terms of the sites), or that admit having registered images with the intention of circulating them for the most different reasons.

At different times of the research, several people came to me to confess or question their own interest in “homemade” images - voluntary or not - for personal



erotic/pornographic purposes. “Am I being turned on by violence, exposure, abuse?”, formulated some of them, associating desires and pleasures with this “home-made” visual and technological language.

### **“I was unlucky” : Maria’s case**

Maria was forty-eight years old when we met, in October 2017. Our first contact was through *WhatsApp*, as would become common in conducting the research. The popular platform for exchanging voice, audio and images messages, which in Brazil has also been nicknamed *zap* or *zapzap*, was not only a faster and cheaper way to arrange meetings, but the main way in which many women approached me, allowing the establishment of long and intimate conversations and relationships.

More than a facilitating tool, *WhatsApp* made the fieldwork possible. Maria and I, for example, never met face to face, since during the time we interacted, we were in different cities. However, describing our interactions as mere “virtual conversations” does not seem to capture the depth of the bond we establish.

I kept in touch with her for more than a year, through long audios and texts in which she made digressions about the end of her marriage and the concern for her daughters, audios that she recorded during the night (“when it is easier for me to talk”). Maria, by the way, said she felt even more comfortable talking “on her cell phone” (“it’s good that I don’t have to look at you when I talk about naughty things and bad things”). It was a “naughtiness” that had led her to look for me, even though she was very embarrassed.

Going through a delicate process of separation from her partner with whom she had lived for more than twenty-five years, Maria met a younger man and became romantically involved. The “Cuban doctor”, a nickname chosen by her to emphasize some characteristics of her lover that she considered relevant in the description of her partner<sup>19</sup>, had profoundly impacted her life.

Maria and the “Cuban doctor” were together for more than six months. During this period, she still lived with the father of her daughters, two girls aged twenty-two and seventeen, and she did not know if the separation would be permanent. The couple had torrid sexual encounters in pensions in the center of São Paulo, always during the day



“so that I could spend the night at home”), and Maria admitted that “I had never been so sexually happy”.

They had met at the health clinic near the building where Maria worked as a cleaning assistant. When accompanying a friend to an appointment, she was enchanted by the “doctor”. After exchanging phones, or zap, both began to send flirty messages to each other. Maria claimed not to have had the courage to meet him for weeks, but said she felt a “teenage joy” when receiving and sending provocative images. She romantically recounted the beginnings of their relationship, how she’d sent pictures taken in low light in new red lingerie she’d bought especially for the situation. The eldest daughter, aware of the relationship, helped her excitedly to produce the photos and taught her not to keep them saved on her cell phone.

When I met her, Maria had already ended the relationship. They didn’t keep any kind of contact. She had reconnected with her husband. One day, to her dismay, the brief adventure had surfaced. Maria’s husband had found a video of explicit sex, on a pornographic page, starring her and her then partner. Maria did not know of the existence of that video, the record was made without her permission. Nervous, Maria approached her ex-partner:

He didn’t do it with bad intentions. He’s not a saint, he put a hidden camera, and you saw what he wrote, “white girl in the Cuban nigga’s roll”... (sigh) But he told me he has nothing to do because he didn’t put my name, not even my face can be seen properly. Of course my husband recognized me, I didn’t even know he was on a site like that, he recognized my body, me on the side, my voice, my moan, those things. It’s really not such a thing to blackmail me, to make me go back to him or to humiliate me. It’s not that revenge leak thing. I was unlucky.

During the period in which I kept up Maria’s story, at her request, I asked for guidance from different legal professionals with whom I had contact in order to get the video deleted. At the time, Brazilian legislation was still very lacking in cases of leaking images of women.

We tried to remove it by triggering article 21 of the Marco Civil da Internet (Law 12.965/2014), which provides for the liability of providers for private nudity content circulated without authorization. According to the norm, providers can be questioned directly by users who have improperly disclosed content. Despite various approaches, we never got an answer. Mary finally gave up.





## Neither pornography nor revenge : limits and refusals

Often, we're not talking about revenge. It happens a lot among strangers. It could be a hacker, for example, who breaks into someone's webcam, or a computer thief. It could even be someone who only shared that material because they thought it was beautiful and turned on. Graziela, research interlocutor, lawyer who is specialized in internet crimes.

“People who are here on the front lines know that no one will come and say ‘I came to report revenge porn’, this only makes sense to journalists and feminists, and we end up falling for it, but it doesn't help anyone”, explained Jéssica, on one of the afternoons we spent together in her chief delegate's room at the 2nd Police Station for the Defense of Women in the city of São Paulo, located in the Vila Mariana neighborhood. “I think we got lazy, we say ‘revenge pornography’ because we know they will understand, most people who know the subject only know it that way”, she added.

Jessica and I met when I was conducting my master's research. In 2012, she had just graduated from the Civil Police Academy and during the period I followed the shifts at the police station where she worked, she used to keep me company and explain to me jargon of police practice. Now, Jessica had allowed me to read some of the police reports and investigations that involved “exposure of women on the internet”, in her own words. There weren't many, I'll talk more about that at another time.

Something similar had been mentioned by Josiane, a very active activist on the internet who often wrote texts and organized campaigns on the subject both on her blog and on her social media profiles: “you can't write on a demonstration poster ‘enough of revenge porn!’. Can you imagine? Nobody identifies with it, it's not a watchword, it doesn't stick”.

A similar opinion was also held by Rosa, a psychologist who became a feminist after going through a situation of “humiliation on the internet” (in her own words) caused by an ex-boyfriend. “It is the end of the world to name an act violence as pornography. Is it degrading, have you been raped, offended, humiliated and the name you have for that is pornography? Of course not”.

Ambivalently, *revenge porn* seemed to be, at the same time, the most widely recognizable nomination to describe the situation and the most problematic. Many events I



participated in, especially organized by journalists, activists and legal professionals, had the expression in their name or descriptions.

As common as it is problematic, *revenge porn* generated constant noise, estrangement and resistance, especially among those women who sought ways to understand, describe and attribute meaning to their own experiences. In general, the term pornography evoked meanings of moralization, eluding content, images and behaviors in bad taste, debauchery and subject to condemnation.

The term revenge pornography is misleading in two ways. First, bullies are not always motivated by revenge. Many act out of a desire for profit, notoriety or entertainment. (...) It also implies saying that taking nude pictures or during a sexual act would be pornographic. Creating images in private contexts of a relationship intimacy - an increasingly common practice - is not the same as creating pornography (Franks, 2016, p. 2).

Both *porn* and *revenge* bring with them a series of negative moral assumptions about the subjects involved. *Revenge porn* implies certain assumptions about the situation described: it presupposes pre-existing affective bonds between the parties, it imputes motivations to those who initiate the dissemination of the material; indicate that the images would have been produced consensually in moments of "intimacy", they directly associate nudity and sex with pornography, as well as attribute a negative moral charge to women whose sexuality would have escaped, even if by default, the sphere of secrecy.

Often understood as a punishment, *revenge* seems to refer to a previous act: someone goes after revenge, justly or not, because something bad has been done to him or her. Revenge, in the context of *revenge porn*, implies a reaction, often to an unwanted breakup or betrayal.

The disagreement with the idea of revenge generated, in many of my interlocutors, discomfort and difficulty in fitting into the category proposed by the media, by feminists and by legislators, bringing not only anguish in the appointment, but also difficulty in asking for help or recognizing what happened in terms of violence and crime. If there was no vengeful intent, many of them wondered, had there actually been violence?

In the two situations I presented, the absence of the intention of revenge meant that Gabriela and Maria did not identify what they had lived within a collectively shared experience, nor did they find legitimacy in their demands for some form of reparation.



Gabriela, assuming that her aggressor was a stranger, had not identified a vengeful intention in the episode that had occurred to her, something she considered seminal when classifying her experience. When Maria understood that her ex-partner had no intention of causing harm, she also did not associate what she had experienced with a bias of violence, convincing herself that, since there would have been no violation, there would be no way to seek a solution.

Perhaps because of the difference in age, personality and the context of production of the disseminated images - Gabriela had recorded her nudes, Maria was filmed without her knowing it -, the meanings and consequences of what happened were different for each one. Gabriela, openly a “taker of selfies and nudes”, although she narrated that she was sad, scared and “a little traumatized”, soon returned to producing and sending sensual images:

At first I was afraid, yes, I thought I would never do it again, I totally lost the lust. Then I took it off and erased it, I just showed it to my boyfriend on my cell phone screen. Now that I'm not dating anymore, I have to chat, so I went back to sending without worrying too much. I put my hair in front of my face, do a half light and never show the pepeca (sic), nor the nipples. I confess that I forgot about this story. I've changed boyfriends, I've changed jobs, and I don't care about my relatives all that much. I love taking pictures, I'm crazy about nudes and selfies, so whatever!

Maria felt extreme shame and deep regret for having allowed herself to become sexually involved with anyone other than her husband. At least during the time we kept in touch, she blamed himself for having “given in to desire”. “I was betrayed by my own feelings,” she said. Eventually, she and her husband divorced. She said that, “afraid of him saying that I do pornography”, she accepted all the conditions to be negotiated in relation to the custody of her youngest daughter and alimony. The girl, by the way, had chosen to live with her father: “she wanted to be with him, she is angry and ashamed of me”.

If *revenge* is a term steeped in problematic meanings, *porn*, in turn, triggered even more reprehensible meanings. Repulsion for the pornographic epithet, Maria repeated, was the greatest source of her suffering:

The worst thing about it all for me is being on a pornography site. It makes me look like I'm a whore. I am not. He's the second man in my life, I've only had two. I didn't make money, I didn't do it so people would see it, I didn't even know he was filming.



It's different from the pictures I took, it's naughty, I'm not that person, that's what hurts me the most. It makes me look like a prostitute.

Gabriela and Maria were not the only ones to associate pornography with the sexually explicit, promiscuous, obscene and reprehensible. Among many of my interlocutors, pornographic would throw something into the sphere of the morally degrading and detestable. Often, pornography was associated with prostitution, implying a moral nexus between the person who produces pornographic materials and prostitutes, a kind of ideal type of the sexually and morally disqualified woman.

Pornography has a history, this is how Lynn Hunt, an American historian, begins her celebrated collection on the “invention of pornography” (Hunt, 1996) as a modern category of thought, representation and regulation. Arguing in favor of the nineteenth-century origin of pornography – at least in its contemporary use –, Hunt points out that pornography came into being, in the terms we understand it now, concomitantly with the emergence of modernity, and therefore reveals some important characteristics of “Western culture”, being linked to thought, to heresy, to the development of science, to political movements that question hierarchy and customs, to gender differentiation (Laqueur, 2001) and to the regulation and normativization of sexual practices. Always controversial and in dispute, the “invention” and permanence of the pornography category involve multiple subjects, from libertine artists to religious, jurists, the State and feminisms.

Traditionally, pornography has been conceived as synonymous with the explicit and realistic representation of sexual practices and organs (Hunt, 1996); as well as “as a discourse par excellence that conveys the obscene: of what is shown and should be hidden (...) exhibition of the undesirable: sex out of place” (Lapeiz; Moraes, 1984, p. 109).

The values and meanings attributed by different research interlocutors to pornography reveal norms of gender and sexuality that hierarchically arrange behaviors and subjects between acceptable and reprehensible.

Let us think, by contrast, of *nudes*. Its practice is often presented in opposition to pornography, announcing some distinctions considered important between the two situations. Nudes are not pornographic. Or at least, for my interlocutors, they shouldn't be. As they were produced for self-enjoyment or within affective and flirty relationships, such materials are not used for commercial purposes or for the sexual arousal of third parties, which would characterize both pornography and prostitution.



The sensual and/or sexual materials produced as nudes establish bonds, even if not necessarily loving or lasting, between those who exchange them, and which presuppose trust and loyalty. Even when these are broken, nudes would not lose their essence: they are products of affective interactions considered legitimate to the detriment of exchanges considered disqualified, such as those closely associated with pornography and prostitution.

Unlike pornography, which would be public, commercialized, immoral and devalued, nude would be restricted, made for the enjoyment of those who produced and exchanged it, an extension of the mirror, flirtation, seduction and, why not, sex. The nude would thus belong to the personal sphere, while pornography, to paraphrase the famous phrase of french filmmaker Alain Robbe-Grillet, would be the “eroticism of others”.

In “The Body is Code” (Valente et al, 2016), researchers from the “InternetLab” - a research center in law and technology linked to the “Nucleo de Direito, Internet e Sociedade” of the Law School of the University of São Paulo - they were willing to analyze judgments in cases of “non-consensual dissemination of images” that had reached the São Paulo Court of Justice.

In the cases analyzed, they found a great variability of situations. Many of them cannot be encapsulated by the popular expression revenge pornography. Most of the complaints, for example, were images that were not even disseminated. Most of the situations encountered involved extortion and threats, sometimes between strangers.

Among the situations that I followed during the field research, Maria’s case was the only one that involved images of explicit sex, even if recorded without her permission and without her knowledge. This was also the only case that I have heard of that was destined for spaces intended for content considered pornographic. Like the researchers of the “Internetlab”, I found a significant variability of situations and cases involving digital erotic images of women.

## **Intimate Exposure and to expose : a change in vector**

Exposed images often earn the epithet of intimates, pointing to an almost unbreakable semantic nexus between nudity, eroticism and intimacy. Intimacy made visible is judged



with exemplary moralizing rigor, attributing infamy, moral discredit, dishonor and ignominy to the revealed subject.

The word intimacy is part of the everyday lexicon of contemporary life and, although we do not always realize it, it is one of the elements that govern the main reflections on our times, a term immensely loaded with moral, normative and prescriptive values.

Intimacy evokes, throughout this research, direct associations between sexuality, shame, modesty and secrecy. When intimacy is exposed, the people portrayed in these images are subjected to different judgments according to values present in a certain hegemonic normativity that condemns women for not having been efficient in maintaining their sexuality in the sphere of secrecy.

The terms exposure of women's intimacy evidence a certain rhetoric of overvaluing the maintenance of a public appearance of modesty, moderation, decorum and dissimulation, fiduciary of a dominant sexual morality that hierarchizes erotic practices and desires.

Within this "hegemonic sexual morality", the dignity of women would be all the more unblemished the more it is performed in terms of discretion, modesty and recollection. It is demanded that sexual intimacy be prescribed to the sphere of secrecy at the risk of severe moral punishment.

The association between the naked female body and the individual or shared enjoyment of libido in the universe of intimacy and secrecy makes the practice of sexuality a taboo. And those who, in their absence or by their own choice, would have their sexual intimacy "revealed", would be justly punished for leaving, in some way, what should be kept in their most private and sacred forum.

The internet is full of creative and disruptive possibilities. In some of them, you can change the exposure vector. It facilitates new expressions, relationships, scopes and constructions of subjectivities, while enabling new forms of control and violence.

Whether to write a text that reaches people outside your personal circle, record videos that move and inspire strangers, expose people's morality and intimacy or even to carry out anthropological research, the internet can be used for different purposes, showing that its meaning, in addition to its contents and forms, is in the intentions that mobilize its uses. Serving to reaffirm social conventions and norms, it can also intend them and, at times, who knows, subvert or provoke them.



When used in an active voice, the expression ceases to designate situations of want of intimacy to take on the contours of a deliberate action of venting and/or claiming. “I haven’t been exposed for five days”, joked Gabriela, questioning the direct and evident association between exposure on the internet and something inherently bad.

She was referring to the tours that took place in the group in the “exposure group” on Facebook of which she was a part, in which users shared images or personal information, usually embarrassing, funny, as a practical way of socializing with people who identify with them, their stories and narratives. When active and authorized, exposure can be pleasurable.

“Exposing someone on the internet” is also a slang term used to describe situations in which the communicative and propagating potential of social networks would be used to trumpet injustices and violence suffered, making the practice a powerful political instrument of claim, mobilization, activism and denunciation. Using a *modus operandi* similar to that of nude leaks, they disseminate information and prints of conversations, personal information and photographs of men accused of violence. The case of a Brazilian university professor accused of harassment who had prints of conversations exposed is an example of the use of exposure via the internet as a form of activist action.

Youtuber Dara, 22, was the protagonist of a video channel where she spoke - “openly and frankly”, in her words - about sex and relationships. When she learned that her boyfriend was sending images to his friends (nudes and sex videos) without her permission, she recorded a video titled “Abusive Relationship: It Happened to Me Too”.

Amidst tears and outbursts, Dara narrated the relationship she had lived, highlighting situations in which she suffered constant humiliation and moral disqualification. According to her perception, an abusive relationship would describe an emotionally violent affective relationship, in which the partner’s violating acts could not be classified as verbal aggression, threats or offenses, that is, in the classic typology of domestic and family violence. Within the list of abuses, Dara included the exposure of intimacy, understood as a “psychological form of rape”.

The video went viral. The ex-boyfriend, also known in the digital influencer scene, deleted his profiles on social networks and disappeared from the network for a considerable time. “He kept repeating that he didn’t break up with me because he was afraid I would expose him on the internet. He knew that I had a lot of followers and a huge ability to communicate, when I created strength, that was all I had”, Dara told me.



Exposing an aggressor on the internet would thus resemble the Argentine technique of “escrache”<sup>20</sup>, in which a kind of public opinion would be used to denounce acts considered undesirable, repudiate violating behavior and announce an injustice suffered. “Exposing someone on the internet” would be a way of seeking a voice, of defending oneself, of trying to resume the narrative. The internet appears here as a space for publicizing situations involving offenses, violations, deprivation of rights, degradations, where the “struggles for recognition” (Honneth, 1992) gain scale, speed and repercussion.

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## Notes

1 An instant messaging app owned by Facebook, Messenger allows interactions visible only to sender(s) and recipient(s).

2 I use italics for emic terms and expressions common to socialization mediated by digital communication platforms, pointing out, whenever possible, nuances and limits in their meanings. On *Facebook*, friends are people whose profiles have the user’s permission to be part of their network.

3 This paper is a translation of an adapted chapter of my PhD dissertation, funded by FAPESP (Fundação de Amparo à Pesquisa do Estado de São Paulo). It was also published as book by Telha Editorial, in 2021, with the name “Caiu na net: nudes e exposição de mulheres na internet”. I thank its editors for the permission to translate it into English.

4 Between 2014 and 2019, I carried out my doctoral research in Social Anthropology with the objective of following the ways in which the issue of unauthorized dissemination of erotic images of women through the internet – or nude leaks – has been defined in the different contexts in which it is triggered, paying attention to the symbolic and classificatory disputes at stake in its construction as, simultaneously, a problem of the internet times and the attempts to associate it with violence against women. My research was conducted in different environments, with immersions and variable durations, through different forms of communication and transiting through a multiplicity of relationships and scales, inserting itself in the initiatives of the “multi-situated” ethnographies (Marcus, 1998), “with” and “between” subjects and relationships (Hannerz, 2003). Social networks, Bills, NGO reports, feminist events, hacker rounds, internet rights debates, legal literature, outbursts, request for guidance, conversations, reports, campaigns, justice system initiatives, notions of violence, violation, rights, crime and reputation.

5 “Facebook’s Help Center” presents itself as a space for users who want to report situations that could harm them and/or violate the “community terms”. As far as I could infer, the platform does not provide any direct service with employees. It seems to be virtually impossible to talk to a “flesh and blood” *Facebook* representative.

6 It was a photograph dated from 1909, taken by Walter Garbe, used to announce the launch of the “Portal Brasileira Fotográfica”, a free online space that offers several digitized historical Brazilian photographic





collections. The then minister of culture, Juca Ferreira, accused the platform of censorship and ethnic prejudice, even claiming that Facebook had violated the Brazilian Federal Constitution. Initially, *Facebook* maintained the decision to ban the image, which features a woman with her breasts uncovered (we can ask ourselves, anthropologically, if she was, in fact, “naked”), but withdrew from the decision after the Ministry announced the will to use. At the time of writing this paper, *Facebook* had in its “Community Standards” the warning that, although it had relaxed its policy in relation to adult nudity, becoming more tolerant of artistic, pedagogical, political, and satirical proposals, it still strictly restricted content of naked bodies as well as images of sexual activity.

7 The printscreen (or simply print) is a common tool on computers and mobile devices that allows recording and archiving, via a kind of photograph of the image present on the computer, cell phone or other electronic device. On most devices, prints are triggered by from the combination of a set of keys or buttons, which must be pressed in a specific order so that the “capture” is done successfully and generally remains archived on the device.

8 Enacted in 2006, the Law 11.340/2006, better known as the Maria da Penha Law, is a legal decree that aims to curb and punish more strictly crimes of domestic violence against women and intrafamilial crimes, approaching such cases from a harder penalization viewpoint. The Brazilian law is considered one of the top 3 in the world.

9 There is a certain common sense that Brazilians like, more than other nationalities, to communicate. As the internet and social networks are fertile ground for this activity, it is not surprising to discover that Brazil occupies, for example, the third place in time “connected to the internet”. In a similar way, Brazilians established as the second most active population in social networks in the world, being the third largest on Facebook (Spyer, 2018). The popularization of the cell phone in its smartphone model had significant impacts on the Brazilian society. In 2018, it was found that there were more cell phones than citizens, counting the existence of 230 million smartphones. Numerically, most Brazilians have access to the network via smartphones simple and cheap, limited data plans and bad or unstable connection.

10 Machado (2018) carried out a mathematical survey of the terms used to describe correlated situations in some of the Brazilian newspapers with the largest national circulation. “Sexting”, “revenge porn”, “internet sexual exposure”, “intimate videos” and “intimate images” were the main terminologies found by the researcher to describe a myriad of situations that did not always involve women. The term “intimate images”, says the researcher, was the most frequently used descriptive term by journalists.

11 Created in 2005, Safernet is a non-profit civil organization governed by private law that aims, according to its institutional presentation, “to act in the promotion and defense of human rights on the Internet in Brazil”.

12 See: <https://escrevalolaescreva.blogspot.com/2013/11/a-pornografia-da-revanche-vindo-com-tudo.html>

13 Two years later, “Think Olga” launched “#MandaPrints” campaign (#SendPrints), consisting of videos with a legal orientation tone, aimed at girls and women in situations of persecution, threats and offenses on the internet. Tips for anyone going through “disclosure of intimate photos” included “do not delete any attack messages” and “print materials that were propagated without permission”. The campaign did only address the victims of *revenge porn*, but also aimed to reach women, mostly feminist activists, who are violently attacked on the internet. This happened with Lola and the founder of “Think Olga”, Juliana de Faria.

14 Contraction of “sex” and “texting”, “sexting” is usually used to describe a certain multiplicity of erotic and sexual uses of digital technologies, ranging from the exchange of sexually suggestive or explicit images, to flirtation, conversations or even “virtual sex”. The expression, which comes from the English language, is also



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reasonably common slang in English-speaking and Spanish-speaking countries (which use the neologism “sextear”).

15 The development of pornography has a strong connection with the emergence of technological-media innovations, which is the case of cinema, cameras or camcorders, VCRs and, more recently, the internet. According to Slater (1993), the exchange of erotic images was one of the first activities to be developed on the network, albeit rudimentary in chat rooms. According to Parreiras (2012), several quantitative surveys carried out in recent years attest to the inseparable link between the network environment and pornographic or sexual content, indicating that a considerable part of internet access would involve the consumption of pornography (about 40%).

16 One of the most popular editions of the magazine featured unauthorized images of the former First Lady of the United States, Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis (1929-1994). While sunbathing during a vacation in Greece, Ms. Onassis was photographed naked by tabloid photographers and the photos were later published by a number of outlets, including Flint’s magazine (Cf. Hall & Hearn, 2017). *Hustler* was not the only magazine to achieve success after publishing unauthorized erotic images of naked celebrities. The Hollywood actress Marilyn Monroe (1926-1962), unwittingly, was on the first cover of *Playboy*, a publication created by the also controversial Hugh Hefner (1926-2017), in 1953. In the cover, the actress is dressed, but the photographs inside show Marilyn completely naked. The images were taken by a photographer about four years earlier. At the time, she had received a fee to pose for the professional, who later sold the image rights to Hefner.

17 According to Linda Williams (1989), “amateur pornography”, a highly profitable market, is characterized by an aesthetic linked to the obscene exhibition industry from the performatization of the idea of being able to watch erotic content accessed “through the keyhole”. The amateur vein had its origin in “stag movies”, films produced in the early 20th century, often clandestinely, targeting the male audience and privileging the “observer’s gaze” (invariably a man).

18 One of the most famous “sex tapes” of this period features images of a trip took by rockstar Tommy Lee with his then-wife, model and actress Pamela Anderson, famous for acting in a series in which she often appeared wearing bathing suits (her character was a lifesaver). Celebrity sex tapes have become an important source of “amateur pornographic” materials.

19 I recognize the problematic senses, explicit and implicit, of this description. “Cuban doctor” ambiguously alluded to both the high professional status of the lover, something Maria was proud of, and the non-hidden prejudices directed at the boy’s color and nationality: “he is black and I have green eyes, I am of Italian descent, they asked me how I managed to catch a black man”. Maria often used the epithet to describe him in a disdainful and racist way.

20 Term of Lunfarda origin that designates a practice popularized by Argentine militants who performed publicity of information about people involved in practices of repression and torture during the authoritarian military period (Catella, 2010). Unlike the Argentine “escrache”, more commonly organized collectively, the internet exhibition takes on tones of individual outbursts.



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### Abstract

This article is part of a broader project, namely a doctoral research in social anthropology on the production, exchange, and circulation of erotic digital images of women (nudes), their possible spread (leaks) as well as their legal, political, social and moral consequences. Here, I dedicate myself to critically presenting a certain taxonomy present in the debates about *nudes* and *leaks*, approaching the different ways of naming the phenomenon brought by the media, by feminist activists, by academic incursions, as well as by my research interlocutors. I pay special attention to the potentialities and limits of terms employed and disputed, embedded in gendered semantic, political and moral connections.

**Keywords:** nudes, revenge porn, online violence against women, social media

### Résumé

Cet article fait partie d'un projet plus large, une recherche doctorale en anthropologie sociale sur la production, l'échange et la circulation d'images érotiques de femmes (des nus) numériques, leur possible diffusion (fuites), ainsi que leur conséquences légales, politiques, sociales et morales. Je me concentre ici sur la présentation d'une certaine taxonomie présente dans les débats autour des *nus (nudes)* et des *fuites (leaks)*, appréhendant différentes manières de dénominer le phénomène par les médias, par des activistes féministes, des incursions académiques, ainsi que par les interlocuteurs de ma recherche. Je m'intéresse en particulier aux potentialités et aux limites des termes employés et controversés, imprégnés dans des connexions sémantiques, politiques et morales genrées.

**Mots-clés:** nus, revenge porn, violence contre les femmes en ligne, réseaux sociaux

### Citation

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