

## A good thriller and bad Porn

**The Confession** by John Grisham

I love a good legal thriller, and John Grisham has produced a variety of books that certainly fit this category. This one is a little different in that much of the situation has already happened, so it is more an opportunity to explore moral and ethical questions about the death penalty and the role of the state and in a minor way, faith.

In *The Confession* an innocent man, Donté Drumm is on death row, and the real killer Travis Boyette confesses the crime to a Lutheran minister, Reverend Keith Schroeder, who then becomes intimately involved in the attempts to free Donté.

Clearly the book is a link to Grisham's non-fiction work *The Innocent Man: Murder and Injustice in a Small Town*. This time he enables the reader to consider in a more popular way the American justice system, faith, politics and lawyers all within the context of the death penalty.

**Big Porn Inc: Exposing the harms of the global pornography industry** by Melinda Tankard Reist and Abigail Bray (Eds), Spinifex Press, 2011. RRP: \$36.95 (310 pages)

I found it difficult to finish this book, not because it is boring, but because some of the chapters are very difficult to read.

I often went to a local coffee shop to read, so I would not be distracted by emails and the phone. This book needs your full attention and consideration.

It is a collection of articles and essays, some written for the volume, some revised from previous articles, and others edited from unpublished writings and material in order to bring together all the areas that encompass the tentacles of the reach of pornography.

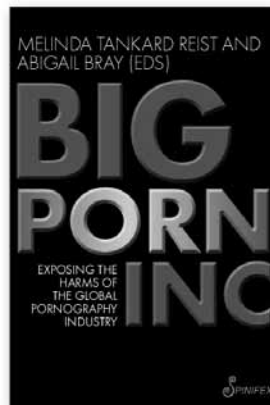
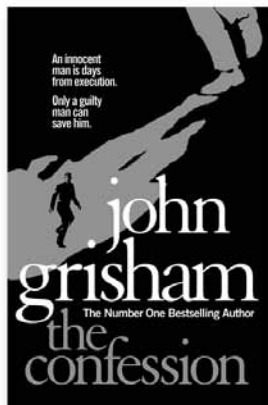
Together it presents a wealth of material showing the links between the different parts of our sexualised culture, highlighting the increasing abuse of women and children through exploitation and sex-trafficking.

The sections of the book focus on:

- The culture of pornography
- The industries which make up pornography
- Harm to children (these are extremely difficult chapters)
- Pornography and the state
- Movements and opposition to pornography.

It is sobering to see the various industries that are either helping or benefitting from the spread of pornography, including pharmaceutical groups and of course mobile phone and internet companies.

The chapters on the development of the pornography industries in South Africa and India are among many illuminating and fundamentally disturbing studies. There



is a helpful discussion through several pieces about the nature of 'free speech', the concept of fair speech and the reality of censorship in society.

I especially recommend the article by Helen Pringle "A Studied Indifference to Harm: Defending Pornography in The Porn Report."

This is very helpful, given the prominent coverage in October to The Porn Report and so-called popular pornography courtesy of the Fairfax media group through the publication

in *The Good Weekend* of an article that actually confirms the whole thesis of this book.

As well as academic material, the book is intertwined with personal story and real situations. *Big Porn Inc.* delivers a knock-out blow to those who trade on the idea that pornography is a harmless pastime.

It has substantial footnoting, and references, partly I believe to categorically place this book at the level it needs to be in terms of input into policy and government.

I realise that given the themes and the academic nature, this is not a book that everyone will read or want to. However, perhaps you should consider how you can be involved in helping to stop the development of a pornified world.

Many people say 'this issue', or 'that issue' is the great moral issue of our day, but I want to put this one on top, as it has growing implications for less-developed countries as well as the 'technically sophisticated'. The exploitation of women and children has no boundary in terms of country, or indeed in terms of what is done to them in the name of profit and gain.

I encourage churches to consider buying a copy for your minister, or lay leader, and asking them to present a summary at a meeting to raise awareness, especially for parents and grandparents who may not even be aware of current issues among teenagers such as 'sexting'.

I also suggest publication of a suitably revised edition that is aimed at a wider audience, especially school students, which could include perhaps a page from each chapter. Another thought was the revision and publication of the introduction as a small booklet. The fifteen pages here represent one of the most helpful introductions to an edited work I have read.

The final chapters in the book provide a helpful way forward for people to become involved in opposing pornography, and also help one not to feel overwhelmed by the enormity of the information provided, and also the depths of depravity that need to be exposed.

You can find out more about the issues and order the book at: [www.melindatankardreist.com](http://www.melindatankardreist.com)

Peter Bentley