

Plotting Sex:  
Pornography's *Performatistic Screen*

By

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Abstract

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The early 1970s witnessed the mainstreaming of feature-length, hard core pornography. Though derided by critics, this newly minted genre had two notable features: broader narratives within which sex occurred, and an insistent focus on the visual display of male pleasure. *Plotting Sex* claims that, by embedding sex within a story, sex itself takes on narrative qualities.

To support this claim, it teases out small shifts in the twentieth century's episteme that collectively contributed to the early 1970s emergence of what it terms pornography's *performatistic screen*, or the base, plotted structure of bodily performance and engagement underpinning sexual displays as enacted over time in orgasmically-oriented hard core film. This project starts with the twin Foucaultian poles of law and "human sciences" as represented by the metonyms of American obscenity jurisprudence and sexology, finding in both a late 1960s pivot to issues of social construction and utility as tethered to narrative. Following this, it narrows focus to look at increasing rates of oral sex in American sexual practice and the changing production and exhibition of filmed pornography. After analyzing then-contemporary concepts of desire in *readerly* narrative, it finishes by proposing a model for how plotted sex works both within and alongside broader narrative.

In all of these analyses, this project pays particular attention to the shifting role narrative occupies in matrices of power, knowledge, and pleasure. It argues that narrative plotting, when applied to sex, increasingly functions as a tool for both policing and reduplicating social and cultural norms.

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## Acknowledgments

When I sat down to write these *acknowledgements*, I immediately thought of two sayings.  
The first: “All the king's horses and all the king's men/Couldn't put Humpty together again.”  
The second: “A bone is strongest where it's been broken.”  
The first is pessimistic. The second is optimistic.

I mention these because, when I initially attempted to single out people to thank for helping bring this project to completion, my thoughts and feelings caught elsewhere at something I have to *acknowledge*.

I've come to believe there is something deeply broken about academia at the macro-level.  
Standing in front of my students and teaching them Marx while the University failed to pay me a livable wage, for example, felt wrong.

Watching my peers, who suffered through the same, emerge with their doctorates into an indifferent academic job market that primarily fails to offer them a living wage and fails to provide them health insurance, for example, feels wrong.

And knowing those few who dare to question the rectitude of this brave new academia (full of adjuncts, rapacious middle-managers, and a mostly compliant and indifferent professorial academy) get beaten and pepper sprayed, for example, is wrong.

I'm going to follow *acknowledgement* protocol and thank the individual people who have helped me complete this project. But I would be remiss to not at least *acknowledge* the system that turns the mind's work and its dedicated workers into yet another set of bodies on the assembly line. It's there. It's broken. And it's hung over my head as well as my heart, breaking both down while I worked on this project, making me repeatedly ask myself, “Why am I doing this? What's the point?”  
Hopefully we will all realize academia is broken and work to repair it. And hopefully that second, rather optimistic saying is more than just palliative.

At the micro-level, I'd like to thank (in alphabetical order) Robert Alford, Diana Anders, Ronessa Butler, Sylvia Chong, Todd Deck, Kate Drabinski, Dan Farber, Ben Fife, Kevin Ford, Jake Godby, Hunter Hargraves, Bharati Hukku, Suman Hukku, Richard Hutson, Matt Johnson, Ben Katz, Kwong Li, Kristen Loutensock, Vandana Makker, Lauren Maxwell, Franklin Melendez, Kathleen Moran, Anne Nesbet, Sabrina Rahman, Matt Rudary, Amy Rust, Sapna Shahani, Kaja Silverman, Noelle Trinidad Taylor, Chan Thai, Lenora Warren, Kristen Whissel, and Linda Williams.

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To close, I'd like to infinitely expand out my *acknowledgements* in a way that *acknowledges* what's broken but is, as *acknowledgements* should always be, optimistic:

I thank you for hearing me.

SPH  
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### I. *Sex and the City's* Sexual Chronology

During my graduate studies at UC Berkeley, my work increasingly focused on “sex.” And by “sex” I do not mean part of the concomitant humanist triptych, *gender*, *sex*, and *sexuality*, but rather something I thought approached “*sex proper*”...bodies in congress...fucking. Granted, the academic triptych served (and continues to serve) as a theoretical spine supporting the corpus of my writing, but, nevertheless, I found my optic evermore insistently focused upon particular arrangements of bodies and these arrangements’ potential significances as pinpoint metaphors within the flux of *gender*, *sex*, and *sexuality*.

My engagement with prurient academic interests accelerated so much, in fact, that when new acquaintances asked what I “worked on” in grad school, I’d slide over known fields (Film Studies, Critical Theory, Gender Studies, etc.) and saucily say “Sex.” This met with varied, intriguing responses—the pertinent one here being my then-roommate, Vandana, asking me my opinion of *Sex and the City*.

I had no idea what I thought about *Sex and the City*. Of course I’d heard of it, but I’d only caught one full episode during its initial run—the second half of the series’ finale, “An American Girl in Paris (part deux).” At Vandana’s insistence, and with her assistance, I vowed in the summer of 2006 to become fully fluent in *Sex*.

*Sex and the City* is a cable television show originally aired between 1998 and 2004 on HBO. The series, based on a weekly column-turned-book by socialite author Candace Bushnell, became a worldwide fin de siècle phenomena, receiving numerous industry accolades,<sup>1</sup> engendering a rabid fan base, spawning consumer trends (cosmopolitans, Manohlo Blahniks, forename jewelry, flower pins, etc.), academic interrogation,<sup>2</sup> a top-grossing major motion picture franchise, and even another television series. Both the original television comedy and its two movie sequels chronicle the lives, loves, lusts, friendships, and, perhaps most importantly, non-pornographic fucks of four women living in a rarefied New York City.

However, much like pornography had been in the 1970s, *Sex and the City* was a major component in America’s shifting sexual discursive. Reading the series’ Wikipedia page, one immediately encounters the following: “the quirky series had multiple continuing storylines that tackled relevant and modern social issues like sexuality, sexually transmitted diseases, safe sex, promiscuity, and femininity while exploring the difference between friendships and relationships” (“Sex and the City”). Indeed, over the course of the series and even to this day, though its overall ideological merits remain debatable, *Sex and the City* engendered many conversations about feminism, sex and sexuality, sex acts, and the socio-sexual landscape of America in the late 90s and early 2000s.

In an initial review of the series entitled “In Pursuit of Love, Romantically or Not” published June 5, 1998, *New York Times* author Caryn James cleverly contrasts the series’ main character’s concerns to the more formulaic ones of fictional characters past.

She finds Carrie Bradshaw, *Sex and the City's* focal, and her constellation far removed from both Audrey Hepburn's iconic Holly Golightly and the litter of "hopeless romantics" filling out Amistad Maupin's *More Tales of the City*.<sup>3</sup> "More than she realizes," James writes, "Carrie is torn between her longing for romance and her knowledge that there is no free breakfast at Tiffany's" This dissonant split between prefab, Hollywood-style fantasy and the drab realities of daily romantic life, James concludes, is precisely the show's connection to its audience: "On the surface, Carrie's world of art dealers, trendy clubs and supermodels may seem hermetic, but her mating rituals have a universal resonance."

Years later in a February 1, 2004 *New York Times* cover story titled "Real-Life Questions In an Upscale Fantasy" published weeks before the series' massively-anticipated February 22, 2004 finale, Dinitia Smith writes:

Every now and then a television series so perfectly captures the mood of a culture that it becomes more than a just a hit: it becomes a sociological event -- something to be studied in terms of historic patterns, analyzed in the spirit of the decade, maybe even incorporated into a college lecture or two. HBO's 'Sex and the City' is one of those series.

Smith's article features feminist scholars commenting on the significance of the by-now globally popular series.<sup>4</sup> Constance Penley claims, "'Sex and the City' is all about women trying to understand men, or 'the semiotics of masculinity.'" Laura Kipnis, Smith observes, figured "a generation of women...see in 'Sex and the City' their own awkwardness -- an awkwardness that comes from sex with relative strangers." Camille Paglia pontificates on how, though still steeped in archaic themes, "'Sex and the City' marks a defeat for the '1980's anti-porn, anti-sex wing of feminists' and a victory for 'the huge wing of us pro-sex feminists who came back with a vengeance in 1990.'" Elaine Showalter is quoted having the most negative appraisal of the series, arguing, "The show is a total fantasy space in which you ward off danger with clothes."

A majority of the commentators align with Caryn James' initial assessment of the series by observing the show's twisted relationship to dominant romance narratives. Smith opens her second paragraph noting, "In the early pulp fiction and working-girl narratives, the city is often depicted as a sexual danger zone into which girls, unencumbered by parental supervision, stray at their peril...they are punished, by caddish lovers and social disgrace. 'Sex and the City,' of course, is different; its characters have multiple partners, and for the most part a good time." *Sex and the City* is a far cry from early cinematic screeds warning of naïf single women's lives run afoul in festering urban pools.<sup>5</sup> Bucking eras of rhetoric tying women and women's sexuality to hidden, domestic spaces, *Sex and the City* maps its women's most intimate experiences onto New York's urban space—cabs, alleys, restaurants, discos, shops, etc. As the series' title implies, it is about "sex" and "the City." One term is not a container for the other; the series is interested in how the two coexist.

This enlargement of the female's world, however, comes with costs. Though the women do not fall into full social disgrace, balance is not handily obtained. As L.S. Kim notes in "Real-Life Questions In an Upscale Fantasy," "women realize they can have both career and family," however, "they also find it difficult weighing how much... [they are] going to have of a career or a family at a certain time." Kim theorizes that the lure of *Sex and the City* "is that the characters are conflicted and complicated...we want to see women in the process of working through these questions," and "the pleasure comes from

the process...not the answers” (“Real Life”). Here Kim reveals a strand common to both second and third-wave feminist thinking. She bemoans the death of grand narrative and, as a substitute for these supposedly once pleasurable and now-failing stories—stories with clear “answers” and satisfying “ends”—suggests that women now seek (or are left with) an open-ended, permutational pleasure-in-process. This pleasure, both Kipnis and Paglia note, is far different from the pleasure that comes with well-worn narrative tracks. Kipnis observes, “There are frequent moments of painful recognition...the show is all about independence,...but independence is disappointing also” (“Real Life”). The freedom these women have attained is not all pleasurable; it is a mixed bag in which, oftentimes, great success comes lumped with great failure. The identificatory pleasure *Sex and the City* offers its viewer comes from both an overreliance on and fundamental lack of belief in grand romantic narrative. It is the pleasure one feels when grand narrative cedes to something else.

Though many aspects of the show warrant analysis, for the sake of this introduction I’m going to keep it simple. I’m interested, as the aforementioned feminist thinkers are, in *Sex and the City*’s relationship to grand, encompassing narratives. Are there moments when this show, so ill at ease with dominant romantic narratives, reveals the possibility of new, unheralded narratives resting behind the breakdown of master narratives? I’m specifically interested in the show’s conception of a kind of sexual chronology. If *Sex* is, as Smith claims, “something to be studied in terms of historic patterns,” and if the 80s marks an era dominated, as Paglia asserts, by the “anti-porn, anti-sex wing of feminists,” then what does *Sex and the City*—even if only as a dragoman of dominant masculinity—have to say about its own conception of the history of sex and the state of the contemporary (late 90s/early 2000s) sexual union? A partial answer, I believe, can be found in the episode titled “Three’s a Crowd”; it is the eighth episode of the series’ first season. Co-written by Darren Starr and Jenny Bicks and originally aired on July 26<sup>th</sup>, 1998, HBO synopsisizes it as follows: “Carrie discovers not only that Mr. Big was once married, but that he and his ex participated in a threesome. Meeting the ex-Mrs. Big, Carrie is disappointed to find her smart, sexy and successful. Charlotte’s boyfriend wants to add another woman to their relationship, and Miranda feels left out. Samantha finds that she has unwittingly become too involved with a married couple” (HBO). This episode, focused on the women’s variant fears that they alone cannot fulfill a partner and, because of this, cannot fulfill themselves, features the following telling snippet of brunch banter. To set the scene, Charlotte (Kristin Davis) is discussing her new beau’s proposal to introduce a third into their sexual repertoire.

Charlotte: Jack wants us to do a threesome.

Miranda: Of course he does. Every guy does.

Samantha: Threesomes are huge right now—they’re the blowjob of the nineties.

Charlotte: What was the blowjob of the eighties?

Samantha: Anal sex.

Carrie: Any sex, period.

(Bicks, Jenny & Darren Star)

This dialogue is curious for several reasons. First, decades are defined primarily by sex acts, and this chronology of decade-defining sex acts incepts in the seventies—a decade *before* the decade *before* this scene takes place. Second, everybody—even resident WASP ingénue Charlotte, the character most overtly tied to dominant narratives of romance and courtship—is scripted as fully aware that blowjobs are *the* defining sex



act of the seventies. Third, the eighties, sandwiched by blowjobs and threesomes, is a decade whose historical reading lies at crosshairs. Indeed, our four favorite gal pals seem to disagree as to just what the “blowjob of the eighties” was. Carrie (Sarah Jessica Parker) sounds like she’s been swapping notes over cosmos with the Camille Paglia cited in “Real-Life Questions In an Upscale Fantasy” while Samantha (Kim Cattrall), the gang’s resident sexual provocateur, sounds like she’s been reading notable, anal-centric writings by gay theorists like Leo Bersani and David Miller. Miranda (Cynthia Nixon), perhaps anticipating these antagonistic positions, argues, as both Constance Penley and Elaine Showalter do in the aforementioned *New York Times* piece, that the girls’ conversation must acknowledge its fundamentally patriarchal frame.

Regardless of how we read this scene, it appears the ladies of *Sex and The City* and, by proxy, the show’s assumed (white female and white gay male) viewers can agree that the seventies, the decade of *Deep Throat* (1972 Damiano) and *Deep Throat* (William Mark Felt, Sr.), had a decade-defining sex act. The eighties become more problematic. With the quick rise of what Paglia describes as an “anti-porn, anti-sex wing of feminists,” a group dominated by Caucasian, heterosexual women and predominantly concerned with policing heterosexuality, finding a defining sex act becomes a more complex operation—perhaps even one that requires a shift outside an (always already assumed) heterosexist, (always already assumed) vaginal-penetration-based frame now come under political erasure. Samantha’s response, “anal sex,” can be read as a knowing nod to the show’s gay male audience. The 80s were, after all, a decade rocked by HIV/AIDS. Perhaps, in the middle of the feminist sex battles, the emergent gay rights movement—rocketed to front page headlines via its membership’s dominant position in the 4-H club (homosexuals, heroin addicts, hookers/hemophiliacs, and Haitians)—were the decade’s most discussed sexual actors...and anal sex their defining act. Of course, between feminist battles and a deadly sexually transmitted disease, Carrie’s response, “Any sex, period,” might be just about right. And then the nineties, removing the shackles of (assumedly) both sexual diptychs and the “anti-porn, anti-sex wing of feminists,” introduced a new twist on the sex act altogether—one that undermines and renegotiates much of the myth of sex as dually mutual. In short, these decade-defining sex acts follow something approaching this progression:

1970s: Oral

1980s: ~~(always already assumed) Vaginal Penetrative~~/Anal

1990s: Threesomes

Now, as any viewer of *Sex and the City* can attest, the above chronology is a bit unfinished. First of all, the actual end result of Charlotte’s acquiescence to a threesome is that her beau so enthusiastically engages with the new partner that she is forgotten and left to watch from the sidelines. In fact, this joke—that threesomes tend to result in two active participants and one viewing from the sidelines—is repeated in season two when Samantha attempts a ménage a trois with a gay male couple<sup>6</sup> and again in season four when Samantha opens up her relationship for her boyfriend’s birthday.<sup>7</sup> If the series’ actual presentation of both Charlotte’s and Samantha’s flirtation with threesomes both humorously supports and humorously undercuts the latter’s proclamation that “threesomes are...the blowjob of the nineties,” overall it appears to reinforce something quite different: that there are many sexual proclivities, and that it is just fine to dip one’s toes and try things out...even if doing so is often equivalent to

watching other, more dedicated participants from the sidelines. After all, this is a show whose main characters encountered, analyzed, and partook of any number of socio-sexual inclinations and modalities. Some notable ones from the first two seasons include modelizing—desiring only models as sexual companions,<sup>8</sup> Charlotte’s addiction to her vibrator at the expense of all social contact,<sup>9</sup> men whose only sexual proclivity is cunnilingus,<sup>10</sup> men who can only be erotically stimulated if pornography is playing,<sup>11</sup> and men who can only achieve arousal if there is a risk of being caught in the act.<sup>12</sup> In fact, over the course of *Sex and the City*’s run, audiences were treated to what, borrowing an oft-repeated idiom of the 1970s, handily amounts to “different strokes for different folks,” or an explosion of various sexual practices...and all embodied by secondary characters who stood in for particular, defining inclinations and modalities. Even if these presentations of diverse sexual proclivities were oftentimes dismissed as failing to live up to a heteromantic regime’s archaic expectations, the protagonists still, if only for one episode, partook of a polyglot’s trove of sexual experiences. They watched. They tried. They discussed. And they moved, without moral and physical damnation, on to more.

I present this because, if *Sex and the City* “captures the mood of a culture” and can be “analyzed in the spirit of the decade,” then the nineties—certainly the late nineties into the early aughts—were, for some, a time of overwhelming sexual variety—many variant pathways to orgasm were presented, uncomfortably tried on, and judged. A revamped timeline might look more like this:

1970s: Oral

1980s: (~~always & already assumed Vaginal Penetrative~~)/Anal

1990s: A Sexual Explosion

## II. Sex in the City (With Apologies to the Hearing Impaired): The “Porn Routine”

The more I watched *Sex and the City* the more I began mapping its contours onto my own life. So much so that, when I met a friend for brunch one Sunday in late September of 2006, I couldn’t help but anticipate some edgy, sexy banter I’d later pore over for a deeper meaning while working at my laptop. My friend, K, did not disappoint. Let me introduce K. He is an accomplished guy; at the time, he was a Berkeley doctoral candidate in biosciences. In addition to his intellectual prowess, he was also a fan of weekend nights out at the bars carousing and, as gay men term it, “cruising.” K almost always arrived late to meet me, hung-over, and with a sordid tale or four from the previous night. He was my Samantha Jones.

This Saturday proved no different. K arrived 15 minutes late, his shirt incorrectly buttoned. Stealing a quick glance to order food, he looked my way and, with a twinkle in his eyes that, for better or for worse, never failed to educe a Pavlovian response from me, began with our corroded take on once upon a time: “You will not believe what happened last night.” I leaned towards him, readily falling into my well-worn role as auditor. Keeping with my expectations, K began narrating a sordid tale of sex in our city, San Francisco. He had been out in the Castro, San Francisco’s main “gayborhood.” While there, he had met, picked up, and bought home a new bedtime companion. This was all, of course, par for the course. K’s Friday night stories, like genres, follow repetitive patterns; I knew the next bit of info would be something notable about the guy—something seemingly trivial but descriptive that would later pivot the encounter to its ridiculous denouement. The notable feature about this fellow: he’s deaf.<sup>13</sup>

K proceeded, glossing over the “uninteresting” bits such as how they initiated social interaction and/or how they sustained it. Rather, he picked up his tale at the important moment—the sexual encounter. He said, “I thought he was making odd sounds while we were going at it. It was like...guttural mewling, and he only got louder and louder. But it was nothing compared to his orgasm. He screamed! It sounded awful! My roommates thought I was being attacked; they broke down the door! I have to replace my bedroom door.”

This story was pure Kevin by way of Samantha Jones.

Later that evening, however, I got to thinking: Why would neither Kevin nor his roommates recognize the sounds of this man’s sexual pleasure? Or, perhaps in a primitivizing move, why would this deaf fellow produce the sounds he produced? I’ve no doubt that, as has been theorized about one’s entry into language systems, one accrues and reduplicates knowledge of social behavior via any number of pathways. However, is there something to be said for the influence these pathways exert on one’s sonant sexual performance? But...is it just about oohing and aahing? This question led me to take a step back and review previous conversations I had had about sex. When complaining about an unsatisfying sexual encounter, my friends, both heterosexual and gay male, frequently identified two forms of clichéd performance: “porn speak” and the “porn routine” nature of sexual operations—the “suck, fuck, cum, and go” as one friend succinctly put it.

This routine structure for both aural and physical sex has, apparently, not gone unnoticed by others. In his 2002 book, *Watching Sex: How men Really Respond to Pornography*, David Loftus interviewed some 150 hetero and homosexual men to find answers to the following questions: “How do men feel about pornography? What do they think it does to their value systems and attitudes towards women?” (xi).<sup>14</sup> Amongst the numerous, fascinating facts, one finds several mentions of the reality or unreality of the sounds of pornographic sex and the “suck, fuck, cum” routine. When asked “What do you especially like to see or read about in pornography?” and “What turns you on the most?”, many readers hinted at, or outright acknowledged, a dominant structuring of the sex act (30). Loftus notes, “comments were pointed with regards to blatant formula in porn videos...the routine is so common and obvious that various men mapped it in similar terms” (32). A 48-year-old musician complained of “the same old series in porn videos of foreplay to sucking to fucking to man-pulling-out-and-cumming-on-her-buns crap” (32). Another, a 27-year-old single computer analyst, wrote, “Kiss. Get undressed. Girl sucks guy. Guy licks girl. They screw missionary. They screw doggie-style. They screw female superior. Back to missionary. The ‘come shot.’ Same old thing, with minor variations, over and over” (32). Another, a 25-year-married, 46-year-old American government technician complains,

I’m tired of the standard S&F [suck and fuck] routine that goes something like this: Dressed boy and girl begin to kiss and undress. She then proceeds to suck boy’s penis for a good while. Next, boy goes down on girl and licks clitoris and tongues vagina for a good while. Next, girl proceeds to be mounted by boy and continue until ejaculation occurs outside vagina, usually near face or breast area (32).

All of these respondents touch upon a repetitive, genre-like order of sexual operations...a directional flow to sex's corporeal overlap—oral sex to fucking to external ejaculation—they consider endemic to pornographic film's representation of sex.

This limited structure, amongst both the men studied and my friends, is often set against a more open, more spontaneous, more “realistic” sex. Summarizing common responses, Loftus writes that many responses he received “had to do with credibility, realism, and overall quality... ‘realistic’ characters and acts, and a natural progression of events instead of abrupt changes” (29). Oddly enough, however, the very core of this “realism” oftentimes seems confused and...well...irrationally specific to the observer. In one telling example, a married 48-year-old musician/writer comments, “I’ve seen amateur videos of sex and masturbation: women usually don’t make much noise when they cum. They squeal a little or sigh and tremble for a few seconds, then it’s over. Knowing that, it’s disgusting to see women carrying on in paroxysms of shrieking ecstasy” (30). For this respondent, his aural experience of amateur pornography is adjudicated as “realistic” or “normal” and set against the different, “false” sonant sexual performance of women in non-amateur pornography. He fails to consider that women in “amateur videos” might be as controlled in their performance of pleasure as “women carrying on in paroxysms of shrieking ecstasy.” In another telling instance, a physician is quoted, in chorus with many others, as desiring what he calls a more “seductive realism,” arguing, “sex that looks like love-making is a turn-on...in terms of particular acts, realism is best” (30). Describing this “realism,” he speculates, “It may include kissing, oral sex, intercourse” (30). If we can assume intercourse ends with an orgasm, this physician’s “realistic” sex, even when the “natural progression” is presented in a conjecturally “love-making” type of encounter, is contoured to follow the “standard S&F routine” with one small difference from filmed pornography: we do not know if the ejaculation is internal or external.

These sentiments are partially echoed 26 years earlier in *The Hite Report: A Nationwide Study on Female Sexuality*, Shere Hite’s controversial 1976 study of female sexual habits. To amass information for her study, Hite Distributed 100,000 copies of a fifty-eight question survey through various women’s groups, mail solicitations, and newspapers/magazines, receiving 3, 019 responses (Xiii-Xx). These were compiled underneath the question categories and the results were published with anonymous excerpts from the various responses. I’d like to analyze one interesting response. In her introduction to the “Masturbation” chapter in which women discuss their masturbatory techniques, Hite writes, “Masturbation is, in a very real sense, one of the most important subjects discussed in this book and a cause for celebration, because it is such an easy source of orgasms for most women...of the 82 percent of women who said they masturbated, 95 percent could orgasm easily and readily whenever they wanted” (3). In fact, Hite continues, “many women used the term ‘masturbation’ synonymously with orgasm: women assumed masturbation included orgasm” (3). One respondent—the only to go into depth regarding her mental processes during masturbation—wrote:

I lie down and begin to fantasize in my mind my favorite fantasy, which is a party where everyone is engaging in group sex, lovely, lovely sex, all positions, kissing, caressing, cunnilingus, and intercourse. After about five minutes of this I am ready, very lubricated. I lift one knee slightly and move my leg to one side, put my middle finger on or around the clitoris and gently massage in a circular motion. Then I dream of being invited to this party and all those delicious things are

happening to me. I try to hold out as long as possible, but in just a minute or two, I have an orgasm (26).

Similar to physician cited above, this woman Hite quotes also fantasizes of a sexual order: kissing-caressing-cunnilingus-intercourse-orgasm.

### III. The Project: An Overview

Looking at *Sex and the City's* act-centered periodization of the seventies, eighties, and nineties in light of this “porn routine,” I couldn’t help but feel I had stumbled upon some sort of constellation. *Sex and the City* is a series obsessed with the failure of grand narratives. So why would it, in its most telling revelation of its concept of sexual chronology, periodize itself in a manner parallel to the routine structuring of the sex act in pornographic films? Why would all the *Sex and the City* women agree the seventies were the blowjob decade? And, from this, why would the two pornographic films that broke narrative pornography into the cultural consciousness both focus so resolutely on oral sex? I venture that this link is telling and warrants investigation.

Broadly stated, I believe the emergence of these “porn routines” is closely tied to shifting concerns and modalities in law, sexology, sexual behaviors, film production, and film exhibition—particularly as these factors gave rise to heterosexual and gay male narrative pornography and these pornographies’ relative mainstreaming as representation of filmed sexual congress in the “porno chic” era<sup>15</sup> through the end of filmed narrative pornography’s so-called “golden age.”<sup>16</sup> Building upon studies of the early 70s emergence of feature-length narrative pornography,<sup>17</sup> I believe this era bore additional witness to the formation and dissemination of a plot-like “porn routine” embedded within the broader narrative of the feature film. This routine, which I am labeling porn’s *performatistic screen*, has come to stand as a base schema for filmed sex. It is something akin to the “boy meets girl/boy loses girl/boy reunites with girl” logic of romantic comedy or the thirty-two bar, AABA (verse-verse-bridge-verse) form of popular showtunes: though not exhaustive of all possible variations, it both holds for the majority and serves as a benchmark from which outliers become outliers. Because this *performatistic screen* has a particular and easily comprehended order (oral->vaginal/anal->external ejaculation), it readily lends itself to the rigors of formal and structural analysis. In being narrative-like, we can consider how it takes the viewer through a progression of elements of differing quality, and we can consider why these various elements appear in the order in which they do relative one another. Additionally, and given its myth-like repetition, we can consider how it speaks both by itself and as a foregrounded component of broader feature-length, narrative pornographic film.

Furthermore, and perhaps more theoretically, I wonder how the emergence of this heretofore repressed system of representation can be understood. I believe this *performatistic screen* and its position within narrative must be read as an emergent myth as well as a palimpsest of the ordering of metaphors, issues, and arguments shaping the uses and deployments of sex, gender, and sexuality surrounding pornography in its “golden age.” American narrative pornography formed and mainstreamed itself in the early seventies via two films: *Mona the Virgin Nymph* (1970 Michael Benveniste & Howard Ziehm) and *Deep Throat*. Both films’ stories focus on oral sex. Following this early 70s emergence of feature-length, narrative pornography, feminists—particularly

those in the then-heavily psychoanalytic field of Film Theory—deployed numerous metaphors of vaginal-penetration to explicate gender roles and power dynamics in narrative. In a parallel manner, authors in the nascent gay rights movement placed particular emphasis, when choosing to discuss or metaphorize sex, on tropes of anal penetration. However insidiously limiting, these two sex acts (vaginal penetrative and anal receptive) became dominant metonyms in the seventies and early eighties for both imagining and theorizing heterosexuality (vaginal penetration) and male homosexuality (anal penetration). In the early eighties, by some strange quilting, numerous strands concerning sexuality, identity, and personal pleasure brutally and explosively met in the era of HIV/AIDS—with a focus placed specifically on semen as vector of disease and orgasmic pleasure as it links to death.

In his major study, *Narration in the Fiction Film*, film theorist David Bordwell presents three basic approaches via which cinematic storytelling can be studied: as *representation*, as *structure*, and as *process*. A study of *representation* looks to the world that is depicted in the narrative or the broader body of ideas from which a given narrative receives its content. A study of *structure* seeks to ascertain how a narrative's elemental units are combined to make a whole. Finally, a study of narrative as *process* looks at “the activity of selecting, arranging, and rendering story material in order to achieve specific time-bound effects on a perceiver” (xi). Studies of *process* embrace considerations of source, function, and effect, keeping in mind how the temporal progress of information or action—the work of a film's “narrator”—is a dynamic of both presenting and suppressing information that is subsequently received and processed by the viewer.

According to Bordwell, it is common for narrative analysis to foreground one of these three poles while bringing in the others as needed. However, though these three approaches often crisscross in the majority of academic writing, Bordwell favors analyses that look to *representation* and *structure* to get at *process*, or what he terms studies of *narration* (xi). “A good theory,” he writes, “would have to include, at least, categories and propositions pertaining to the artwork's structure, the perceiver's relation to the work, and the broader functions of the work...[it] should possess internal coherence, empirical breadth, discriminating power, and some recognition of historical change” (xii-xiii).

In a similar manner, philosopher Paul Ricoeur outlines a theory that attempts to elucidate how one understands the self through the activity of emplotment or mimesis in his *Time and Narrative* trilogy. His basic thesis as written in *Time and Narrative I* claims that, “between the activity of narrating a story and the temporal character of experience there exists a correlation that is not merely accidental but that represents a trans-cultural form of necessity[:] ...time becomes human to the extent that it is articulated through a narrative mode, and narrative attains its full meaning when it becomes a condition of temporal existence” (52, emphasis in text). In other words, “the poetics of narrativity responds and corresponds to the aporetics of temporality” (84). Ricoeur claims that narratives act—they not only articulate time and experience; they themselves in turn become the measures by which future time and experience can be processed. In much the same way, I believe the emergence of the *performatistic screen* must be understood as an act of narrating sex that has now become a measure of sex.

To support his claims, Ricoeur begins by arguing narrative has the same broad referential function as metaphor. Referencing his own *The Rule of Metaphor*, Ricoeur outlines how metaphor's "innovation lies in the producing of a new semantic pertinence by means of an impertinent attribution[;]...[it] is alive as long as we can perceive, through the new semantic pertinence—and so to speak its denseness—the resistance of the words in their ordinary use and therefore their incompatibility at the level of a literal interpretation of the sentence" (ix). As with metaphor, "with narrative, the semantic innovation lies in the inventing of another work of synthesis—a plot...goals, causes, and chance are brought together within the temporal unity of a whole and complete action" (ix). "It is," Ricoeur reasons, "this synthesis of the heterogeneous that brings narrative close to metaphor[;]...the new thing—the as yet unsaid, the unwritten—springs up in language" (ix). Metaphor takes two things previously "distant" and presses them "close," "the productive imagination at work in the metaphorical process is thus our competence for producing new logical species by predictive assimilation, in spite of the resistance of our current categorizations of language"; narrative "is comparable to this predictive assimilation[;] it 'grasps together' and integrates into one whole and complete story multiple and scattered events, thereby schematizing the intelligible signification attached to the narrative taken as a whole" (x). Narrative, like metaphor, brings things heretofore distant together. In much the same way, I believe this early 1970s narrativization of sex brings together previously distant or disparate cultural strands within its emplotment.

If metaphor and narrative both partake of syncretic processes made possible and necessary by language, they must play off the relation the reader has with both language and the broader world. "In both cases," Ricoeur writes, "the semantic innovation can be carried back to the productive imagination and, more precisely, to the schematism that is its signifying matrix" (x). With metaphor, the reader must grasp the slippages between a descriptive, referential deployment of language and a fanciful one. Ricoeur writes, "poetic discourse brings to language aspects, qualities, and values of reality that lack access to language that is directly descriptive and that can be spoken only by means of the complex interplay between metaphorical utterances and the rule-governed transgression of the usual meanings of our words" (xi). Metaphors "redescribe a reality inaccessible to direct description"; fresh, living metaphors—metaphors not reduced to the commonplace—are untranslatable without remainder into literal language (so that there is both a metaphorical reference as well as a metaphorical sense); they reveal a new way of assessing their referents by transforming both language and cognition. Ricoeur argues, "the mimetic function of narrative poses a problem exactly parallel to the problem of metaphorical reference" (xi). In much the same way, I believe the emergence of narrativized sex presents broad, metaphoric answers to heretofore troubling anxieties.

To prove this parallel, Ricoeur presents a tripart logic of narrative mimesis. Mimesis, commonly translated as either "imitation" or "reproduction," is generally understood as having to do with that puzzling intuition that makes one want to say "art imitates life" or vice versa. To reach his understanding of narrative mimesis, Ricoeur spends several pages analyzing Aristotle's *Poetics*. Aristotle's work, he notes, "is replying to Plato who is replying to [the sophist] Gorgias" (238 fn. 8). In Plato's Socratic dialogue, *Gorgias*, whereas "Gorgias praises painters and artists for their [mimetic] skills in deceiving us[,] Socrates draws from him an argument against art and the power it provides for manipulating opinions" (238 fn. 8). This distrust motivates the whole

discussion of mimesis in Book 10 of the Plato's *Republic*, leading him to recount Socrates' metaphor of the three beds in which one bed exists as an idea made by God (the Platonic ideal), one is made by the carpenter in imitation of God's idea, and one is made by the artist in imitation of the carpenter's. Effectively, Plato defines mimetic art as an imitation of imitation, twice removed from reality and the contradictor of philosophy's truth (596a-597b). Ricoeur writes, "Aristotle's *Poetics* thus is a reply to Book 10 of the *Republic*," because, "for Aristotle, imitation is an activity and one that teaches us something" (238 fn. 8). Assessing Aristotle's influential theorization of *mimesis*, "imitation of an action," and *muthos*, "the organization of the events" or emplotment, Ricoeur finds a similar shortcoming: Aristotle's writing tends to confuse the two (34). "For him," Ricoeur writes, "mimetic activity tends to be confused with emplotment" (31). This confusion of imitation and structuration, in turn, causes a similarly odd slippage: where "Platonic mimesis...distances the work of art by twice over from the ideal model which is its ultimate base," Ricoeur finds that "Aristotle's mimesis has just a single space wherein it is unfolded—human making [*faire*], the arts of composition" (34). In Aristotle's formation, a work like *Oedipus Rex* is Sophocles' imitation of another action—that of the "real" Oedipus.

The best way to understand *mimesis*, Ricoeur believes, is to free the concept of "imitation" from any narrowly conceived comparison of art work and object, as in the physical resemblance between a wooden bed and its straw imitator or as in the resemblance between Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* and a "real" person. What can then emerge is an alternative understanding of *muthos* as an arc of operations or a complex movement that originates in culture (understood as a symbolic order) before passing into fixed or frozen form in a work like *Oedipus Rex* to subsequently be reintroduced into the cultural sphere in the consciousness of listeners or readers whose way of being in the world has been altered by their textual engagements. Ricoeur terms these three stages of this essentially continuous process Mimesis<sub>1</sub>, Mimesis<sub>2</sub>, and Mimesis<sub>3</sub>. He writes in his preface, "I shall distinguish at least three senses of this term mimesis: a reference back to the familiar pre-understanding we have of the order of action [Mimesis<sub>1</sub>]; an entry into the realm of poetic composition [Mimesis<sub>2</sub>]; and finally a new configuration by means of this poetic refiguring of the pre-understood order of action [Mimesis<sub>3</sub>]," and "it is through this last sense that the mimetic function of the plot rejoins metaphorical reference" (xi).

The mimetic function of narrative is exactly parallel to metaphorical reference—the pressing "close" things previously "distant"—through Mimesis<sub>3</sub>'s collapsing of the reader's incommensurate cultural symbolics, one lost to "before" and the other anticipated for "after" his or her engagement with the narrative text. (xi). "Whereas metaphorical redescription reigns in the field of sensory, emotional, aesthetic, and axiological values, which make the world a habitable world, the mimetic function of plots takes place by preference in the field of action and of its temporal values[;]...in the plots we invent the privileged means by which we re-configure our confused, unformed, and at the limit mute temporal experience" (xi). In much the same way, I believe the plotted *performatistic screen* can be understood as connecting issues from seemingly disparate cultural spaces; as finding form embedded within the genre of feature-length, narrative pornography genre; and as a novel arc reintroduced into the cultural sphere of early 1970s America.



This project loosely follows both Bordwell's and Riceour's tripart logics. It begins by looking at markers pertinent to studies of both *representation* and Mimesis<sub>1</sub>: the antecedent cultural symbolics and configurations that prefigure the emergent *performatistic screen*. From there, it moves to issues pertinent to studies of both *structure* and Mimesis<sub>2</sub>: analyses of the *screen's* structure and logic. Finally, it finishes with analyses that lean toward studies of both *process*, or *narration*, and Mimesis<sub>3</sub>: an engagement with the metaphoricity of the *performatistic screen* as embedded within feature-length, narrative pornography.

These four chapters function, if I may use the simile, like matryoshka dolls; the focus of following chapters will be delimited by the broader concerns of those preceding.

The first two chapters frame and explicate the emergence of American feature-length, narrative pornographic film and its *performatistic screen* in the early 70s. In chapter one, I look at two cultural systems that bookend pornography itself—law and sexology. Legal sanctions, or fear thereof, have long influenced American film production. This is perhaps most notable in the self-censorship of the Motion Picture Production Code, but it is equally notable in America's ongoing legal attempts to delineate and regulate obscenity. Similarly, sexology stands as the academic discourse most responsible for influencing public opinions of sex. Chapter one surveys both juridical and sexological discourse in order to show how both regimes pulled their focus in the late-1960s from parts to wholes. In American jurisprudence this shift is best exemplified by a turn away from finding obscenity if a work contains any discrete offensive material to basing adjudication on assessing whether the work, *taken as a whole*, lacks literary or artistic merit. In sexology, chapter one moves from Freud's willful partitioning of the 'analyzable' mind from the symptomatic body to both Kinsey and Masters & Johnson's close empiricism, which effectively does the opposite and separates 'analyzable' physical sexual experience from affective association. In response to both of these models' perceived shortcomings, John H. Gagnon & William Simon's "sexual scripting" attempts to read sex acts at the juncture of the ideational and physical body, creating an act-based bodily narrative that reunites the mental and physical body. Building from sexologists Gagnon & Simon's theory of "sexual scripting," Kenneth Burke's concept of "terministic screens," and theories of "performativity," chapter one concludes by introducing the concept of a *performatistic screen* for the filmed sex sequence—described as the base structure of bodily performance and engagement underpinning sexual displays as enacted over time in orgasmically-oriented hard core film.

Chapter two, chapter one's mini matryoshka, looks at the mid-late sixties rise in rates of oral sexuality in American sexual practices and the early-seventies emergence of feature-length narrative pornography. Film scholar Linda Williams, in her influential study *Hard Core: Power, Pleasure, and the "Frenzy of the Visible,"* has convincingly argued that cum shots serve as a generic convention signaling the closing of the filmed sex act. I believe that, in addition to this, one must acknowledge that oral sex serves a similar generic convention: it begins the arc of sex the money shot closes. These two acts, the bookends of what I term porn's *performatistic screen* for filmed sex, operate in both heterosexual and gay male pornography as standard opening and closing of the sex act. In

its study of oral sex, this chapter moves from a presentation of oral sex's position in historic sodomy law to an analysis of how sexology and sexologists became experts in the legal parsing of criminal *mens rea* ("guilty mind") to surveys on rates and patterns of behavior. Because oral sex emerged as an addition to sodomy statutes, its history is deeply imbricated with legal and sexologic approaches to understanding homosexuality. This chapter will present the *performatistic screen's* emergence three ways: as the result of shifting American sexual mores, as the result of shifting American obscenity standards, and as the result of shifting production and exhibition practices made possible by the aforementioned. This emergence will best be exemplified via a reading of *Mona the Virgin Nymph*, America's first notable feature-length and narrative pornographic film. Here I argue that, like law and sexology, pornographic film's lure shifted in the early 1970s from a focus on "meat" to a focus on narrative and the promise of "money"—a move from shorter, non-narrative films that center their visuals around discrete shows of penetration to longer, narrative films that structure themselves around embedded plot-like systems of bodily engagement beginning with oral and leading to visible orgasm.

Once the emergence and establishment of the feature-length, narrative pornographic film genre and its embedded *performatistic screen* has been delineated, chapter three constructs a theoretical model for how to understand its viewers' "desire in narrative." To do this, it looks at then-contemporary theoretical texts in narratology, or the theory and the study of narrative and narrative structure and the ways that these affect or solicit our perception. This chapter starts by mapping the shift from Structuralism to post-Structuralism. This shift occurs, I argue, by the introduction of the concept of a reader possessed of some "desire in narrative." This has, as is shown, repeatedly been described as an Oedipal desire built on absence or lack. In order to better understand this nexus of the reader, desire, narrative plotting, and Oedipus, this chapter analyzes the Oedipal myth's structuring absences in order to think through the myth's historical position, the emergence of narrative, and the role of "desire in narrative."

Chapter four, combining the previous three chapters, presents a model for how feature-length, narrative hard core's elemental units (its "narrative" and its "numbers") combine to make a whole, and what time-bound effects these combinations achieve. In order to do this, it continues chapter three's analysis of Oedipus by bringing several highly influential theories of narrative that utilize the Oedipus myth into conversation with pornographic film. Genre, it argues, operates as a contemporary myth. This chapter closes by teasing out the implications of hard core's repetitive deployment of plotted sex. If, as I claim, the *performatistic screen* operates as an always-already-assumed, plot-like schema for filmed sex embedded as sequence within the broader story of the feature film, how can we think of its repetitive deployment?

#### **IV. Some Final Notes**

Over the course of this project, the primary texts and primary concerns follow a rough chronology. My analysis of law, sexology, oral sex, and the transition from pornographic stags to features in chapters 1 and 2 move across the twentieth century up to the late 60s/early 70s. The same holds for my narratological third chapter. Finally, my fourth chapter primarily looks across films from pornography's so-called Golden Age to make and support its claims.

This project takes what I am terming a “constellational” approach to its topics. This blends specific textual analysis into broader theorizing in order to trace the contours of its subject. My hermeneutic is deeply indebted to that of Jonathan Crary in *Techniques of the Observer* and *Suspensions of Perception*. In his introduction to *Suspensions*, Crary writes, “Each of my chapters presents a constellation of objects that suggests some of the ways in which the problems of a contingent modernized perception took shape...I have attempted to balance any general speculation with highly specific analyses of concrete practices and objects” (5). In *Techniques*, he explains that his approach “will involve sketching out a set of related events that produced crucial ways in which vision was discussed, controlled, and incarnated in cultural and scientific practices” (7). In much the same manner, this project’s chapters investigate broader discursive thematics via specific analyses of related or proximate events and objects. These studies and claims are in no way intended to be exhaustive. Sex and sexuality is a wide field of seemingly infinite possibilities for investigation. These chapters are, by necessity of form and argument, narrow and somewhat skewed.

I suspect this is both willful and, in some ways, indicative of the deeper concerns I personally bring to bear on the era. For example, chapter 3’s oral sex section privileges fellatio and homosexuality in its analyses, but its discussion of films is primarily heterosexual. Additionally, there is little to no analysis of female homosexuality outside of mainstream, male-oriented pornography. I (quite tenuously) justify this 3 ways: 1) male homosexual and heterosexual pornography emerged contemporaneously to one another in the early 70s; 2) their *performatistic screens*, as I argue in the fourth chapter, operate as one another’s obverse, and 3) there is, relative to these two types of feature-length pornographic film, limited feature-length lesbian pornography targeted at lesbian consumers. Indeed, much lesbian-aimed product did not really emerge until the 80s (or the tail end of this work’s field) and even then in a highly circumscribed manner. Again, things are, by form and argument, narrow. These are not intended to be exhaustive analyses. Rather, they are intended to highlight and articulate the emergence of the *performatistic screen* and analyze the contours of some aspects of “desire in narrative” that have attach themselves to it.

I am also endeavoring, for better or for worse, to sidestep the mire of the so-called pro- and anti-pornography debates. Though I do touch upon obscenity cases, I am not interested in advancing a full argument that falls to either side of this binary. Rather, I am interested in looking at the narrative codification of filmed sex and seeing what, if anything, it can reveal. My readings are in no way definitive; they are, like Roland Barthes’ work in *S/Z*, speculative attempts at scaling textual edifices.

***To this end, please enjoy the project.***

## Chapter 1. The Push to Narrative: Law, Sexology, and the *Performatistic Screen* (Representation I)

Smut becomes a joke and is only tolerated when it has the character of a joke. The technical method which it usually employs is the allusion—that is, replacement by something small, something remotely connected, which the hearer reconstructs in his imagination into a complete and straightforward obscenity.  
(Freud *Jokes* 119)

Still photography—a close relative to film, or else some very old and distant second cousin—was never intended to tell stories. Whenever it does, it is imitating the cinema, by spatially deploying the successivity that film unfolds in time. The eye proceeds down the page of the “picture romance” magazine in the prescribed order of the photographs—which is the order they would have unreeled on the screen.  
(Metz *Language and Cinema* 46)

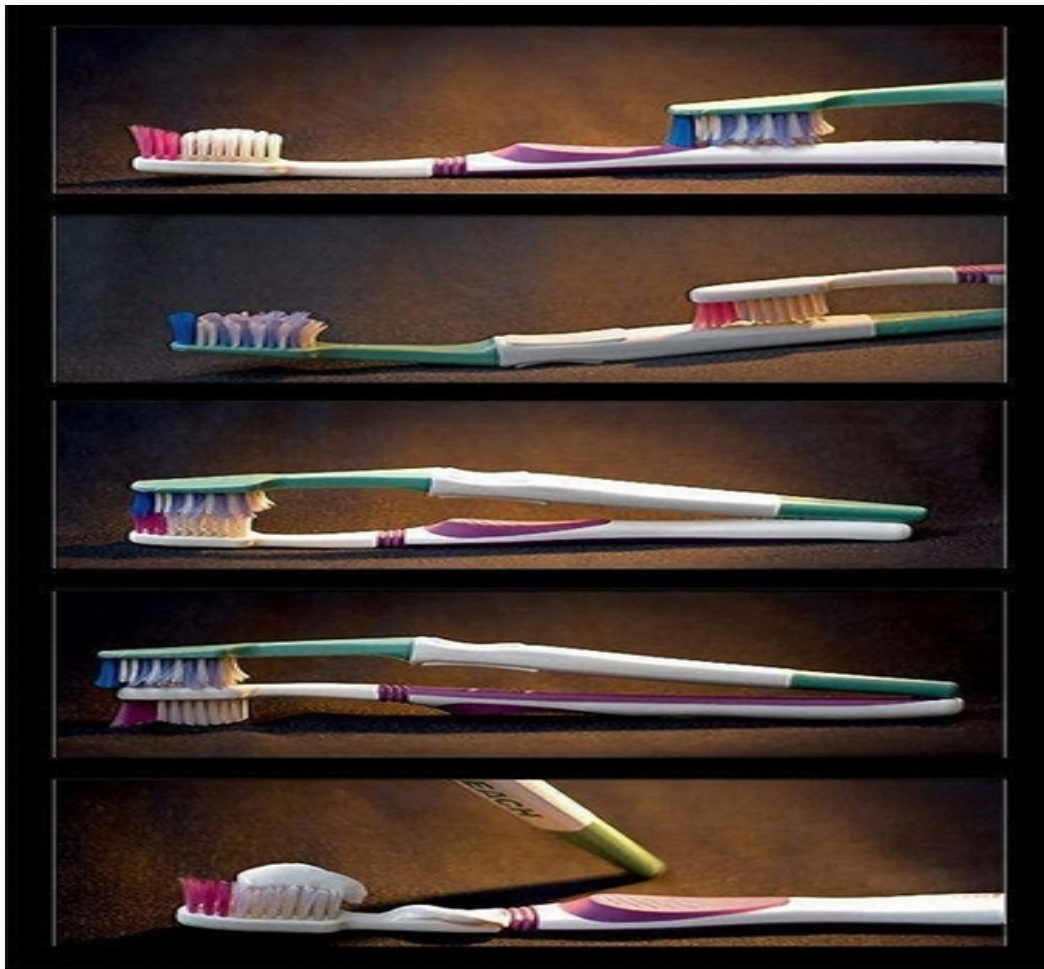


Fig. 1: Toothbrushes *in Flagrante*

## I. Understanding the Joke

Admit it: you laughed.  
But...why?

Why is the above sequence of images funny? If the Freud quote above is any indication, it is primarily because it substitutes toothbrushes, objects with semi-anthropomorphic qualities, for humans. Accepting this substitution of bristles for head and handle for body, the viewer's eyes trace down the page; this linear succession is understood as instances culled from a broader flow of spatio-temporal engagement. Given all of this, we can now ask ourselves two questions: what exactly are these toothbrushes supposed to be doing, and how do we know these toothbrushes are doing what we believe they are doing? The "joke" is that they are having sex. I also think it is clear, given their positions relative one another in the assumed sexual engagement, that the green brush is coded active (male) and the purple brush is coded passive (female). The path of their grouping follows an order; it begins with 'oral' and ends with the green brush's 'ejaculate' (toothpaste cleverly substituting for semen) on the purple brush's 'face.'

Looking closely, one must note two things primarily sanction this reading: the order of the images and the final image—the so-called "money shot." From the first image on, the reader must anticipate what follows. These mental prolepses must hold all the way to the final image; it serves as proof of inference for the humorous allusions one reads into the first four. Without the final image and its show of toothpaste 'ejaculate,' the first four images remain much more confused in implication and expression. As Frank Kermode writes in *The Sense of and Ending*, "we use fictions to enable the end to confer organization and form on the temporal structure" (45). Here, the final image 'closes' the joke, allowing us to retrospectively understand the five images as a syntagmatic representation of the path to orgasm from oral sex to visible ejaculation.

Can we not claim this series of images follows a narrative-like pattern of rising action leading to denouement? And is it not the case that this pattern of oral, insertion, and visible ejaculation has so entrenched itself in our conception of heterosexual and, to an extent, male homosexual pornographic sexual practice that it now stands as the baseline pattern for filmed sex? As we shall see in the next two chapters, this was not always the case for filmed pornography. This order of operations—what I will term a *performatistic screen* for the filmed sex sequence—most likely emerged between 1970s *Mona the Virgin Nymph* (Benveniste & Ziehm) and 1972s *Deep Throat* (Damiano) via a close coordination of several factors: shifting foci in American censorship law, shifting considerations in popular research and thought regarding sex and sexual practices, shifting practices in human sexual interaction, and shifting practices and possibilities in pornographic filmmaking and exhibition. In all these spaces, we will find repeated concern regarding the difference between static elements of spectacle and the arrangement of these elements into narrative-like patterns.

In a series of lectures titled "Truth and Juridical Forms" delivered in 1973, the French philosopher Michel Foucault presents his audience with a broad introduction, a "working hypothesis, with a view to future work" (*Power 1*).<sup>1</sup> Foucault speculatively describes his ongoing project as one moving away from the assumption "that the human

subject, the subject of knowledge, and forms of knowledge themselves are somehow given beforehand and definitively, and that economic, social, and political conditions of existence are merely laid or imprinted on this definitely given subject"; instead, he explains, "I would especially like to show how a certain knowledge of man was formed in the nineteenth century...that actually originated in social control and supervision [*surveillance*]...[and how], in a certain way, this knowledge was not imposed on, proposed to, or imprinted on an existing human subject of knowledge; rather, it engendered an utterly new type of subject knowledge" (2).

"In my view," Foucault continues, "what we should do is show the historical construction of a subject through a discourse understood as consisting of a set of strategies which are part of social practice" (4). He follows, "among the social practices whose historical analysis enables one to locate the emergence of new forms of subjectivity, it seemed to me that the most important ones are juridical practices" (4). For Foucault, acts of government, case law, legal instruments, and criminal proceedings can be considered enunciative objects; they relate to and reveal the episteme within which they come into being.<sup>2</sup> This allows him two basic maneuvers: it allows him to view jurisprudence and the history of law as a heterogeneous intersection of discourses rather than one unified discipline, and it also allows him to view legal objects as metonymous products of a given moment's episteme; the smaller part—jurisprudence in this instance—being reflective of the larger whole. "Juridical practices," he writes, "all these rules or, if you will, all these practices that were indeed governed by rules but also constantly modified through the course of history, seem to me to be one of the forms by which our society defined types of subjectivity, forms of knowledge, and, consequently, relations between man and truth which deserve to be studied" (4).

In these lectures, Foucault argues the nineteenth century bore witness to the rise of a new power formation; he terms it *panopticism*. "Panopticism," he explains, "is a form of power that rests not on the inquiry but on something completely different, which I will call the 'examination'" (58). *Inquiry*, according to Foucault, "is a rather characteristic form of truth in our societies... [that] made its appearance as a form of search for truth within the judicial order in the middle of the medieval era" (4-5). This formation emerged "in order to know exactly who did what, under what conditions, and at what moment"; it was subsequently "used in the scientific realm and in the realm of philosophical reflection" (5). *Examination* also emerged "from the starting point of juridical, judicial, and penal problems," but it differed greatly from *inquiry*. "It was no longer a matter of reconstituting an event, but something—or, rather, someone—who needed total, uninterrupted supervision" (59). Where *inquiry* sought to find whether or not something had occurred, the *examination* "was about whether an individual was behaving as he should, in accordance with the rule or not...it was organized around the norm, in terms of what was normal or not, correct or not, in terms of what one must do or not do" (59). This new formation engendered "a new knowledge of a completely different type, a knowledge characterized by supervision and examination, organized around the norm, through the supervisory control of individuals throughout their existence" (59). "Panopticism," Foucault expands, "is one of the characteristic traits of our society"; it is continuously applied to individuals in a threefold manner—supervision, control, and correction" (70). Both *examination* and *panopticism* are founded in the observation of

individuals and their behavior over time; they are fundamentally invested in tying actions to mentalities and to narrativizing their objects.

In “Truth and Juridical Forms,” Foucault explains that “the examination was the basis of the power, the form of knowledge-power, that was to give rise not, as in the case of the inquiry, to the great sciences of observation, but what we call the ‘human sciences’—psychiatry, psychology, sociology” (59). The “human science” supervision of the individual “is carried out not at the level of what one does but of what one is, not at the level of what one does but of what one might do” (71). These “human sciences” aided and abetted *panopticism* by annexing information about individuals into a discursive regime founded on policing the norm—maintaining an average person who applies average community standards to expectable life choices that keep with the spirit of the law. This places the individual’s constitution and confession of self-identity at a premium. Foucault makes this argument perfectly clear in his 1976 masterpiece, *Histoire de la sexualité Vol I: La Volonté de savoir* (published in 1978 as *The History of Sexuality Volume 1: The Will To Knowledge*). In this book, Foucault famously argues that, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Western world bore witness to an ever-tighter tethering of identity to sexuality. Because of this, any number of “human science” inquiries that fall under the umbrella sexology—inquiries aimed at both understanding “type” and rationalizing a “normal” from which an “abnormal” is derived—became crucial to the ongoing function *panopticism*.

My first two chapters work in tandem to tease out small shifts in the twentieth century’s episteme that collectively contributed to the early-1970s emergence of pornography’s *performatistic screen*. In this first chapter, I focus on the twin Foucaultian poles of law and “human sciences” as represented by the metonyms of American obscenity jurisprudence and sexology. Though there is little direct crossover between these two in the materials presented, I pair them inasmuch they represent twin limits that have both shaped and bound American pornography. The law, as Foucault observes, is a privileged discourse from which to ascertain a given moment’s episteme. Indeed, obscenity law has stood as a primary barrier to the formation of an American pornography industry; its permutations have both opened and closed doors for pornographic filmmaking, distribution, and exhibition. Likewise sexology, the study of sexual behavior, has redrawn the bounds of what we deem sexually acceptable; its movements have articulated and recast the constellation of individuals’ relationships to their minds, bodies, and desires.

I witness in both discourses two major shifts: the first is from atomized considerations to a mid-century modernization focused on rates and norms, and the second is from mid-century modernization to a late 1960s pivot introducing issues of social construction and use value as tethered to narrative. In obscenity law, the first shift is found in the move away from a common law standard, articulated in the 1868 English case *Hicklin v. Regina*, that any material that tended to “deprave and corrupt those whose minds are open to such immoral influences” could be deemed “obscene” and banned to a new standard, established in the 1957 case *Roth v United States*, that defined obscenity as material whose “dominant theme taken as a whole appeals to the prurient interest” to the “average person, applying contemporary community standards.” The second shift comes in the wake of *Roth*. As various metrics were used to define the non-prurient appeal of questionable texts, narrative plotting emerges as a sign (if not *the* sign) of textual merit.

In sexology, I move from Freud's willful partitioning of the 'analyzable' mind and symptomatic body to both Kinsey and Masters & Johnson's closed empiricism, which effectively does the opposite by statistically separating 'analyzable' physical sexual experience from affective associations. In response to both of these models' perceived shortcomings, Gagnon & Simon's "sexual scripting" attempts to read sex acts at the juncture of the ideational and physical body, creating an act-based bodily narrative that reunites the mental and physical body under the aegis of plotting.

The second chapter narrows the compass of the first, focusing on the paired emergence of oral sex in American sexual practice and that of a narrative-like "porn routine" (what I term the *performatistic screen*) in filmed pornography. The emergence of the *performatistic screen* is perhaps best understood three ways: it is often embedded within a larger film narrative, it features a codified sequence of bodily events starting with oral and ending with the cum shot, and it establishes, as the toothbrush images do, the male's cum shot as generic marker of visibly attained orgasmic pleasure.

## II. Law and Obscenity: The Push to Narrative

Obscenity laws and laws dealing with copyright, slander, and libel are the major juridical spaces that attempt to ascertain the merits and effects of aesthetic productions. Because of this, these laws occupy a special place in legal discourse. Of these, obscenity law is particularly interesting inasmuch as it so often entangles morality, sexual anxiety, and shifting thoughts on aesthetic practice. Indeed, as numerous scholars have argued, human sexuality is subject to sociocultural molding to a degree surpassed by few other forms of human behavior. This dense imbrication of the individual and his or her sociocultural milieu is, if anything, anxiety producing. Pornography, American obscenity law's object *de rigueur*, plays off these anxieties. The bulk of pornography not only deals with explicit representations of sexual activity; it also deals with illicit (read: non-marriage, non-procreative, and non-intercourse) types of sex. A handy rule of thumb for pornography can be established using Kenneth Burke's *dramatistic pentad* (act, scene, agent, agency, purpose) ("Questions and Answers" 331).<sup>3</sup> If any one of these positions is "conventional," then pornography will skew the other four to the "unconventional." In this manner, pornography presses up against and troubles the edges of any "panopticism's" norm. The law's attempts to define its obscenity shows these anxieties.

In United States Supreme Court history, the bulk of pre-1952 cases dealing with issues of censorship focus on still images and/or written texts. This is partly because the Supreme Court, in its 1915 case, *Mutual Film Corporation v. Industrial Commission of Ohio*, unanimously decided free speech protection under the Ohio Constitution—substantially similar to the First Amendment of the United States Constitution—did not extend to motion pictures (236 U.S. 230). Motion pictures, the Court concluded, constituted strictly commercial speech and were not protected "as part of the press of the country, or as organs of public opinion" (230). Because of this, motion pictures fell fully under the purview of any number of regional censoring agents. As has been well documented by other scholars, this was a major factor leading to the emergence of Hollywood's self-censoring Hayes Code.<sup>4</sup> The Hayes Code allowed Hollywood to edit itself before shipping its product to various local markets with variant (and at times conflicting) moral codes; by self-censoring in order not to offend any conservative



markets, studios could ensure their films received wider exhibition with minimal local friction.

This does not mean, however, that these non-film obscenity cases are without importance. Rather, they form the legal frame into which film, with 1952's "Miracle Decision" subsequently found entry. Both before and contemporary to the rise and spread of film, court cases dealing with literature and photography produced numerous and variant standards for assessing and determining what comprised censorable material. These definitions serve as initial juridical assessments of the position within, and potential influence of, so-called obscene representations relative to broader textual and contextual systems such as narrative and community.

Though many have studied the following cases, they have not, to my knowledge, been analyzed with a focus on their underlying claims regarding narrative cohesion as a broad marker of cultural merit. In surveying two major historical movements in American obscenity jurisprudence, I hope to reveal an inverse trend moving from considerations of the work focused solely on potentially obscene aspects and the effects these will have on a singularly defined "Young Person" to broader, textual/contextual considerations of the work that assess it as potentially polyphonous and capable of varied effects on a variegated audience formed of standardized types.<sup>5</sup> To put this in more Foucaultian language, I hope to show how obscenity jurisprudence moves from an always-already understood victim, a naïve and malleable child who will be deformed by exposure to even the slightest part of a questionable text, to considerations of what an average person is and might do given contact with questionable materials. With shifts in how potentially obscene work was adjudicated, merit—as tied to narrative plotting and construction—becomes increasingly capable of saving a controversial text from the grip of legal censorship.

### **A. The *Hicklin* Test (1873-1956)**

The formative early definition of obscenity was imported to the United States from an 1868 English Common Law case titled *Regina v. Hicklin* (LR 3 QB 360). About a decade before this case, in 1857, the British Parliament enacted the Obscene Publications Act 1857 (20 & 21 Vict. c.83), also known as Lord Campbell's Act and considered by most legal and literary historians to be the first modern obscenity statute (Lewis 231). Lord Campbell's Act granted English magistrates the right to seize "works written for the single purpose of corrupting the morals of youth and of a nature calculated to shock the common feelings of decency in a well managed mind" (231). This statute was famously brought to court in *Regina v. Hicklin*, a case involving an antireligious, sexually loaded pamphlet titled *The Confession Unmasked* (231-32). Writing on behalf of the court in deeming the pamphlet obscene, Chief Justice Alexander Cockburn presented the DNA of what would become the British (and later American) standard for assessing obscenity: "I think the test of obscenity is this: whether the tendency of the matter charged as obscenity is to deprave and corrupt those whose minds are open to such immoral influences, and into whose hands a publication of this sort might fall" (*Regina v. Hicklin*, LR 3 QB 360).

The *Hicklin* Test, while close to Lord Campbell's Act, made some noteworthy alterations. Lord Campbell's Act took the work under consideration as the product of an

author's "purpose" combined with its intended effects. This required the magistrate to impute both an author and an authorial intent ("purpose") behind the work and to adjudicate if those purposes were in fact met after the text's release. In order to do this, prosecution had to demonstrate that the intent of the work was to corrupt the morals of youth and that, concomitantly, this purpose and/or work was also capable of shocking adults (possessed of "well managed mind[s]"). *The Confessional Unmasked* clearly met this standard. The *Hicklin* Test, emerging from a case against materials easily deemed objectionable under Lord Campbell's Act, eliminated two of its major prongs while answering the lingering question of whether the text should be assessed as a whole or only in terms of its potentially obscene parts. The author's intent was fully eliminated from consideration; the only corruptible morals considered were those of youth (not those of adults), and the work at issue could be considered obscene if any portion of the material brought under scrutiny had a tendency "to deprave and corrupt those whose minds are open to such immoral influences, and into whose hands a publication of this sort may fall" (*Regina v. Hicklin*).

### **1. *Hicklin* comes to America**

The major steps paving the way for the *Hicklin* Test's entry into U.S. Federal jurisprudence were initiated by Anthony Comstock, a Civil War veteran and head of the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice (Lewis 232). With the help of YMCA president Morris K. Jessup and U.S. Supreme Court justice William Strong,<sup>6</sup> Comstock successfully maneuvered an amendment to the Federal Post Office Act that banned the mailing of certain materials. Widely named the Comstock Act, this amendment was passed in 1873. It prohibited the use of U.S. mail to distribute materials of an "obscene, lewd or lascivious" nature and/or "of an indecent character," and it also prohibited the use of mail to distribute "any article or thing designed or intended for the prevention of conception or procuring of abortion" (233). The Comstock Law effectively banned not only the distribution of obscene materials as defined by *Hicklin*—materials capable of depraving susceptible (young, naïve) minds—it also made the distribution of both contraceptives and information about contraception illegal.

The Comstock Law stands in the background of the first Supreme Court case to use the *Hicklin* Test, 1896's *Rosen v. United States* (161 U.S. 29). This case concerns Lew Rosen, a publisher who used the U.S. mail to distribute 'indecent' pictures. Writing for the majority in finding Rosen guilty, Justice John Marshall Harlan firmly established *Hicklin* as the court's standard for defining obscenity (Lewis 232). The application of *Hicklin* to written text proved more difficult in 1896's *Swearingen v. United States* (161 U.S. 446). In this case, Dan Swearingen, a Kansas newspaper publisher, used the U.S. mail to circulate a newspaper containing a searing personal attack on an unnamed but easily identifiable person. Authorities at the local level found the paper illegal under the Comstock Act, adducing that Swearingen's use of U.S. mail kept this paper outside First Amendment protections for free press. The Supreme Court, while concurring with the lower court that the attack was potentially libelous, reversed the decision. "Coarse and vulgar language," the justices concluded, could not be deemed obscene under Comstock unless it was that "form of immorality which has relation to sexual impurity" (451). Obscenity was now tied to one effect: sexually depraving or corrupting young members

of the text's audience. This new definition, the Court reasoned, applied to both writing and images.

The first *Hicklin*-based classification of texts as "obscene"—illegal for production and distribution—appeared a year later with the 1897 case, *Dunlop v. U.S.*, in which Justice Brown, writing on behalf of a unanimous court, upheld an Illinois conviction for mailing and delivery of a newspaper called the *Chicago Dispatch*, containing "obscene, lewd, lascivious, and indecent materials" (165 U.S. 486). At issue before the Supreme Court were numerous technicalities and issues regarding charges given or withheld from the jury, most pertinently whether the lower court's jury had received prejudicial instructions for determining if the questionable materials, consisting "of advertisements by women, soliciting or offering inducements for the visits of men, usually 'refined gentlemen,' to their rooms, sometimes under the disguise of 'Baths' and 'Massage,' and oftener for the mere purpose of acquaintance," could be deemed obscene (501). The jury in the Illinois case was given the following instruction:

"It is your duty to come to a conclusion upon all those facts, and the effect of all those facts, the same as you would conscientiously come to a conclusion upon any other set of facts that would come before you in life... There is no technical rule; there is no limitation in courts of justice, that prevents you from applying to them [the facts and circumstances in evidence] just the same rules of good common sense, subject always, of course, to a conscientious exercise of that common sense, that you would apply to any other subject that came under your consideration, and that demanded your judgment...

Now, what is [are] obscene, lascivious, lewd, or indecent publications is largely a question of your own conscience and your own opinion, but it must come -- before it can be said of such literature or publication -- it must come up to this point: that it must be calculated with the ordinary reader to deprave him, deprave his morals, or lead to impure purposes... It is your duty to ascertain, in the first place, if they are calculated to deprave the morals; if they are calculated to lower that standard which we regard as essential to civilization; if they are calculated to excite those feelings which, in their proper field, are all right, but which, transcending the limits of that proper field, play most of the mischief in the world." (499,500)

The plaintiff (*Dunlop*) protested these instructions on two grounds: he claimed the first instruction regarding the use of "common sense" prejudiced the jury "to depart from the rules of evidence, and to decide the case upon abstract notions of their own, or from facts gathered outside of the testimony"; he also protested that the second instruction defining obscenity directed "the jury that obscene literature was such as tended to deprave the morals of the public in any way whatever, whereas the true test of what constitutes obscene literature is that which tends to deprave the morals in one way only—namely, by exciting sensual desires and lascivious thoughts" (500,501). The Supreme Court ruled that the first instruction had no error in it: "while it is entirely true that the jury are bound to receive the law from the court, and to be guided by its instructions, it by no means follows that they are to abdicate their common sense, or to adopt any different processes of reasoning from those which guide them in the most important matters which concern themselves" (499-500). The Court also found no error in the second instruction, claiming that various levels of context made the instruction clear: "There was no question as to depraving the morals in any other direction than that of impure sexual relations... the words were used by the court in their ordinary signification, and were made more definite by the context and by the character of the publications which had been put in evidence" (501).

The Supreme Court's upholding of the lower court's instructions defining "obscenity" set the standard as that which, according to common sense and strictly in

regards to sexual relations, is “calculated to deprave the morals...calculated to lower that standard which we regard as essential to civilization...calculated to excite those feelings which, in their proper field, are all right, but which, transcending the limits of that proper field, play most of the mischief in the world” (500). Keeping with the *Hicklin* Test’s previous incarnations in *Rosen* and *Swearingen*, this standard clarified that a juror’s commonsense conception of “those whose minds are open to such immoral influences,” namely children, women, and/or the naïve, was the basis for adjudicating potential obscenity. This was held, of course, at a time when, as chapter two outlines, any and all sexual relations outside of the non-miscegenal, vaginal-receptive, and procreative marriage union could be cause for great public and legal punishment. In addition, and in accordance with *Hicklin*, the obscenity of the whole newspaper could be decided by any part under scrutiny. In this instance, small ads soliciting men tanked the *Chicago Dispatch*.

## 2. *Hicklin*’s influence erodes

At the start of the 1900s, a slightly refined *Hicklin* Test was America’s dominant model for adjudicating obscenity. It held that a (presumably white and male) juror, applying common sense (tied to maintaining dominant morality’s interest in maintaining non-miscegenal, vaginal-receptive, and procreative marriage unions), could find any work obscene if any portion of it was such that it would deprave the morals or excite sexual feelings in child-like minds. The *Hicklin* Test’s lack of regard for broader context and differentiated readership received its first (albeit localized) shock in the 1913 case *United States v. Kennerley* (209 Fed. 119 (S.D. N.Y. 1913)). Decided in US District Court for the Southern District of NY, Judge Learned Hand suggested in a dissenting dictum that the *Hicklin* Test, “however consistent it may be with mid-Victorian morals...does not answer to the understanding and morality of the present time” (121). Hand expressed concern regarding *Hicklin*’s use of (assumed) universal metrics of morality as well as its use of a child’s mind as the standard for adjudicating potential influence, writing, “It seems hardly that we are even to-day so lukewarm in our interest in letters or serious discussion as to be content to reduce our treatment of sex to the standard of a child’s library in the supposed interest of a salacious few” (121).

The next (also localized) blow to the *Hicklin* test occurred in the same region’s higher court. In 1933 the US Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit upheld Judge John M. Woolsey of the US District Court for the Southern District of NY’s decision in *United States v. One Book Called Ulysses* (5 F.Supp. 182). Breaking away from the textually atomizing *Hicklin* Test to instead focus on *Ulysses*’ effect on “a person with average sex instincts — what the French would call *l’homme moyen sensuel*” Judge Woolsey sanctioned the importation and sale of James Joyce’s much-acclaimed modernist novel (184). In his decision, Woolsey did not argue against *Hicklin*’s effects-based standard, rather he held a) that the *Hicklin* Test was too rigid and b) that complete works should receive evaluation on a case-by-case basis (185). Upholding Woolsey’s decision in the Second Circuit, Judge Augustus Hand (Learned Hand’s first cousin) wrote, “that numerous long passages in *Ulysses* contain matter that is obscene under any fair definition of the word cannot be gainsaid; yet they are relevant to the purpose of depicting the thoughts of the characters and are introduced to give meaning to the whole,

rather than to promote lust or portray filth for its own sake” (*Entitled Ulysses by James Joyce* 705). This decision was a major turning point in thinking about obscenity; it both eroded the *Hicklin* Test’s reliance on subjects “whose minds are open to such immoral influences,” and it instated an analysis of the relative merits of the complete text as narrative whole into any consideration of its potentially obscene instances (710).

*United States v. Kennerley* and *United States v. One Book Called Ulysses* began to erode the supposedly uniform national application of the *Hicklin* Test. Discussing this history in a 1960 article from *The University of Chicago’s Supreme Court Review*, legal scholar Harry Kalven Jr. writes, “The constitutional problems are primarily of two kinds...the ambiguity of the term ‘obscenity’...[and] toward what dangers was obscenity legislation directed?” (2-3). How does one clearly define obscenity? And what, exactly, is the threat it poses to society? What are its demonstrable, clearly dangerous effects; who are its supposed victims?

Because of the tiered structure of the United States’ legal system, the decision in *Ulysses* was binding under *stare decisis* only for the Second Circuit, or for the states of Connecticut, New York, and Vermont. It could be considered persuasive reasoning by adjacent courts. Though it was not national law, it did present the Court with a particular problem: different regions were using different standards when adjudicating obscenity. The law in Louisiana was not the same as that in New York.

Kalven notes that, “In 1956,” when the Supreme Court made its “first important [contemporary] decision in the obscenity area, *Butler v. Michigan*,” it “appeared to dig deeper the hole in which... [it] would find itself when it faced the constitutional issue directly” (5). In this case dealing with a publication sanctioned under a Michigan statute making it illegal to “publish material tending to incite minors to violent or depraved or immoral acts, manifestly tending to the corruption of the morals of youth,” the court unanimously found the Michigan statute unconstitutional (352 U.S. 380 (1957)). Justice Frankfurter, echoing Learned Hand’s dictum in *Kennerley*, wrote, “the incidence of this enactment is to reduce the adult population of Michigan to reading only what is fit for children” (383-84). Analyzing this, Kalven adduces that *Butler* made it clear that “the average adult is not merely the preferred test audience for materials distributed generally; it is the constitutionally required test audience...the impact on the young has now become irrelevant” (7). This Supreme Court decision, however, only muddled things. Kalven notes that the new problem instantiated by *Butler*, to assess and judge materials “because of their effect on the average adult who is sexually experienced and mature...served to sharpen the constitutional debate that would attend a decision on the constitutionality of general obscenity statutes” (7). With the ever-increasing attenuation of the *Hicklin* Test and the ever-more muddled regional and national logic of how to judge obscenity (how to judge a work with potentially obscene parts, who exactly obscenity statutes sought to protect, and how to determine the scope of the adjudicator) the stage was set for the Supreme Court to deliver a new national standard.

## **B. Roth to Redrup: Unified Work/Inconsistent Metrics (1957-1967)**

Films were brought back into the fray of First Amendment Protection four years prior to *Butler* with the 1952 Supreme Court decision, *Joseph Burstyn, Inc. v. Wilson*, also known as the “Miracle Decision” (343 U.S. 495). In this case, the U.S. Supreme

Court unanimously overruled its 1915 decision in *Mutual Film Corporation v. Industrial Commission of Ohio*, holding that motion pictures were entitled to First Amendment protection. This arose because the New York State Board of Regents sought to ban “The Miracle,” a short film that was one half of *L'Amore* (1948), an anthology film directed by Roberto Rossellini. The Regents’ ban was grounded on the fact that Rossellini’s film, about a peasant woman (Anna Magnani) who believes herself the Virgin Mary, was both blasphemous and damaging to women. This Court decision not only brought films back under First Amendment protection by effectively making the claim that film was an art form, it also ended blasphemy laws—weakening the ability of moral watchdog groups to censor supposedly blasphemous texts. This proved to be the first in a series of major blows to the Motion Picture Production Code. And it brought films back under the dominance of First Amendment protection, as will be shown, right before the Supreme Court both overhauled its now-confusing and confused obscenity standard and tied issues of obscenity to the First Amendment.

In a display of the contemporary zeitgeist, Duke University School of Law’s journal of *Law and Contemporary Problems*’ Autumn of 1955 volume was dedicated to the topic “Obscenity and the Arts.” In his introductory remarks, associate editor Melvin G. Shimm writes, “perhaps the heaviest fire, apart from that drawn by restraints ‘political’ in nature, has been directed at those qualifications of freedom imposed in the name of public morals...perhaps most dramatically and significantly seen in those instances where artists adopting unconventional modes of expression, albeit for the attainment of valid objectives, have collided with certain sexual taboos” (530-531). Showing a great amount of foresight and foreshadowing Harry Kalven Jr.’s previously quoted critique of obscenity regulation, he asks, “Assuming that there is general agreement that obscenity should be suppressed, the basic problem of definition presents itself: What is obscene? Are there any universally absolute concepts and standards? Are there any absolutes even within a given culture at all times and places? At the same time and place? Or, is one man’s sacred cow rather another’s sacrilege?” (532).

Shimm’s (and Kalven’s) questions regarding defining obscenity and adjudicating it will present themselves in numerous forms in the following set of cases. The Supreme Court, incapable of providing any stable answer, will repeatedly retool its metric defining obscenity and assessing/proving its threat. This reconfiguring takes place against several broad cultural trends: arguments over the need for increased individual privacy, social upheavals in civil rights, the ever-changing landscape of what can be considered art,<sup>7</sup> the rise of statistical analysis, issues of the dividing line between states’ rights and national law, and the influential publication of both the Kinsey and the Masters & Johnson sexological studies (Lewis 237). Over the course of the decade 1957-1967 three major trends emerge as the Supreme Court abandons the *Hicklin* Test: 1) an increasing insistence upon assessing the work as speech occurring in a textual, contextual, and socio-narrative entirety, 2) an ever more erratic, personally determined metric for what can the “average adult” would consider obscene—one tied, seemingly, to autonomic sexual response, and 3) an increasing insistence on statistically quantifiable proof of damage. All three of these trends enlarge the *panoptic* logic of obscenity law. They are all founded in the increased observation of individuals and their behavior over time. This individual is increasingly understood via some form of “human science” (psychiatry, psychology, sociology) and its construction of a “normal” adult. And they are

fundamentally invested in tying actions to mentalities and narrativizing their objects (both the potentially obscene work and the harm it might cause).

### 1. *Roth* and the Literary Merit Defense

In *Roth v. United States* (354 U.S. 476 (1957)), consolidated with *Alberts v. California*, the Supreme Court finally rejected the *Hicklin* Test altogether and supplanted it with a new measure, similar to that of the American Law Institute's Model Penal Code for obscenity: "whether to the average person, applying contemporary community standards, the dominant theme of the material, taken as a whole, appeals to the prurient interest" (489). Both cases dealt with publishers using the mail to distribute erotic images and text. Writing for the Court in a 7-2 decision upholding the convictions, Justice Brennan sought to set obscenity considerations aside for serious works of art that depicted nudity and/or sex but should receive protection under the First Amendment. Defining obscenity as "material which deals with sex in a manner appealing to prurient interest . . . having a tendency to excite lustful thoughts [or] as [a] shameful and morbid interest in sex" (476). Brennan noted that "all ideas having even the slightest redeeming social importance - unorthodox ideas, controversial ideas, even ideas hateful to the prevailing climate of opinion - have the full protection of the guaranties, unless excludable because they encroach upon the limited area of more important interests; but implicit in the history of the First Amendment is the rejection of obscenity as utterly without redeeming social importance" (476).

*Roth* was the first direct constitutional challenge to obscenity law. Prior to this case, according to philosopher Susan Dwyer's *The Problem of Pornography*, "obscenity cases were not taken to implicate the First Amendment, because it was believed that obscenity was not *prima facie* protected by that amendment. The Court in *Roth* reaffirms this view, and ruled that both state and federal provisions concerning obscenity were constitutional" (124). Additionally, *Roth* introduced the term "'hard core'" to the Court's lexicon. Though Brennan's decision for the majority stated that items deemed obscene were not protected under the First Amendment, Justices Hugo Black and William O. Douglas both dissented, arguing that even obscene materials warranted First Amendment protection (*Roth* 476). Douglas echoes the Hands when he writes, "Any test that turns on what is offensive to the community's standards is too loose...it creates a regime where, in the battle between the literati and the Philistines, the Philistines are certain to win" (512).

The *Roth* decision fundamentally shifted the parameters of the *Hicklin* Test. Instead of adjudicating a work based upon isolated passages and their potential effect on an easily-influenced minor, the new national standard established in *Roth* judged work as a whole, looking for dominant themes and their effects on the mind of an average (read: mature or Adult) citizen applying contemporary community standards. This shifted a) the "ideal" mentality of the material's potential interlocutor, b) the geographic locus from which the standard for obscenity could be drawn, c) the amount of the questionable text that had to be considered, and d) the manner in which it was assessed in order to deem it obscene. If a work was not found obscene, it was now also assumed to have protection under the First Amendment. Contemporary to this change in American law was the instantiation of the 1959 Obscene Publications Act in Britain. This act similarly eliminated the *Hicklin*/Cockburn standard, stating that an item could be deemed obscene

if a) its effect “taken as a whole” was b) “such as to tend to deprave and corrupt persons who are likely, having regard to all relevant circumstances,” to encounter it (Hyde 172). In both countries, the defendant was now allowed to defend the work at issue by arguing that, as a whole, it bore literary or other merits.<sup>8</sup> Where the previous standard allowed for censorship based upon objectionable elements and their effects on naïve audiences, the new American and British standards required the adjudication of whole works and their roles within a broader society. These new standards required the increased observation of individuals and their behavior via some form of “human science” (psychiatry, psychology, sociology) in order to construct a concept of a “normal” adult. And, following this, they necessitated tying texts to these broader conceptions of “normal” via defense of their literary and other merits. This “merit,” in the popular understanding of textual worth since Aristotle, has been linked to the presence of plotted narrative.

The new *Roth* standard was explicitly tied to film in the 1964 case *Jacobellis v. Ohio* (378 U.S. 184 (1964)). This case, concerning whether the state of Ohio could ban Louis Malle’s *Les Amants* (1958), was the first to directly assess film under the *Roth* standard, and it managed to do so awkwardly: there were four different opinions from the majority, and none of these garnered the support of more than two justices. In addition, there were two dissenting opinions. Justice William J. Brennan, joined only by Justice Arthur Goldberg, wrote the Court’s judgment. In his opinion, Brennan added four clarifications to the *Roth* standard: 1) a work cannot be proscribed unless it is utterly without redeeming social importance; 2) there is no weighing of social importance against prurient appeal when making obscenity decisions; 3) proscribed material “must be found to go substantially beyond customary limits of candor in description or representation”; and 4) “contemporary community standards” applied to obscenity “are not those of the particular local community from which the case arises, but those of the Nation as a whole” (184). Brennan’s redressing of “community standards” ties back to Justice Learned Hand’s concerns as raised in *Kennerley*; it is moot whether Hand meant exactly what Brennan proposed in *Jacobellis*. In his famous concurring opinion Justice Potter Stewart claimed the First Amendment protects all obscenity except so-called ““hard core”” pornography. Stewart asserted the film at issue did not fall under the ““hard core”” umbrella because it was not, at first view, patently “hard core”. He famously concluded, “I shall not today attempt further to define the kinds of material I understand to be embraced within that shorthand description; and perhaps I could never succeed in intelligibly doing so...I know it when I see it, and the motion picture involved in this case is not that” (197).<sup>9</sup> Chief Justice Earl Warren and Justice Tom Clark, centrists on issues of social and civil liberties, dissented. Warren (with Clark concurring) specifically took issue with Brennan’s attempt to formulate a national standard via his interpellation of Hand, writing, “communities throughout the Nation are, in fact, diverse, and it must be remembered that, in cases such as this one, the Court is confronted with the task of reconciling conflicting rights of diverse communities within our society and of individuals” (200).

At issue in the numerous *Jacobellis* opinions is the opacity of the *Roth* standard, the differentiation between local and federal concerns when assessing “community standards,” and the point at which a work can be deemed censorable given *Roth*’s insistence upon looking at the text in its entirety via any number of metrics adjudicating



worth. These fissures, already apparent in the overlapping but inconsistent decisions in *Jacobellis*, were destined to grow evermore pressing.

Published the same year Justice Potter Stewart claimed, “I know it when I see it,” H. Montgomery Hyde’s 1964 study, *A History of Pornography*, concludes with chapters devoted to nineteenth- and twentieth-century issues of law and censorship.<sup>10</sup> Hyde concludes his study by claiming that, despite the fact that “much pornography is badly written, poorly produced, and admittedly of little or no literary merit,” it “must always have some value for the anthropologists and sociologists” (207). By framing pornography within a broad, if disparate, history, Hyde concludes on the hope that “with a rational system of sex education and hygiene...the worthless and unaesthetic pornographic product, which can only be productive of a sense of nausea and disgust, must disappear...leaving only what is well-written and aesthetically satisfying” (207). This “well-written and aesthetically satisfying” pornography is, he claims, “gradually winning common acceptance” with “changing social attitudes” (207).

Hyde’s work, perhaps in keeping with its zeitgeist, pledges allegiance to the utopic possibility of an aesthetically satisfying written pornography that tickles the mind as well as the body. Oddly enough, however, the very logic of his conclusion is at odds with itself. By virtue of casting the pornographic as something with a defined history and politics, Hyde begins to place it within broader cultural considerations—opening the door for one to argue that, even if lacking so-called literary merit and even if only productive of nausea and disgust,<sup>11</sup> pornography still holds some form of useful cultural capital...if only in its use value for anthropologists, sociologists, and sexologists. This blind spot—that something offensive is, by virtue of its ability to offend, of value—appears to structure the core of Brennan’s somewhat paradoxical claims in the *Roth* decision that “material which deals with sex in a manner appealing to prurient interest . . . having a tendency to excite lustful thoughts [or] as [a] shameful and morbid interest in sex” are censorable, despite the fact that “all ideas having even the slightest redeeming social importance - unorthodox ideas, controversial ideas, even ideas hateful to the prevailing climate of opinion - have the full protection of the guaranties.” The argument that any cultural product can be without redeeming qualities is, at best, a specious artifact of Hyde and Brennan’s era; it assumes the possibility a cultural product can exist in such a manner that it solicits a zero degree of mental signification, rather manifesting all its textual energies in eliciting supposedly lesser, bodily responses. Additionally, despite the twentieth century proliferation of image-making technology, Hyde’s work is very little concerned with visual pornography. In fact, parsing Hyde’s warnings regarding “the worthless and unaesthetic pornographic,” the reader is led to believe that this is something akin to Justice Stewart Potter’s contemporary designation of ““hard core”” with one variation: rather than solely knowing it upon sight, Hyde’s pornographic continuously elicits a similarly autonomic emotional/physical response over the course of one’s interaction with it. Both Justice Potter’s *Jacobellis* decision and Hyde’s *A History of Pornography* appear to tie literary merit to the operations of the mind. In their writings, it appears that censorable, obscene works bypass the mind and affect the body. Furthermore, the revisions to the *Roth* standard made in *Jacobellis* further tie narrative plotting to literary merit and social importance. Censorable material must be utterly without redeeming social importance, and it “must be found to go substantially beyond customary limits of candor in description or representation” (*Jacobellis* 184). Both

redeeming social importance and these customary standards are based upon a loose concept of an adult applying national community standards. Again, these moves tend to enlarge the *panoptic* logic of obscenity law. They are all founded in the increased observation of individuals and their behavior over time in order to form, via some form of “human science” (psychiatry, psychology, sociology), a construction of a “normal” American adult. At this broad level, understanding “merit” also requires expert testimony. This being said, in popular understanding of textual worth since Aristotle (read: “normal” national community standards in America to this day), “merit” has been linked to the presence of narrative plotting.

## 2. *Memoirs* and Narrative as Literary Merit

This linking of “merit” to narrative plotting comes to the fore in the 1966 case *Memoirs v. Massachusetts* (383 U.S. 413). In *Memoirs* the Supreme Court was once again tasked with clarifying *Roth*. In this case, the work at issue was a 1963 G.P. Putnam and Sons reissue of John Cleland’s *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure*, commonly known as *Fanny Hill*. First published in England in two volumes (1748 and 1749), the epistolary novel tells the story of a destitute orphan, Fanny Hill, who seduces her way into the patronage and eventual ownership of a wealthy man’s estate. Though *Memoirs* could be described, as Justice Tom Clark did in his dissenting opinion, as “nothing more than a series of minutely and vividly described sexual episodes”; it possesses one small extra: it has an overarching plot (445). This plot is precisely what came to be at issue in the Putnam trial. According to Jon Lewis, “[Charles] Rembar,” the famed lawyer hired by Putnam to defend the book in New York, New Jersey, and Massachusetts, “attempted to focus attention away from the specific content of the book, which was fairly shocking...instead he insisted that the only issue of relevance was whether or not, according to the *Roth* standard, the book as a whole could be considered obscene” (*Hollywood* 245). Rembar placed particular emphasis on the text from *Roth* holding that “a book cannot be proscribed as obscene unless found to be utterly without redeeming social value,” holding that *Fanny Hill* had redeeming social value and, in support of this, enlisting a litany of expert witnesses and literary critics from institutions such as Harvard, MIT, and Rutgers to speak on the book’s behalf (245). Lower courts split in their decisions; eight judges ruled against the book and seven ruled for it before the Supreme Court decided to hear the Massachusetts appeal.

The Court once again split messily in its decision, voting six-to-three to overturn the Massachusetts ban, but producing five separate decisions, two in support of the majority and three (Clark, Harlan, and White) in dissent. Writing for the Majority (and joined by Justices Fortas and Chief Justice Warren), Brennan called for a national obscenity standard that combined *Roth* and *Jacobellis* into a “coherent” test (*Memoirs*). For a book to be obscene, Brennan stipulated it must, 1) taken as a whole, appeal to a prurient interest in sex; he also stated the material 2) must be “patently offensive because it affronts contemporary community standards” of the nation, and 3) the material must be utterly without redeeming social value (413). Brennan claimed that, despite what one thought about *Memoirs*’ position relative the first two planks, it was proven via expert testimony that it was not without redeeming social value (413).

Justice Clark’s dissent took specific issue with the book’s plot, arguing that it was nothing more than window dressing for obscenity. “There are some short transitory

passages between the various sexual episodes,” he notes, “but, for the most part, they only set the scene and identify participants for the next orgy, or make smutty reference and comparison to past episodes” (440). Offering statistical sociological evidence to counter that obscenity was linked to criminal conduct, Clark sought to utilize the twin tools of statistical sociology and absence of narrative to diminish the book’s cultural importance as well as its literary merit (441). Echoing Aristotle’s devaluation of “episodic” plotting in *Poetics*, it appears that Clark is setting up a proportionally direct relationship between the presence of causal narrative momentum, tight plotting, literary merit, and redeeming social worth. Additionally, by claiming this link, Clark devalues sexual spectacle as both without inherently redeeming qualities and without inherent narrative momentum. On the other side and in arguing the work’s worth, both Rembar and the various expert witnesses he presented attempted to bring sexual spectacle under the purview of *Memoirs*’ literary merit as primarily understood via its narrative. In debating *Fanny Hill*, both sides made direct reference to the novel’s literary merit as shown via the mechanics of its narrative plotting.

### 3. *Redrup* and Average People Applying Community Standards

As Steven J. Gertz writes in *Sin-A-Rama*, “Suddenly [after the *Memoirs v. Massachusetts* case], community standards... were trumped by any value whatsoever” (27). Gertz continues, claiming that “this was an epochal event, heralding nothing less than the democratization of reading in this country, for this kind of literature had prior been almost exclusively available to the wealthy or well-connected only, printed in small editions and generally cost-prohibitive for the average citizen” (27). This issue of literature’s merit came before the Supreme Court once again in the decisive case of *Redrup v. New York* (386 U.S. 767). Robert Redrup, a clerk at a New York City newsstand, was arrested for selling an undercover policeman two pulp paperbacks, *Lust Pool* and *Shame Agent*. At the Supreme Court level, the 7-2 decision to overturn Redrup’s conviction was again split and confusing. Writing for the majority and citing *Memoirs* and *Roth*, Potter Stewart described the splits as follows:

Two members of the Court have consistently adhered to the view that a State is utterly without power to suppress, control, or punish the distribution of any writings or pictures upon the ground of their ‘obscenity.’ A third has held to the opinion that a State’s power in this area is narrowly limited to a distinct and clearly identifiable class of material. Others have subscribed to a not dissimilar standard, holding that a State may not constitutionally inhibit the distribution of literary material as obscene unless ‘(a) the dominant theme of the material, taken as a whole appeals to a prurient interest in sex; (b) the material is patently offensive because it affronts contemporary community standards relating to the description or representation of sexual matters, and (c) the material is utterly without redeeming social value,’ emphasizing that the ‘three elements must coalesce,’ and that no such material can ‘be proscribed unless it is found to be utterly without redeeming social value.’ Another Justice has not viewed the ‘social value’ element as an independent factor in the judgment of obscenity (770-771)

Though Justice Potter Stewart’s opinion notes that, “whichever of these constitutional views is brought to bear upon the cases before us, it is clear that the judgments [against Redrup] cannot stand,” the reason why is left unclear (771). Stewart’s opinion affirmed Brennan’s three-pronged test as delivered in *Memoirs*, adding two more criteria: 1) proscribing “hard core” (still undefined beyond “I know it when I see it”), and 2) introducing a so-called “variable yardstick” affirming states’ rights to make and

enforce statutes protecting minors from certain materials and protecting “unwilling individuals” from “assault” by panderers while also not extending the full right to ban materials to states (773).

*Redrup* effectively ended the censorship of written fiction, and it also effectively stopped states from banning the sale of literature not foisted upon unwilling recipients. Additionally, in its attempts to clarify the *Roth* standard as it had permuted through both *Jacobellis* and *Memoirs*, *Redrup* “made obscenity a matter of specific content viewed in context” of broader textual and social concerns, putting “the Court in the unhappy position of evaluating each obscenity ban on an individual basis” (Lewis 250-51). Constitutional law scholars James Foster and Susan Leeson have noted of *Redrup* that, “by 1967, the Justices could do no more than declare that a finding of obscenity would depend on the independent determination of each Justice employing his own theory of what constituted obscenity” (12). Foster and Leeson observe that, “if the *Roth* decision created uncertainty for state and lower federal courts, the *Redrup* approach created virtual chaos” (12).

Because prosecution of obscenity required proving the work without merit (as understood via some concept of average national community standards), both prosecution and defense increasingly turned to expert testimony. These scholars, culled from disparate fields, would present various arguments for and against the materials at hand. These arguments, as in *Memoirs*, commonly did two things: they utilized a logic promoting unified narrative plotting as better and different than discrete spectacle, and they deployed some measure of “human science” (psychiatry, psychology, sociology) to explicate the work’s effects on its audience. The cacophonous chaos of scholars and experts post-*Redrup* resulted in each Justice working as a *bricoleur*, stitching together his own broad theory of what constituted national community standards, literary thematics, literary merit, and obscenity from the various competing expert testimonies presented. In the end, as in *Memoirs*, the presence of an overarching narrative plot that tied together the material’s discrete elements increasingly came to operate as shorthand for the presence of thematics, literary merit, and redeeming social value.

### **C. *Ginsberg* and The MPAA Rating System: X’s Open Door (1968)**

On 22 April 1968, the Supreme Court decided *Ginsberg v. New York* (390 U.S. 629). This case was brought against a shopkeeper and his wife who “willfully” sold “girlie” magazines to two 16 year-olds (629). Both sides agreed these materials did not meet the *Roth/Redrup* standard for obscenity, but there was disagreement as to whether their sale could still be restricted under a New York statute that “prohibits the sale to minors under 17 years of age of material defined to be obscene on the basis of its appeal to them, whether or not it would be obscene to adults” (631). The majority decided that, though New York could not ban the sales of these materials to adults, it could operate so-called “variable obscenity” standards to protect minors from accessing sexually suggestive materials (640).

The concept of “variable obscenity” was developed by William Lockhart & Robert McClure in their 1960 article, “Censorship of Obscenity: The Developing Constitutional Standards.” In it, the authors write: “Variable obscenity... furnishes a useful analytical tool for dealing with the problem of denying adolescents access to

material aimed at a primary audience of sexually mature adults. For variable obscenity focuses attention upon the makeup of primary and peripheral audiences in varying circumstances, and provides a reasonably satisfactory means for delineating the obscene in each circumstance" (85). Under "variable obscenity" standards, materials in question are evaluated not only for their content but also in context of their distribution and state interests in protecting potential audiences (80). The basic principle underlining "variable obscenity" is that the determination of obscenity can only be made in terms of the material's distribution, and that the state can judge the purpose of the distributor, the manner of distribution, and the audience/vendors to whom the material is distributed (68-88).

Justice Douglas, writing the dissent in *Ginsberg*, found great fault in this. Referring at length to Anthony Comstock's crusade against obscenity, Douglas writes, "As I read the First Amendment, it was designed to keep the state and the hands of all state officials off the printing presses of America and off the distribution systems for all printed literature. Anthony Comstock wanted it the other way; he indeed put the police and prosecutor in the middle of this publishing business. I think it would require a constitutional amendment to achieve that result" (*Ginsberg* 655). Though admitting that the materials sold to the minors could be considered harmful, Douglas finds the First Amendment protection afforded them uncontrovertibly secure, and expresses concern that "variable obscenity" standards can be used to delimit anything (653-55). Claiming that any definition of obscenity is highly subjective and impossible to agree upon, Douglas laments, "Today, this Court sits as the Nation's board of censors...I do not know of any group in the country less qualified, first, to know what obscenity is when they see it, and second, to have any considered judgment as to what the deleterious or beneficial impact of a particular publication may be on minds either young or old" (656).

Following the *Ginsberg* decision, the MPAA, on 1 November 1968 and under the supervision of its president, Jack Valenti; the National Association of Theater Owners (NATO); and the International Film Importers & Distributors of America (IFIDA) put a new self-auditing, "variable" rating system into effect. This came about in response to several factors: declining revenues, studios erratically nudging at long-held PCA content boundaries, broad sociopolitical unrest, competition from racier foreign fare, and, as has been shown following *Ginsberg*, shifting legal precedence (Lewis 135-147). This system modified the MPAA's 1966 division between unlabeled/general and "SMA" (Suggested for Mature Audience) films by creating four "variable" category designations, "G," "M," "R," and "X," delimiting who can and should see particular films. This content-based classification system was originally going to have only three ratings (G, M, and R) with the intention of allowing parents to accompany children to any film they choose. However, at the urging of the NATO, the most financially vulnerable group in any community-specific legal pushback, an adults-only category (X) was created. These categories were defined as follows:

G: General audiences - all ages admitted

M: Mature audiences - parental discretion advised, but all ages admitted.

R: Restricted - children under 16 not admitted without an accompanying parent or adult guardian.

X: Children under 17 will not be admitted

The "X" rating was not an MPAA trademark: any producer not submitting a movie for MPAA rating could self-apply the "X" rating (or any other symbol or description that was not an MPAA trademark) (*Voluntary Movie Rating*).

Following Foucault's argument that judicial practices are "one of the forms by which our society defined types of subjectivity, forms of knowledge, and, consequently, relations between man and truth which deserve to be studied," we see in the cases surveyed two major movements in American jurisprudence's conception of obscenity (*Power* 4). First, we witness a variegation of the text's potential audience. Moving from the "Young Person" of the *Hicklin* standard to the "average" citizen of the *Roth* standard, we end in 1968 with an acknowledgment of different types of audiences in *Ginsberg's* use of "variable obscenity." Second, these cases increasingly tether textual merit to textual unity (as indicated by narrative plotting). Where *Hicklin* allowed for the censoring of text for any part of its content, the *Roth* standard looked to the "dominant theme of the material taken as a whole." In *Memoirs*, Justice Clark's logic indicates there is a proportional relationship between narrative coherence and merit.

Both of these movements, from "Young Persons" to "average" citizens applying "contemporary community standards" and from censoring for offensive content to searching for a "dominant theme of the material taken as a whole," shifted the law towards what Foucault would term an *examination*-based logic for adjudicating obscenity. In case after case, the Court played host to witnesses from arts and sciences testifying for or against the work and its merit—whether "it was organized around the norm, in terms of what was normal or not, correct or not" (59). Though the language of the law read as if obscenity exists outside of meaning, the spirit of its application was consistent with the logic of *examination*. The Justices were tasked with supervising and examining works on a case-by-case basis (constant supervision), and their decisions were organized around considerations of a work's "dominant theme" and "redeeming social value" as influenced by other branches of human inquiry (policing the norm).

In the second chapter we will examine how "variable obscenity" and the "X" rating threw the door wide open for "'hard core'" to make its move into theatrical exhibition. Before doing this, I'll first turn to the other major Foucaultian pole: "human sciences" (as represented by the metonym sexology).

### **III. SEXOLOGY 101: The Push to Scripting**

If law presents one major intertextual pole against which one can understand the emergence of filmed narrative pornography, another must be sexology. Sexology, or the study of human sexuality and sexual pleasure, is an interdisciplinary field of research into human sexual interests, behaviors, and functions. Sexology has interrogated, enumerated, and enlarged the public's understanding of human sexuality. Sexology has both pushed and policed the bounds of public discourse, medical understanding of behavior and identity, and, in the end, aesthetic representations of sex and sexuality.<sup>12</sup>

For this section, I want to explore two things. First, I want to explore how the following sexological writings relate to and reveal the episteme within which they come into being. To do this, as I did in the previous section on jurisprudence, I will follow a Foucaultian approach and read the thinkers presented as metonymous products of their

given moment's episteme. Second, I will seek to discern, if possible, how these sexologists understand the arc of sexual encounters, or how they comprehend what people actually do and in what order people do these things. We will once again find a trend towards *examination* and *panopticism*. Sexology, a part of the broader the "human sciences," aids and abets *panopticism* by annexing information about individuals into a discursive regime founded, as we saw in the previous section's discussion of law, on policing the norm—maintaining an average person (or set of types) who applies average community standards to expectable life choices that keep with the spirit of the law. The sexologists we encounter will, in their observations of individuals and their behavior, be a part of that larger project. And, parallel to what we witnessed in the previous section, these sexologists will become increasingly focused at the nexus between the mind and the body inasmuch as it is indicative of some form of narrative plotting.

I start by turning to contemporary analyses of early thinking on sex, gender and sexuality. From there, I turn to Freud inasmuch as he represents the first of three major epistemological moments in 20<sup>th</sup> century sexology. It is my aim to outline how 20<sup>th</sup> century sexology undertook a parallel shift to that I have shown in American obscenity jurisprudence. As was shown in the previous section, the law moved from atomized early-20<sup>th</sup>-century considerations of both text and audience to something more holistic, contextual, and narrative-focused in the late 60s. In order to make this move, the law had to posit an "average person" who applies "contemporary community standards" in order to assess a work's "dominant thematic." Sexology treads a parallel path, moving from the discarnate, ideational early-20<sup>th</sup>-century model of Freud to the decorticated and statistical midcentury models of both Kinsey and Masters & Johnson before landing on the social constructivist, narrative and plot-minded ground presented by John H. Gagnon and William Simon in their groundbreaking 1973 anthology, *Sexual Conduct: The Social Sources of Human Sexuality*. This collection, some chapters of which were in draft as early as 1965, proved to be a game-changer in the sociology of sexuality, moving the field past noted problems in the preceding scholars' otherwise pathbreaking work towards a bodily-narrative-focused (social constructivist) approach to sexology (Simon & Gagnon xxiii).

Because their work is contemporary to the both the *Memoirs, Redrup*, and *Ginsberg* decisions—the decisions that established narrative as an indicator of merit, individuated the Justice's application of "average person applying contemporary community standards," and established variable obscenity—as well as the emergence of what I am terming feature-length, narrative pornography's *performatistic screen*, Gagnon and Simon serve as my dominant hermeneutical frame. In order to ascertain the episteme as it existed in the late sixties-to-early seventies, I will utilize their analysis of what came before in order to establish where, exactly, sexology was in this crucial late sixties/early seventies pivot to corporeal narrative.

### **A. Linking Power/Knowledge/Pleasure in Sexology**

Taking a step back before moving into analysis of Freud, Kinsey, Masters & Johnson, and Simon & Gagnon, one immediately notices pleasure—particularly sexual pleasure—has long been linked to knowledge. Aristotle suggests as much when he opens Book 1 of *Metaphysics*, "All human beings by nature desire to know. A sign of this is our

liking for the senses” (*Ancient Greek* 690). In Aristotle’s formulation, pleasure is subjective whereas knowledge is objective. Pleasure is individual, and knowledge is communicable. Much of Western epistemology deals with slippages and inconsistencies in this formulation. In Aristotelian philosophy, the basic unit of logic’s pleasurable production of knowledge is the syllogism, or the inference of a concept from two or more preceding ones. Aristotle defines it in *Prior Analytics* as “a discourse in which certain (specific) things having been supposed, something different from the things supposed results of necessity because these things are so” (24b18–20). To infer is to know more, and knowledge, being communicable to others, is a form of cultural power. Aristotle’s syllogistic logic has served as bedrock of deductive reasoning in philosophy, mathematics, and science.

Historian Michel Foucault, in his groundbreaking 1976 work, *The History of Sexuality Volume 1: An Introduction*, also studies the relationship between knowledge, pleasure, and power. His work directly links these to knowledge of sex and sexuality (or bodily pleasure). Foucault locates a rift in the ways sexuality was understood before and after the late 17<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>13</sup> Contrary to what he terms the “*repressive hypothesis*,” the widespread belief among 20<sup>th</sup>-century westerners that sexuality and the open discussion of sex was repressed during the late 17<sup>th</sup> to early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries and that political liberation can only be achieved via sexual liberation, Foucault argues the 18<sup>th</sup> century witnessed an increase in both the confession and study of sexuality, or what he terms an “*incitement to discourse*.” In the earlier era, Foucault writes, “three major explicit codes...governed sexual practices: canonical law, the Christian pastoral, and civil law,” and “they were all centered on matrimonial relations,” because, “the marriage relation was the most intense focus of constraints; it was spoken of more than anything else; more than any other relation, it was required to give detailed accounting of itself” (37). Marriage, in this account, is the procreative (of children, social stability, and cultural heritage) union between a man and a woman. It is studied in great depth because it is considered the pleasurable goal of all things. Other types of sexuality (as understood by our current standards), Foucault argues, “remained a good deal more confused,” because “these different codes did not make a clear distinction between violations of the rules of marriage and deviations with respect to genitility...breaking the rules of marriage or seeking strange pleasures brought an equal measure of condemnation” (37-38). In this earlier model, marriage was an object of inquiry; all else was condemned equally for standing outside the inquiring gaze of canonical law, the Christian pastoral, and civil law.

In the latter era, something different occurs. Foucault argues that “discursive explosion of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries caused this system centered on ‘legitimate alliance’ to undergo major modifications”: the first is “a centrifugal movement with respect to heterosexual monogamy”; concurrent to this, he writes, “it was time for all these figures, scarcely noticed in the past, to step forward and speak, to make the difficult confession of what they were” (38-39). This double motion—the entrenching of reproductive heterosexual monogamy as “normal” and the simultaneous studies of, and confessions from, those deemed “perverse”—created, in Foucault’s famous wording, “perpetual spirals of power and pleasure” as supposedly repressed sexualities expressed themselves and solidified as both confessing subjects and objects of inquiry (45). Foucault describes this new *panoptic* structure and its major *examination* agents as follows: “the medical examination, the psychiatric investigation, the pedagogical report,



and family controls”; though “they may have the over-all and apparent objective of saying no to all wayward or unproductive sexualities,” they in fact “function as mechanisms with a double impetus: pleasure and power...pleasure that comes of exercising a power that questions, monitors, watches, spies, searches out, palpates, brings to light; and, on the other hand, the pleasure that kindles at having to evade this power, flee from it, fool it, or travesty it” (45). This pleasure in knowledge is experienced by those studying sexuality as much as it is by the so-called “perverted.” Foucault writes, “it is through the isolation, intensification, and consolidation of peripheral sexualities that the relations of power to sex and pleasure branched out and multiplied, measured the body and penetrated modes of conduct” (48). Accompanying this spiraling fusion of knowledge, of pleasure, and of pleasure in knowledge, “scattered sexualities rigidified, became stuck to an age, a place, a type of practice” (48). In this manner, individual understanding of subjective pleasure is abstracted to objective knowledge—to indices of category, type, species, or object relation.<sup>14</sup>

This linking of knowledge, pleasure, and power in sexological *examination* aids and abets *panopticism* by annexing information about pleasures and solidifying them as identities and types that can be controlled or made useful. In this new discursive regime, one must fully admit one’s pleasures to give an account of oneself. And, in a recursive move, this pleasure one admits has probably already been forged to conform to knowledge of identities and types. Sexology, the study of human sexuality and sexual pleasure, becomes increasingly focused at unpacking this nexus between the mind and the body inasmuch as it is indicative of identity. This nexus, the object of sexological *examination*, is increasingly understood as something akin to a form of narrative plotting.

## 1. The One-Sex Model

In his landmark 1992 historiography, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud*, Thomas Laqueur extends Foucault’s basic argument about the social construction of identity within matrices of pleasure and knowledge to epistemologies of gender and sex. Like Foucault did with sexuality, Laqueur locates a major shift in philosophical and scientific conceptions of anatomy and desire in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. And, like Foucault did, Laqueur links these shifting epistemologies of gender and sex to considerations of bodily pleasure that necessitate increasing *examination* of the individual’s personal narrative.

Prior to the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Laqueur argues, a *one-flesh* or *one-sex* theory dominated Greek through Renaissance discourses. Though physical differences between men and women were acknowledged, women were essentially thought men turned outside in, and both were thought isomorphic variations on one basic flesh. Laqueur cites Galen’s (c. 130-200) suggestion to his readers, “think first, please, of the man’s [external genitalia] turned in and extending inward between the rectum and the bladder,” because, “if this should happen, the scrotum would necessarily take the place of the uterus with the testes lying outside, next to it on either side” (24). In the one-sex model, the vagina was considered an inverted penis, the labia equivalent to foreskin, the uterus the scrotum, and the ovaries the testicles (4). Women were considered less perfect variations of men; both were thought to share the same basic humors, but the women were a lesser, weaker variation of a masculine ideal (35). In this logic, sex and gender were not connected.

Because both men and women were seen as variations of one basic flesh, their genders are external indices of slight internal variations. Gender inheres not in absolutely different bodies, but in the quantity, quality, and location of desire-producing and indicating humors. In the most instructive example, seminal fluid, issues such as amount present, degrees of warmth or coolness (warmth being superior to cool), and location of the fluid dictate gender. Laqueur describes the logic of Aristotle, “‘Semen’ in this economy of pleasure is not only a generative substance but also, through its specific action on the genitals, one of the causes of libido” (44).

Importantly, and justified by recourse to the aforementioned logic regarding humors, in the “one-flesh theory” it was strongly believed that both the male and female needed to achieve orgasm in order to conceive. Laqueur writes of the story of Tiresias in Ovid’s *Metamorphosis*, “Though differing perhaps in nuance, orgasm is orgasm in the one-flesh body” (44). Laqueur clarifies this, writing that “the fact that women had gonads like men, that they had sexual desires, that they generally produced fluid during intercourse and presumably showed signs of ‘delight and concussion,’ all confirmed the orgasm/conception link” (99-100). Women’s sexual response was understood inasmuch as it was an isomorphic mirror of man’s. Though their seminal fluid was of a different quality, it was still considered a necessary product of (and for) pleasure. Because of this isomorphic logic, what we would now term heterosexual and homosexual penetrative sexuality was mapped within the binary of male-active and female-passive. Male homosexuality—defined exclusively in Laqueur’s work on this era as men engaging in anal sex—was viewed as one active, male-gendered partner engaging with a passive, female-gendered partner. Laqueur writes, “the only ancient text to discuss the physical causes of passive homosexuality—the unnatural desire of the male to play the socially inferior role of woman by offering his anus for penetration—attributes it to both an excess of semen and to a congenital defect that shunts this excess to an inappropriate orifice, the anus, instead of allowing it to simply build up in the proper male organ” (44).

In this one-sex model, women and anally passive gay men were understood as isomorphic men. Because of this, their sexual pleasures were considered isomorphic mirrors of a man’s pleasure. This stabilized them within a set system of knowledge and power. As this system of tight isomorphism shifts, sexological *examination* becomes increasingly important, because it can unpack and articulate the nexus between the mind, the body, pleasure, and identity as it comes to define varied types of people.

## 2. The Two-Sex Model

In the 18<sup>th</sup> century this one-flesh logic gave way to what Laqueur terms a *two-flesh* or *two-sex* theory. “Sometime in the eighteenth century,” Laqueur writes, “sex as we know it was invented” (149). He writes of this two-flesh theory, “here was not only an explicit repudiation of the old isomorphisms but also, and more important, a rejection of the idea that nuanced differences between organs, fluids, and physiological processes mirrored a transcendental order of perfection” (149). Indeed, the two-flesh theory takes as its primary epistemological principle the ontological difference between man and woman and, subsequently, the primacy of heterosexuality; everything else descends from this pairing. “Organs that had shared a name—ovaries and testicles—were now linguistically distinguished,” and “organs that had not been distinguished by a name of their own—the

vagina, for example—were given one” (149). In the two-flesh system, gender descends from sexual difference, “and the bodies of women—the perennial other—thus became the battleground for redefining the ancient, intimate, fundamental social relation: that of woman to man” (150). In this new system, “the cultural work that had in the one-flesh model been done by gender devolved now onto sex” (151). Because of this movement from a one-sex to a two-sex understanding of gender, sex, and sexuality, sexological *examination* becomes increasingly focused at unpacking the nexus between the mind and the body inasmuch as it is indicative of different identities. As will be shown, this focus is increasingly interested in types, standards, rates, and narrative plotting.

One representative issue in this shift from a one-sex to a two-sex model, according to Laqueur, was the changing status of the female orgasm. Rather than assuming woman’s pleasure mirrored man’s, the two-sex model assumes women can conceive without orgasm. Because of this, women’s sexual pleasure became both unimportant (for the maintenance of population) and, conversely, infinitely interesting. “Orgasm,” Laqueur notes, “became a player in the game of new sexual difference” (150). Additionally, and following Foucault, homosexuality emerged as pathology; the passive partner could no longer be seen as gendered woman in the moment of congress. In a two-sex model, because sex and gender tethered to one another, the passive male becomes abnormal, and his pathology bears a constant weight on his psyche’s constitution. In the famous words of Foucault, “the sodomite had been a temporary aberration” of the one-sex male; “the homosexual was now a species” (*History* 43).

All of the aforementioned studies of Knowledge/Pleasure and Gender/Sex operate amidst two crucial junctures. Most notable, perhaps, is that of the visible and the invisible. Objective knowledge is visible—it is shareable; subjective pleasure is hidden. Male organs and orgasms are visible; female organs and orgasms are, for lack of a better term, invisible. The penis shows, via erection and ejaculation, its arousal. In the one-flesh model, this outward show was either handily mapped onto the female’s interior or imaginatively tweaked to explain anally passive male homosexuality. In the two-flesh model, the visibility of woman’s pleasure takes on a double logic of interiority—it is indicative of a hidden, different bodily structure as much as it simultaneously indicates a hidden, different mental structure. Both of these require interrogation—the one by science and the other by psychoanalysis. Both maneuvers attempt to stabilize the woman within an objective knowledge by having her confess her pleasure. Additionally, both models operate under clear logics of activity and passivity. In the one-sex model, males penetrated females; because of this, an anally passive partner was gendered female. In the two-sex model, males still penetrate females, but a passive male homosexual, now both sexed and gendered male by the visible marker of penis, had to be understood as something else. No longer female gendered in sexual congress, his visible marker of both maleness and pleasure becomes warrant for...well...probing. In this way and because anatomy becomes the marker of gender, what was previously a more mobile gender untethered to sex gives way to further *examination* of both the mind and the body by “human sciences” such as sexology.

## B. Freud and the Ideational Body

### 1. The Disappearing Clitoris: A “Narrative of Culture in Anatomical Disguise”

Laqueur closes his study with a brief section on Freud. This highlights some of the confusion we will encounter when we look at his contribution to sexology, and it also shows one aspect of Freud’s interest in plotted narrative models. Laqueur writes, “Freud’s account of how the clitoral sexuality of young girls gives way to the vaginal sexuality of mature women powerfully focuses on the issues of my book” (*Making Sex* 233). The reason: in Freud we witness “a version of the central modern narrative of one sex at war with two” (233). In Freud’s famous model, as outlined in *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* and extended in “On Narcissism,” children go through five stages of development: oral, anal, phallic, latent, and genital. In all of these stages, Freud distinguishes “sources” of sexual excitation from “sexual objects” and “sexual aims.” The “source” is some state of excitation the body seeks to diminish. The “sexual object” is the person or thing toward whom or which sexual activity is directed or sexual desire felt, and the “sexual aim” is the act toward which the sexual instinct inclines in order to diffuse excitation. Additionally, because “the mental dams against sexual excesses—shame, disgust and morality—have either not yet been constructed at all or are only in course of construction,” and because their libidinal pleasure is comprised of discrete sources of pleasure tied to discrete “component instincts,” children possess an innate aptitude for what Freud terms “polymorphous perversity,” or the ability to gain sexual gratification from multiple sources outside socially normative behaviors (69).

Because the component instincts are at play and the organization of the polymorphously perverse child’s sexual object(s) and sexual aim(s) are both mobile and shifting, Freud does not differentiate the young girl from the young boy in the oral and anal stages. The core Freudian drama, the Oedipal, occurs in the third of these five stages; this forms the focus of Laqueur’s inquiry. Broadly speaking, in the phallic phase, the child’s narcissistic libidinal cathexis shifts to its penis (or assumed penis). Freud allows the child four basic subject positions: 1) identification with the *father as subject*, 2) identification with the *mother as subject*, 3) love of the *father as object*, and 4) love of the *mother as object*. Both young girls and young boys begin this third phase loving their mothers as objects, identifying with their fathers as subjects (or objects of their mother’s affections), and erotically investing in the masturbatory pleasure of their clitoral “phalluses.”<sup>15</sup> The boy’s Oedipal takes place when his libidinal (love) investment in his mother increases to the point where his father becomes competition for, and obstacle to, her affection. Though the young boy desires to kill his father and assume the man’s position, he will also recognize and respect his father’s superior power via an awareness of the mother’s “castration” at the father’s hand. This recognition couples with the boy’s desire to maintain his penis; he will strengthen identification with his father and choose to defer gratification by rerouting his libidinal energy from his mother to an exogamous substitute. Across the male’s development, he maintains identification with his father as subject and understands woman as his object. Additionally, from this third stage on his penis will become and remain the core of his libidinal narcissism. Because it stands as both proof of his maleness and marker of his eventual claim to both a father-like position

and a mother-like substitute, the Oedipal the solders the male child's sexual object to his sexual aim (a substitute mother for intercourse).

For young girls, however, the path is more complex in the phallic, latent, and genital stages. In what Freud terms a "negative Oedipal" or a "feminine Oedipal attitude," the girl will route her love for her mother to her father while simultaneously, and equally contentiously, routing her identification from her father to her mother. Freud argues that, during the phallic stage, a young girl initially appreciates her clitoris as a young boy does his penis; the two are isomorphic equivalents. She receives masturbatory pleasure from direct stimulation of her "little penis." Like the young boy, the young girl will initially identify with the father as subject and take the mother as object. Unlike a boy, she will learn that, because she does not have a penis, she is not physically equipped to have a heterosexual relationship with her mother and will grow desirous of a penis—her father's—and the power it represents ("penis envy"). This "envy," given the girl's push-pull cathexis, will couple with desire for the father. The girl will come to blame her mother for her castration (seeing it as punishment by her mother for being attracted to the father) and further attempt to take her father as object (Jung's "Electra complex"). This will approximate the original triangle, except the mother can never truly be a competing subject in the same manner as the father; the girl's investments and inclinations exist at a crosshair, and she will realize she not only cannot have her father, but, furthermore, that she might also lose her mother. To avoid this absolute abandonment, she will seek an exogamous male substitute—preferably one similar to her father—and maintain a deeply contentious yet highly proximate identification with her mother. Freud's description of the precise timeline of the girl's investment in her mother, her father, and her clitoris during all of these relations is unclear.<sup>16</sup> He is quite clear, however, that in order to exit the negative Oedipal and ensure her proper position in the genital, the girl will have to give up her masculine investment in her clitoris for a proper, feminine (read: similar to her mother's) investment in her vagina.<sup>17</sup> She will have to castrate herself, rerouting her masturbatory pleasure away from her isomorphic clitoral "penis" to her vagina and rerouting her desire for her father onto another, exogamous male and the future child he can offer. In Freud's formulation, the young girl will abandon her "little penis" under the belief that her future baby boy will serve as compensation for its loss. Because of this, the female's sexual object and sexual aim remains confused. On the one hand (and as much psychoanalysis claims), the sexual object and sexual aim is the soldering of the girl in intercourse with an exogamous male, but it could very well be (and I believe) that the sexual object is an exogamous male while the sexual aim is the post-coital birthing of a male child.

Laqueur explains, "A little girl's realization that she does not have a penis and that therefore her sexuality resides in its supposed opposite, in the cavity of the vagina, elevates a 'biological fact' into a cultural desideratum" (235). Though "there is nothing in nature about how the clitoris is construed," because it need be neither a "female penis" nor opposing the vagina, "the history of the clitoris is part of the history of sexual difference generally and of the socialization of the body's pleasure...it is the story of the aporia of anatomy" (234). Freud's model reaches a strange tangle when describing the female's development in the phallic stage, and this tangle is best represented by his argument that, unlike the boy's, the girl's libidinal investment in her own body must, "like a Bahktari tribesman in search of fresh pastures...migrate from one place to

another” (234). Indeed, Laqueur argues, it was common medical knowledge in 19<sup>th</sup> century medical handbooks that the clitoris contains numerous, specialized nerve endings the vagina lacks. Freud was constructing “a narrative of culture in anatomical disguise”; he was using “the language of biology” to veil the awkward conflict between one-sex and two-sex models (236). “Freud, in short, must have known that what he wrote in the language of biology regarding the shift of erotogenic sensibility from the clitoris to the vagina had no basis in the facts of anatomy or physiology”; this “must be understood as re-presentations of a social ideal in yet another form” (240). Though Freud almost certainly knew his claims regarding the primacy of the vagina for mature female sexual pleasure did not hold up to scientific scrutiny, he needed them to manoeuvre from his one-flesh-like logic of early childhood development to a more culturally acceptable two-flesh-like logic of mature adult sexuality. In this two-flesh model, the clitoris, because it was considered “like” the penis in the early childhood model, could not adequately be considered its opposite.

Freud’s model normalizes vaginal penetrative intercourse and, with it, heterosexuality, as the determinant bodily engagement constitutive of gender and gendered self-awareness. It also, for some fifty-plus years, pushed female clitoral pleasure to the sidelines of intellectual discourse on woman’s pleasure. Laqueur explains, “the revelation by Masters and Johnson that female orgasm is almost entirely clitoral would have been a commonplace to every seventeenth-century midwife and had been documented in considerable detail by nineteenth-century investigators,” but “a great wave of amnesia descended on scientific circles around 1900” (234).

Additionally, Freud’s model stages a linking of knowledge, pleasure, and power in sexological *examination*. His narrative model of development, because it had to differentiate men and women, necessitates an increased focus on unpacking this nexus between the mind and the body. No longer isomorphic mirrors, the development of both men and women became the object of sexological *examination*. This *examination* sought to, as just witnessed, create knowledge of identities and types. This knowledge is increasingly understood as something akin to a form of narrative plotting. Freud’s model of childhood development is a narrative plot moving from the one-sex to the two-sex.

## **2. Freudian Psychoanalysis: an Epistemology in Ontological Disguise**

In addition to utilizing a plotted, narrative model to explain childhood development, Freudian psychoanalytic practice concerned itself with *examination* of personal narratives to ascertain deviations from preformed, preferred, and standardized types and identities. Freudian psychoanalysis, Gagnon and Simon note, “remains the superego of nearly all researchers into the sexual, since we must in some measure either conform to or rebel against his body of ideas” (7). Given this, Freud’s “narrative of culture in anatomical disguise,” as explicated by Laqueur, is illustrative of the basic maneuver one repeatedly encounters in Freudian psychoanalysis itself.

Freud’s *Interpretation of Dreams* was first published in 1899;<sup>18</sup> it famously shifted the Hobbesian divide between ‘natural’ instinct and ‘cultural’ constraint “from the arena of the state, power conflicts, and the social contract to the arena of the mind, sexuality, and parent-child” (7-8). “Libido,” Freud’s term for the sexual instinct energy force, is viewed as a central element of human experience. In his model the libidinal

presses against all forms of control; indeed its unrepentant presence is the determining factor in the construction of both psychic and social systems. The libidinal organizes both intra- and extrapsychic life, and its parameterized contouring shapes the various meanings assigned to parts of the body. Freud famously placed sexual concerns at the core of all development—even that of the child. This radical reconceptualization of libido's role in psychic development recasts both 'aberrational' (hysteria, paranoia, homosexuality, etc.) and seemingly innocuous (childhood games, rites of childhood) behaviors under the aegis of the libidinal.

In his 1911 work, *On Dreams*, which he considered a more accessible popularization of *Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud indicates this maneuver, writing, "no one who accepts the view that the censorship is the chief reason for dream-distortion will be surprised to learn from the results of dream interpretation that most of the dreams of adults are traced back by analysis to *erotic wishes*" (*Freud Reader* 169). Freud, from the inception of his psychoanalytic oeuvre, positions the libidinal as the core constituent factor of intra- and extrapsychic life. He continues, "we are justified in saying that almost every civilized man retains the infantile forms of sexual life in some respect or other... infantile sexual wishes provide the most frequent and strongest motive-forces for the construction of dreams" (170). As applied to dreams, "the material of the sexual ideas must not be represented as such, but must be replaced in the content of the dream by hints, allusions and similar forms of indirect representation" (170). These various symbols, Freud contends, operate via some form of standardization; "it has been noticed," he writes, "that dreamers speaking the same language make use of the same symbols, and that in some cases, indeed, the use of the same symbols extends beyond the use of the same language" (170). Here, Freud presents the core logic that undergirds his theory. He indicates first that there is some basic set of norms, and he then expands that these "norms" operate both at the level of core libidinal desire as well as at the level of how that desire finds representation via displacement, hint, allusion, etc.

In his 1905 treatise, *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, Freud posits that infantile sexuality, where the wishes that provide the "most frequent and strongest motive-forces for the construction of dreams" originate, is "polymorphously perverse." He writes, "a disposition to perversion is an original and universal disposition of the human sexual instinct and... normal sexual behavior is developed out of it as a result of organic changes and psychic inhibitions occurring in the course of maturation" (108).<sup>19</sup> Infantile sexuality, in Freud's model of "normal" development, undergoes two decisive changes: "the subordination of all the other sources of sexual excitation under the primacy of the genital zones and the process of finding an object" (111). Laqueur directly addresses the former in analyzing how Freud comes to privilege vaginal over clitoral pleasure. Freud writes this process "is accomplished by the mechanism of exploiting fore-pleasure: what were formerly self-contained sexual acts, attended by pleasure and excitation, become acts preparatory to the new sexual aim (discharge of the sexual products), the attainment of which, enormously pleasurable, brings the sexual excitation to an end" (111-12). The latter "is given its direction by the childhood hints (revived at puberty) of the child's sexual inclination towards his parents and others in charge of him, but that it is diverted away from them, on to other people who resemble them, owing to the barrier against incest" (112).

In *Three Essays*, Freud defines “perversion” as sexual activities, which extend “beyond the regions of the body that are designed for sexual union” or “linger over the immediate relations to the sexual object which should normally be traversed rapidly on the path towards the final sexual aim” (28). He defines “fore-pleasure” as “the same pleasure that has already been produced, although on a smaller scale, by the infantile sexual instinct,” and this he sets against “end-pleasure,” which is “something new... probably conditioned by circumstances that arise only at puberty” (89). Freud ties “fore-pleasure” to “the excitation of erotogenic zones” and “end-pleasure” to “the discharge of the sexual substances... or pleasure of satisfaction derived from the sexual act” (89). “The normal sexual aim,” or the “sexual act” Freud implicitly refers to, “is regarded as being the union of the genitals in the act known as copulation, which leads to a release of the sexual tension” (28). Congruently, all other sexual interaction—even if it can lead to a “discharge of the sexual substance—” is implicitly coded as “perversion” or “fore-pleasure.”

Gagnon and Simon criticize several aspects of the Freudian model. Though it allows for “polymorphous perversity,” it tends to apply a strict delimitation of its modalities due to its insistence upon the primacy of heterosexual intercourse and female vaginal pleasure. Most notably, they find “this point of view presents both an epistemological and sociolinguistic problem,” for “Freud’s descriptive language for sexuality was the language of adults describing their current and childhood ‘sexual’ experience... which was then imposed upon the ‘apparent’ behavior and ‘assumed’ responses, feelings, and cognitions of infants and children” (*Sexual Conduct* 9). This, in turn, leads to a data quality control error, resulting “from attempting to gather either data from children who are, because of their stage of development, ill-equipped to report on their internal states or from adults who were asked to report about periods in their life when complex vocabularies for internal states did not exist for them” (9). In other words, is the savvy, language-based model Freud presents via his psychoanalysis’ “talking cure” retrieving and correcting obvious disjoints in the libidinal, or is it soliciting, construing, and recasting experience that, in its moment, was neither libidinal nor disjointed under the auspices of a now-supposedly-central and standardized libido?

It is no surprise, given this possible overcoding of the past by the present, that the Freudian model is highly ideational in its approach to sex. Adult social temperaments are understood as symbolic artifacts of occurrences fossilized in childhood and subsequently worked over and brought to enunciation via layers and layers of dense affectation and adult sexuality. “Sex itself,” Gagnon and Simon write, “seems disembodied... we are left with a world full of ideas and psychic structures only tangentially related to the bodies that are performing the acts” (4).

Indeed, Freudian psychoanalysis (certainly Freudian psychoanalysis as it has been filtered through the augurs of semiotics) tends away from assessment of physical bodies towards slipperier mental states and abstract concepts. But, as Gagnon & Simon note, “when we think about the sexual, nearly our entire imagery is drawn from the physical activities of bodies,” because “our sense of normalcy derives from organs being placed in legitimate orifices” (4).<sup>20</sup> Though Freud does write in *Three Essays* that “the normal sexual aim is regarded as being the union of the genitals in the act known as copulation,” and though he does spend some time in this same text discussing various individual sex



acts as they relate to psychic configurations, the general trend of his writings is to avoid discussing physical sex qua physical sex (28). In Freudian psychoanalysis the body itself tends to disappear between competing impulses: it is either an ontologically stable, natural given “norm” (read: anatomy as destiny), or it is a passive recipient of epistemologically complex attributed meaning and implication (painful paroxysm substituting for unfulfilled sexual desire, etc.) that must be squared against the aforementioned ‘natural givens.’

The disappearance of the body in Freudian psychoanalysis has three effects: the construction of broadly plotted, narrative models for “normal” development; a dearth of knowledge or concern for what people actually do when they have sex; and an obsession with the *examination* of personal narratives to ascertain deviations from preformed, preferred, and standardized types and identities. We have witnessed the first of these three effects in our discussion of Freud’s shift from a one-sex understanding of childhood to a two-sex understanding of adulthood. The second operates as a blind spot in his writings and necessitates the third.

### **3. Freudian Psychoanalysis: The Symbolic and the Concrete**

Freudian psychoanalysis is rife with narrative plotting, but there is very little within Freud’s many writings discussing the concrete physical activities of sexual encounters and how they, themselves, combine in plot-like sequences. He implies in *Three Essays* that a sexual interaction can include multiple “perversions” and “fore-pleasures,” but a “normal,” heterosexual interaction inevitably must end with the “penultimate” of intercourse and the “end-pleasure” of orgasm achieved via intercourse.<sup>21</sup> Following this, there is little to no attempt to link together the discrete elements he does analyze under a broader, narrative-like logic for human sexual interaction. Rather, one finds within Freudian psychoanalysis two seemingly oppositional maneuvers that both utilize narrative for *examination*: physical symptoms and dreams are read against culturally assumed norms while seemingly mundane descriptions oftentimes take highly connotative form. Both of these operations utilize narrative. In the first, narrative plot works to present an ideal developmental pattern that leads to the standards of culturally assumed norms; in the second, psychoanalytic patients present personal narratives for *examination* in order to ascertain knowledge of how they deviated from these norms. In both these moves, Freudian psychoanalysis utilizes narrative plotting while simultaneously overlooking the body itself as a lived-in and experienced source of meaning.

One can understand both these maneuvers as the recto-verso of Freud’s aforementioned comments on dreams: “the material of the sexual ideas must not be represented as such, but must be replaced in the content of the dream by hints, allusions and similar forms of indirect representation,” but “dreamers speaking the same language make use of the same symbols, and that in some cases, indeed, the use of the same symbols extends beyond the use of the same language” (*Reader* 170). In the former, Freud reverts to a set of assumed sociocultural norm against which he deciphers the various hints, allusions, and indirect representations of both dreams and symptoms. Men are active; they are agents possessed of (and defined by) a penis; women are passive; their vaginas (or, more correctly, their lack of a penis) make them the recipient objects of

masculine endeavor.<sup>22</sup> In the Freudian model, as he indicates in *Three Essays*, the sex act that implicitly structures his understanding of such “symbolics” as dreams and/or hysterical symptomology is the male inserting his penis into the female’s vagina. Freud extends this as key analogy into almost all social and cultural production.<sup>24</sup> In the latter, Freud is often prone to deploying the same types of hints, allusions, and indirect representations when describing the nexus of power, knowledge, and pleasure. Either way, the concrete—the symptoms felt, the dreams dreamt, or the purely denotative level of Freud’s descriptions—are quickly rendered both discarnate and highly ideational.

The following section from *Dora: An Analysis of a Fragment of Hysteria* perfectly illustrates one half of the prototypical Freudian operation. Here, he presents and analyzes at length an episode between Dora and Herr K.

She was fourteen years old at the time...[He] suddenly clasped the girl to him and pressed a kiss upon her lips. This was surely just the situation to call up a distinct feeling of sexual excitement in a girl of fourteen who had never been approached. But Dora had at that moment a violent feeling of disgust, tore herself free from the man, and hurried past him to the staircase and from there to the street door. (21)

Dora, upon receiving an unexpected advance from Herr K., experiences a “violent feeling of disgust” and subsequently extracts herself from his embrace. Freud interprets Dora’s response to Herr K.’s advance—the fact that she did not experience “a distinct feeling of sexual excitement”—as “entirely and completely hysterical” (21-22).

I should without question consider a person hysterical in whom an occasion for sexual excitement elicited feelings that were predominantly or exclusively unpleasurable... The elucidation of the mechanism of this *reversal of affect* is one of the most important and at the same time one of the most difficult problems in the psychology of the neuroses... (22)

In parsing how Dora came to experience this ‘hysterical’ “reversal of affect,” Freud clearly indicates his understanding of the “norms” that rest beneath symptomatic symbolics. Dora should have experienced “sexual excitement”; the fact that she didn’t—that she did not respond with excitement to Herr K.’s masculine endeavor—is ‘hysterical.’ By parsing the various inversions and displacements that led to Dora’s ‘hysterical’ reaction to Herr K.’s advance, Freud centers “the appropriate stimulation of an erotogenic zone (the genital zone itself, in the glans penis) by the appropriate object (the mucous membrane of the vagina)” as the norm from which all other reactions are deviant and from which symbolics, in the end, derive their meaning.

In order to particularize Dora’s case it is not enough merely to draw attention to the reversal of affect; there has also been a *displacement* of sensation. Instead of the genital sensation which would certainly have been felt by a healthy girl in such circumstances, Dora was overcome by the unpleasurable feeling which is proper to the tract of the mucous membrane at the entrance to the alimentary canal—that is by disgust. The stimulation of her lips by the kiss was no doubt of importance in localizing the feeling at that particular place; but I think I can also recognize another factor in the operation...

In accordance with certain rules of symptom formation which I have come to know, and at the same time taking into account certain other of the patient’s peculiarities... I have formed in my own mind the following reconstruction of the scene. I believe that during the man’s passionate embrace she felt not merely his kiss upon her lips but also the pressure of his erect member against her body. This perception was revolting to her; it was dismissed from her memory, repressed, and replaced by the innocent sensation of pressure upon her thorax, which in turn derived an excessive intensity from its repressed source. Once more, therefore, we find a displacement from the lower part of the body to the upper...

The pressure of the erect member probably led to an analogous change in the corresponding female organ, the clitoris; and the excitation of this second erotogenic zone was

referred by a process of displacement to the simultaneous pressure against the thorax and became fixed there... (22-24)

Here we find one half of the Freudian operation par excellence. Freud takes a set of bodily cues—Dora’s sense of pressure on her thorax, her surprise kiss from Herr K., etc.— and he reads into them a core desire for vaginal penetrative sex—for the man to enter the woman, and for the woman to desire the man enter her. According to Freud, Dora felt Herr K.’s erect member pressing upon her genitals; this excited her. Her “entirely and completely hysterical” reaction to the surprise kiss and genital excitation is to not express normal desire. Instead, as with dreams, this core desire is inverted, displaced, and resymbolized as a nagging symptom of thorax pressure.

One must continually attempt to read Freud against himself in search of his understanding of how bodies actually act in sexual congress. He provides an attentive reader with many options to do this. In *Leonardo Da Vinci and a Memory of His Childhood*, for example, Freud writes of Da Vinci’s seeming “cool repudiation of sexuality” in favor of a search for knowledge and beauty (16). Where Freud could present this in a purely denotative manner, he instead presents this nexus of power, knowledge, and pleasure in a highly connotative form.

In reality Leonardo was not devoid of passion; he did not lack the divine spark which is directly or indirectly the driving force *—il primo motore—*behind all human activity. He had merely converted his passion into a thirst for knowledge; he then applied himself to investigation with the persistence, constancy and penetration which is derived from passion, and at the climax of intellectual labor, when knowledge had been won, he allowed the long restrained affect to break loose and to flow away freely, as a stream of water drawn from a river is allowed to flow away when its work is done. (22)

Rejecting claims that Leonardo was without libido, Freud positions his “thirst for knowledge” as a particular expression of the libido’s *primo motore*. Reading this excerpt—particularly reading this excerpt with the toothbrush image in mind—one cannot help but see a telling referential logic at place in Freud’s description of Leonardo’s libidinal “passion” for “knowledge.”<sup>24</sup> Freud describes Leonardo’s libidinal “thirst for knowledge” as something applied via “persistence, constancy and penetration” that culminates in “long restrained affect...break[ing] loose and...flow[ing] away freely.” This arc to knowledge won is highly sexual in its description. We move from “thirst”—an oral reference—to “penetration” to “climax.” Freud’s description of Leonardo’s rerouted libido indicates, via highly metaphoric language, that there is some arc to the sexual engagement operating behind Freudian logic. But, as with the bulk of Freud, it does so under highly symbolic terms.

The linking of knowledge, pleasure, and power in sexological *examination* aids and abets *panopticism* by annexing information about pleasures and solidifying them as identities and types that can be controlled or made useful. To do this, sexology becomes increasingly focused at unpacking the nexus between the mind and the body inasmuch as it is indicative of identity. Freudian psychoanalysis does this in two ways: it creates standardized narratives for proper human development, and it asks those who deviate in any way to tell their stories. These stories are then analyzed and adjudicated against the standardized norms to create knowledge of deviant forms of pleasure. Though Freudian psychoanalysis places libido at the center of human development, it tends to overlook the actual things bodies do during sex, relying instead on presumed norms. If we are

beholden enough to find the sexual in seemingly nonsexual behavior and symbolism (as does Freud), then, Gagnon and Simon ask, is it not “just as plausible to examine sexual behavior for its capacity to express and serve nonsexual motives” (*Sexual Conduct* 12)? Perhaps, rather than read heterosexual intercourse into symptoms and dreams as the “norm” from which their meaning deviates and emerges, we can look at sex itself as full of multiple acts with numerous contextual meanings. Perhaps, moving away from the Freudian impulse to find a single sex act at the core of all symbolics, we can open up sex itself into meaning. To do that in Freudian psychoanalysis would require reading Freud against himself.

If Freudian psychoanalysis and its episteme overlooked the things bodies did to argue libido was at the center of broader meaning, it did so via recourse to two types of narrative plots—standardized narratives for proper human development, and confessional stories coming from deviants. The Freudian model is highly ideational in its approach to sex. It is interested in how people think and feel but not what their bodies do. This represents the dominant sexological model for the first half of the twentieth century.

### **C. Midcentury Empiricism: Kinsey’s and Masters & Johnson’s Decorticated Men and Women**

The dominant sexological model for the middle of the twentieth century does the inverse of Freud. If, in Freud, the sexual body is primarily an ideational one, and the ideational aspects of sex inflect out into all logics, spaces, and temporalities, how are we to grasp the fleshy body—what it does and how it does it? Rather than ask for personal narratives to adjudicate against narratives for normal development, the midcentury sexological model focuses on “objective,” statistical analysis of bodies in action. Kinsey’s and Masters & Johnsons’ linking of knowledge, pleasure, and power in sexological *examination* utilizes scientific research to seek out rates and standards for behavior. These studies, focusing on bodies but not minds, aid and abet *panopticism* by annexing information about pleasures under the aegis of behavioral statistics and measures of corporeal response.

#### **1. Kinsey’s “Radical Empiricism”**

Alfred Kinsey’s major works, 1948’s *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* and 1953’s *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female*—representative of what historian Paul Robinson describes as a late forties ‘modernization of sex’—attempted to do just this by moving past the discarnate Freudian model. In their foreword to *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female*, Robert M. Yerkes and George W. Corner write, “Comparison of Freud and Kinsey is not implied...but what should be noted is the fact that Freud, on the basis of clinical experience, proposed theories which laid the foundation for a task he was not fitted by nature or training to carry on” (vii). This task, they explain, is that “of fact-finding through careful, patient, long-continued, objective research” (vii). It is “Alfred Kinsey, the laboratory- and field-trained biologist,” they predict, whose work, “sufficiently extended, should come basic knowledge of sexual phenomena against which theory may be checked, modified and supplemented” (viii). In his preface to *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*, Alan Gregg describes the Kinsey Studies as “sincere,

objective, and determined explorations of a field manifestly important to education, medicine, government, and the integrity of human conduct generally” (viii). Because Kinsey’s research provides concrete, objective knowledge (as opposed to the abstract, potentially subjective work of Freud), Gregg explains that it has “demanded from Dr. Kinsey and his colleagues very unusual tenacity of purpose, tolerance, analytical competence, social skills, and real courage” (vii).

The Kinsey research findings both astounded and shocked the public. Coming out in the early post-war era, these best-selling reports were immediately controversial. The findings challenged conventional beliefs about sexuality, discussing previously taboo or romanticized subjects in a frank, statistical manner. To conduct the study, Alfred Kinsey and his associates memorized a set of 521 questions to use as guiding protocol (Laumann et al. 66). The interviewers were the 6 main researchers; they were allowed to vary the number, order, and wording of questions for different respondents. Over nine years from mid-1938 to mid-1947, Kinsey and his colleagues collected data (or histories) on 12,214 volunteers for the 1948 publication of *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* (Kinsey et al., *Human Male* 10). Of these 12,214, about 6,300 were male, and 5,300 “white males” provide the data set for the published study (6).<sup>25</sup> Though studies were collected from every US state, the histories predominantly came “from the northeastern quarter of the country, in the area bounded by Massachusetts, Michigan, Tennessee, and Kansas” (5). By the 1953 publication of *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female*, Kinsey and co. had collected 16,392 histories, 8,603 male and 7,789 female (22). Of these, “5,490 cases of white, non-prison females” acquired before 1950 were used in the study (22).

The researchers partitioned the respondents’ sex lives into classes of sexual activity (or “outlets”) measured primarily in terms of incidence, prevalence, and frequency. In the volume on men, the key measure was whether orgasm had occurred during the encounter; this was expanded to include experiences where orgasm did not occur for homosexual men and in the later volume on women.<sup>26</sup> “The six chief sources of orgasm for the human male,” *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* claims, “are masturbation, nocturnal emissions, heterosexual petting, heterosexual intercourse, homosexual relations, and intercourse with animals of other species” (193). These “outlets” are, to say the least, quite confusing. “Heterosexual petting” is defined as “any sort of physical contact which does not involve a union of genitalia but in which there is a deliberate attempt to effect arousal” (531). An individual’s “total sexual outlet” is the “sum of the orgasms derived from these several sources” (193). As a puzzling explanation, the researchers write, “since practically all of the sexual contacts of the mature male involve emotional changes, all of which represent expenditures of energy, all adult contacts must be considered means of outlets, even though they do not lead to orgasm” (193). But, despite the fact that “all adult contacts must be considered means of outlets,” the researchers continue, “these emotional situations are...of such variable intensity that they are difficult to assess and compare” (193). Embedded in this method is a belief that an individual’s profile of sexual activities and total number of orgasms represents a complex tension between biological sexual possibility and cultural constraints; the distribution of orgasms across sexual practices is indicative of an “unstable compromise between biology and sociology” (Laumann et al. 78). Though all of the independent variables in Kinsey’s studies were social (class, generation, religion, gender), it is assumed the differences between individuals—as well as those between men

and women—resided in biological factors (except homosexuality, which was treated as learned) (78). In order to maintain the veneer of empiricism, the researchers conclude that, “for the sake of achieving some precision in analysis, the present discussion of outlets is confined to those instances of sexual activity which culminate in orgasm” (193).

Despite this bracketing of affect to focus on orgasm, the researchers acknowledge that “there are, both theoretically and in actuality, endless possibilities in combining these several sources of outlet” (Kinsey et al., *Human Male* 193). “The record of a single sort of sexual activity, even though it be the one most frequently employed by a particular group of males, does not adequately portray the whole sexual life of that group” (193). Later, in the section on “Marital Intercourse,” the researchers write, “there has been an insistence under our English-American codes that the simpler and more direct a sexual relation, the more completely it is confined to coitus, and the less variation which enters into the performance of the act, the more acceptable the relation is morally” (572). The researchers reason, “this is the basis of much of our sex law, of a large portion of the sexual mores, and of the lower level’s frequent avoidance of any variety in sexual relations” (572). Compared to the “lower level,” the researchers find that “the educated portion of the population [even in high church positions], especially within more recent generations, includes a good many persons who feel that any sort of activity which contributes to the significance of an emotional relationship between spouses is justified, and that no sort of sexual act is perverse if it so contributes to the marital relationship, even though exactly the same act between two persons who were not spouses might be considered a perversion” (572). The core logic the researchers ascertain for this is that “variety is acceptable only when the techniques are not an end in themselves, but a means of increasing the possibility and probably of conception as an outcome of the marriage” (572). Additionally, the researchers also acknowledge the strange contrast that, while marriage manuals advocate experimentation, that era’s “English-American common law... makes no distinction between acts that are ‘contrary to nature’ in marriage, and acts that are ‘contrary to nature’ outside of marriage” (572). However, despite these acknowledgments, there is no point in the text at which the researchers articulate any particular arc of engagement for the sexual encounter. This is, perhaps, due to the tethering of “outlet” to orgasm. The toothbrush image, for example, though it contains both “heterosexual petting” and “heterosexual intercourse,” would most likely be recorded in the Kinsey study as whatever “outlet” the penultimate image indicates (be it anal sex/“heterosexual petting” or spoons position/“heterosexual intercourse”).

By and large, the Kinsey study’s strict focus is empirical evidence of rates of what people do to orgasm. This is accomplished, historian Paul Robinson claims, by stringently separating sexual experience from its affective associations (28). Gagnon and Simon align with Robinson, writing, “in the work of Kinsey we see the opposite thrust [from Freud]... sexual men and women in the decorticated state; the bodies arrange themselves, orgasm occurs, one counts it seeking a continuum of rates where normalcy is a function of location on a distribution scale” (4). Kinsey’s intense focus on rates of isolated act and hazily described field (such as homosexual contacts) “outlets,” flattened sexual identity into “a summation of orgasms, rather than a reflection of one’s relationship to the world” (24). Sociologist Mike Brake calls this Kinsey’s “radical empiricism” (24). It presents sexual identity as statistical arrays and eliminates the

question of understanding what things people engaged in sexual activity do and in what order (24).

If the Freudian model favors the mind at the expense of the body, the Kinsey model does the inverse; its radical empiricism favors the body at the expense of the mind. Where the Freudian model views the sexual body as primarily an ideational one, and these ideational aspects of sex inflect out into all logics, spaces, and temporalities, the Kinsey model links knowledge, pleasure, and power in sexological *examination* of rates and standards for behavior. Rather than ask for personal narratives to adjudicate against narratives for normal development, the midcentury sexological model focuses on “objective,” statistical analyses of bodies in action. Kinsey’s studies, focusing on bodies but not minds, aid and abet *panopticism* by annexing information about pleasures under the aegis of behavioral statistics.

Despite these shortcomings, Kinsey’s work provides a trove of empirical data that expanded the American conception of what people were doing and with whom they were doing it. It was, until the 1994’s *The Social Organization of Sexuality*, “the only comprehensive American study of sexuality based on a large cross section of the population” (Laumann et al. 35). And though it suffered from sampling and design problems, its empiricism did much to denaturalize the “natural.” For example, Kinsey distinctively debunked some of the phallocentrism of Freud, and he laid the empirical foundations for much work to come on women and gay people. Kinsey’s work eschewed much of his era’s preoccupations with “morality” and “normality,” focusing instead on statistical rates, means, and medians. Additionally, although oftentimes erroneously credited to Masters & Johnson, Kinsey’s research pressed for a rethinking of female clitoral pleasure. “The most common error the male makes concerning female sexuality,” the researchers wrote, “is the assumption that stimulation of the interior of the vagina is necessary to bring maximum satisfaction to the female” (*Human Male* 576). To counter this misconception, they argue that there are few nerves in the vagina, and there are exceedingly few females who masturbate by inserting objects into the vagina...most of the masturbatory techniques are labial or, more often, clitoral” (576).

## **2. Masters & Johnson’s “Radical Empiricism”**

William H. Masters and Virginia E. Johnson, like Alfred Kinsey, favor the body at the expense of the mind. Like Kinsey, Masters & Johnson’s research links knowledge, pleasure, and power in sexological *examination* of rates and standards for behavior. Where Kinsey researched an array of behaviors to find their discrete statistical rates of occurrence, Masters & Johnson focus on patterns of human sexual response leading to orgasm. Their model’s interest in “objective,” statistical analyses of things like heart rate and muscle tension lead them to develop a plot-like schema for both male and female orgasmic response. Like Kinsey’s studies, Masters & Johnson’s research aids and abets *panopticism* by annexing information about pleasures under the aegis of behavioral statistics. Where Kinsey provided a treasure trove of discrete rates, Masters & Johnson present their research within a somewhat plotted teleological model that seeks to explicate typical human sexual response patterns in the stages leading to orgasm. Though not interested in what people actually do to one another with their bodies during sex

(what goes where), Masters & Johnson reintroduce an element of narrative plotting into their “radical modernism.”

William H. Masters and Virginia E. Johnson continued down Kinsey’s empirical path with their 1966 *Human Sexual Response* and 1970 *Human Sexual Inadequacy*. In fact, Brake comments, “the radical empirical tradition reached new proportions with the work of Masters and Johnson” (24). In the first chapter of *Human Sexual Response*, “The Sexual Response Cycle,” Masters & Johnson make this perfectly clear, “although the Kinsey work has become a landmark of sociological investigation, it was not designed to interpret physiological or psychological response to sexual stimulation...the current study of human sexual response has been designed to create a foundation of basic scientific [read: physiologic] information” (3-4).

The pair shaped their 11-year study around two guiding questions: “What happens to the human male and female as they respond to effective sexual stimulation? Why do men and women behave as they do when responding to effective sexual stimulation?” (10). To answer these two questions, they initially interviewed 118 female and 27 male prostitutes over a 20 month period (10). These subjects, “regarded as knowledgeable, cooperative, and available for study,” yielded 8 women and 3 men for anatomic and physiologic study (10). This subset provided “suggestions...for support and control of the human male and female in situations of direct sexual response,” describing “many methods for elevating or controlling sexual tensions and [demonstrating] innumerable variations in stimulative technique” (10). Masters & Johnson eventually decided to forego the use of prostitutes, deeming the population too migratory and their reproductive organs too varied (“the varying degrees of pathology of the reproductive organs”) to relate to baselines of anatomic normalcy. Instead, they drew a new population from “select segments of a metropolitan community...primarily from and sustained by the academic community associated with a large university-hospital complex” (11). To this they added “family units, initially presenting clinical problems either of sexual inadequacy or conceptive inadequacy,” and “volunteers of all ages...from all social strata” (11). In the end, and with some recognized bias in sample (primarily as relates to education, class, age, and race), the pair engaged with 382 women participants, ages 18 to 78, and 312 male participants, ages 21 to 89 (12-13).<sup>27</sup>

In presenting their results, Masters & Johnson state, “no attempt will be made to provide statistical analyses of the sexual-behavior content elicited from detailed intake interviews” (20). Though “modes or means of sexual stimulation will be described without reservation,” there is little to no attempt to statistically array sexual technique into an analysis of what people do while having sex. Instead, their work “has been concentrated quite literally upon what men and women do in response to effective sexual stimulation”; their work focuses not on what the people are doing with one another, but on how their bodies are physically reacting to whatever it is that is happening (20). Though “recorded and observed sexual activity of study subjects has included, at various times, manual and mechanical manipulation, natural coition with the female partner in supine, superior, or knee-chest position and, for many female study subjects, artificial coition in supine and knee-chest position,” there is very little to no detail defining what exactly subjects were doing that constituted “effective sexual stimulation” at any given



moment, and, following from this, there is absolutely no attempt—explicit or implicit—to codify a process or preferred ordering of human sexual interaction (21).<sup>28</sup>

In diagramming gender-based “Sexual Response Cycles” to orgasm, Masters & Johnson maintain a clinically narrow focus. There is no in-depth discussion of what people do together; instead, their work focuses on the physiologic response cycles of men and women experiencing sexual pleasure.<sup>29</sup> They claim, in *Human Sexual Response*, that human sexual excitement for both males and females passes through four linearly ordered stages—the *excitement phase*, the *plateau*, *orgasm*, and *resolution*—with distinct types of corporeal reactions (muscle contraction, blood flow, fluid secretion, tumescence, etc.) (3). Masters & Johnson revealed that, whereas men required a refractory period post-orgasm, all women were not only potentially orgasmic, but potentially multi-orgasmic (7 and 65). In addition, their work seeks to quell the longstanding vaginal/clitoral orgasm debate. They ask, “are clitoral and vaginal orgasms truly separate anatomic entities?” They respond, “from a biologic point of view, the answer to this question is an unequivocal no,” and, “from an anatomic point of view, there is absolutely no difference in the responses of the pelvic viscera to effective sexual stimulation, regardless of whether the stimulation occurs as a result of clitoral-body or mons are manipulation, natural or artificial coition, or, for that matter, specific stimulation of any other erogenous are of the female body” (66).

As with Kinsey, Masters & Johnson’s work focuses an empirical eye on markers of orgasm, but, unlike Kinsey, Masters & Johnson mold a somewhat causal directionality into the language and findings of their studies. Gagnon and Simon write, “the language of Masters and Johnson—‘arousal, plateau, climax, and resolution’...[is] a conception resembling somewhat an Aristotelian notion of the dramatic or the design for a nineteenth-century symphony” (*Sexual Conduct* 16). Despite this nod towards causal order, and also despite this ordering’s placement of orgasm as the end goal of sexual activity, Masters & Johnson remain ironbound in their exclusion of cultural factors from their first two books’ biologically-based research findings. This presents an interesting problem: “Unless the two people involved recognize that the physical events outlined are sexual and embedded in a sexual situation,” Gagnon and Simon write, “there will not be the potentiation of the physiological concomitants that Masters and Johnson have demonstrated as necessary in the production of sexual excitement and the orgasmic cycle” (16). This does not appear to concern Masters & Johnson in their research. Additionally, and perhaps equally confusing, woman’s pleasure, although differentiated inasmuch as she is theoretically multiorgasmic, is still plotted as equivalent to that of man inasmuch as her end goal, like his, is orgasm and resolution.

The linking of knowledge, pleasure, and power in sexological *examination* aids and abets *panopticism* by annexing information about pleasures and solidifying them as identities and types that can be controlled or made useful. Freudian psychoanalysis, the dominant model for the first half of the twentieth century, focused on the mind at the expense of the body, both Kinsey and Masters & Johnson do the opposite and focus on the body at the expense of the mind. Freudian sexological *examination* creates standardized narratives for proper human development and action; asks those who deviate in any way to tell their stories; and then analyzes and adjudicates these stories against the standardized norms to create more, better knowledge of deviant forms of

pleasure. Kinsey and Masters & Johnson ignore the mind to focus their sexological *examination* on rates and statistics of bodily behavior. Where Kinsey researched an array of behaviors to find their discrete statistical rates of occurrence amongst various populations, Masters & Johnson focus on universal and average patterns of human sexual response leading to orgasm. Kinsey did not present any narrative concept for human sexual engagement, choosing instead to focus on rates. Masters & Johnson's "objective," statistical analyses of things like heart rate and muscle tension in male and female orgasmic response lead them to develop a plot-like schema. Though not interested in what people actually do to one another with their bodies during sex (what goes where), Masters & Johnson reintroduce an element of narrative plotting into their "radical modernist" study of average human response.

#### **D. Gagnon and Simon: Sexual Scripts**

As stated at this section's start, 20<sup>th</sup> century sexology undertook a parallel shift to American obscenity jurisprudence. As was shown in the previous section, the law moved from atomized early-20<sup>th</sup> century considerations of both text and audience to something more holistic, contextual, and narrative-focused in the late 1960s. Sexology treads a parallel path, moving from the discarnate and ideational early-20<sup>th</sup> century model of Freud to the decorticated and statistical midcentury models of both Kinsey and Masters & Johnson before landing on the social constructivist, narrative and plot-minded ground presented by John H. Gagnon and William Simon in their groundbreaking 1973 anthology, *Sexual Conduct: The Social Sources of Human Sexuality*. This third and final 20<sup>th</sup> century model attempts to bring both the mind and the body under simultaneous *examination*, creating a narrative-like model for human sexual interaction. This model, termed "sexual scripting," occurs at the juncture of the ideational and physical body. It brings the dominant interests of Freud into conversation with those of both Kinsey and Masters & Johnson, and it expands both the scope of sexological *examination* and *panopticism* by broadening the reach of the "human sciences." Gagnon and Simon began publishing the essays that form *Sexual Conduct* in 1966. The emergence of this third sexological model occurs contemporary to the 1966 *Memoirs*, 1967 *Redrup*, and 1968 *Ginsberg* obscenity decisions—the decisions that established narrative as an indicator of merit, individuated the Justice's application of "average person applying contemporary community standards," and established variable obscenity. It also occurs contemporary to the early 1970s emergence of feature-length, narrative pornography and its embedded *performative screen*—a sex act that, this project claims, has taken on qualities of narrative plotting.

The operative ordering and processes of deciphering inherent in sex and sexuality became the focus of Gagnon and Simon's post-1965 research into "sexual scripts." These scripts bring together the concerns of Freud, Kinsey, and Masters & Johnson by studying sexual actors, their actions, and the various meanings attributed to sex acts. Brake writes, "Gagnon and Simon move to an interpretation which includes an element left out of the empirical studies...they consider the meaning a sexual act has for the actor" (*Human Sexual* 25). In doing so, they precede many humanist critical theorists in asserting sex as social construction with biological foundations (25). Brake summarizes, "Gagnon and Simon (both have been senior researchers at the Kinsey Institute)...moved from

empiricism to the notion that sexual behavior is scripted, that there is a repertoire of publicly recognized acts and statutes with rules and sanctions attached” (25). To do this, Simon and Gagnon study human sexual encounters as both social and learned interactions; these interactions take stage via a narrative understanding of the self. Gagnon and Simon write of their project, “The term ‘script’ might properly be invoked to describe virtually all human behavior in the sense that there is very little that can in a full measure be called spontaneous...without the proper elements of a script that defines the situation, names the actors, and plots the behavior nothing sexual is likely to happen” (*Sexual Conduct* 13). Sexual scripting occurs at the juncture of the ideational and physical body. It “occurs not only in the making of meaningful interior states, but in providing the ordering of bodily activities that will release these internal biological states” (15). Scripts become the mechanisms through which biological events such as orgasm can be potentiated (16). The concept of sexual scripting highlights three levels where scripting occurs: the cultural/historical, the social/interactive, and the personal/intra-psychic

Writing the foreword to the thirtieth anniversary edition of *Sexual Conduct*, Kenneth Plummer delineates Gagnon and Simon’s ties to the work of fellow University of Chicago scholar, Kenneth Burke:

For them [Gagnon and Simon] human sexualities are thoroughly symbolic: we need to look for the meaning of human sexualities and their social sources...One of their greatest influences appears to be the man of letters and social critic Kenneth Burke, who argued that human beings were “symbol using” creatures who have “bodies that learn language.”...Human beings are seen to have devised a myriad of metaphors to talk about, think about, write about, and perform human sexualities...sex for humans is never “just sex,” sui generis. Its reality is always overlaid with what Burke calls “symbolicity.” It is to be found in intricate worlds of meaning, metaphor, language, and symbol. (xii-xii)

Gagnon and Simon’s main inspiration appears to be Burke’s conception of the *dramatistic pentad*. Developed in his *A Grammar of Motives*, the pentad forms the core of *dramatism*, or the study of the motives behind dramatic action. The five rhetorical elements forming the pentad (and the general ‘reporter’s questions’ attached to them) are as follows:

**Act** (what?): What is the action? What is the thought?

**Scene** (where?): Where is this taking place? What is the context?

**Agent** (who?): Who is acting? What is his/her role?

**Agency** (how): How (and by what means) do the agents act?

**Purpose** (why?): Why did the agent act? What is the agent seeking through this act?

(“Questions and Answers” 331)

Burke posits that analysis of the relative weight given to these elements and their questions by a fictional work will determine character motivation; different character types will favor different poles of the pentad when making decisions. Kenneth Plummer gives an example of this in his 1975 book, *Sexual Stigma: An Interactionist Account*. He describes two situations: a naked woman lying on a couch being fingered by a man and an adolescent male watching football. The ‘common-sense’ view would hold that the former is a sexual scenario, but, as Plummer argues, this is placing too much emphasis on the physical *Act* (*Sexual Stigma* 64). The woman could be receiving a gynecological examination, and the boy watching the football could very well be fantasizing sex with the players. In both these cases, the other parts of the pentad, when added to the *Act*, either contour or redirect the “common-sense” meaning (64). If we return to the pictures with which we began this chapter, we can note that, as we move down the image set, we

find proof upon proof of inference; the fact that this image set is a sexual joke becomes increasingly clear. In much the same manner, over time the pentad will narrow and meaning will become clearer.<sup>30</sup>

Gagnon and Simon's sexology, with a deep interest in real-life, lived situations, sought to balance the severe empiricism of both Kinsey and Masters & Johnson against metaphor-heavy, disembodied Freudian (and post-Freudian) psychoanalysis. "We have adopted the view," they write, "that the point at which the individual begins to respond in intrinsically sexual ways, particularly in terms of socially available or defined outlets and objects, reflects a discontinuity with previous 'sexual experience' (however that might be defined)," because, at this point in one's development, "both seemingly sexual and seemingly nonsexual elements 'contend' for influence in complex ways that in no respect assure priority for experiences that are apparently sexual in character and occur earlier in the life cycle" (*Sexual Conduct* 11). A sexual script brings together and begins to delineate these competing impetuses. "Without the proper elements of a script that defines the situation, names the actors, and plots behavior, nothing sexual is likely to happen" (13). Scripts are involved in "learning the meaning of internal states, organizing the sequence of specifically sexual acts, decoding novel situations, setting limits on sexual responses, and linking meanings from nonsexual aspects of life to specifically sexual experience"; they sit at the juncture of the internal and external (13-14). The script is not only the "organization of mutually shared conventions that allows two or more actors to participate in a complex act," it is also "the internal, the intrapsychic, the motivational elements that produce arousal or at least a commitment to the activity" (14).

As a result of several coordinating cultural factors, the physical aspects of sexual behavior remained unrepresented, unstudied, and unaccounted for before Kinsey and Masters & Johnson. Once brought under empirical study, however, these aspects remained segregated from their broader functions within scripts. Criticizing previous models, Gagnon and Simon explain that, "as a result of our commitment to nature and to the sexual organs as the primary sources of meaning, we fail to observe that the doing of sex (even when alone) requires elaborated and sequential learning that is largely taken from other domains of life and a resultant etiquette that allows for the coordination of bodies and meanings in a wide variety of circumstances" (6). In other words, doing sex requires knowledge of what sex is, and this knowledge comes from any number of places. To adequately understand what is at stake in a sexual encounter, a sexologist, following Gagnon and Simon's insight, must carefully *examine* all the factors (mental, social, physical, etc.) that constitute a sexual encounter between individuals possessed of thoughts and feelings. This analysis, by necessity, must be understood via narrative plotting.

Pornography, though not the same as individual confessional and standard sexological demographic work, rests somewhere close to scripting's aforementioned fields: it brings together feelings of sex with descriptions or representations of actual sexual activity. "It is the most suspect of the expository literature about sex," Gagnon and Simon write, "that attempts to bring together feelings about sex with descriptions of sexual activity" (6). Pornography, though it "may appear to be (in the words of Steven Marcus) 'organ grinding,'" still manages to "indicate a crude psychology and set of motivations for those who are performing the sexual acts" (6). Gagnon and Simon argue that pornography contains far more social life than its detractors are willing to notice,

because, “in order for the sexual activity described or observed to have erotic stimulus value...the actors must be playing out some sociosexual script that has significance” (6). Prior to the 1960s and “for all practical purposes,” they argue, pornography was the primary cultural representation detailing physical aspects of sexual behavior; “while limited in complexity and with a limited sensibility, the characters in pornography actually felt skin, smelled each other’s odors, tasted bodily fluids, and did sexual things” (6).

### **E. Pornography’s *Performatistic Screen***

Gagnon and Simon argue that pornography brings together feelings of sex with descriptions or representations of sexual activity. In other words, it presents information regarding the juncture of the mind and the body—the very nexus sexual scripting *examination* seeks to know. At this moment in the mid-1960s, both law and sexology shared an increased interest in narrative plotting. The law cases surveyed reveal two major movements in American jurisprudence’s conception of obscenity: a variegation of the text’s potential audience and an increasing concern for textual merit and textual unity as indicated by narrative plotting. Both of these movements shifted the law towards what Foucault would term an *examination*-based logic for adjudicating obscenity. Sexology, standing as a metonym for the “human sciences,” treads a similar path during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It moves from the discarnate and ideational early-20<sup>th</sup> century model of Freud to the decorticated and statistical midcentury models of both Kinsey and Masters & Johnson before landing on the social constructivist, narrative and plot-minded model presented by John H. Gagnon and William Simon. This third and final 20<sup>th</sup> century model attempts to bring both the mind and the body under simultaneous *examination*, creating a narrative-like model for human “sexual scripting” that occurs at the juncture of the ideational and physical body.

As we shall see in the next chapter, both the structure and lure of film pornography tracks alongside with this shift. Not only did feature-length, narrative pornography emerge as a genre in the early 1970s, it does so by changing the lure of filmed sex. Pornography moves from a focus on “meat,” or static shots of organs to a focus on “money,” or the various activities that its performers do with one another to potentiate and produce male orgasm. This project claims that, by embedding sex with visible beginnings and ends (usually oral and money shots) within a broader narrative, sex itself takes on the qualities of narrative plot. Perhaps, then, we can begin to assess the order of bodily action and placement shown in the toothbrush series as ur-script in the construction of the pornographic sex act as a narrative-like arc. Indeed, Gagnon & Simon note a similar script at play in the United States outside of the realm of filmed pornography. “If one examines the assembly of events that are the physical elements of the current script in the United States for adolescent or adult heterosexual behavior that leads to coitus,” they claim, “it is clear that there is a progression from hugging and kissing, to petting above the waist, to hand-genital contacts (sometimes mouth-genital contacts), and finally to coitus” (15). Though there is the possibility of “some variation...this order is roughly—at the physical level—what normal heterosexual activity is” (15).

These sentiments are echoed in 1976's *The Hite Report: A Nationwide Study on Female Sexuality*, Shere Hite's controversial sexological study of female sexual habits. To amass information for her study, Hite Distributed 100,000 copies of a fifty-eight question survey through various women's groups, mail solicitations, and newspapers/magazines, receiving 3,019 responses (*The Hite Report* xii-xx). These were then compiled underneath the question categories and the results were published with anonymous excerpts from the various responses. To close this section, I'd like to analyze an interesting quote from one respondent. In her introduction to the "Masturbation" chapter within which women discuss their masturbatory techniques, Hite writes, "Masturbation is, in a very real sense, one of the most important subjects discussed in this book and a cause for celebration, because it is such an easy source of orgasms for most women...of the 82 percent of women who said they masturbated, 95 percent could orgasm easily and readily whenever they wanted" (3). In fact, Hite continues, "many women used the term 'masturbation' synonymously with orgasm: women assumed masturbation included orgasm" (3). One respondent—the only to go into any depth regarding her mental processes during masturbation—wrote

I lie down and begin to fantasize in my mind my favorite fantasy, which is a party where everyone is engaging in group sex, lovely, lovely sex, all positions, kissing, caressing, cunnilingus, and intercourse. After about five minutes of this I am ready, very lubricated. I lift one knee slightly and move my leg to one side, put my middle finger on or around the clitoris and gently massage in a circular motion. Then I dream of being invited to this party and all those delicious things are happening to me. I try to hold out as long as possible, but in just a minute or two, I have an orgasm. (26)

This woman fantasizes, when pleasuring herself, of first witnessing and then finding herself within a group sex scenario. In narrating the flow of her fantasy's sexual plot; the woman displaces the order of sexual operations delineated by Gagnon and Simon—kissing, caressing, cunnilingus, intercourse, and orgasm—first onto the various people in the group in the order she witnesses them and then, following her invitation to the group sex party, onto her fantasy of her own body's performance. In doing so, this fantasy scenario both establishes the presence of a broader sexual script—that engaged in by the participants in the group sex scenario—and then reduplicates it at the personal level with the woman's subsequent invitation to the party where, she fantasizes, "all those delicious things are happening to me." This set order of relations form a very particular sociosexual script—one quite proximate both to that laid out by Gagnon & Simon as well as that found in the series of toothbrush images.

One might ask why the toothbrush image series eliminates kissing and caressing from its tableau? I believe the answer to this question is twofold. First, kissing and caressing, though perhaps part of the typical cultural script, fall outside the realm of "hard core" proper and, from this, the obscenity that must be transmuted in this image tableau. By and large, both kissing and affectionate caressing are omnipresent outside of the sexual realm and within any number of other social scripts. Indeed, one of the earliest films, Thomas Edison's 1896 *The Kiss* prominently (and controversially) featured both. Advertised with the tag, "they get ready to kiss, begin to kiss, and kiss and kiss and kiss in a way that brings down the house every time," this 47 second film features actors May Irwin and John Rice reenacting the a scene of John McNally's then-contemporary musical, *The Widow Jones*. According to Kenneth Turan and Stephen F. Zito's 1974 *Sinema: American Pornographic Films and the People Who Make Them*, the dividing

line between so-called “soft-core” and “hard core” (and, by proxy, “hard core” and all other) film rests upon the absence/presence<sup>32</sup> of three elements: “erection, ejaculation, or penetration” (64). Films that feature erection, ejaculation, or gross penetration<sup>33</sup> of bodily cavities qualify as “hard core”; those that do not feature any of these elements cannot qualify as “hard core” (78).

Additionally, and perhaps more esoterically, kissing and caressing are, in and of themselves, not strictly held positions on the aforementioned script’s syntagmatic chain. In his 1964 (translated in 1967) discussion of the “garment system,” Roland Barthes describes clothing, when worn, as comprised of both syntagmatic and paradigmatic elements (*Elements of Semiology* 26-27). The paradigmatic elements are those that cannot be worn at the same time on the same parts of the body (hats, trousers, shoes, etc.), and the syntagmatic is the juxtaposition of different paradigmatic elements at one time within a complete clothing ensemble (27). Kissing and caressing, while commonly considered the intro elements of the sexual script, are neither necessarily exclusive to any of the other elements. Indeed, one can simultaneously kiss, caress, and have intercourse with another. One cannot, however, easily pleasure a partner’s genitals orally while simultaneously performing intercourse with said partner. Perhaps, in its own manner, the series of toothbrush images accounts for this lack of proper paradigmatic positioning by stripping these floating elements from a more delimited, syntagmatically secure system of mutually exclusive bodily interlockings?

In order to assess this series of images, we might want to follow Gagnon & Simon’s lead by turning to Kenneth Burke. In his famous 1966 collection of essays, *Language as Symbolic Action*, Burke introduces the concept of the *terministic screen*. “Not only does the nature of our terms affect the nature of our observations,” Burke writes, “many of the ‘observations’ are but implications of the particular terminology in terms of which the observations are made” (46). For example, Gagnon & Simon critique Freud for “attempting to gather either data from children who are, because of their stage of development, ill-equipped to report on their internal states or from adults who were asked to report about periods in their life when complex vocabularies for internal states did not exist for them” (*Sexual Conduct* 9). In both instances, the information will be filtered and processed through Freud’s *terministic screen*; the analyst will seek Oedipal dynamics, hidden wishes, language-based substitutions, and other Freudian terms at the expense, perhaps, of all other assessment techniques. This fact—that the very symbolics we use to assess the world both shift the nature of our observations received and strictly delimit the possibility of our originary assessments and performances—is the core to Burke’s *terministic screen*. “Reality,” Burke argues, “could not exist for us, were it not for our profound and inveterate involvement in symbol systems” (*Language as Symbolic* 48). When interpreting Dora’s case, for example, Freud’s overwhelming reliance on his assumptions regarding female desire leads him to read into Dora’s experiences a core desire for vaginal penetrative sex. Burke takes a slight jab at Freud when he warns, “to mistake this vast tangle of ideas for immediate experience is much more fallacious than to accept a dream as immediate experience” (48).

Burke claims his concept of the *terministic screen*, when expanded into the *Dramatistic screen*, does not lead to “mere relativism” for one reason: we must afford the possibility that a person, unlike a thing, is capable of action. “A *Dramatistic screen* does possess the philosophic character adapted to the discussion of man in general,” Burke

claims in defense of both his general theory of *Dramatism* and its (previously discussed) *dramatistic* pentad, because “as distinct from kinds of insight afforded by the application of special scientific terminologies,” it responds to humans as persons “rather than purely and simply as automata responding to stimuli” (53).

Gagnon & Simon, dealing with human actors in their research, focus on issues related to *Dramatism*. This series of toothbrush images, so closely related to the “assembly of events that are the physical elements of the current script in the United States for adolescent or adult heterosexual behavior that leads to coitus,” presents us with something akin to a *terministic screen*. It is, as I will argue and Gagnon & Simon have noted, the assemblage of bodily events that is widely recognized as the arc of the sex act leading to (and hence potentiating) orgasm. Additionally, this series of toothbrush images contains the base structure of bodily performance and engagement underpinning sexual displays as enacted over time in the feature-length, narrative, and orgasmically-oriented pornography that emerged in the early 1970s.

Because these concepts deal with bodily actions over time inasmuch as one physically performs sex, and because this arc is a standardized, known, and *examined* sexual script, perhaps we can more accurately connect the *terministic screen* to theories of *performativity*. Theories of *performativity*, like Gagnon & Simon’s writings on sexual scripting, attempt to understand the fraught meeting of the mind and the body by analyzing the capacity of speech and gestures to act or to consummate an action, or to construct and perform an identity. Both of these notions happen physically and over time. Concepts of *performativity* have most frequently been applied to gender, seeing gender as neither innate nor natural, but as a “reiterative power of discourse to produce the phenomena that it regulates and constrains” (Butler *Bodies* 2).

Bringing Burke’s concept of the *terministic screen* into orbit with more recent concepts of *performativity*, one cannot help but consider this standardized script for heterosexual sexual engagement that both potentiates and leads to orgasm as something both plotted, narrativized, and reiterative. This meeting of the mind and the body in a series of reiterative physical actions that develop over time and lead to orgasm now has a beginning, a middle, and an end terminus. This sequencing is, as Burke outlines for all *terministic screens* and Butler argues for *performative* identity, nothing more than convention passing as nature.

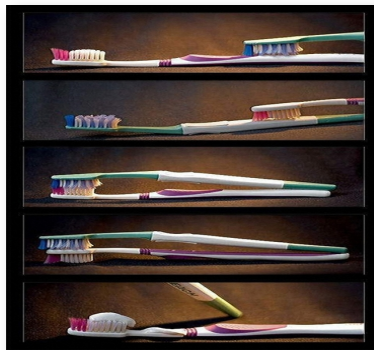


Fig. 2: Toothbrushes *in Flagrante*

To acknowledge this nexus between the *terministic screen* and *performativity*, this project introduces the term *performatistic screen* to describe the base, plotted structure of



bodily performance and engagement underpinning sexual displays as enacted over time in orgasmically-oriented “hard core” film. As we shall see in the next three chapters, this order of operations most likely emerged between 1970s *Mona the Virgin Nymph* (Benveniste & Ziehm) and 1972s *Deep Throat* (Damiano) as the standard representation for plotted and narrativized filmed sex embedded within a broader narrative film.

## Chapter 2: Oral Sex, Narrative Pornography, and the “Money Shot” (Representation & Structure)

The previous chapter analyzed the paired Foucaultian poles of obscenity law and sexology. It found in both a late 1960s pivot to issues of social construction and utility as tethered to narrative. It concluded by combining sexologist John H. Gagnon & William Simon’s late-1960s theory of “sexual scripting,” American philosopher Kenneth Burke’s term “terministic screen,” and the idea of “performativity” to introduce the concept of a *performatistic screen* for the filmed sex sequence. A “terministic screen” is a language or thought system that determines an individual’s perception and symbolic action in the world. A “sexual script,” like a “terministic screen,” is a blueprint and guideline for what one does, thinks, and feels in a sexual encounter to potentiate orgasm. And “performativity” describes the capacity of speech and gestures to act or to consummate an action, or to construct and perform an identity. These three terms, all at the nexus of the physical body and its mental activities and construction, combine in the concept of the *performatistic screen*, described in the first chapter as a base structure of bodily performance and engagement that underpins sexual displays as they are enacted over time in orgasmically-oriented, narrative hard core film. This sequencing—oral to fucking to cum shot—operates, it was hypothesized, as a conventional, narrative-like logic within the broader pornographic film.

This second chapter narrows the compass of the first, focusing on the paired emergences of oral sex in American sexual practice and the *performatistic screen* in filmed pornography. Broadly speaking, this chapter investigates the opening and closing elements of the *performatistic screen*. As seen in the last chapter, heterosexual vaginal intercourse has come to serve as metonym for heterosexuality itself. Mirroring this, anal intercourse has come to occupy an analogic position as metonym for male homosexuality.<sup>1</sup> Krafft-Ebing, surveying then-contemporary sodomy law, writes, “Among the immoralities between men, pederasty (*immissio penis in anum*) claims the principal interest” (*Psychopathia Sexualis* 408). Freud echoes this in *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* when he observes, “it seems that *pædicatio* with a male originates on the analogy of a similar act performed with a woman” (31).<sup>2</sup> This linking of act to sexuality, however conventional, is important in pornographic film: these two acts are at the center of the *performatistic screen*; one is common in heterosexual pornography, and the other is equally common in male homosexual pornography.

Oral sex in filmed pornography commonly takes three forms: fellatio, cunnilingus, and anilingus. One form of oral sex, the first element of the *performatistic screen*, is common to both pornographies (fellatio). Others tend to be more common in heterosexual pornography (cunnilingus) or homosexual pornography (anilingus). Unlike heterosexual vaginal intercourse and male anal intercourse, however, oral sex has not come to stand as metonym for any form of “sexuality.” Historically, it has been categorized four ways: as a pathology (especially anilingus), as a perversion adjacent to male anal intercourse (especially the fellator’s role in fellatio), as an accepted component of foreplay leading to vaginal penetration (especially the fellatrix’s role in fellatio as well

as male-female cunnilingus), and, more recently, as a fully pleasurable act in its own right (especially female-male fellatio). Fellatio also happens to be the core focus of both 1970's *Mona the Virgin Nymph* (Benveniste & Ziehm)—America's first widely released feature-length narrative pornographic film—and 1972's *Deep Throat* (Damiano)—considered the work that brought awareness of feature-length narrative pornographic film to more mainstream American audiences. One cannot analyze the emergence of the *performatistic screen* without also tracking the emergence and recalibration of cultural thinking regarding of oral sex.

Additionally, one cannot analyze the emergence of the *performatistic screen* without the second focus of this chapter: the cum shot as it has come to represent the closing event of this narrative-like, orgasmically-oriented routine in filmed pornography. Broadly speaking, cum shots emerge in early 70s filmed pornography alongside feature-length narratives as visible marker of sex's end. The emergence of the *performatistic screen* is perhaps best understood three ways: it is often embedded within a larger film narrative, it features a codified sequence of bodily events starting with oral and ending with male orgasm, and it establishes, as the toothbrush images that open the first chapter indicate, the male's cum shot as generic marker of visibly attained orgasmic pleasure.

## I. Oral Sex

This section will do two things. First, it will trace a brief, very loose history of oral sex from its emergence within sodomy laws through its use in the attachment of *mens rea* to sexual deviation. It will pay particular attention to how various thinkers position and interpret oral sex. Following this, it will trace a broader, mid-20<sup>th</sup>-century-focused cultural history of oral sex.

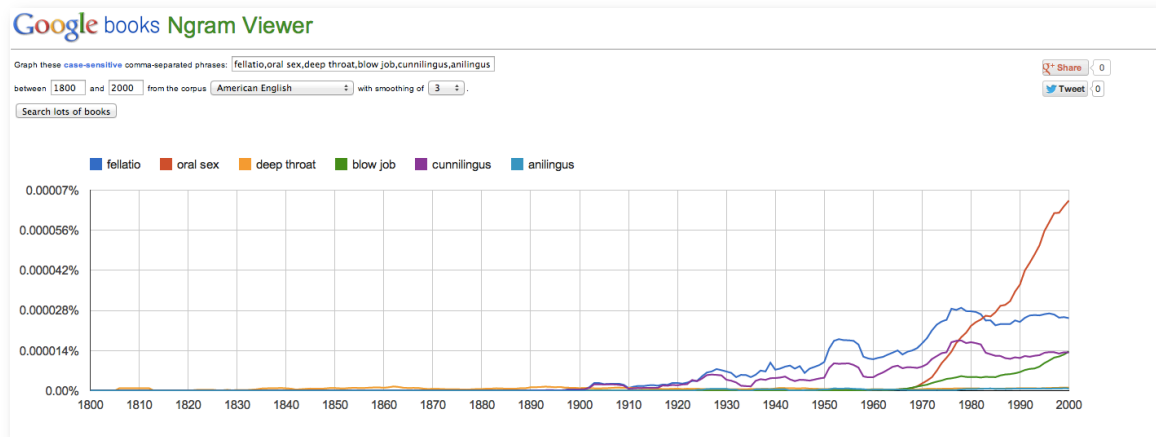


Fig. 1: Google Ngram Search

The image above is a Google Ngram search for “fellatio, oral sex, deep throat, blow job, cunnilingus, and anilingus.” According to Wikipedia, “The Google Ngram Viewer is a phrase-usage graphing tool which charts the yearly count of selected n-grams (letter combinations) or words and phrases, as found in over 5.2 million books digitized by Google Inc.” (“Google Ngram Viewer”). According to Google, “when you enter phrases into the Google Books Ngram Viewer, it displays a graph showing how those

phrases have occurred in a corpus of books (e.g., "British English", "English Fiction", "French") over the selected years" ("Google Ngram Viewer Info"). The image above shows trends in six ngrams from 1800 to 2000: "fellatio" (a 1-gram or unigram), "oral sex" (a 2-gram or bigram), "deep throat," "blow job," "cunnilingus," and "anilingus." The y-axis positioning of "blow job," for example, shows what percentage of all the bigrams contained in Google's sample of books written in English and published in the United States during these years are the bigram "blow job."

It is probably not too large a claim to make, given the above and what will come below, that although oral sex is nothing new, from the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to the present—and certainly from the late 1960s to the present, Americans have increasingly thought about it, discussed it, and admitted to partaking of it. It is also, as forthcoming chapters will endeavor to show, not too large a claim to make that 1972's *Deep Throat* (Gerard Damiano), the little porno that did, has become an oft-acknowledged turning point in America's 'oral' history. This is not to claim the connection is causal; rather it appears *Deep Throat*, the movie that mainstreamed both narrative pornography and its *performatistic screen*, emerged symptomatically from a particularly heady moment in America's sexual discursive.

## A. The 19<sup>th</sup> Century

Prior to the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the American record of who was doing what and how with whom is relatively unclear. The primary reason for this: sex was not discussed as openly<sup>4</sup> as it now is, and some of what we would now consider sex—particularly those acts that are distinctively non-procreative—were considered "crimes against nature" and/or culturally deployed outside of erotics. For example, the Wikipedia entry for "anilingus" features the following: "forced and mostly public anilingus was used from time immemorial as a form of humiliation and punishment... use of the practice in the Thirty Years' War was described by Grimmelshausen in *Simplicius Simplicissimus* (1668)" ("Anilingus"). Commonly referred to as "ass licking," "kissing ass," or "brown nosing," this non-erotic connotation is still applied to the behavior of someone who is overly obsequious. Additionally, in keeping with earlier codes of propriety, historical records were often expurgated. Mark J. Blechner, psychoanalyst and author of *Sex Changes: Transformations in Society and Psychoanalysis*, labels this practice of removing reference to sex and sexuality (particularly as applied to the homosexual record) "the closeting of history" (57).

### 1. Oral Sex and Sodomy Law

In American law, sodomy statutes were on record in every US state prior to 1962. Sodomy law, like other forms of criminal law policing sex, sought to control certain sexual interactions by criminalizing them and punishing the actors. The history of sodomy law brings together legal censure of both homosexuality and oral sexuality as well as the rise of what Foucault terms the "human sciences." In his 1966 study, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, Foucault describes them as follows:

...not, then, an analysis of what man is by nature; but rather an analysis that extends from what man is in his positivity (living, speaking, labouring being) to what enables this same being to know (or seek to know) what life is... The human sciences thus occupy the distance that separates (though not without connecting them) biology, economics, and philology from that which gives them possibility in the very being of man... In fact, the human sciences are no more within these sciences than they give them interiority by deflecting them towards man's subjectivity... Surreptitiously, they lead the sciences of life, labour, and language back to that analytic of finitude which shows how man, in his being, can be concerned with the things he knows, and know the things that, in positivity, determines his mode of being. But what the analytic requires in the interiority, or at least in the profound kinship, of a being who owes his finitude only to himself, the human sciences develop in the exteriority of knowledge. This is why what characterizes the human sciences is not that they are directed at a certain content (that singular object, the human being); it is much more a purely formal characteristic: the simple fact that, in relation to the sciences in which the human being is given as object (exclusive in the case of economics and philology, or partial in that of biology), they are in a position of duplication, and that this duplication can serve *a fortiori* for themselves. (353-354)

The "human sciences," sexology prime amongst them, pursue knowledge about Man through extended and continuous observation, statistical analyses, surveys, polls, and controlled experiments. They utilize these various and ongoing forms of *examination* to extract and develop a shareable, discrete *knowledge* from what was previously thought of as individuated human *pleasure*. In this way, they develop statistical norms for types of people and behaviors whereby the former can dictate the latter and vice-versa. Foucault argues that the "human sciences," rather than operate objectively, operate to reinforce any given era's power structure. In this way, sexology came to occupy an important position when adjudicating cases under sodomy law. Because "human sciences" purport to be able to reconstruct an individual's identity from his or her actions by comparing the aggregate of these actions to statistical norms, sexology became a crucial factor in both figuring out an offender's *mens rea* as well as in policing the line between accepted and unacceptable (wanted and unwanted) forms of sexuality and sexual pleasure.

In common law, criminal conduct is defined by looking at three things. First, the law looks at the *mens rea* or the offender's "guilty mind." Second, the law looks at the *actus reus*<sup>5</sup> or the offender's "guilty act." Finally, the law weighs any *attendant circumstances* or the "facts surrounding an event." For example, common law defined battery as "when a person actually and intentionally touches or strikes another against his or her will." The word "intentionally" describes the offender's state of mind (*mens rea*); "actually... touches or strikes another" describes the offender's action(s) (*actus reus*), and "against his or her will," or the point of view of someone other than the defendant (typically the victim), is utilized to determine factors that aggravate or mitigate the amount of culpability (*attendant circumstances*). Though in early common law *mens rea* only modified *actus reus*, over time American understandings of *mens rea* shifted, and by the late 1950s to early 1960s *mens rea* modified everything. *Mens rea*, expressed in common law via in the Latin phrase, *actus non facit reum nisi mens sit rea* ("the act is not culpable unless the mind is guilty"), depends upon a deep understanding of the accused's psychology. This was one of many factors in the explosion of research into the psychic aspects of sex and sexuality during the last two centuries.

In *Intimate Matters: A History of Sexuality in America*, historians John D'Emilio and Estelle B. Freedman write of the history of American sodomy law. Colonial Americans, they explain, considered sodomy (anal sex between men) and buggery (sex

with animals) “sins to be punished or for which a man could repent” (122). They continue, “the laws almost always applied to men, not women, because they typically referred to the unnatural spilling of seed, the biblical sin of Onan” (122). Legal scholar William N. Eskridge, Jr. writes of *actus reus* and *attendant circumstances* in early sodomy statutes in *Dishonorable Passions: Sodomy Laws in America 1861-2003*, “because American criminal law did not attempt to legislate female intimacy or oral sex, it did not perfectly fence out all nonmarital or nonprocreative sex,” and “because the age of consent was low, usually ten years, the regime also did not criminalize sexual activities between adults and adolescents” (24). We find in these early sodomy statutes a familiar logic: procreative heterosexual sex is normalized as a cultural goal and male homosexual anal sex is normalized as its sinful opposite; oral sexuality is completely absent in early sodomy statutes.

Nineteenth-century Americans expanded the field of sodomy’s *actus reus*; they “continued to condemn sodomy, a term which they used to refer not only to anal sex between men but also to various nonprocreative sexual acts, including masturbation and oral sex” (D’Emilio and Freedman 122). However, “at a time when the state was not heavily involved in the regulation of morality, urban police did not vigorously prosecute consensual sodomy” (123). For example, between 1769 and 1873 New York City courts issued only 22 indictments for sodomy, and it was only at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century that New York law began to criminalize “consenting to sodomy” (123) Eskridge writes, “once they became aware that many Americans, in our booming cities, were engaging in oral sex, some judges and many legislators between 1871 and 1921 extended sodomy laws to include fellatio, oral sex performed upon a man...cunnilingus—oral sex performed upon a woman—came within the scope of some sodomy laws in the course of the twentieth century” (2-3). Oral sex was not statutorily classified as sodomitic *actus reus* in the United States until June 11, 1879, when Pennsylvania amended its law to include the first detailed specification of what conduct constituted sodomy.<sup>6</sup> Unsurprisingly, this was both the first English-language law to include oral sex as sodomy as well as the first mention of women as intended defendants in non-bestiality/buggery sodomy cases (50). The first case to emerge under this new law was also the first reported fellatio case in the United States, *Commonwealth v. Smith* (Painter, *Pennsylvania*). Smith was accused of forcing another man to fellate him; “although the Court could not bring itself to specify that Smith had been accused of fellatio other than by making reference to the change in the law,” the judge “cautioned the jury against allowing their abhorrance [sic] of this crime to prejudice them in considering the evidence against the defendant” (Ibid.). The prosecuting witness, the fellator, claimed “he was overpowered—that the defendant held him down and forced him to the act—or, as he expresses it, ‘at last he forced me to have him’” (Ibid.). Despite testimonial against him, the Court overturned Smith’s conviction, reasoning the witness was an accomplice because he made no outcry, did not attempt to get away, and did not tell anyone of the act for weeks afterward (Ibid.). “Following the Pennsylvania approach of specifying fellatio as a crime against nature more precisely within state sodomy laws were New York (1886), Ohio (1889), Wyoming (1890), Louisiana (1896), Wisconsin (1897), Iowa (1902), Indiana (1905), Washington (1909), Missouri (1911), Oregon (1913), Nebraska (1913), North Dakota (1913) Virginia (1916, 1923), and Minnesota (1921)” (*Dishonorable* 50).

Tracing the legal status of anilingus proves much more difficult. D’Emilio and Freedman’s book makes no reference to it, and Eskridge’s has the word “rimming” just once in a footnote list of acts representing “sexual variety reported by the sex variants” found within a broader study cited (65, 426 fn. 75). Using Pennsylvania as an illustrative example, the legislature adopted a new sodomy law in 1917 that was reworded to punish any person who “carnally knows any male or female person by the anus or by or with the mouth, or voluntarily submits to such carnal knowledge” and specified that the crime was considered complete upon “penetration, however slight” (Painter, *Pennsylvania*). Though this new, broad statutory language could be used to outlaw anilingus, it was most likely not crafted with anilingus in mind. Of the three forms of oral sex, the law tends to overlook anilingus.

Eskridge ties this fin de siècle expansion of sodomy law to several factors: the emerging classification of the homosexual and increasing homophobia, increasing acknowledgment of female sexual desire, and developing fears of non-matrimonial and non-procreative sexuality in urban centers. D’Emilio and Freedman comment, “even as middle-class men and women began to limit family size and value romantic union in marriage, they worried about the specter of sexuality unleashed from traditional controls... whatever new sexual meanings they may have embraced within the private realm of marriage, middle-class Americans increasingly insisted on limiting the public expression of sexual desire,” and, “sex divorced from reproduction was simply too disturbing to unleash in public” (164).

Despite the increasing legal censure of oral sex in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there are records remaining of it being both encouraged and practiced. One famous example occurred midcentury on the east coast. American utopian socialist John Humphrey Noyes—the man who coined the term “free love—” developed the alternative sexual system “sexual communism.” John, his wife Harriet, and up to 300-something followers put “sexual communism” into practice in Putney, Vermont (1846-1848) and Oneida, New York (1848-1879). D’Emilio and Freedman write, “Noyes attempted to place not only property but also sexuality and reproduction under communal control” (118). He did so by espousing to the Oneidans a form of “free love” whereby any member was free to have sex with any other who consented and great care was taken to avoid unwanted pregnancy. Postmenopausal women in these communities were encouraged to introduce teenage males to intercourse (resulting in fewer pregnancies), and older men often introduced young women to sex. This was partly inspired by John and Harriet’s personal experiences; Harriet had survived four stillbirths, and the Noyeses wished to avoid unwanted children as well as the physical burdens of repeated pregnancies. “Noyes urged the avoidance of ‘propagative’ sex in favor of the pursuit of ‘amative’ sex,” and he urged this happen “through the practice of a form of male continence known as *coitus reservatus*,” whereby, “the man withdrew but did not ejaculate” (119). In this system, “erotic pleasure was acceptably only within an ideology of extreme male self control” (119). Oneidans maintained a traditional view of man as woman’s superior. Men were expected to control their bodies and urges (illustrated by *coitus reservatus*); women, considered the weaker vessel, were expected to give in to their sexual desire. “Noyes encouraged women to succumb... even to experience multiple orgasms,” and “Oneidans

could engage in extensive foreplay, positional variation, and oral sex to achieve this goal” (119).

In June 1879, one of Noyes' followers alerted him that he was about to be arrested for statutory rape. He fled Oneida for Canada under cover of night. The community, suffering from numerous pressures, slowly collapsed, notably leaving behind Oneida Limited, the silverware and flatware manufacturer. Compared to dozens of other short-lived radical utopian communities, Oneida famously persisted for thirty-plus years; its membership topped 300 in the 1870s, and it maintained branch communities in Brooklyn, New York; Wallingford, Connecticut; Newark, New Jersey; Cambridge, Vermont; and Putney, Vermont (120).

## 2. Oral Sex and 19<sup>th</sup> Century Sexology: *Mens Rea* and *Actus Reus* in Richard Freiherr von Krafft-Ebing

Richard Freiherr von Krafft-Ebing published his *Psychopathia Sexualis: eine Klinisch-Forensische Studie (Sexual Psychopathy: A Clinical-Forensic Study)* in 1886 (with a first American edition in 1892). Many consider this famous volume, a collection of case studies, the first scientific sexological work. It became a touchstone reference for psychiatrists, physicians, and even judges. In it, Krafft-Ebing categorizes a wide array of sexual psychopathologies in categories of *hyperaesthesia* (pathologically exaggerated sexual instinct), *anaesthesia* (absence of sexual instinct) and, most frequently, *paraesthesia* (perversion of the sexual instinct). In *Psychopathia Sexualis*, Krafft-Ebing casts a shadow of insanity upon all forms of sexual behavior that deviate from a marriage-based, procreative heterosexual norm. He unequivocally claims procreation the purpose of sexual desire, and he repeatedly reiterates his core contention that any form of recreational sex is a perversion of the sex drive.<sup>7</sup> *Psychopathia Sexualis* features four case references to fellatio and six to cunnilingus; it features no references to anilingus. Despite these references, it is clear Krafft-Ebing does not focus his analysis on these acts. “Exhibition and mutual masturbation [amongst other things] seem to indicate the probable existence of pathological conditions,” he explains, but “cunnilingus and fellare (penem in os mulieris arriqere) [penis in the mouth of a woman] have not thus far been shown to depend upon psychopathological conditions” (382). These acts, falling outside the basic purview of Krafft-Ebing’s analysis of sexual psychopathy, receive mention only when found within case studies exemplifying other delineated pathologies. In his section on masochism, for example, Krafft-Ebing first references fellatio within a section discussing *larvated masochism*, or the performance of “disgusting acts for the purpose of self-humiliation and sexual gratification” (134). “W, aged 45,” takes pleasure in drinking the urine of women, and “once he had the same pleasure in drinking the urine of a nine-year-old boy, with whom he once practiced fellatio” (137). The second reference to fellatio occurs in a short case within a section discussing “offenses against morality in the form of exhibition” (382). Krafft-Ebing discusses the “silliness” of exhibition inasmuch as it “points to intellectual and moral weakness; or, at least, to temporary inhibition of the intellectual and moral functions, with excitation of libido dependent upon a decided disturbance of consciousness” (383). The following 2-sentence case exemplifies Krafft-Ebing’s mentions of fellatio and cunnilingus: “Paralytic, aged sixty. At the age of fifty-



eight he began to exhibit himself to women and children. In the asylum at Verona, for a long time thereafter, he was lascivious, and also attempted fellatio” (384). Instead of representing their own form of sexual psychopathy, Krafft-Ebbing explains, “these horrible sexual acts [cunnilingus and fellare] seem to be committed only by sensual men who have become satiated or impotent from excessive indulgence in a normal way” (382).

He continues by making reference to various sodomy laws, “the practical importance of the subject makes it necessary that the sexual acts threatened with punishment as sexual crimes be considered by jurists from the standpoint of the medico-legal expert,” because “there is an advantage gained, in that the psycho-pathological acts, according to circumstances, are placed in the right light by comparison with analogous acts that fall within the domain of physiological psychology” (382). This passage is notable because, in it, Krafft-Ebbing shifts from a discussion of oral sexuality into a discussion of sodomy law. He tethers the two together, addressing both *mens rea* and *actus reus*, and claiming that the criminality of both require the expertise of scholars such as himself—expertise that can take acts and actors and produce determinations of the possible presence of, type of, and degree of psychopathology. Different sexual activities indicate different forms of pathology. A person whose *actus reus* indicates the presence of sexual psychopathy, following Krafft-Ebbing’s implication, will have a wholly different *mens rea* (and, presumably, *historia actione*) than a person whose *actus reus* (and *historia actione*) indicates the presence of a physiologically psychological ailment. The latter will be more culpable for having acted without the presence of underlying mental fault. In this way, Krafft-Ebbing’s work could be used to argue that congenital homosexuality (or oral copulation by congenital homosexuals) is less of a crime than oral copulation in and of itself.<sup>8</sup> Oral sex, though indicative of sexual desire, is neither fully equated with either sexuality nor any particular *mens rea* in Krafft-Ebbing’s works. Instead, it occupies a strange in-between. By tying it to homosexuality, Krafft-Ebbing shows a paucity of knowledge regarding this act as compared to homosexuality. Because of this, one can argue that oral sex requires more analysis by the “human sciences” in order to develop some knowledge of what it means and what interpretive standards can apply both to it and its agents.

In *Psychopathia Sexualis*, Krafft-Ebbing defines “antipathic sexuality” as “the total absence of sexual feeling toward the opposite sex” (54). “From the clinical and anthropological standpoint,” he writes, this abnormal manifestation offers various grades of development,” the major binary (with numerous sub-shadings) being between congenital and so-called “acquired antipathic sexual instinct” (54). “Sexual inversion,” he writes, “as a rule, exists *ab origine*,” and “we must look for the cause in central (cerebral) defects in the embryonic and fetal stages of gestation,” (348); acquired antipathic sexual instinct will have a root cause in some other root deviation of the sexual instinct (excessive masturbation, childhood sexual activity, debauchery, etc.). “Every case of genuine homosexuality,” he writes, “has its etiology, its concomitant physical and psychical symptoms, its reactions upon the whole psychical being...the diagnosis is to be found in the anamnesis, the aetiology, the *vita antea*, the psycho-sexual development of the case” (444). In this way, if a medico-legal expert argued that a man accused of a crime was a congenital homosexual, his deviance would be one he could not fully

control; his *mens rea* would be different from either that of an acquired antipathic or that of a non-homosexual accused of the same *actus reus* under sodomy law.<sup>9</sup>

### 3. Oral Sex and 19<sup>th</sup> Century Sexology: *Mens Rea* and *Actus Reus* in Havelock Ellis

A decade after Krafft-Ebing published *Psychopathia Sexualis*, British sexologist Havelock Ellis and co-author John Addington Symonds published *Das Konträre Geschlechtsgeföhle (Sexual Inversion)*.<sup>10</sup> This was the first English medical textbook on homosexuality, and it would eventually come to be the second volume in Ellis' seven part series, *Studies in the Psychology of Sex*.<sup>11</sup> Discussing Ellis, D'Emilio and Freedman write, "although Freudianism proved more enduring in its lifetime, in the short run the writings of the English sexologist Havelock Ellis had a greater impact" (*Intimate Matters* 224). Ellis' studies quickly found a broad American audience. Described by historian Paul Robinson as the first of the sexual modernists, Ellis' writings brushed against almost every aspect of nineteenth-century sexual heritage (*Intimate Matters* 224).<sup>12</sup> "For Ellis, sexual indulgence did not pose a threat to health or character [as it did in Krafft-Ebing]... as with mass-circulation presentations of Freud, Ellis seemed to be advocating gratification rather than self-control" (224). In his work, Ellis writes approvingly of masturbation; he questions the necessity of marriage, calling it "essentially rather... a tragic condition than a happy condition," and, perhaps most surprisingly, he argues that homosexuality (or "sexual inversion" as he terms it), is "essentially a congenital condition, as natural for its practitioners as heterosexual relations were for the majority" (224). Because of this, Ellis argues against legal punishment of "sexual inverts." Like Krafft-Ebing, Ellis differentiates between inborn and acquired same-sex desire. He term the former "sexual inversion," or "sexual instinct turned by inborn constitutional abnormality toward persons of the same sex," and the latter "homosexuality," which he defines as "all sexual attractions between persons of the same sex, even when seemingly due to the accidental absence of the natural objects of sexual attraction, a phenomenon of wide occurrence among all human races and among most of the higher animals" (*Sexual Inversion*).<sup>13</sup> Unlike Krafft-Ebing, Ellis considers neither sexual inversion nor homosexuality a disease, immoral, or a crime.

Robinson writes that Ellis' defense of a variety of sexual practices is indicative of his belief that the world needed, "not more restraint, but more passion" (*Modernization of Sex* 31). Indeed, in 1896's *Sexual Inversion* one finds numerous references to fellatio and some to "cunnilinctus" (Ellis' term for "the action of cunnilingus") with very little of Krafft-Ebing's judgment. As in Krafft-Ebing's writings, there are no references to anilingus. The bulk of these references to fellatio and cunnilinctus occur within case studies, and there is no particular interpretation attributed to them beyond their presence as a form of sexual interaction. Summarizing his findings in the section "Methods of Sexual Relationship" with reference to sodomy law, Ellis writes, "the exact mode in which an inverted instinct finds satisfaction is frequently of importance from the medico-legal standpoint; from a psychological standpoint it is of minor significance, being chiefly of interest as showing the degree to which the individual has departed from the instinctive feelings of his normal fellow-beings" (*Sexual Inversion*). He continues, "taking 57 inverted men of whom I have definite knowledge... 12, restrained by moral or other considerations, have never had any physical relationship... in some 22 cases the

sexual relationship rarely goes beyond close physical contact and fondling, or at most mutual masturbation and intercrural intercourse,” and “in 10 or 11 cases fellatio (oral excitation)—frequently in addition to some form of mutual masturbation, and usually, though not always, as the active agency—is the form preferred” (*Ibid*).

In *Sexual Selection in Man*, the fourth volume of *Studies in the Psychology of Sex*, Ellis writes of “skin sensations...and secondary sexual centres” (including fellatio and cunnilinctus but not anilingus), “it is important to remember that the phenomena we are here concerned with are essentially normal...as they are aids to tumescence they must be regarded as coming within the range of normal variation” (*Ibid*). In support of this, Ellis extensively cites Julius Rosenbaum’s *Geschichte der Lustseuche im Altertume* (History of Syphilis in Ancient Times), “it may be accepted that both cunnilingus and fellatio, as practiced by either sex, are liable to occur among healthy or morbid persons, in heterosexual or homosexual relationships,” and that “the essentially normal character of cunnilingus and fellatio, when occurring as incidents in the process of tumescence, is shown by the fact that they are practiced by many animals” (*Ibid*). Rosenbaum continues his discussion of these acts by claiming, “they have little psychological significance, except to the extent that when practiced to the exclusion of normal sexual relationships they become perversions, and as such tend to be associated with various degenerative conditions, although such associations are not invariable” (*Ibid*). Ellis does not provide interpretation of the Rosenbaum passage, but his later writings indicate he does not agree with Rosenbaum’s privileging of (presumably) heterosexual intercourse.

Though Ellis presents neither a deep psychological, nor a deep scientific, nor a deep cultural codification of fellatio and cunnilinctus (he never mentions anilingus in the six volumes), he does briefly discuss their “aesthetic qualities.” Writing, “they may be considered unæsthetic, but...it has, moreover, to be remembered that æsthetic values are changed under the influence of sexual emotion,” and that, furthermore, “from the normal standpoint of ordinary daily life, indeed, the whole process of sex is unæsthetic, except the earlier stages of tumescence” (*Ibid*). One of these “aesthetic qualities” could be odor and taste; Ellis quotes Albert Moll’s *Untersuchungen über die Libido sexualis: Erster Band, Erster Teil* (*Studies on the Sexual Appetite: First Volume, Part One*), “cunnilingus and fellatio derive part of their attraction, more especially in some individuals, from a predilection for the odors of the sexual parts” (*Ibid*). Ellis rehashes these sentiments in *Sex in Relation to Society*, the sixth volume of *Studies in the Psychology of Sex*. This book, Ellis’ attempt to parse the “relationship of the sexual impulse to third persons and to the community at large with all its anciently established traditions,” can be interpreted as his expansion on the issue of “aesthetic qualities” (*Sex in Relation*). Ellis, breaking with Krafft-Ebing’s Victorian sensibilities, harshly criticizes the culture (and even perhaps the legal culture) within which sex is attributed negative “aesthetic qualities.” In chapter 11, “The Art of Love,” Ellis writes, “Among most uncivilized races there appear to be few or no ‘sexually frigid’ women...it is little to the credit of our own ‘civilization’ that it should be possible for physicians today to assert, even with the faintest plausibility, that there are some 25 percent of women who may thus be described” (*Ibid*). This fact, Ellis claims, indicates backward progress. To prove his point, Ellis again cites numerous scholars at length.

Fellatio and cunnilinctus, while they are not strictly methods of coitus, in so far as they do not involve the penetration of the penis into the vagina, are very widespread as preliminaries, or as vicarious forms of coitus, alike among civilized and uncivilized peoples. Thus, in India, I am told

that fellatio is almost universal in households, and regarded as a natural duty towards the paterfamilias. As regards cunnilinctus Max Dessoir has stated (*Allgemeine Zeitschrift für Psychiatrie*, 1894, Heft 5) that the superior Berlin prostitutes say that about a quarter of their clients desire to exercise this, and that in France and Italy the proportion is higher; the number of women who find cunnilinctus agreeable is without doubt much greater. (*Ibid*)

These matched claims by various scholars lead Ellis to the following conclusion: “it seems to some that the recognition of variations in sexual relationships, of the tendency of the monogamic [heterosexual intercourse] to overpass its self-imposed bounds, is at best a sad necessity, and a lamentable fall from a high ideal. That, however, is the reverse of the truth. The great evil of monogamy, and its most seriously weak point, is its tendency to self-concentration at the expense of the outer world” (*Ibid*). Rather than privilege married, monogamous, heterosexuality and its assumed corollary in heterosexual intercourse at the expense of other forms of physical intimacy, Ellis implicitly and explicitly argues for play and experimentation in sexual interactions.<sup>12</sup> In making this claim, though he does not attempt to map any particular meaning onto oral sex, he presents it as a viable form of intimacy and pleasure that should, presumably, be free of legal censure.

Both Krafft-Ebbing and Ellis were highly influential sexologists. Their writings, unsurprisingly, were very important in adjudicating *mens rea* during sodomy trials. Surveying their writings on oral sex, one notices several things. First, they are both part and parcel of the operations of what Foucault terms “human sciences.” Both sexologists utilized forms of ongoing *examination* to amass concepts of what is normal and what is deviant. Second, when discussing oral sexuality, both sexologists appear to waver as to what it indicates regarding *mens rea*. In both of their writings, oral sexuality ties back to other, supposedly better known, types—particularly the homosexual.

## **B. The 20<sup>th</sup> Century**

### **1. Freud: Pathology, Homosexuality, Oral Sexuality, and *Mens Rea***

Though both Krafft-Ebing’s and Ellis’ writings proved influential at the turn of the century, “the writings of Sigmund Freud perhaps best symbolize the new direction that sexual theorizing took in the twentieth century” (D’Emilio and Freedman 223). Freud, whose 1909 visit to lecture at Clark University introduced influential intellectuals and professionals to his work, was quickly translated and published in America. “By the mid-1910s,” D’emilio and Freedman write, “popularizers were presenting Freudian ideas to a larger audience” (223). Freudian concepts such as infantile sexuality, the Oedipal triangle, female frigidity, and the primacy of sexual instinct in human life—often stripped of their subtlety and complexity—quickly grabbed hold of America’s imagination.<sup>14</sup>

Perhaps, given Krafft-Ebing’s decidedly negative treatment of many modes of sexual interaction and Ellis’ open challenges to the institution of marriage, one can advance the claim that Freud—particularly the Freud that lodged in the America’s popular consciousness during the 20<sup>th</sup> Century—balanced the two in a more palatable package. Like Ellis, Freud privileges sexual instinct; he places “libido,” his term for the sexual instinct energy force, at the center of human interaction and argues that its unrepentant presence is the determining factor in the construction of both psychic and

social systems. However, like Krafft-Ebing (and unlike Ellis), Freud's theories clearly advocate for both childbearing and heterosexual union. D'Emilio and Freedman write, "if Americans were not quite ready to abandon marriage, many were prepared to accept revised notions of female sexuality and to reassess the place that sexual expression held in a happy life" (231).

Freud's writings advocate for sexual experimentation, but they do so only as "fore-pleasure" or "supplement" to "the normal sexual aim...the union of the genitals in the act known as copulation, which leads to a release<sup>15</sup> of the sexual tension," and, presumably, the production of the woman's substitute phallus, a boy child (*Three Essays* 28, 39). Congruently, all sexual interaction outside of the "normal sexual aim"—even if it can lead to a "discharge of the sexual substance—" is implicitly coded by Freud as either a "perversion" (not necessarily indicative of a culpable *mens rea*) or, if "so far removed from the normal in...content" a "pathology" (possibly indicative of a culpable *mens rea*). "Perversions" in Freud are defined mainly by aim rather than by the sex of the object in relation to the self; they exist on the same continuum as normality. Freud argues perversions are normal when part of the process leading to heterosexual coitus, and that any organ can come to function as an erotogenic zone. Perversions become pathologies when they take the place of the normal sexual aims and object "in all circumstances," or when they take on the "characteristics of exclusiveness and fixation" (39). In pathologies, Freud writes, "the quality of the new sexual aim is of a kind to demand special examination"; this is "especially so where (as, for instance, in cases of licking excrement<sup>16</sup> or of intercourse with dead bodies) the sexual instinct goes to astonishing lengths in successfully overriding the resistances of shame, disgust, horror or pain" (39). Though this quote indicates Freud might maintain definite and strong thoughts about anilingus, in general, rather than equate any particular act with a culpable *mens rea*, he argues at length that the "pathological character in a perversion is found to lie not in the content of the new sexual aim but in its relation to the normal" (39). This "normal" rests at the nexus of the individual's taste and his or her considerations of broader cultural standards. Though perversions are recognized by the subjective feeling of disgust they elicit, this subjectivity is, for Freud, both historically and conventionally determined—particularly as perversions pass into pathologies. Regarding *mens rea*, Freud's body of work connects perversion and neurosis as two sides of the same psychic formation. He writes in the "Conclusion" of *Three Essays*, "neuroses are the negative of perversions" (115). Individuals who are conflicted about or condemn sexual desires (perverse aims, component instincts, normal sexuality, etc.) they define as perverse or abnormal (either consciously or unconsciously) may repress them and constitute neurotic symptoms instead. In this way, for example, Freud introduces terms such as "anal retention," or compulsive withholding and orderliness, to describe a particular mode of expressing repressed sadistic anal desires. Using this metric, the psychoanalyst becomes the master to deciphering *mens rea*; his trade is finding the links between perverse impulses and aberrant behavior, and it is his work to articulate the limits of so-called "normal" behavior.

This shift from Krafft-Ebing to Ellis to Freud and its implications for adjudicating *mens rea* (as well as insight into Freud's thoughts on oral sexuality) is most clearly modeled in their various understandings of what we now term homosexuality.<sup>17</sup> "Every case of genuine homosexuality," Krafft-Ebing writes, "has its etiology, its concomitant

physical and psychical symptoms, its reactions upon the whole psychical being...the diagnosis is to be found in the anamnesis, the aetiology, the *vita antea*, the psycho-sexual development of the case” (444). Like Krafft-Ebing, Ellis also considers sexual inversion inborn. Where his work deviates from Krafft-Ebing’s is in its further claim that homosexual desire—a rough equivalent to “acquired antipathic sexual instinct” in Krafft-Ebing’s writings—is neither a disease, nor immoral, nor is its expression criminal. Instead, Ellis writes, “whatever its ultimate explanation, sexual inversion may thus fairly be considered a ‘sport,’ or variation, one of those organic aberrations which we see throughout living nature, in plants and in animals” (*Sexual Inversion*). Though “many people imagine that what is abnormal is necessarily diseased,” when discussing sexual inversion and homosexual desire, “that is not the case, unless we give the word disease an inconveniently and illegitimately wide extension” (*Ibid*).

Unlike Krafft-Ebing and Ellis, Freud’s work tends, over the course of his writings, to increasingly mark homosexuality as the outcome of some form of libidinal arrest in the phallic phase. As discussed in the previous chapter, Freud’s theory presented in his 1905 text, *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, claims children are originally polymorphously perverse, or capable of gaining sexual gratification outside socially normative sexual behaviors. This perversity includes both a non-genital libidinal thrust as well as a “bisexual” ability to take either parent (or members of either gender) as sexual object. In this same text, Freud identifies three types of inverts: *absolute* inverts who take their own sex exclusively as sexual objects; *amphigenic* inverts who may equally take their own or the opposite sex as sexual objects, and *contingent* inverts who are capable of taking someone of their own sex as object and deriving satisfaction from intercourse under certain external conditions (14-15). He writes, referencing both Krafft-Ebing and Ellis, “the earliest assessments regarded inversion as an innate indication of nervous degeneracy” (16). Assessing claims to both degeneracy and innateness, Freud finds that “inverts cannot be regarded as degenerate,” and, “the nature of inversion is explained neither by the hypothesis that it is innate nor by the alternate hypothesis that it is acquired” (16-19). “In the former,” he writes, “we must ask in what respect it is innate,” and, “in the latter case it may be questioned whether the various accidental influences would be sufficient to explain the acquisition of inversion without the co-operation of something in the subject himself” (19). Though he acknowledges variation in both, “a person’s final sexual attitude,” Freud writes, “is the result of a number of factors, not all of which are yet known” (19).

Despite the fact that Freudian psychoanalysis does not have a complete explanation for inversion, Freud writes in a footnote appended to the 1920 revision of *Three Essays*, “nevertheless, it has discovered the psychical mechanism of its development, and has made essential contributions to the statement of the problem involved,” because “in all the cases we have examined, we have established the fact that the future inverts, in the earliest years of their childhood, pass through a phase of very intense but short-lived fixation to a woman (usually their mother), and that, after leaving this behind, they identify themselves with a woman and take *themselves* as their sexual object” (23 note 1).

### a. Homosexuality and Oral Sexuality in *Leonardo*

This footnote appears to stem from his 1910 work, *Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of His Childhood*. This study, interestingly enough, discusses both homosexuality and oral sexuality at great length—arguing that both of these find root both in the same period of childhood development and via similar psychic mechanisms. In fact, in the Freudian oeuvre, this 100-page study is the single longest sustained engagement with both subjects. In doing this work, Freud clearly articulates his major premise regarding both the childhood origins of homosexuality as well as why and how homosexuality and oral sexuality appear to hem close to one another. In *Leonardo*, Freud psychoanalytically interprets what he sees as Leonardo's latent homosexuality via the painter's 1508 work *The Virgin and Child with St. Anne* (below).



Fig. 2: The "Vulture"

He argues the Virgin's garment, when viewed sideways, reveals a hidden vulture, and that this vulture is a manifestation of a childhood fantasy Leonardo writes about in his twelve-volume *Codex Atlanticus*:

It seems that I was always destined to be so deeply concerned with vultures; for I recall as one of my very earliest memories that while I was in my cradle [*essendo io in culla*] a vulture<sup>18</sup> came down to me, and opened my mouth with its tail, and struck me many times with its tail against my lips. (Freud *Leonardo* 32)

Freud reasons that this memory, which Leonardo ascribes to his "suckling period," is more likely "a phantasy, which he formed at a later date and transposed to his childhood" (33). "Quite unlike conscious memories from the time of maturity," Freud writes, childhood memories "are not fixed at the moment of being experienced and afterwards repeated, but are only elicited at a later age when childhood is already past; in the process they are altered and falsified, and are put into the service of later trends, so that generally speaking they cannot be sharply distinguished from phantasies" (33). Despite this, Freud argues, "what someone thinks he remembers from his childhood is not a matter of

indifference; as a rule the residual memories—which he himself does not understand—cloak priceless pieces of evidence about the most important features in his mental development” (35). Psychoanalysis, Freud reasons, is “an excellent method for helping us to bring this concealed material to light” (36).

In his analysis of Leonardo’s memory, Freud writes, “a tail, ‘*coda*’, is one of the most familiar symbols and substitutive expressions for the male organ, in Italian no less than in other languages; the situation in the phantasy, of a vulture opening the child’s mouth and beating about inside it vigorously with its tail, corresponds to the idea of an act of *fellatio*, a sexual act in which the penis is put into the mouth of the person involved...it resembles certain dreams and phantasies found in women or passive homosexuals (who play the part of the woman in sexual relations)” (37).

To get at the core of Leonardo’s childhood memory, Freud takes his reader through a lengthy discussion of *fellatio*. He comments broadly, “the inclination to take a man’s sexual organ into the mouth and suck at it,” though it “is considered a loathsome sexual perversion” in “respectable society,” “is nevertheless found with great frequency among women of to-day—and of earlier times as well, as ancient sculptures show—, and in the state of being in love it appears completely to lose its repulsive character” (38). Moving from this towards psychoanalytic analyses, he writes, “further investigation informs us that this situation...may be traced to an origin of the most innocent kind,” because “it repeats in a different form a situation in which we all felt comfortable—when we were still in our suckling days (*‘essendo io in culla’*) and took our mother’s (or wet nurse’s) nipple into our mouth and sucked at it” (38). This is a rearticulation of several arguments advanced in *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*. Freud argues infantile sexuality, or pre-oedipal sexuality, originates via a tethering of libidinal pleasure to somatic (eating, defecating, etc.) necessity (Freud *Three Essays* 61). Because the young child has no real sexual object, infantile sexuality is auto-erotic; its sexual aim is dominated by an erotogenic zone (“part of the skin or mucous membrane in which stimuli of a certain sort evoke a feeling of pleasure possessing a particular quality”) (61). In the case of oral pleasure, children link pleasure in nourishment to their mouth, or the source of their sustenance. Thumb-sucking, or sensual sucking of any sort, reduplicates early pleasure at nourishment; “it is clear,” he writes, “that the behavior of a child who indulges in thumb-sucking is determined by a search for some pleasure which has already been experienced and is now remembered” (60).

Freud considers adult (post-latent) oral sexual pleasure something akin to thumb-sucking. “Certain regions of the body, such as the mucous membrane of the mouth,” he writes, appear to be making the claim “that they should themselves be regarded and treated as genitals”; this “claim is justified by the history of the development of the sexual instinct” (31). Though kissing is considered conventional, “the use of the mouth as a sexual organ is regarded as a perversion if the lips (or tongue) of one person are brought into contact with the genitals of another”; echoing Ellis’ discussion of “aesthetic qualities” in sex, Freud claims this condemnation of oral eroticism is indicative not of a primary state of logic but rather of a conventional (cultural) formation of disgust sedimented atop (and in reaction to) an original polymorphous perversity (30). Adult oral sexuality is, in his logic, a “deviation in respect of the sexual aim,” because the “normal” sexual aim is heterosexual copulation (28). However, considering object choice, adult oral sexuality may or may not be a deviation, because one can still take a member of the



opposite sex for one's sexual object. As with other "perversions," oral sexuality connects itself to "normal" sexual life by virtue of its ties to infantile sexuality's polymorphous perversity. "Perversions," Freud writes, "are sexual activities which either (a) extend, in an anatomical sense, beyond the regions of the body that are designed for sexual union, or (b) linger over the immediate relations to the sexual object which should normally be traversed rapidly on the path towards the final sexual aim" (28). Oral sexuality (certainly fellatio and cunnilingus; less certainly anilingus), because it deviates from penile-vaginal intercourse, is a "perversion." Freud labels this "perversion" as "fore-pleasure," arguing it is perfectly normal to experience it as a lead up to an "end-pleasure" of heterosexual intercourse. Should it supplant penile-vaginal intercourse as sexual aim, it operates as a "pathological perversion." Furthermore, and this is perhaps the more interesting result one can draw from Freud, fellatio and cunnilingus, because both are mouth-genital (or "sucked" versus "being sucked"), presents a situation where, though both partners are mutually partaking in a "perversion with regard to the sexual aim," one partner is experiencing genital pleasure while the other (the fellator or cunnilinguist) is experiencing something entirely different—something possibly tied to infantile sexuality and auto-eroticism. In anilingus, on the other hand, both partners are united in experiencing non-genital pleasures.

Here, again, Freud mirrors the writings of Krafft-Ebbing and Ellis inasmuch as he wavers as to what oral sexuality indicates regarding *mens rea*. In Freud's schema, one partner is enjoying a completely different type of pleasure than the other, and these pleasures are indicative of a wholly different set of investments and engagements with the body that arise from (and tie back to) different moments in psychic development. Like Krafft-Ebbing and Ellis, Freud tends to shift away from these murkier, less developed concepts about the act of oral sexuality by attempting to tie them into the supposedly better researched and better understood homosexual as a type.

Discussing Leonardo specifically, Freud writes, "what the phantasy conceals is merely a reminiscence of sucking—or being suckled—at his mother's breast" (*Leonardo* 38). Tracing a link between the hieroglyphic representations of vultures as maternal symbols, the Egyptian belief that there are no male vultures and that the females of the species are impregnated by the wind, and the deployment of the latter as proof of the Virgin Birth by "Fathers of the Church," Freud comes to the conclusion that "he once happened to read in one of the Fathers or in a book on natural history the statement that all vultures were females and could reproduce their kind without any assistance from a male: and at that point a memory sprang to his mind, which was transformed into the phantasy...but which meant to signify that he also had been such a vulture-child—he had a mother but no father" (42). Leonardo, who was born out-of-wedlock to a peasant mother, was not received into his wealthy father's home until the age of five. "The Vulture phantasy confirms," Freud writes, "that Leonardo spent the first years of his life alone with his mother," and that this led him to brood on the question of where babies come from and what fathers have to do with their origins (45). "Later on it will not be difficult to show," Freud writes, "how his curiosity about the flight of birds was derived from the sexual researches of his childhood" (45).

If the vulture represents the symbolic chain articulated above, the question remains as to "why this content has been recast into a homosexual situation" (46). To

answer this, Freud acknowledges the commingling of masculine and maternal characteristics in representations of deities and animals in the Egyptian pantheon as well as Egyptian and Greek myth cycles. “Mythology,” he reasons, “may then offer the explanation that the addition of a phallus to a female body is intended to denote the primal creative force of nature, and that all these hermaphrodite divinities are expressions of the idea that only a combination of male and female elements can give a worthy representation of divine perfection” (48). Though these avenues of inquiry are interesting and persuasive, Freud does not find them adequately convincing “of the puzzling psychological fact that the human imagination does not boggle at endowing a figure which is intended to embody the essence of the mother with the mark of male potency which is the opposite of everything maternal” (48). Instead, he argues, psychoanalysis’s “infantile sexual theories provide the explanation” (48).

In Freud’s schema, a little boy begins his inquiry into the riddles of sexual life dominated by interest in his organ. Believing his genitals invaluable, he “makes the assumption that all human beings, women as well as men, possess a penis like his own” (49). It is during this time—“when he still holds women at full value”—that the little boy invests in the erotic activity of looking at other people’s genitals (50). “He wants to see other people’s genitals,” Freud writes, “at first in all probability to compare them with his own”; furthermore, “the erotic attraction that comes from his mother soon culminates in a longing for her genital organ, which he takes to be a penis” (50). When met with contrary evidence from activities with other children, the little boy “is incapable of admitting to himself that the content of this perception is that he cannot find a penis in girls” (49). Rather, he avoids facing the “uncanny and intolerable idea” by concluding girls have a small penis that will grow (49). When this expectation is dashed, “he has another remedy at his disposal: little girls too had a penis, but it was cut off and in its place was left a wound...he will tremble for his masculinity, but at the same time he will despise the unhappy creatures on whom the cruel punishment has, as he supposes already fallen (49).

This realization is the crucial moment in the Oedipal that causes the child to break from his mother. “With the discovery...that women do not have a penis, the longing [for the mother’s penis] often turns into its opposite and gives place to a feeling of disgust which in the years of puberty can become the cause of psychical impotence, misogyny, and permanent homosexuality” (50).

Freud, utilizing both his broad (and more accepted) theory of childhood development as well as his broad (and more accepted) theory of the etiology of homosexuality in childhood development, attempts to naturalize or embed Leonardo’s oral fantasy within a supposedly better understood and articulated part of psychoanalysis. He asks, “whether this [Leonardo’s] phantasy does not indicate the existence of a causal connection between Leonardo’s relation with his mother in childhood and his later manifest, if ideal [sublimated], homosexuality” (53). His answer: “we should not venture to infer a connection of this sort from Leonardo’s distorted reminiscence if we did not know from the psycho-analytic study of homosexuals patients that such a connection does exist and is in fact an intimate and necessary one” (53). Freud argues that, though homosexuals (and Krafft-Ebing and Ellis) claim they are “men who are innately compelled by organic determinants to find pleasure in men,” this argument does not take into account the insights provided by psychoanalysis (53). “Much as one would be glad on grounds of humanity to endorse their claims,” Freud writes, “one must treat their

theories with some reserve, for they have been advanced without regard for the psychical genesis of homosexuality” (53).

### **b. Freud on Homosexuality**

In all his male homosexual patients, Freud claims, “the subjects had a very intense erotic attachment to a female person, as a rule their mother, during the first period of childhood, which is afterwards forgotten; this attachment was evoked or encouraged by too much tenderness on the part of the mother herself, and further reinforced by the small part played by the father during their childhood” (53). In a footnote appended to the Leonardo da Vinci text in 1919, Freud expands on this point in a manner similar to his 1920 footnote in *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*:

Psycho-analytic research has contributed two facts that are beyond question to the understanding of homosexuality...The first is the fixation of the erotic needs on the mother...the other is contained in the statement that everyone, even the most normal person, is capable of making a homosexual object-choice, and has done so at some time in his life. (54 note 10)

In both *Three Essays* and *Leonardo*, Freud advances the following broad etiological myth for male homosexuality: the boy child, lacking a father figure, grows up over-attracted to his mother; he comes to identify with her and narcissistically seek love objects like himself to love as his mother loved him (*Three Essays* 23 note 1, *Leonardo* 55). In both *Three Essays* and *Leonardo*, this etiology directly overlaps with that of oral perversion—both take place at the same time in childhood development, and both overvalue some form of relationship to the mother (either that between the mouth and breast as source of pleasure in nourishment or as an object of erotic fixation). In *Leonardo*, Freud directly conflates the two and reads a fantastic memory of fellating bird’s tail as a condensation and displacement of both latent homosexuality as well as pleasure in suckling. Over the course of his writings, Freud advances three additional and related explanations for male homosexuality:

1. Homosexuality arises from the boy’s discovery that his mother is ‘castrated;’ it engenders an intense anxiety that causes him to turn from his castrated mother to a ‘woman with a penis.’
2. If a ‘negative’ or ‘inverted’ Oedipus complex occurs, a boy seeks his father’s love by taking on a feminine identification and reverting to anal eroticism.
3. Finally, homosexuality could result from a reaction formation wherein sadistic jealousy of brothers or the father is converted to love of other men. (Lewes 7)

Though never as central a concern in his work as male homosexuality, Freud discusses the etiology of lesbianism in one case study, 1920’s “The Psychogenesis of a Case of Female Homosexuality.” In it, he attributes his female patient’s homosexuality to a “masculinity complex” and a “libidinal withdrawal” which have their origins in the girl’s disappointment with her father. Freud claims the young girl turns away from her father (and subsequently from men) as object and identifies with him as subject, taking first her mother and then another woman as objects in his place (Young-Bruehl 257).

### **c. Freud’s Impact: Van de Welde**

Despite never fully taking a position in the “nature”/“nurture” debate regarding either homosexuality or oral sexuality, the heft of his writing (and indeed the entire project of psychoanalysis) indicates that Freud’s theories, focusing on the importance of ascertaining the psychical genesis of ailments and inclinations, form a major break from

both Krafft-Ebing and Ellis. D’Emilio and Freedman write, “at first, medical theorists leaned towards the hypothesis that homosexuality was a degenerative disease, an acquired form of insanity,” but “by the early twentieth century, especially as the writings of Havelock Ellis gained wider currency, opinion had shifted towards a congenital model, and a rough consensus developed that ‘inverts’ were born that way”; it was “not until the 1920s, when Freudianism swept competitors from the field, would the pendulum swing back to the position that homosexuality was an acquired condition” (226).

After Freud (but not necessarily keeping with either Freud’s own views and the views espoused in Freudian psychoanalysis<sup>19</sup>), American popular thought regarding sexuality and sex shifted in two directions. D’emilio and Freedman summarize, “even as some sexual boundaries were dissolving, others grew tighter,” because “hand in hand with the more permissive attitudes of sexual liberalism toward most forms of heterosexual expression went an effort to label homosexual behavior as deviant” (288). This is echoed by William N. Eskridge Jr. when he writes that Freud “provided grist for American traditionalists to both broaden and narrow their understanding of ‘perverted,’ and presumptively criminal, practices,” because, “even when his or her sexual aim was nonprocreative oral sex, the sexual object of the heterosexual remained someone of the opposite sex, and so the possibility of productive procreation could always be imagined” (62). This was, he observes, “not the case for the homosexual, whose sexual aim was inherently sterile; it could never be associated with procreation, given that a homosexual’s choice of a sexual object was someone of the same sex” (62). In other words, “just as officials were expanding the range of sodomy laws’ reach to include oral sex, Freud’s theory provided a justification for narrowing their enforcement to the unproductive, pleasure-loving, sterile homosexual” (62). Heterosexuals who practiced various forms of sodomy (such as oral sex) were (arguably) experimenting before union; homosexuals, on the other hand, had no such excuse. Any form of homosexual *actus reus* was automatically indicative of some form of culpable *mens rea*; adults having homosexual desires—let alone acting upon them—flew against the norm of an expanded field of heterosexuality. Additionally, if homosexuality had a psychical genesis, American traditionalists of the era believed it required control by the state’s apparatus. “Freud’s understanding of childhood sexuality and its fragile evolution towards maturity,” Eskridge explains, “fueled Americans’ concerns about adult stimulation of minors” (62). Because of this, American traditionalists believed both “parents and the state should do everything possible to prevent the child’s evolution being derailed in the direction of bad (sterile) homosexuality” (62). In popular American culture, the dual poles of an absentee father figure (both within the nuclear family and at the governmental level) and a smothering mother-son dynamic emerged as major concerns in child rearing.<sup>20</sup> Homosexuality (and homosexual orality) indicated, by its mere presence, a whole history and etiology of culpable, degenerate *mens rea*—one that required punishment, quarantine, and treatment.<sup>21</sup>

This double maneuver (and the vehement reaction it supports against homosexuality) is quite apparent in *Ideal Marriage: Its Physiology and Technique*. This famously popular scientific treatise and self-help book by Dutch gynecologist Theodoor Hendrik van de Velde, retired director of the Gynecological Clinic in Haarlem, was first published in London in 1926 and New York in 1930. Reprinted 46 times in the original

edition, the book sold over a half-million copies in the United States before a revised edition was published in 1965 (with a subsequent one in 2000). Looking at the section on “Sexual Intercourse: Its Physiology and Technique” as published in the original edition, van de Velde opens as follows (his emphases included):

By the term sexual intercourse, we herewith designate the full range of contact and connection, between human beings, for sexual consummation. But let us first of all make unmistakably clear that by “sexual intercourse,” unqualified by any adjectives, we refer *exclusively to normal intercourse between opposite sexes*. If we cannot avoid occasional reference to certain abnormal sexual practices, *we shall emphatically state that they are abnormal*. But this will only occur very seldom, for, as postulated above, it is our intention to keep the Hell-gate of the Realm of Sexual Perversions firmly closed. On the other hand, Ideal Marriage permits normal, physiological activities the fullest scope, in all desirable and delectable ways; these we shall envisage, without any prudery, but *with deepest reverence for true chastity*. All that is morbid, all that is perverse, we banish: for this is Holy Ground. (144)

In *Ideal Marriage*, Van de Welde argues that “complete sexual intercourse” comprises four parts: “the prelude, the love-play, the sexual union; and the after-play or epilogue (postlude)” (145). Grafting a narrative-like logic onto sexual intercourse, he writes, “its summit and its purpose alike blend in the third stage [*coitus*]...*communion*” (145). Van de Welde, as did many other writers of the twentieth century, places emphasis on the mutuality of pleasure in sexual intercourse, writing that “communion-mating—merging together—implies *equal rights and joys in sexual union*,” because “even though he is certainly, and must be, essentially active, she is quite as certainly not the purely passive instrument which she has been so long considered, and still is considered, far too often” (145 and 172). This is particularly interesting given Freud’s notions that partners engaging in fellatio and cunnilingus are experiencing different forms of pleasure and that partners engaged in anilingus, though they are both experiencing the same form of pleasure, are both not experiencing a mature form of pleasure.

This anxiety of oral sexuality and what it means regarding the mutuality of pleasure as well as individual pleasure extends into Van de Welde’s only discussion of oral sexuality. One particular tool he discusses for helping women achieve pleasure during “love-play” is what he terms the “kiss of genital stimulation,” or “genital kiss” (169). “This type of stimulation has many advantages,” he writes, primary amongst them being their deployment of saliva—a lubricant—to the genitals in preparation for intercourse and “the acuteness of the pleasure it excites and the variety of tactile sensation it provides” (169-170). At the same time, van de Welde cautions his readers who perform genital kisses, “the old proverb says: from the sublime to the ridiculous is but a step...*supreme beauty and hideous ugliness are separated by a border-line so slight that our minds and senses may transgress it, unawares!*” (170).

Though he never explicitly states what this “hideous ugliness” is, one can intuit two major interpretations: van de Welde is asserting that, though pleasurable, genitals are also used for urination and defecation; he is also potentially warning his readers to not substitute oral sex for coitus, because it itself cannot be what he would term a “communion mating.” Indeed, throughout this text—the most enduringly popular marriage manual of the first two-thirds of the twentieth century—van de Welde makes it abundantly clear that, though “normal sexual intercourse” can contain various forms of erotic play such as genital kisses, it should conclude “with the ejaculation—or emission—of the semen into the vagina, at the nearly simultaneous culmination of sensation—or orgasm—of both partners” (145). Genital kisses, though highly erotic and

fully viable type of “love-play,” are also highly dangerous precisely because they might supplant “communion.” “In union or coitus,” van de Welde writes, “prelude and love-play attain their goal, and sexual relationships their culmination” (172). Implicit in this, if not explicitly hinted at in the selection above, is the strict exclusion of non-procreative and non-heterosexual forms of pleasure as terminal. Van de Welde appears to consider vaginal-penetrative intercourse as the only viable form of “communion mating.” All other acts, though enjoyable—perhaps even more than vaginal-penetrative intercourse—run the risk of tipping the sexual relation into inequality and individuating the actors and their pleasures.

Though highly influential, Ellis’ and Freud’s writings must be also be understood as pernicious. They called for an radical expansion of the heterosexual repertoire, but they simultaneously took other, possibly discrete acts such as oral sexuality and embedded them within supposedly better understood aspects of human sexual development and standards. Eskridge writes, “the Americans who embraced Freud’s ideas were in the process of changing their sexual repertoires” (62). Edward O. Laumann, John H. Gagnon, Robert T. Michael, and Stuart Michaels’ broad 2000 sexological survey, *The Social Organization of Sexuality: Sexual Practices in the United States*, support this. In it, the authors write that, “beginning in the 1920s, the sexual script for opposite-gender sex has become increasingly elaborated to include more kissing, more caressing of the body, more manual genital contact, and, more recently, more oral sex” (107). This shift is in no small part because of the impact of thinkers like Ellis and Freud. However, if Americans of all stripes were expanding the scope of their sexual activities, this expansion emerged alongside a heightened policing and stigmatization of particular forms of sexual expression—especially as previously discrete activities were tied to broader concepts like homosexuality and sexual deviancy.

## 2. Kinsey and Post-war America

As discussed in the previous chapter, Alfred Kinsey’s and William H. Masters & Virginia E. Johnson’s midcentury writings represent, as historian Paul Robinson terms it, a “modernization of sex.” Rather than focus on the psychical constitution of sexual actors and/or their potential *mentes reae*, these researchers focused on empirical, sociological or physiological data. Despite this, Alfred Kinsey was an outspoken challenger of sodomy laws, and his work is considered a *de facto* rebuke of them. In fact, his first paper on human sex, titled “Biological Aspects of Some Social Problems” and delivered on 1. April. 1935 to an Indiana University faculty group, ends as follows: “The currently accepted lists of sex perversions are, almost without exception, rooted in primate behavior and, in that sense, natural; if divorced from their present-day social reactions, most of them would have little effect on the security of the home or the propagation of the race” (Eskridge 109). Martin J. Smith and Patrick J. Kiger write in *Poplorica: A Popular History of the Fads, Mavericks, Inventions, and Lore That Shaped Modern America* that this represents “the first public indication that he [Kinsey, a maverick who to this point had published two well-received studies of gall wasps] wanted to use science—the greatest weapon he possessed—to attack the conventional morality” (37). Eskridge writes, “Kinsey aimed to persuade America that the prescriptions of the ‘Social

Problems' paper were valid and should serve as the basis for law reform" (110). Starting in the summer of 1938, Kinsey offered an elective course on marriage at Indiana University, Bloomington; its normative point was that shame-based ignorance and religion-based taboos were skewing culture against various natural and benign sexual activities. He approached this end, as he did throughout his career, under cover of descriptive presentation of detailed scientific and sociological evidence. "Kinsey urged students," Eskridge continues, "to consider that most such practices were more common than moralists were willing to admit and that everyone enjoyed some activities that most others did not...Kinsey issued blunt declarations and then backed them up with massive support from human case studies and comparative zoology" (110). Kinsey, throughout his storied career, adamantly opposed consensual sodomy laws; he was the first public figure in American history to take such unequivocal a position against them (111). Though Kinsey did not dedicate much of his writings to criticizing sodomy laws, his output must be interpreted as both railing against more conservative orthodoxy while simultaneously utilizing the *examination* structure of "human sciences" to create newer, broader standards and norms.

This is abundantly apparent in Kinsey's two major works: 1948's *Human Male* and 1953's *Human Female*. Coming out in the early post-war era, these best-selling reports were immediately controversial. The findings challenged conventional beliefs about sexuality, discussing previously taboo or romanticized subjects in a frank, statistical manner that sidestepped (and by sidestepping placed into question) issues of culpable *actus rei* and *mens rea*. In *Human Male*, they write of adolescence, "by making illegal all pre-marital sexual activities except nocturnal emissions and solitary masturbation, English and American law forces most boys...into illicit activity" (224). This sentiment echoes in their discussion of "Marital Status and Sexual Outlet." Criticizing sodomy laws, church attitudes, and conservative morality for attempting to restrict sex to procreative intercourse within heterosexual marriage, the researchers comment, "the individual's standards are very largely set by the mores of the social level to which he belongs," and the effect of such interdictions "is strongly to limit his opportunity for intercourse, or for most other types of sexual activity" (265).

To conduct the research that forms both books, Alfred Kinsey and his associates memorized a set of 521 questions to use as guiding protocol (Laumann et al. 66). The interviewers were the 6 main researchers; they were allowed to vary the number, order, and wording of questions for different respondents. Over nine years from mid-1938 to mid-1947, Kinsey and his colleagues collected data (or histories) on 12,214 volunteers for the 1948 publication of *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* (Kinsey et al., *Human Male* 10). Of these 12,214, about 6,300 were male, and 5,300 "white males" provide the data set for the published study (6). By the 1953 publication of *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female*, Kinsey and co. had collected 16,392 histories, 8,603 male and 7,789 female (22). Of these, "5,490 cases of white, non-prison females" acquired before 1950 were used in the study (22).

The researchers partitioned the sex lives of the respondents into classes of sexual activity (or "outlets") measured primarily in terms of incidence, prevalence, and frequency. In the volume on men, the key measure was whether orgasm had occurred during the encounter; this was expanded to include experiences where orgasm did not

occur for homosexual men and in the later volume on women. “The six chief sources of orgasm for the human male,” *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* claims, “are masturbation, nocturnal emissions, heterosexual petting, heterosexual intercourse, homosexual relations, and intercourse with animals of other species” (193). Oral sex, or “mouth-genital contact” in the Kinsey study, is classified under both “heterosexual petting” and “homosexual relations.” Rather than claim a biological or ontological root to discovered differences, the researches ascribe them to cultural factors such as class and education level. Though neither a chief source of orgasm for males or females and despite cultural restriction on it, Kinsey considers stimulation of the genitals by the mouth a form of oral eroticism rooted, along with most sexual techniques, in mammalian heritage (510). Though a potential act, its absence from a typical repertoire follows as a result of civilized repression (197). The researchers write, “the lower mammals, unrestricted by social convention, know and utilize oral and anal stimulation as well as genital...the violence of our social and legal condemnations of these phenomena is testimony...that it is a basic biologic urge that is being repressed” (574). *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* presents the cumulative figures below, Table 94, on page 370 of its text. It should be noted that, in the Kinsey research, an “active” male stance is performing cunnilingus or fellatio, and a “passive” male stance is receiving fellatio.

AGE GROUP	CASES	ORAL CONTACTS: ACCUMULATIVE INCIDENCE BY PERCENTS OF TOTAL POPULATION											
		Any Type	HETEROSEXUAL									HOMO-SEXUAL	
			Ever, Male Active	Ever, Male Passive	Pre-Marital, Any	Pre-Marital, Male Active	Pre-Marital, Male Passive	Marital, Any	Marital, Male Active	Marital, Male Passive	Male Active	Male Passive	
All Educational Levels: U. S. Correction													
16-20	1208	46.2	8.2	22.8	23.7	7.7	22.8					12.0	38.3
21-25	1502	49.1	8.4	27.2	26.7	6.9	26.5	16.7	12.1	12.6		14.1	36.3
26-30	653	55.9	12.3	40.0				22.3	15.8	21.3		13.5	36.6
31-35	370	55.2	15.3	40.6				19.2	15.8	13.8		15.4	32.0
36-40	317	58.9	16.7	46.7								11.5	29.8



Educational Level 0-8												
16-20	176	44.9	8.0	22.2	21.0	8.0	21.0				15.2	38.2
21-25	123	41.5	4.9	22.8	21.0	6.5	21.0	8.2	3.3	6.6	10.6	30.9
26-30	109	45.0	5.5	37.6				9.3	2.7	9.3	4.6	33.0
31-35	74	40.5	6.8	29.7				10.5	7.0	7.0	10.8	27.0
36-40	88	44.8	9.1	35.2				10.8	6.2	9.2	5.7	24.1
41-45	67	34.3	1.5	28.8					0.0	0.0	5.9	13.2
46-55	84	22.6	1.2	16.7					3.0	4.5	6.0	14.5
56+	77	23.1	5.2	18.2					4.5	4.5	6.3	15.2

Educational Level 9-12												
16-20	228	54.8	9.6	26.8	28.9	8.8	27.5				12.4	46.5
21-25	142	57.0	9.1	30.1	31.0	6.9	31.0	14.3	10.7	8.9	18.0	45.8
26-30	104	64.4	10.6	40.4				21.7	15.0	21.7	21.4	45.7
31-35	62	66.1	14.8	47.5							21.3	42.6
36-40	49	77.6	16.3	61.2							20.4	42.9

Educational Level 13+												
16-20	802	15.8	3.2	8.8	9.5	3.0	8.7				3.6	6.6
21-25	1237	34.9	13.5	25.7	22.1	8.0	20.9	44.1	36.2	39.9	6.5	11.5
26-30	440	57.0	34.8	44.8	29.1	12.6	28.1	56.9	51.5	50.6	11.4	17.1
31-35	234	70.5	42.7	55.1				48.7	43.5	36.8	13.8	18.9
36-40	180	71.7	49.4	58.9				54.2	50.3	47.7	13.7	21.3
41-45	118	74.6	51.7	55.1				62.1	55.3	46.6	11.9	17.8
46-55	122	63.9	43.4	50.8				47.2	42.5	36.8	9.8	10.7
56+	55	54.5	41.8	40.0				43.1	39.2	35.3	9.1	12.7

**Table 94. Oral techniques at three educational levels**

Showing accumulative incidences. Data not calculated as described for accumulative incidence curves in Chapter 3, but derived from experience of each subject up to time of reporting. Lower incidences in some older age groups may be due to small size of samples and to possible cover-up, but most probably to the fact that incidences were actually a bit lower in that generation.

Fig. 3: "Oral Techniques at Three Educational Levels" (*Male Sexuality* 370)

The researchers observed of this table, "in marital relations, oral stimulation of male or female genitalia occurs in about 60 per cent of the histories of persons who have been to college, although it is only in about 20 per cent of the histories of the high school level and in 11 per cent of the histories of the grade school level" (576-77). Additionally, the researchers observe that rates of mouth-genital contact are higher in marriage than outside as well as higher amongst homosexuals than heterosexuals (371-73). However, when looking at the information as generational rates, the researchers observe, "the suggestion that such techniques on our present-day society are a recent development among sophisticated and sexually exhausted individuals is curiously contrary to the specific record, for the figures for at least three generations do not show significant changes in this respect" (371). The Kinsey research is indicative of a strange shift in American sexual practices. The fact that those who have been to college, have been married longer, and are homosexual appear to have more experience with oral-genital stimulation while the overall rates do not show a marked shift indicates that the burgeoning interest in oral sexuality was initially isolated within smaller subsections of the broader American population. This will, as we will see, shift drastically in studies that look at Americans in the years after the Kinsey research. There are numerous potential sociohistorical explanation for this shift. Three pertinent ones are the two world wars, the

rise of the youth generation, and the rise of urban singledom. All of these will, effectively, enlarge the three populations Kinsey observes having higher rates of oral-genital stimulation, and they will impact American culture in such a way that this new activity will spread into other groups.

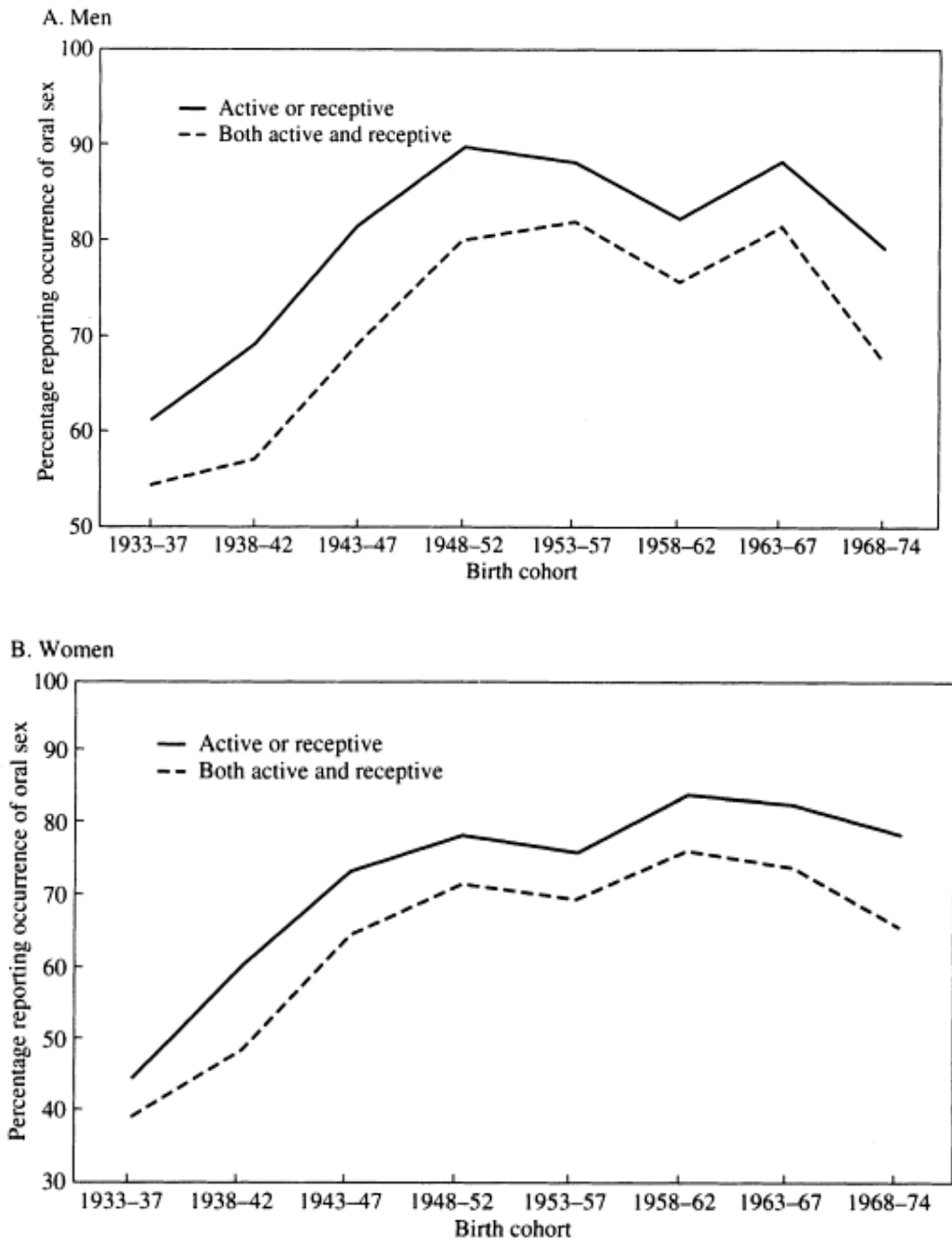
When we place the Kinsey Male results within sexual scripting theory, the research indicates that homosexual men, married men, and those with higher education levels partake of more mouth-genital play (371). “Pre-coital petting,” the researchers write, “is limited in many of the lower level histories to the most perfunctory sort of body contact” (572). In contrast to this, “the average college-bred male is more likely to extend the pre-coital petting for a matter of five to fifteen minutes or more” (577). “Petting techniques,” the researchers explain, “usually expand in a more or less standard sequence, as the partners become better acquainted...beginning with general body contact, lip kissing, and the deep kiss, it advances to a deliberate manipulation of the female breast, to manual stimulation of the female genitalia, less often to the manual stimulation of the male genitalia, to the apposition of naked genitalia, to oral stimulation of the male genitalia, and finally to oral stimulation of the female genitalia” (540). The researchers tend to align this “familiarity” with marriage or greater coed education such as college (371). Additionally, educated groups are more likely to engage in petting without coitus (541). The Kinsey researchers surmise that, “with the better educated groups, intercourse versus petting is a question of morals,” but, “for the lower level, it is a problem of understanding how a mentally normal individual can engage in such highly erotic activity as petting and still refrain from actual intercourse” (541). Again, the Kinsey studies hold for pre-WWII. As we have already stated (and as we will see), the massive shifts that affected America after the 1950s will drastically change the factors Kinsey attributes to his survey’s results.

*Sexual Behavior in the Human Female* has no analogous table. Rather, it spreads similar information across several spaces—primarily a section on “premarital petting,” a section on “pre-coital petting techniques” in marriage, and a section on “homosexual” activity. Like *Human Male*, *Human Female* finds that rates of mouth-genital contact increase alongside education levels, marriage, and with female homosexuality (Figure 42 on page 255 and Table 100 on page 399, Table 130 on 492). Unlike *Human Male*—which includes no such analytic in its mouth-genital contact findings, *Human Female* also finds that, the more heterosexual or homosexual partners a female has before marriage, the higher likelihood she will have partaken of mouth-genital contact (258, Figure 42 on page 255, Table 73 on page 281, and Table 130 on 492). “In the sample of females born before 1900,” they write of pre-coital petting in marriage, “some 29 per cent had made oral contacts with the male genitalia, while 57 per cent of the females born between 1920 and 1929 had made such contacts” (362). “Although,” the researchers write of pre-coital activity in marriage, “mouth-genital contacts are part of pre-coital sex play of practically all mammals, such contacts are condemned in Judeo-Christian codes...they are the last of the petting techniques to be accepted by males or females” (257). *Human Female* also finds no shift in generational rates for both fellatio and cunnilingus amongst married couples (258). Though differences in education appear to inform rates of mouth-genital experience, the researchers find “surprisingly few differences between the older and younger generations” of these groupings (257, 258).

Finally, *Human Female*'s findings stand in curious opposition to *Human Male*'s in regards to pre-marital mouth-genital contact. In *Human Male*, the authors note that "most of the action in a petting relationship originates with the male," and "most of it is designed to stimulate the female" (Kinsey et al.540). "It is doubtful," they conclude, "if a sufficient biological basis could be shown for such a one-sided performance, and it may be that this great difference in the activity of the male and the female is, at least in part, another outcome of the patterns by which females are raised in our culture" (540-41). In *Human Female*, the researchers return to this point, writing, "oral stimulation of the male genitalia by the female occurs somewhat less frequently than oral stimulation of the female genitalia by the male" (257). Claiming that this mirrors a greater inclination toward oral activity in the males of other species, the researchers conjecture, "contrary to our earlier thinking, we now understand that there are basic psychological differences between the sexes; and although cultural traditions may be involved, the differences in oral behavior may depend primarily on the greater capacity of the male to be stimulated psychologically" (258). Though the researchers couch the greater incidence of males performing cunnilingus on females in a newly identified "biological" (psychological) root, this finding opens up questions of the differences in how males and females react to various sexual stimulation—particularly as understood within the body/mind binary<sup>22</sup>.

Unlike the Kinsey research, Masters & Johnson's 1966 *Human Sexual Response* features no reference whatsoever to oral sexuality and sodomy. In fact, both terms (and their various synonyms) do not appear in the book's index. In the first chapter of *Human Sexual Response*, "The Sexual Response Cycle," Masters & Johnson make this maneuver perfectly clear, "although the Kinsey work has become a landmark of sociological investigation, it was not designed to interpret physiological or psychological response to sexual stimulation...the current study of human sexual response has been designed to create a foundation of basic scientific [read: physiologic] information" (3-4). Their work is, by design, intended to present an intellectual distance from "psychological" issues such as popular morality and sodomy law.

The Kinsey studies came out in 1948 (*Male*) and 1953 (*Female*) respectively. They describe a pre-WWII America. They present habits and rates for sexual behavior during the historical moment when Freudian thinking on desire and sexuality was very much in vogue. As we have signposted, this was a moment when people were beginning to experiment, but they were doing so primarily under the aegis of marriage and procreation. The Kinsey results, though not interested in psychological motivations, tend to reflect this broad trend. This America, as anyone semi-observant of history can explain, changed drastically in the years post WWII. Therefore, to set the stage for further inquiry into the years following the Kinsey studies let's take a brief moment to look over a 1994 study titled *The Social Organization of Sexuality: Sexual Practices in the United States*. Conducted at The University of Chicago by a team of researchers (including John H. Gagnon), respondents were asked if they had experienced oral sex in their lifetime. Respondents were grouped by birth cohort; the following figures (numbered 3.2 on page 103 of the source text) present the results:



**Fig. 3.2 Lifetime occurrence of oral sex, by cohort. A, Men. B, Women.**

Fig. 4: "Lifetime Occurrence of Oral Sex, by Cohort" (*Social Organization* 103)

The authors write, in agreement with the Kinsey results, that "the emergence of oral sex as a widespread technique practiced by opposite-gender sex partners probably began in the 1920s, and over the past seventy years it has become more common in various social contexts and among most social groups" (102). Referring to sexual

scripting theory, they continue, “if there has been any basic change in the script for sex between women and men, it is the increase in the incidence and frequency of fellatio and cunnilingus” (102).

These observations are supported by figure 3.2. “It is useful,” the researchers explain, “to think of the effect of age...not in terms of advancing years, but rather as an indication of when the respondents became sexually active” (102). If we look at the men’s chart, we see the highest incidence of “active or receptive” and “both active and receptive” oral sex occurs for those born between 1948 and 1953. These men will reach 18 between the years 1966 and 1971. For women, the highest incidence of “active or receptive” and “both active and receptive” occurs for those born between 1958 and 1963. These women will reach 18 between the years 1976 and 1981. Interestingly enough, the women’s chart appears to pace after the men’s by 10 years. The researchers write of their findings, “the overall trend of figure 3.2...reveals what we might call a rapid change in sexual technique, if not a revolution” (103). If the Kinsey studies represent America before WWII, this study shows what happened after. Where Kinsey found overall stagnant rates across three generations for mouth-genital contact which he contrasted to increases amongst three key demographics (the educated, the married, and the homosexual), this survey indicates an across-the-board rise in rates of oral sexuality.

### **3. 1966-1976: Oral Sexuality’s Emergence: Cultural Factors**

As we can see in *The Social Organization of Sexuality* (Image 3), the rates Kinsey found stagnant across generations would soon shift dramatically. The authors of *Social Organization* observe, “the difference in lifetime experience of oral sex between respondents born between 1933 and 1942 (who would have been age eighteen in the decade of 1951-60) and those born after 1943 (who became age eighteen in the 1960s and after) is dramatic...from 62 percent of those born between 1933 and 1937 to 90 percent of those born between 1948 and 1952” (104). What structural factors led to the increased popularity of oral sex in the era following the Kinsey studies? In addition to numerous cultural changes in the late 1950s and 1960s, *The Social Organization* researchers write, “the growth rates in lifetime experience of oral sex for older cohorts may be attributable in part to the development in the late 1950s and early 1960s of a sizeable population of young people in urban centers” (104). They speculate that, if one reads between the lines of both the Kinsey results and their own findings, “prior to the mid-1960s and perhaps even as early as the 1950s, oral sex was being practiced more widely outside marriage” (104). If so, then the increase in young, single people—especially young, unmarried, and educated women taking work in “clerical and secretarial positions generated by the expansion of the corporate sector in most major cities...resulted in the development of a distinct urban ‘singles’ culture in which multiple partnering was a more common occurrence and sexuality was the object of an increasingly widespread consumerism” (105). This increasing consumerism of sexuality includes media representations. These young, urban, educated singles must have interacted within emerging movements towards ‘sexual liberation’ in literature, film, music, and politics, and these would certainly serve to encourage certain groups to incorporate oral sex into their sexual script (105).

The researchers in *Social Organization* make two major claims that run counter to popular belief: 1) the politically oriented movements of the late 60s did not initiate the

increased incidence of oral sex, and 2) this increase was, though present, not uniform across social categories (105). If we return to Figure 3.2 while keeping in mind the offset required to adequately assess when those polled entered sexual maturity (~18 years), male incidences of lifetime oral sex peak for those born around 1948; the same peak occurs for women born in 1958. These men would reach 18 in approximately 1966, and these women would reach 18 in approximately 1976. If anything, this decade (1966-1976) marks a leveling off for the male population and an initiation of sorts for the female one. Indeed, looking at the flow of the chart for women born in the decade 1948-1958, one immediately notices a relative leveling off in the first five years followed by a steep rise in the next five. We will find this addressed repeatedly in the film texts in section three—they primarily deal with women and oral sexuality.

As for the second point, the researchers write, “both the youth-oriented urban cultures of the early 1960s and their more politically oriented counterparts of the late 1960s were confined largely to white middle- and upper-middle-class populations” (105). These populations were, for the most part, racially and culturally homogenous; “sexual practices that gained popularity within them would not tend to spread beyond their boundaries” (105). Indeed, though the research findings tracks with Kinsey’s in observing “less educated respondents are significantly less likely to have experienced oral sex in their lifetime,” it also reveals that sexuality, race, and religion play a factor in rate of experience (105). The research indicates approximately 60 percent of men with less than a high school degree had experienced either fellatio or cunnilingus; those rates rise to 75 percent for men with a high school degree and exceed 80 percent for higher educational levels (105). As with Kinsey, this relation also holds true for women; “the proportion of women with less than a high school education who had performed fellatio on a partner is only 41 percent, and only 8 percent more have experienced cunnilingus...yet women with a high school degree reported rates of lifetime experience of both forms of oral sex that are 17-19 percentage points higher, and women with at least some college education were just as likely as men to have experienced fellatio or cunnilingus (around 80 percent)” (105). Furthermore, their findings agree with Kinsey’s (and Freud’s broad conjectures) that there is a higher rate of oral sexuality amongst gay men and women than amongst their heterosexual peers (318). In addition to education level obtained and sexuality, race proves to correlate to experience. “Of white men,” they write, “81 percent have experienced fellatio, and the same proportion have performed cunnilingus on a partner,” but “blacks are some 30 percentage points less likely than whites to have engaged in the two forms of oral sex.” (105-6). Though this racial component could be partially due to educational access, the researchers conclude that race has an independent and causal effect on lifetime incidence of oral sex (106). Religion, the researchers observe, “is also associated with lifetime incidence of oral sex,” but “its effect...may be minimal owing to the confounding effects of other factors—principally education” (106).

#### **4. 1966-1976: Oral Sexuality, the Personal, and the Political**

This difference in rates of oral-genital experience between groups based on factors of race, education, and sexuality all come into play when considering their dominant sexual scripts. In *Sexual Conduct*, Gagnon and Simon write of heterosexual

sex, “Given the achievement orientation of men toward sexual activity learned in adolescence and the capacity of sexual activity to be put to a wide range of uses in human relationships, there is a tendency on the part of many men (and fewer women) to seek variety in their sexual experiences, especially after marriage and even during the period of more extensive experimentation that precedes it” (62). This tendency, however, must be considered as a factor of personal development within broader considerations of personal agency. I would venture that experimentation happens for two reasons: because one is blocked from the dominant paradigm, or because one has such paradigmatic presence that the paradigm itself starts to feel...jejune. The white, urban, and educated members of youth-oriented urban cultures of the early 1960s and their politically oriented counterparts of the late 1960s were, by and large, socially unfettered. Having the leverage of race, class, youth, and education as well as the possibilities provided by urban density, they could seek variety—not only in the sociopolitical but also in their interpersonal and sexual relationships. This quest for sexual variety, of course, was bolstered by the fact that they were, by and large, seeking it within a homogeneous pool. The other notable population, homosexuals, also shares a commonality: their position outside the dominant model of procreative heterosexual marriage as well as their tendency to gather in urban environments. It would be interesting to see rates for individuals who exist at the intersection of these paradigmatic differences—an ethnically non-white gay male, for example. Though the researchers do not fully investigate why the less educated and racially othered experienced lower rates of mouth-genital sexuality, their findings prove highly evocative when considering the link between personal agency, political agency, and sexual agency and the linking between so-called progressivism and otherness (homosexuality and racial integration, for example).

Gagnon and Simon continue by indicating just this, writing, “this search for variation can be managed in a number of ways, all of which transgress some normative constraint on sexual behavior...Anal intercourse, mouth-genital contact, and variety in coital positions are the most common physical techniques” (62). Of these transgressions, “positional variation in coitus is perhaps the most frequently practiced variant” (63). This would entail moving away from the conventional coital social script for of man on top and woman on bottom, “a postural affirmation of the symbolic dominance of men and submission of women,” to any number of other genital-genital engagements (63). Here Gagnon and Simon present two interlocked claims. They tie sexual positions to broader social mappings of identity (“symbolic dominance of men”), and they argue for the importance of transgression—both from broader social scripting as well as from symbolically laden corporeal postures, in renewing and invigorating sex. If the sixties bore witness to a “sexual revolution” amongst the white, urban, and educated members of youth-oriented urban cultures, then oral sex’s rising rates form a major part of this revolution. Furthermore, if these rates are a major part of this revolution, one can assume they will also form a part of other revolutions that “liberate” those other groups (the less educated, people of color, etc.) from their leaden social and sexual scripts. Though not a focus for the researchers of *Social Organization*, this link between social position and sexual position is highly evocative.

This shift away from preordained combinations of bodily posture and symbolic meaning is, if anything, anxiety-ridden. Indeed, Gagnon and Simon are well aware that

“mouth-genital contact is perhaps the most tension-producing technique in sexual experimentation” (64). Why? Because it brings the mouth, the seat of one’s ability to taste, into close proximity with organs often defined negatively in terms of odor, taste, cleanliness, and excretion. Gagnon and Simon write, “in much of conventional sexuality the genitals are out of sight or at least at arm’s length, and in consequence the penis or vagina are experienced as objects of sensation, but only marginally significant in terms of manipulation” (64). Speaking of fellatio, Gagnon and Simon write, “Given the strongly initiatory role that men have in sexual activity, the instigator for the largest proportion of mouth-genital activity is the man” (64). This occurs for any number of reasons, particularly that “central to the sexual culture of boys and men are a series of myths about mouth-genital contact and one of the sources of its power and significance is the desire to place the penis in a forbidden location” (64). This transgression, however, ruptures the link between posture and symbolic. “Since there is no meaning immanent in the activity and nothing intrinsic to the mouth [except, perhaps, the tongue] that makes it a better orifice for stimulation of the penis, the meaning of the act and its capacity to arouse must be sought in extrasexual and extraphysical area...it is the psychological inputs that serve to heighten arousal and not the value of the physical stimulation” (64). Here, again, Gagnon and Simon link the “personal” and the “political.” In their interpretation, fellatio is a complex negotiation of the relationship between bodily position and the symbolic. It is understood via both images of filling up, choking, dominating, controlling, and degrading as well as via images of affection and proximity (64). Attempts to map it within conventional, missionary-based sexual symbolics oftentimes require mental gymnastics. “Even though the woman is more physically active and dominating and the man more passive,” they observe, “the act of fellatio is often symbolically constructed in terms of men’s dominance and women’s submission” (64-65). This symbolic construction, unlike that of missionary-style intercourse, is highly unstable. It is buffeted neither by years of cultural practice nor by more than a passing likeness to sedimented symbolics. Again, this indicates that oral sexuality is a site of rupture. In the sexologists surveyed, this rupture was assimilated under supposedly better-researched models and types such as the homosexual. Here, it is assimilated under other cultural symbolics.

Interestingly enough, cunnilingus, an act that is more difficult to symbolically map than fellatio, tends to get attached to other deviancies. Again, this mirrors the maneuvers within the writings of Krafft-Ebing, Ellis, and Freud. “The act of cunnilingus,” they explain, “is not physically symmetric to fellatio, though its practice may be physically reciprocal and psychologically symmetric in terms of the exchanges and of intimacy” (65). Cunnilingus, unlike fellatio, is viewed either ambivalently or negatively amongst nearly all masculine youth cultures. “There is a powerful component in humor among boys and men that avers to the uncleanness of the vagina, its odors, and its peculiar (often described as fishlike) tastes” (65). This hesitation stems both from masculine culture’s general aversion to the woman and its hesitation at men assuming feminine-coded positions. “Concurrently,” Gagnon and Simon note, “there is the imagery that cunnilingus is somehow a homosexual act” (65). On the other hand, cunnilingus can also be a means for men to powerfully demonstrate their ability to arouse women. “The act of cunnilingus is nearly always begun (and often sustained) in the context of masculine striving for the enhancement of the capacity to produce sexual pleasure in the woman” (66). It is both disgusting and intimate, a sign of masculine mastery and



feminine supplication. As with fellatio, to search for an entrenched symbolic meaning in cunnilingus is, at best, a losing effort.

If oral sexuality emerged in the late 1960s and early 1970s, it did so at crosshairs. Its meaning within both sexology and broader social mappings appears unsure. In sexology, there is a trend to attach it to other, better researched types of behaviors or types. In broader social mappings, it appears that groups with greater cultural capital and those aforementioned researched types were more liberally partaking of oral pleasure. Nevertheless, it was the most recent notable addition to America's aggregate sexual script. The authors of *The Social Organization of Sexuality* write, "if there has been any basic change in the script for sex between women and men, it is the increase in the incidence and frequency of fellatio and cunnilingus" (102). To support this, they present a survey that shows the highest lifetime incidence of any form of oral sex ("active or receptive" or "both active and receptive") occurs for males who reached 18 between the years 1966 and 1971 and for females who reached 18 between the years 1976 and 1981. The researchers write of their findings, "the overall trend...reveals what we might call a rapid change in sexual technique, if not a revolution" (103). This "rapid change" takes place precisely contemporaneous to the emergence of feature-length, narrative pornography and its *performatistic screen*, and it is no surprise that both acknowledge it.

## **II. From the Smoker to the Theater: The Emergence of Porn's *Performatistic Screen***

The second focus of this chapter, the emergence of a narrative-like, orgasmically-oriented "porn routine" in filmed pornography, cannot be understood without reference to both the "variable obscenity" decisions highlighted in chapter one and the discussion of oral sexuality that precedes. Oral sex and cum shots emerge in early 70s feature-length narrative pornography—pornography that embeds the sex act within a narrative—as visible markers of sex's beginning and end. The emergence of this "porn routine" is perhaps best understood three ways: it is often embedded within a larger film narrative, it features a codified sequence of bodily events starting with oral and ending with male orgasm (the *performatistic screen*), and it establishes, as the toothbrush images in chapter one indicate, the male's cum shot as generic marker of visibly attained orgasmic pleasure.

### **A. Pre-1969: Stags and "Meat" (Paradigms<sup>23</sup>)**

Prior to 1968 and the establishment of the rating system, filmed hard core was primarily available in so-called "stag" films. "Stag," a colloquial adjective, describes items that exist "for men only." Luke Ford, in *A History of X*, explains

Stag films frequently appeared at stag parties—parties for men only...From the 1920s through the 1950s, college fraternities and volunteer social groups like the Elks and Shriners provided the largest market for stag films in America. Patterned after theatrical striptease, stags encouraged male spectators to talk to the projected image and even to 'touch' her spread legs and labia. Unlike later pornos, which seek to satisfy the viewer's sex urge, stags generally aimed to arouse. Brothels used them to encourage potential patrons to buy the sexual favors of their women. After World War II, the greater availability of projection equipment enabled the stag to move into the home. During the 1950s, they were increasingly shot on 8mm color film, using younger and more attractive performers. (13-16)

Stag films are, in a word, primitive. Scholars oftentimes locate this primitivism in these films' execution, though it is also noticeable in stag films' distinct narrative-visual lure. Film scholar Linda Williams explains, "The most obvious primitive qualities of the stag films are short length, usually filling a single reel (a thousand feet, up to fifteen minutes) or less; silence and lack of color; and frequent lack of narrative coherence" (*Hard Core* 60). Indeed, stag films remained primitive well past advancements in film technology. Dave Thompson, writing in *Black and White and Blue: Adult Cinema from the Victorian Age to the VCR* jokes, "a few hardy entrepreneurs toyed with color and sound, but it didn't really make a difference...average onlookers were seldom searching for a master class in the latest movie techniques, and half of them didn't particularly care if the film was even in focus" (2). Many observers have noted that, unlike their mainstream counterparts, stag films evolved to show less concern with issues of plotting and narrative coherence. Thompson notes, "in the earlier movies, the lovers are people with motives and desires (however crudely they might be rushed through in the opening minutes of the film). In later offerings, they are simply the objects at the end of their genitalia" (81). Williams, echoes this sentiment, "the earliest stag films are often technically and narratively more accomplished than later ones" (*Hard Core* 61).

This primitivism can be attributed to several factors. Perhaps most notable is the lack of any discernable, structured system of production, distribution, and exhibition. Because of their illegal status, production, distribution, and exhibition of stag films had to exist beyond measurable economies and outside the sight of the law. Thompson notes, "the people who made these films left no footprints. We do not know the names of the filmmakers, nor, for the most part, of their stars or distributors. We do not know when or where the films were shot. We cannot say with any certainty precisely who they were made for" (*Black and White* xiv). Stag productions were not recorded in a master ledger; the films received neither mainstream advertising nor reviews; the directors and stars were not part of any recognized collective, and the films themselves did not require a cohesive structure across exhibition spaces. This lack of structure makes any analysis of profits or exhibition, at best, vague.

Indeed, individual stags were better the less their elements called for overarching cohesion. In a 1990s interview discussing her depression-era career as a stag performer, Joan, a grandmother and great-grandmother resembling "an advertisement for Mom's Apple Pie," recalls her experience moving from making dancing films to making stags with a director named Sydney:

'Sydney had what you could call a plot in mind...the man would be lying on his bed reading, he'd hear a voice and turn, and I'd be standing there with a mask on, breaking into his house... I had a shortish skirt on and no underwear, so Sydney wanted me to force him back and then sit over his face. The only trouble was, he couldn't get the camera close enough to actually show what was going on! (92)

The director, Sydney, aimed to structure the stag around a kernel of narrative motivation, but inexperience and overarching technological limitations impaired his ability. Though Kodak introduced the Cine-Kodak 8 in 1932, Bell & Howell introduced the Filmo Straight 8 in 1935, and Eastman introduced Kodachrome in 1935, stag filmmakers operating these new equipment were not expert technicians and, given startup costs, the perils of underground film development, nonintegrated systems of distribution and exhibition, etc., the convenience of lesser overarching coherence oftentimes won out over the demands of linear narrative. Joan ends her reminiscing, "It turned out that Sydney had

caught enough action on film that he was able to turn in a ten minute picture... He told me he spliced in a few head shots from some of my dances, so people could see me enjoying myself,<sup>24</sup> I suppose, and that was it” (93).

As Thompson summarizes:

During the years when even ‘professional’ stagmakers were essentially amateurs—that is, any time before the industry began considering itself an industry, during the late 1960s... though we know that certain moves may have been choreographed beforehand, there is no rigid adherence to any set of sequence of events and actions. Even that most beloved (and literal) climax to the modern film, the so-called “money shot” of male ejaculation, was by no means guaranteed in the earliest films. (103)

Due to any number of factors (including those expressed above), the visual lure of the stag film was not the operations of a chronological sexual journey to climax; it was the static spectacle of sexual proximity, exhibitionist nudity, and some form of penetration: the “meat shot.” Luke Ford, author of *A History of X*, explains, “stag films specialized in such ‘meat shots,’ close-ups of penetration, rather than ‘money (cum) shots,’ men ejaculating on, rather than within, women. By the early 1970s, however, cum shots became so essential to porn that it seemed flicks without them weren’t pornographic” (14).

How did this transition from the static lure of “meat” to sexual cause-effect logic leading to a “money shot” happen? Chapter one argues that both the law and sexology were influential factors. 1960s obscenity law placed an increased emphasis on the relationship between narrative plotting and redeeming cultural merit. And the then-dominant sexological model work of Gagnon and Simon—particularly their theory of “sexual scripting”—attempts to read sex acts at the juncture of the ideational and physical body, creating an act-based bodily narrative that reunites the mental and physical body under the aegis of plotting. I believe that, in addition to changing legal and social concerns, this transition from “meat” to “money” was the effect of shifting practices in pornographic filmmaking and exhibition. In the post *Redrup* (and post *Ginsberg*/MPAA Rating) era, the X-rating opened up a “variable” marker designating material intended only for adult audiences. With the audience now “variably” restricted, any film with “socially redeeming” qualities could legally show in theaters. What better proof of “socially redeeming” content than those ever-popular bourgeois methods: instructional content and/or narrative?

## **B. 1969-1970: Theatrical Exhibition, Two Denmark Docs, and *Mona: The Virgin Nymph***

### **1. X Marks the Spot: Variable Obscenity, the Rating System**

As discussed in the previous chapter, the concept of “variable obscenity” was developed by William Lockhart & Robert McClure in their 1960 article, “Censorship of Obscenity: The Developing Constitutional Standards.” Under “variable obscenity” standards, materials in question are evaluated not only for their content but also in context of their distribution and state interests in protecting potential audiences (80). The basic principle underlining “variable obscenity” is that the determination of obscenity can only be made in terms of the material’s distribution, and that the state can judge the purpose of the distributor, the manner of distribution, and the audience/vendors to whom the material is

distributed (68-88). This was introduced into American law in the 1968 decision, *Ginsberg v. New York* (390 U.S. 629 (1968)).

Following the *Ginsberg* decision, the MPAA, on 1 November 1968 put a new self-auditing, “variable” rating system into effect. This system modified the MPAA’s 1966 division between unlabeled/general and “SMA” (Suggested for Mature Audience) films by creating four “variable” category designations, “G,” “M,” “R,” and “X,” delimiting who can and should see particular films. These categories are defined as follows:

G: General audiences - all ages admitted

M: Mature audiences - parental discretion advised, but all ages admitted.

R: Restricted - children under 16 not admitted without an accompanying parent or adult guardian.

X: Children under 17 will not be admitted

The "X" rating was not an MPAA trademark: any producer not submitting a movie for MPAA rating could self-apply the "X" rating (or any other symbol or description that was not an MPAA trademark) (Voluntary Movie Rating).

## 2. Exhibition 1: Denmark Docs

It was within this post-*Ginsberg* melee that hard core pornographic film first found notable American theatrical exhibition. With the new MPAA rating system, the door was opened for hard core, under cover of the “X” designation, to bypass MPAA approval and slide into theatrical exhibition. Writing in *Sinema* of the 1968 state of affairs in San Francisco, Turan & Zito explain, “movies showing real—not simulated—sex were available behind the counter of hundred of bookstores...they were simply waiting for the theater exhibitor willing to risk arrest, court battles, public scrutiny, and community pressure to show them” (78). Indeed, “several people rose to the occasion, in late 1969, among them the Mitchell Brothers, owners of the O’Farrell Theater, and Alex de Renzy, a moderately talented filmmaker, who operated a theater called the Screening Room” (78). San Francisco, CA, was the first city to “get into hard core on a citywide, nationally recognized basis” (80). In late 1969, approximately 25 San Francisco theaters played hard core film (80). “By 1970 theaters in Indianapolis, Dallas, Houston, and New York were advertising *Frisco Beaver Action*, *Frisco Girls*, and *Hot Frisco Shorts* and showing a considerable amount of oral sex, some mutual masturbation, and, occasionally, scenes of sexual intercourse” (80).

Hard core found its way into the theaters in many forms. The majority of exhibitors, seeking to meet strong demand, initially ran loops of old stag reels mixed in with tamer, non hard core filler. Exhibition spaces were, by all accounts, marginal operations. Stag films followed their oft-mentioned cousins, the “nudie cutie” and the “beaver” into willing grindhouse theaters. Though still marginal and limited, this new system of exhibition—located in one space with a steady influx of paying customers—led to higher concentrated grosses and the demand for more ambitious product. Turan and Zito describe the rise of Alex De Renzy to highlight this arc:

De Renzy had been trained as an industrial cameraman, and, after opening the Screening Room, he began to shoot and exhibit five or six loops every week. As De Renzy said in an interview with *Newsweek* in 1970, “There were certain things that everyone accepted you didn’t do—and we did them.” Unlike many of his competitors, De Renzy was willing to expend the time, energy, and money to make money...

As De Renzy moved into hard core...the films gradually became better, with refinements in both form and content. Production values improved, color quality became adequate, and dialogue was

added. This last was an important step; even rudimentary dialogue—timeless phrases like “That feels good” and “Gee, I never knew it could be like that”—was a vast improvement over canned music. At the same time there was an attempt to tailor the music track—preferably progressive rock but sometimes cannibalized classics, in particular the works of Bach—to the dramatic needs of the film. (78-79)

De Renzy, following a well-worn adage, was willing to spend money to make money. Trained in aspects of film production, and benefiting from increased film technology, a steady influx of capital from stag screenings, and a steady exhibition space in his Screening Room Theater, he sought to improve the quality of both the form and content of his exhibition product. By adding dialogue and tailoring the audio to meet the arc of the visuals, De Renzy sought, in some basic manner, to shift beyond the static, meat-oriented spectacle of the stag. Indeed, an audio commentary seemingly addressing diegetic action and/or a system of editing cued to the dramatic flux of a melody (or vice versa) is, in and of itself, much tighter a linear suturing of shot to shot than the Kuleshov-like splicing Joan describes Sydney producing. Unfortunately, “even the best improvements by De Renzy... could not overcome the built-in limitations of working in a form [stag] where creative effort is circumscribed by length and the pressure of time” (79). De Renzy had to turn out shorts quickly to fill demand inside his one theater. This meant his product, though superior to stags of yore, could not exhibit too long before it had to be replaced. This tight circularity of exhibition and production, though allowing for some improvement in the product, did not present De Renzy with the broader material base necessary to make a substantially more ambitious film. In order to move beyond these limitations, hard core had to find wider distribution and exhibition outside the narrow grindhouse circuit.

This occurred via three notable films: two documentaries and one a feature-length narrative. The first two, John Lamb’s *Sexual Freedom in Denmark* (1970) and Alex de Renzy’s *Censorship in Denmark: A New Approach* (1970), were both feature-length documentaries about Denmark, which in 1969 became the first country to legalize pornography. *Sexual Freedom in Denmark*, released in March of 1970, uses interviews, studies of erotic art, studies of nudist culture, various kinds of statistical research, and sequences on education and practice to examine the effects of liberal Scandinavian attitudes towards sex. In order to have redeeming social value, as Stephen Turan observes, “the makers of *Sexual Freedom in Denmark* were very careful to keep the film within the documentary framework, and the tone of the narration is deadly serious” (83). By strictly confining itself to educational material and by maintaining a dry, even approach to its exhibition of potentially-shocking material, this documentary found moderate success in several cities (83).

Even more successful, however, was *Censorship in Denmark: A New Approach*. Produced, directed, and edited by De Renzy with distribution by Sherpix, this 90-minute film was titled *Pornography in Denmark* upon its April 1970 San Francisco release. After receiving favorable reviews and meeting with runaway success at the Screening Room, De Renzy changed the title in order to facilitate motion into other markets. This was done for two reasons: so that major newspapers, particularly those in New York, would carry advertisements for the film and because the word “pornography” was a red flag for post-*Redrup* pandering statutes (84). Following San Francisco, the rechristened *Censorship in Denmark: A New Approach* was released in Los Angeles in late April, in New York in

Mid June, and in Washington D.C. in Late July. This film, assembling footage De Renzy shot in and around Copenhagen's "Sex '69" trade show, features street interviews with locals and attendees, clips of various trade show exhibits and paraphernalia, tours of sex shops, interviews with (and clips of) pornographic actors and actresses, footage (including filmed film) shot inside a pornographic movie house, and behind-the-scenes footage of Danish filmmakers making a sex film. There are three specific moments within the film that make mention of pornographic narrative structure, and each time occurs in reference to sex as narrative-like. Two of these occur in segments discussing pornographic photo packs. In the first, an interviewee comments that Danish pornographic photo magazines feature a story-like order of images. This observation is neither expanded upon, nor is the audience given view of a visual example. In the second, the narrator again alludes to the ordering in photosets. Again, this observation is neither expanded upon, nor is this observation put into any broader context.<sup>25</sup> The third and most telling mention of pornographic narrative structure, voiced by the narrator over a filmed film projection of a man and a woman copulating in the leapfrog position, describes the new (to American audiences) convention of external ejaculation in Danish product. This is noted over a shot showing the man pulling out of the woman and ejaculating on her buttocks. It is clear from the narrator's commentary that this is not common in comparable American pornographic shorts but, rather, is an emergent and notable feature in the booming Danish industry's operating standards.

Discussing De Renzy's choice to film the sex shown in scenes such as the aforementioned one off of screens inside pornographic movie houses, Turan explains, "De Renzy photographed these films directly from the movie screens in the Danish clubs, rather than making duplicate negatives of the originals, and this was, of course, the legal pretext by which he was able to defend the film in court: He was not making a pornographic movie but a movie about the showing of pornographic movies" (81). With *Censorship in Denmark*, De Renzy was making a movie about the making, showing, and capital/cultural industry surrounding pornographic movies. This sleight of hand made *Censorship in Denmark*, though much less dry in tone, defensible in court in a manner similar to *Sexual Freedom in Denmark*.

*Censorship in Denmark* was favorably reviewed in *Variety* upon its Los Angeles opening. Upon release in New York 17.June.1970, Vincent Canby of the *New York Times* found that, despite its technical limitations, *Censorship* deserved praise as "an impolite film that makes very little pretense of being anything else." This was, according to Turan, "the first time a major critic from a major newspaper took notice, much less sympathetic notice, of a film that graphically showed intercourse, fellatio, and cunnilingus" (82). Canby's review, "The Screen: 'Censorship In Denmark' Begins Run," candidly announces the obvious, "*Censorship in Denmark: A New Approach*... is really a new approach to the distribution of hard core pornographic film in the United States... all framed, and thus apparently legally protected here, by the fact that this is, after all, a movie about pornography." Indeed, by working around the logic of *Redrup*, *Censorship in Denmark* managed to achieve simultaneous exhibition in several major markets while grossing heretofore unprecedented amounts.

This use of the documentary, educational model of filmmaking as a means of achieving broader distribution for hard core sex in 'respectable' theaters was part of a growing upswing in the dissemination of feature-length films with pornographic content.

Four days after reviewing *Censorship*, Canby addressed increased theatrical presence of films such as *Sexual Freedom*, *Censorship*, and *Wide-Open Copenhagen 70* (Lyhne 1970) in an article titled “Have You Tried the Danish Blue?” Appearing next to a review of the new Rudolph Nuryev ballet, Canby’s article opens as follows: “Blue movies—the shortest, purest form of the cinema-of-achievement—are now openly available to Manhattan adults as elements of feature-length documentaries on the effects of Denmark’s abolition (in June, 1969) of the manufacture and sale of pornography to adults,” Canby’s article ambivalently discusses the merits and oddness of pornography’s circuitous path to midmarket exhibition. “By framing obscenity—by distancing it—within a study of it,” he writes, the filmmakers have “put the United States Supreme Court, or, at least its obscenity rulings, up against the wall.” What exactly, Canby asks, is the difference between one form of exhibition and the other? “Can the American courts that permit us to see blue movies enclosed within a documentary frame legally deny an adult the right to see the same blue movie unencumbered by that frame?” After discussing the three films in specificity and finding all of middling quality and merit, Canby ends his article on a highly ambivalent note: “whether or not one finds pornography erotic is inevitably a matter of individual taste...my experience is that some of the sequences in these new films are erotic, but that it’s a fleeting, certainly harmless kind of eroticism that depends largely on shock and curiosity, which turn into almost scholarly interest, and then dwindle off in a sort of arrogant boredom” (“Have You Tried”).

Regardless of Canby’s ambivalence towards these feature-length documentaries, and regardless of these films’ technical and aesthetic shortcomings, they broke barriers in the presentation and distribution of filmed hard core sex. Turan writes, “*Censorship in Denmark* eventually was shown throughout the New York area, playing boroughs and suburbs that previously had seen nothing more explicit than an occasional, quick glimpse of pubic hair...many middle-class people who did not realize that there were hard core films on Eighth Avenue (and would not have gone in any case) were suddenly willing to go to a ‘nice’ theater to see a film that was reviewed in the *New York Times*” (*Sinema* 82). Indeed, De Renzy’s film found nation-wide exhibition and, because of this, managed to gross an estimated \$2 million off of its initial \$15,000 budget.<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, unlike his stag predecessors, De Renzy boldly claimed ‘authorship’ over his ‘educational’ work; his film’s exhibition form opens with a series of credits exhibited over an extended shot of a ship sailing into Copenhagen’s harbor.

By contextualizing it as a Danish legal, social, and economic phenomenon, filmmakers were able to give pornography deeper implications; this allowed them to market their works as serious documentaries, providing them prima facie arguments for “redeeming social value.” Furthermore, the local court cases prosecuting Lamb's and de Renzy's films set precedents that helped usher in the era of hard core as a theatrical experience. By embedding hard core sex within the frame of documentary reporting, these films managed to utilize the language of *Redrup* as an entry to more ambitious filmmaking and distribution practices. With the possibility of increased control over broader, profit-bearing distribution networks, as well as with filmmakers’ willingness to jump from anonymity into authorial presence, “Pornography was,” as Turan summarizes, “beginning to become more widely seen and even somewhat fashionable” (82). It was,

perhaps, inevitable pornographers would continue to press the bounds of *Redrup*'s logic. As Canby queried, could the courts logically deny audiences blue movies when these same images were legally viewable embedded within a feature-length documentary frame? Or, following this, could non-documentary-style films featuring hard core sex somehow avoid falling into the three prongs— (a) dominantly appealing to prurient interest, (b) patently offending community standards, and (c) utterly lacking redeeming social value – required by the *Memoirs/Redrup* decisions to censor sexual obscenity?

### 3. Exhibition 2: *Mona*



Fig. 5: A *Mona the Virgin Nymph* Poster



*Mona the Virgin Nymph*, produced by Bill Osco (of the Osco drugstore family) and directed by Michael Benveniste and Howard Ziehm, answered Canby's (and numerous others') speculation. Taking three days and \$7,000 to make, *Mona* was released in San Francisco on 6 August 1970 (IMDB). From these humble beginnings, this film would go on to forever change the landscape of filmed pornography. Describing *Mona* in *Sinema*, Turan and Ziplow write, "if the film was not the first 60-minute feature of its kind to be made or shown<sup>27</sup>—such statistics are hard to come by—it was certainly the first to be shown by name and promoted nationwide" (124). One trade review called it "the hard-core equivalent of *Birth of a Nation*," and the *Village Voice* described it as possessing "the same combination of fascination and revulsion that characterized *La Dolce Vita*" (*Wages of Skin*). Variety hailed *Mona* as "a landmark...the long-awaited link between the stag loops and conventional theatrical fare" (*Sinema* 136).

"The most remarkable thing about *Mona*," Turan and Ziplow write, "is not the hard-core sex but the film's recognizable dramatic structure" (124). What is notable about *Mona* is not only what it has—a defined narrative structure featuring characters with defined motivations; a plot arc that somewhat ratchets up tension across its beginning, middle, and end leading to a penultimate, cathartic orgy—but also what it doesn't: money shots. *Mona*, a transition film, embeds the sex in a narrative and, following this, produces a narrative-like logic for sexual operations. But, unlike both the feature-length pornographic films that come after it and the Scandinavian stags contemporary to it, *Mona* does not close the arc of sex with a visual show of ejaculate. *Mona* is very important for several reasons. It is the first nationally distributed and exhibited feature-length, narrative pornographic film. Both its broader story and its sex scenes place an emphasis on oral sexuality—the most recent addition to America's sexual script. It distinguishes between two heterosexual orders of operation (one with vaginal penetration and the other without). And, though it doesn't feature visible orgasms, it attempts to semiotically cue the audience to their occurrence. Read retrospectively, *Mona*'s lack of visible orgasms and subsequent deployment of numerous semiotic cues indicting their presence is streamlined in the full visibility of male ejaculation that comes to dominate feature-length, narrative pornography in the so-called Golden Age.

*Mona* begins, as many narrative films do, by swiftly introducing its main characters and structuring problematic. The film opens to the strains of lightly classical harpsichord music. Mona Madison (Fifi Watson) and her fiancée, Tim (Orrin North), are enjoying a wine-soaked picnic. After some casual, sync-sound conversation about flowers and the general "grooviness" of nature, talk turns to the couple's impending nuptials. Tim, the more demonstrative of the two, proceeds to undo Mona's belt and unzip her skirt, prompting her to decide she will sunbathe nude. Tim decides to join her. As the conversation progresses, Tim presses Mona to consummate their relationship before marriage.

"I promise I'll give you all my love when we're married," Mona explains.

To this Tim responds, "But...gee, hon, we're just as good as married."

Mona's answer: "But there's a world of difference."

They progress to kiss and fondle. Tim suckles on Mona's breasts, moving a free hand down her stomach to caress her labia. He proceeds to perform cunnilingus; she moans. They maneuver back to kissing; with Tim's body repositioned atop Mona's, he pleads, "Oh Mona; let me put it in." He wants to consummate their relationship with intercourse,

but Mona avers, claiming, “Honey, we’ll be married in a week...don’t you want to marry a virgin?” When Tim claims he doesn’t care, Mona responds, “Tim, I promised my mother [Judy Angel] I’d be a virgin when I got married.” To appease, Mona offers to fellate him, saying, “Let me do that other thing to you; it always makes you feel so good.”

This introduces the most repeated sex act in the film: fellatio. Mona, we discover over the film’s 71-minute length, is a “virgin nymph” because, though she demonstrably refuses Tim (and all other men) intercourse, she is more than willing to orally pleasure men (and one woman). Unaware of Mona’s nymph(omania) [the film never uses the term “nymphomania” to describe her, relying instead on the title’s allusion], Tim finds respite in the opening sequence when Mona proceeds to orally pleasure him. The camera cuts to various viewing positions (including an odd one at tree level looking at them through a u-shaped branch) as a new, more jarring music takes hold. As it builds, so does Mona’s physical ferocity. This music smothers the sounds of their moaning. The camera cuts to a close-up shot of Mona fellating Tim and zooms out as the music builds to a medium shot of the same activity. While at this musical climax, the film cuts to a wider shot of the activity from a different viewing angle; the muted sound of gentle moaning is reintroduced; the music quickly drops down to low ambient sounds, and Mona pulls off of Tim and asks, “Come on; feeling better?”

This opening sequence utilizes numerous strata of cinematic signification to build the arc of sex to a semiotically significant crescendo. Though the audience is never given a view of Tim ejaculating, its significance drives the film’s various registers, forcing them to contour themselves to both announce his climax and acknowledge its import. This purposeful use of cinematic signification for narrative purposes is highlighted again in the following sequence after Tim drops Mona off at her home, because she is concerned she is running late while her mother is waiting. Mona enters her home to find her mother sitting on the couch watching television.

“You’re a little late, aren’t you, Mona?” her mother observes.

“Tim and I were talking about the marriage,” Mona answers.

“Is that all you were doing?”

“Mother, of course that’s all we were doing.”

“Now don’t forget your promise to me, Mona.”

“Mother, I’m still a virgin.”

As this dialogue proceeds, Mona’s mother moves towards a phonograph and selects a record. Looking at her choice, she begins a monologue praising Mona’s dead father as “wonderful” and “the only man I ever went to bed with.” After she puts the record on the player and as we hear its preliminary scratches, the image cuts to a low medium shot of Mona.



Fig. 6: Mona is Isolated in the Frame

We hear Mrs. Madison ask, “Oh! Why did he have to die?” Mona rolls her eyes slightly, shifts her body, and the music—a string-accompanied, vaudevillian melody—begins. Mona’s mother informs, “And he loved you so much too, Mona”; the image zooms in to a tighter shot of Mona’s face. Mona, gazing to the frame’s edge, sighs, “Yeah. He was a wonderful man.”



Fig. 7: A Zoom Into Mona’s Thoughts

The music continues, but the image cuts to an extreme close-up of a record playing.



Fig. 8: Mona's Flashback Begins

The visual tenor of this shot is different than the previous; it leans more toward inks and blues than the warm hues of the preceding close-up. The camera pulls back to reveal Mona, her hair in pigtails and a doll in her hands. A man's voice, presumably issuing diegetically from *both* the record Mona's mother played and the record playing in this shot, begins to sing. This coded-younger Mona sits down to play with her dolls. A man's lower half walks into the frame and approaches her. He is holding a newspaper on one side of his body. Young Mona greets him, "Hi, Daddy, want to play?" He says nothing, instead moving to a chair in upper-frame right to sit and read his newspaper. The viewer is not given view of his face. After a second sitting, he stands up and approaches Mona again.

"This is my favorite doll, Daddy," she says, handing him a doll. "You can play with her if you like."

Without speaking, he sets the doll down, unzips his trousers and pulls out his penis.



Fig. 9: Mona's Father Solicits Fellatio

“Oh, Daddy,” she pleads, “don’t make me do it again, please.”  
He says, in a slightly Germanic accent, “You know you like it. Stop playing games.”  
At this point, Mona moves her face towards her father’s lap and fellates him. The camera moves in closer, showing the back of her head, her father’s hands holding it, as it bobs in front of his crotch.



Fig. 10: Mona Fellates Her Father

The image then cuts to a side angle, giving us a close-up view of Mona fellating her father.

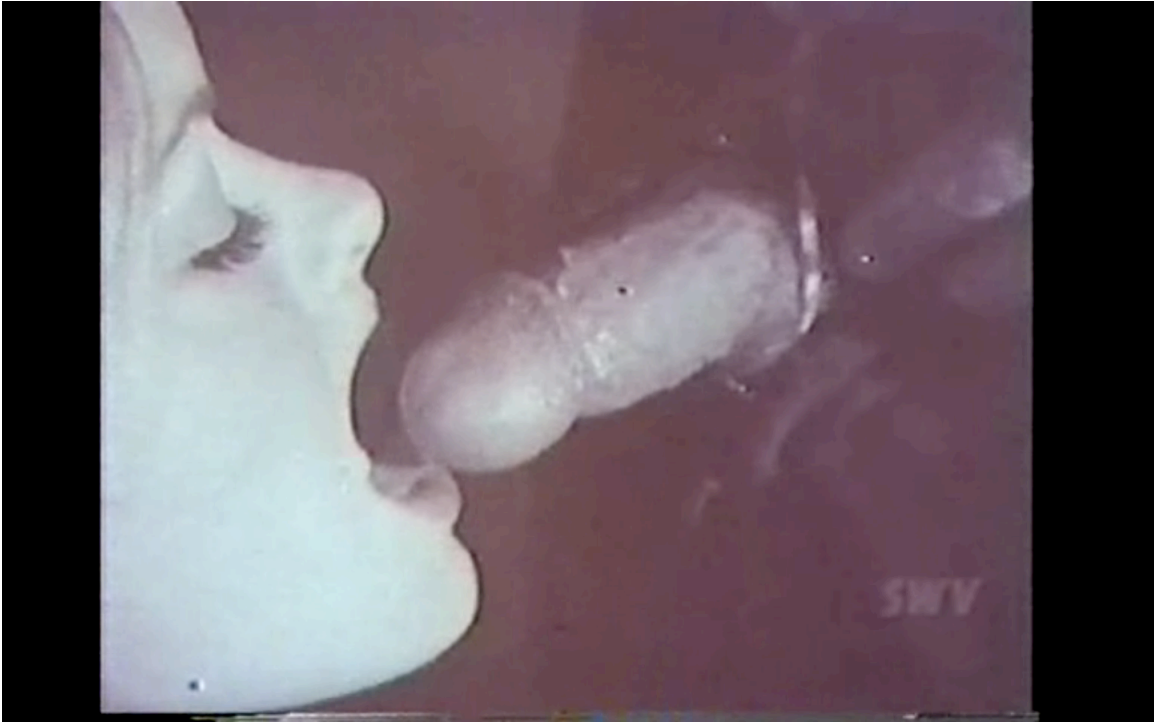


Fig. 11: A Different View of Mona Fellating Her Father

The music continues throughout this, and we hear him exclaiming “Oh,” “Ah,” “That’s good,” etc. A cut returns the image to the previous view, and the camera pans to the right, revealing Mona’s favorite doll set alongside the record player before it zooms in on the record.



Fig. 12: A Pan to Mona's Doll and the Record, Linking Past and Present

As this happens, the singer sings, "I'll always love you/I'll still remember when you forget."

The image cuts back to a warmer-hued shot of Mona and her mother listening to the record, reminiscing.

Unlike the crude logic of stags, *Mona* proves, in this sequence, that Benveniste and Ziehm possessed a dense understanding of narrative cinema's trope and strophe. At the level of this sequence, the use of an aural bridge, the zoom into Mona's face to indicate *focalization* (the perspective through which the narrative content is delivered), the connective diegetic image of the record, and the shift in color all work to structure this *syuzhet* (the material as presented) towards a more-defined *fabula* (the reconstituted chronology created from the materials presented). The song's lyrics, "Sweetheart, ever since we parted I'm so blue," is sung from the perspective of a lovelorn man, provide a metaphoric contour to the two women's individual affective states. This sequence gives Mona's 'virgin nymphomania' (if the word "nymph" in the title can be read both literally and as an abbreviation for "nymphomania") narrative and psychological pertinence while simultaneously positioning it against both the upcoming Saturday wedding and Mrs. Madison's fiercely policed edict that her daughter remain a virgin.

Given *Mona's* increased narrative complexity, it follows that sex within the film is mapped out along a narrative-like logic. As witnessed in the opening sequence, sex's presence slots into the flow of the film; its presentation contains legible entry and exit points. What is even more interesting is that, despite the film's overwhelming focus on oral copulation to some form of acknowledged (though never viewed) orgasm, it still posits the "porn routine" of the *performatistic screen*, albeit with certain semiotic substitutions for the money shot, as the most complete sex act. This could be an *post hoc*

*ergo propter hoc* thought, but the overwhelming use of various cues to signal the end of the sex act indicates an awareness of sex's position within a broader narrative. Not only does the sex begin; it must also have an end. Where *Mona* presents this end via any number of semiotic cues, later films will streamline it by making the marker of sex's completion in orgasm the visible male orgasm. In a way, *Mona*'s lack of visible male orgasms reveals its position at the nexus of stag films and later features.

This awareness of sex as plotted features prominently in a sequence approximately two-thirds through the film where Tim has intercourse with Mona's mother. This sequence is notable for several reasons: it is the only one to feature intercourse; it is the only one to not feature Mona, and it is, at approximately fifteen minutes in length, the film's longest. It begins when Tim interrupts Mrs. Madison's masturbation by knocking on the door. He has come by to find Mona, but she has already departed to the movie theater. At her mother's insistence, "I'm all alone and would love the company," Tim comes in for "a couple of minutes."

They sit next to one another in a medium-framed two shot, and Mrs. Madison moves to turn on the record player. The same musical intro from the previously described scene plays in the background as they converse.

"You know, Tim, I've been alone an awfully long time. I really do envy you...well...marrying Mona Saturday."

"Well, you have a very nice daughter, Mrs. Madison."



Fig. 13: Mrs. Madison Seduces Tim

As the singing starts, she asks, "Do you know what it's like...to be alone for a long time? I haven't had anybody for three years."

Tim, clearly uncomfortable, "Well...I guess I'd better go."

He makes to stand up, but she stops him. "Oh Wait! You know, you remind me so much of Mona's father."



“Really?”

“Just like I had my own young man back again when I was a girl.”

She has moved to looking into his eyes and lightly, caressingly, holding his hand. He, still uncomfortable, repeats, “Well...I...I guess I really should be going.”

He makes to stand up again, but she, authoritatively pitching her voice, interjects, “Honey, you can’t go.” Placing her hand on the nape of his neck and gently leading him to a fully seated position, she says, “You can’t go now,” and then moves to kiss him. He does not resist, bringing his hand to her side. She comes up from their kiss and, as if an afterthought while he nuzzles her neck, she says, “Oh don’t rape me. Don’t rape me.” The two recline, Tim’s body atop Mrs. Madison’s, and she, in a huskier tone, suggests, “Why don’t you stay...and I’ll show you what marriage is really about.”

At this suggestion the camera changes position, and we are given full view of the two of them laid out.



Fig. 14: Tim Gives in to Mrs. Madison

They kiss a little; Tim reaches over to change the music, before they proceed to oral copulation, vaginal copulation, and, as with the opening sequence between Tim and Mona, a money shot not shown but made legible via numerous strata of cinematic signification: more echo; the introduction of several percussive sounds; increased moaning and panting; faster vacillation between close-ups and full shots; more body movement; and, finally, the introduction of calmer string music with light moans, pants, and claims of “yes” echoing deeply and distantly in the audio mix.

*Mona* is notable for numerous reasons. It was the first widely recognized and advertised feature-length pornographic film. After some initial friction, it both carried title cards indicating authorship and played in one stable form across several markets. Both of these can, in some way, be attributed to its narrative. Because *Mona* told a story

with consistent characters and dialogue indicating temporal order, it could not undergo repeated editing and reassembling of its constituent scenes<sup>28</sup> as it played in one space or as it moved from market to market. The story *Mona* told—that of a compulsively oral girl who nevertheless maintains a strict allegiance to saving her virginity for marriage—may seem laughable to most, but it is, in its own slight way, both instructional and possessed of some form of morality. Tim catches and punishes Mona, and the audience is made abundantly aware her nymphomania is the product of aberrant childhood sexual experiences. Dave Thompson, writing in 1997, explains that, though “the story possessed little more substance than you’d expect to find in the tale of a prenuptial nymphomaniac celebrating her last days of freedom by fellating every man she can lay her hands,” Osco “at least offered audiences something new to chew on, both by exploring the reasons behind his heroine’s oral fixation and by introducing a genuine element of suspense to the proceedings” (*Black and White* 245). Luke Ford comments, “*Mona* displays dramatic structure and credible relationships with the actors developing their characters through dialogue...unlike the documentaries, this film uses a story” (*History X* 43). Additionally, though they did not have to, *Mona*’s producers could have strategically used the narrative elements to argue for the film’s redeeming value in court cases: it contains a pro-abstinence message; it indicates that compulsive oral sexuality is unhealthy when compared to a mutually fulfilling, monogamous relationship built around intercourse; and it has merit as an artistic work of fiction investigating characters with some depth beyond their genitalia.

Ford writes, “Pornographic in intention and execution, *Mona*, which appears on *Variety*’s list of top fifty grossing films of 1971, follows the classic pattern of erotic scenes” (43). This is an interesting comment precisely because Ford argues that *Mona*, the first widely released feature-length, narrative pornographic film, “follows the classic pattern.” In creating a narrative film, the makers of *Mona* also reinforced the operational and narrational logic of a particular kind of sexual script that, as we have seen in the first chapter and the section preceding this, was already present amongst a particularly influential set of Americans. These were, by and large, the white, educated, urban, and youthful audiences (and their imitators and adjacents) the new porno chic was addressing. *Mona*, without featuring cum shots, still reinforces the *performatistic screen*. If Tim is left somewhat unfulfilled by *Mona*’s fellatio, it is because “what marriage is really about” (or, perhaps, what sexual pleasure that is capable of engendering satisfying release is really about) is more than just this one act—it is about a sequence of acts leading to orgasmic release. In *Mona*, though this orgasmic release is never shown, it is both highlighted by any number of shifts in editing, framing, and soundtrack as well as via spoken acknowledgment in character dialogue. By embedding sex within narrative film, *Mona*, in effect, narrativizes filmed sex.

### C. 1970-72: Feature-Length Narratives: *Deep Throat* and “Money” (Syntagms) Over “Meat” (Paradigms)

Following *Mona*’s overwhelming success, other filmmakers moved to make similar product. Thompson writes, *Mona* “prompted at least one *Village Voice* critic to describe director Osco as the closest thing the erotic-movie industry had to its own Fellini. *The New York Times Sunday Magazine* responded by dubbing de Renzy the

industry's Jean-Luc Godard. Now all it needed was a Bubby Berkeley, a visionary who could choreograph the genre's elevation out of the art house and into the cinematic mainstream" (*Black and White* 247). This vacancy, Thompson notes, "would not remain unchallenged for long. Leasing an old warehouse on San Francisco's Potrero Hill, the Mitchell Brothers set about erecting what would become the largest soundstage in the city. There, at the rate of one a month, they pumped out a series of plot-based erotic films that reached first for the thirty-minute mark, and then for the sixty" (246). Ford echoes this when he writes, "Soon other adult theaters in San Francisco followed the Mitchells' lead and storylines became more common" (*History X* 43).

"Where the Mitchells led," Thompson observes, "soon every aspiring filmmaker in San Francisco...California...the western states...the entire country was following," leading the *Village Voice* to claim, "'There's no longer any need to be curious, yellow or blue. Gaping cunts and hardened cocks can be seen cavorting in the bloody warm flesh-tones of color film, all in gigantic close-up, on select screens throughout our fair city'" (*Black and White* 246-47).

The two years after *Mona* saw the full establishment of conventions for feature-length pornographic film's "porn routine." Though developed in the periphery, these would boldly spin to the center of America's cultural conscience in 1972, because it was on 12.June.1972 that Gerard Damiano's *Deep Throat* opened on at the New Mature World Theater to New York's "raincoat brigade." An independent production shot in Miami over six days for \$22,000-\$25,000 dollars, this film has gone on to gross what is estimated at as much as \$600 million and remains undoubtedly the most profitable pornographic film of all time—if not the most profitable independent film of all time. *Deep Throat* marked the beginning of an era Ralph Blumenthal, writing for *The New York Times* on 23.January.1973, dubbed "Porno Chic." This was an era marked by two things: the emergence of a mass, mixed-sex audience going to, consuming, and discussing pornographic film, and the willingness of mainstream media to advertise and review pornographic cinema. *Deep Throat* also marked the beginning of a "Golden" or "Classical" era for feature-length pornographic film lasting from approximately 1972 to 1984. Films such *Boys in the Sand* (1971 Wakefield Poole), *Behind the Green Door* (1972 Artie & Jim Mitchell), and *The Devil In Miss Jones* (1973 Gerard Damiano) were widely discussed and their stars, actors such as Marilyn Chambers and John C. Holmes, were beneficiaries of pornography's increasing cultural cache.

*Deep Throat*, the little porno that did, followed *Mona*'s lead by cementing its radical shifts in America's conception and consumption of filmed sexual pleasure. Film scholar Linda Williams notes that three major features emergent in the post-*Deep Throat*, feature-length pornographic film were the late introduction of sound, the motif of the "money shot," and the embedding of the sexual "number" within a broader narrative. "It was not until the early seventies," Williams writes, "with the rise of the hard-core feature, that the money shot assumed the narrative function of signaling the climax of a genital event" (*Hard Core* 93). According to Williams, where previously silent hard core shorts tended to focus on "meat shots," shows of genitals and proof of penetration, feature-length porn, as best represented by *Deep Throat*, upped the ante, extending visibility beyond mere proof of penetration "to the point of seeing climax" (93-94). Williams summarizes, "the climax is now rendered in glorious Eastmancolor...accompanied by all

the moans, groans, and cries, synchronized or post-synched, appropriate to such activity” (94).

In addition to the “money shot” and the use of sound as visual supplement, Williams notes that “what was memorable in *Deep Throat* was precisely what most people disparaged about it: its ‘threadbare,’ ‘poor excuse’ for a plot” (99). This touchstone film amalgamated the previous threads of the stag film, the beaver shot, the exploitation picture, and the sex-documentary. Taking additional cues from the coherent construction of narrative films such as *Mona*, *Deep Throat* added visible “money shots” to the sound and rolled out the product under the umbrella of a newly minted genre. Williams argument parallels our previous descriptions of *Mona* when she continues, “yet in concentrating on this defect vis-à-vis other forms of narrative, critics missed the more important fact that the film had a plot at all, and a coherent one to boot, with the actions of the characters more or less plausibly motivated...for the first time in hard-core cinematic pornography a feature-length film—not a documentary or a pseudodocumentary, not a single-reel, silent stag film or the genital shows of beaver films—managed to integrate a variety of sexual numbers into a narrative that was shown in a legitimate theater” (99).

As with *Mona*, *Deep Throat*'s plot is patently simple. A young, sexually open woman named Linda (Linda Lovelace) confesses to her more experienced roommate, Helen (Dolly Sharp), that she has never experienced orgasm. Linda finds sex pleasant, having experienced “a lot of little tingles,” but she has not experienced “bells ringing, dams bursting, or bombs going off.” Helen, after organizing (and participating in) an unfruitful sex party for her roommate, recommends Linda visit Doctor Young (Harry Reems). Upon inspection, Dr. Young promptly discovers that Linda's clitoris is located in her throat. After experiencing her first orgasm with the doctor—symbolized by the visual intercutting of his ejaculation by a montage of fireworks, ringing bells, and firing missiles, Linda immediately wants to marry him and be his “slave.” He refuses, and she instead goes to work as a “physiotherapist” for him, performing various sexual acts with various clients while continuing her “deep throat” therapy with him. Meanwhile and in addition to his bouts with Linda, the doctor has sex with his blonde nurse (Carol Connors) while recording and narrating Linda's “case history.” Linda's voraciousness outpaces Doctor Young's, crippling him with a bandage around his penis. The movie ends well, however; Linda meets a man, Wilbur, while working. Once Wilbur is willing to shorten his penis' length to meet Linda's nine-inch requirement, the movie ends with the lines "The End. And Deep Throat to you all."

Again, what is notable about *Deep Throat* and the genre of films it incepts in the public imaginary is precisely that which most critics of the film tend to overlook or disparage: it is plotted. In fact, it is plotted in a manner that motivates and contains the radical of sexual performance within the more palatable mainstream of scripted acting performance by giving sex a narrative-like arc leading to visual display of male ejaculate.

As most viewers of feature-length pornographic film are well aware, these two do not necessarily rest seamlessly alongside one another. This dissonance between linear narrative and disruptive sexual spectacle is made abundantly clear not only in feminist-driven anti-pornography critiques, but also in seemingly pro-pornography texts. In the self-pitying, apologetic 1991 collection of essays, *Men Confront Pornography*, editor

Michael S. Kimmel writes in his “Introduction: Guilty Pleasures-Pornography in Men’s Lives” that men “watch pornographic films, but we are indifferent to narrative content or cinematic technique...men consume pornography, using pornographic images for sexual arousal, usually without considering the relationship between what’s in the pictures of stories and the sexual pleasure we seek” (1). This is at odds, however, with David Loftus’ 2002 survey of “nearly 150 men” in *Watching Sex: How Men Really Respond to Pornography* (xi). In his introduction, Loftus claims of the surveyed men, “their answers might surprise you”; when listing some of these “surprises,” Loftus leads by writing that the men responding claimed “they would like to see more plot and romance in pornography” (xii). If true, this indicates, contra Kimmel’s claim, that the men surveyed are not only not indifferent to narrative, but that they rather enjoy it and actively desire more of it. But look carefully at the wording: Loftus writes men would like to see more “plot” and “romance” in their pornographic films. He ties plotting and romance together in an assumed proportional relationship. Is this to imply that screened sex as it is structured in narrative pornographic film is somehow antithetical or inverse to plot and romance? Or is this implying that screened sex as it is structured in narrative pornographic film is constructed for maximum sexual arousal?

### **III. The Pornographic Routine: Porn’s *Performatistic Screen***

What if screened sex is not antithetical to plot? What if it is fundamentally plotted? And what if, by taking on a bare minimum of plotting, it is also maximizing its ability to sexually arouse? Would that change its position relative romance? What if, by virtue of being plotted, those very *pleasures* we think most proximate to who we are—pleasures such as affect, romantic “love,” sexual desire, and sexual pleasure—are annexed as *knowledge* of type and median and...rendered statistical and shareable? And what if, by virtue of being slightly plotted, sex maximizes its ability to pass as sexually arousing? This is precisely what the very concept of sexual scripting both attempts to understand and simultaneously enacts. Plot and romance do not disappear in the bedroom against an oppositional arousal—even the pornographic bedroom. Rather, they operate in tandem across a dense set of markers—markers like body position, genital activity, and order—that are, under the examination of human sciences, further proof that the subject itself—both the subject who seeks sexual arousal and the subject who pines for romance—is less an agent of free will than a combine of types and attitude. The “human sciences,” when studying a supposed rupture like an increased rate of oral sexuality, quickly worked to bring it under the control of type by annexing it to previously established pools of narrative knowledge. In the same way, by bringing sex into narrative, both sexual scripting and feature-length, narrative pornography move ever closer to articulating the nexus of the mind and the body, or the nexus between romance and sexual arousal. This is, as chapter one argues at length, the key interest of the “human sciences.”

It is my contention that, with the emergence of feature-length, narrative pornography, the sex act itself becomes plotted as a generic narrative routine. This is by virtue of its inclusion as syntagmatic sequence within a broader narrative film, and this is perhaps most convincingly proven by the new generic convention of the “money shot” as it retrospectively structures “meat shots” into a series of bodily engagements approaching

the teleological denouement of visible orgasmic release. Williams hints at this when she writes the following about a scene in *The Opening of Misty Beethoven* (1976 Metzger): “this number’s sexual content consists only of a highly conventional progression from oral sex to straight sex to money shot” (*Hard Core* 141). Though she observes this by-then established convention, it is later disavowed or overlooked when she summarizes, “what counts [about sexual performances] is not so much the intrinsic content of the sexual numbers, but how they are played (that is, performed, lit, shot, edited)” (141, 149). I disagree. If sex and sexuality has proven to be one of the formative things whereby individuals define themselves and enact their lives, then its annexation as plot under the *panoptic examination* of “human sciences” warrants study. There is nothing natural in this progression; it is, as Williams writes, *conventional*. But, by being a conventional plot system, does one set it opposite romance or opposite sexual arousal? Or, by becoming plotted in this way, does it mix both romance and sexual arousal in a manner so conventional that, effectively, it passes for natural? It is, as I have attempted to show, a *performatistic screen* generated alongside the “human sciences” and disseminated by narrative pornographic films.

This routine structure of both aural and physical sex has, apparently, not gone unnoticed by others. In *Watching Sex*, David Loftus asked his 150 interviewees the following questions: “How do men feel about pornography? What do they think it does to their value systems and attitudes towards women?” (xi). Amongst the numerous, fascinating facts, one finds several mentions of the reality or unreality of the sounds of pornographic sex and the “suck, fuck, cum” routine. When asked “What do you especially like to see or read about in pornography?” and “What turns you on the most?”, many readers hinted at, or outright acknowledge, a dominant structuring of the sex act (30). Loftus notes, “comments were pointed with regards to blatant formula in porn videos...the routine is so common and obvious that various men mapped it in similar terms.” (32). A 48-year-old musician complained of “the same old series in porn videos of foreplay to sucking to fucking to man-pulling-out-and-cumming-on-her-buns crap” (32). Another, a 27-year-old single computer analyst, wrote, “Kiss. Get undressed. Girl sucks guy. Guy licks girl. They screw missionary. They screw doggie-style. They screw female superior. Back to missionary. The ‘come shot.’ Same old thing, with minor variations, over and over” (32). Another, a 25-year-married, 46-year-old American government technician complains, I’m tired of the standard S&F [suck and fuck] routine that goes something like this: Dressed boy and girl begin to kiss and undress. She then proceeds to suck boy’s penis for a good while. Next, boy goes down on girl and licks clitoris and tongues vagina for a good while. Next, girl proceeds to be mounted by boy and continue until ejaculation occurs outside vagina, usually near face or breast area. (32). All of these respondents touch upon a syntagmatic order of sexual operations, a directional flow of sex’s corporeal overlap—oral sex to fucking to external ejaculation—they consider endemic to pornographic film’s representation of sex.

This limited structure is often set against a more open, more spontaneous, more natural, more romantic, or more “realistic” sex. Summarizing common responses, Loftus writes that many he received “had to do with credibility, realism, and overall quality... ‘realistic’ characters and acts, and a natural progression of events instead of abrupt changes” (29). Where is this “realism” found? What does “a natural progression of events” mean? Is it the effect of more “plot” and “romance” in pornography? Or is it the

effect of less “abrupt changes” and more “sexual arousal”? Something in these comments doesn’t work. Namely: what is the difference between a “natural progression” and a plot, and what is the difference between less “abrupt changes” and plot? When discussing pornography’s S&F routine, why is such obviously “plotted” sex set outside the realm of either? Unsurprisingly, the very core of this “realism” oftentimes seems confused. In one telling example, a married 48-year-old musician/writer comments, “I’ve seen amateur videos of sex and masturbation: women usually don’t make much noise when they cum. They squeal a little or sigh and tremble for a few seconds, then it’s over. Knowing that, it’s disgusting to see women carrying on in paroxysms of shrieking ecstasy” (30). For this respondent, one form of sonant sexual performance is adjudicated as “realistic” and set against a different sonant sexual performance. He fails to consider that women in “amateur videos” might be as controlled in their performance of pleasure as “women carrying on in paroxysms of shrieking ecstasy.” In another telling instance, a physician is quoted, in chorus with many others, as desiring what he calls a more “seductive realism,” arguing, “sex that looks like love-making is a turn-on...in terms of particular acts, realism is best.” Describing this “realism,” he speculates, “It may include kissing, oral sex, intercourse” (30). Oddly, this physician’s “realistic” sex, even when the “natural progression” is presented in a conjectural encounter, is contoured to follow the “standard S&F routine.” Again, is plot “real” and “romantic,” or is it “sexually arousing”? Or, perhaps, is plot actually mediating the two in sexual performance.

What are we to make of this plotted *performatistic screen* in feature-length, narrative pornographic film? What is the status of sex in narrative pornography? More specifically, what is the logic and function of sex as it comes to be narratively motivated as a set series of actions in feature-length pornographic film? What are we to think of its elements, and how are we to understand them when pieced together? In order to answer these questions, we must turn to basic concepts of plot. More specifically, we must turn to basic questions of “desire in narrative” as it comes to structure one’s engagement with plots.

### Chapter 3: *Readerly Desire in Narrative*

At all events, without wanting to strain the phylogenetic hypothesis, it may be significant that it is at the same moment (around the age of three) that the little human ‘invents’ at one sentence, narrative, and the Oedipus.  
(Barthes *Image, Music, Text* 124)

The notion of a text’s ‘structuring absence’ is a suggestive, even beguiling one...It does not mean things which are simply not in the text, or which the critic thinks ought to be in the text...A structuring absence...refers to an issue, or even a set of facts or an argument, that a text cannot ignore, but which it deliberately skirts around or otherwise avoids, thus creating the biggest ‘holes’ in the text, fatally, revealingly misshaping the organic whole assembled with such craft.  
(Richard Dyer *The Matter of Images* 14)

What's the big mystery? It's my clitoris, not the sphinx.  
(Miranda Hobbes in “They Shoot Single People, Don’t They?”)

In his major study, *Narration in the Fiction Film*, film theorist David Bordwell presents three basic approaches via which cinematic storytelling can be studied: as *representation*, as *structure*, and as *process*. A study of *representation* looks to the world that is depicted in the narrative or the broader body of ideas from which a given narrative receives its content. A study of *structure* seeks to ascertain how a narrative’s elemental units are combined to make a whole. Finally, a study of narrative as *process* looks at “the activity of selecting, arranging, and rendering story material in order to achieve specific time-bound effects on a perceiver” (Bordwell *Narration* xi).

#### I. Where Were We? (Reviewing Chapters One and Two)

The two chapters preceding this primarily focus on *representation* and *structure*—on the broader body of ideas from which feature-length, narrative pornography emerged and on how its sex act’s units combine. They work in tandem to tease out small shifts in the twentieth century’s episteme that collectively contributed to the early-1970s emergence of feature-length, narrative pornography and what I term its *performatistic screen*. The first chapter focuses on the twin Foucaultian poles of law and “human sciences” as represented by the metonyms of American obscenity jurisprudence and sexology. It finds in both a late 1960s pivot to issues of social construction and utility as tethered to narrative and plot. It argues that this turn follows what Foucault has termed a shift from *inquiry* to *examination*. *Inquiry* asks, “exactly who did what, under what conditions, and at what moment” (*Power* 5). *Examination*, on the other hand, is “no longer a matter of reconstituting an event, but something—or, rather, someone” in need of “total, uninterrupted supervision” (59). Where *inquiry* seeks to find whether or not something has occurred, *examination* is about observing how an individual behaves and whether it is in accordance with a rule or a norm (59). Foucault calls the new knowledge formation that operates via *examination panopticism*. It is “characterized by supervision and examination, organized around the norm, through the supervisory control of individuals throughout their existence” (59). Both *examination* and *panopticism* are founded in the observation of individuals and their behavior over time; they are fundamentally invested in tying actions to mentalities and to narrativizing their objects. Both of obscenity law’s major changes—the move away from censoring to protect a naïf



towards thinking of a work as it would be seen through the eyes of average citizens applying contemporary community standards; and the shift from censoring for discrete, offensive content to searching for a work's dominant theme when taken as a whole—shifted the law towards what Foucault would term an *examination*-based logic for adjudicating obscenity.

The first chapter found a similar shift in sexology. Sexology, it argues, operates at the nexus of power, knowledge, and pleasure. Where pleasure is individual, knowledge is communicable. Using Thomas Laqueur's insightful study, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud*, it claims that sexology as we know it emerged when a one-sex model of gender, sex, and sexuality gave way to a two-sex model. In the one-sex model, both women and passive gay men were essentially thought of as men turned outside in, and both were thought to be isomorphic variations on one basic flesh: man's. In this logic, sex and gender were not connected. Because of this, all sexual pleasures were considered isomorphic mirrors of a man's visible pleasure (erection and orgasm). This stabilized both women and passive gay men within a set system of knowledge and power. The two-flesh theory, on the other hand, takes as its primary epistemological principle the ontological difference between man and woman and, subsequently, the primacy of heterosexuality; everything else descends from this pairing. In this new system, "the cultural work that had in the one-flesh model been done by gender devolved now onto sex" (*Making Sex* 151). Because of this, the invisibility of woman's pleasure takes on a double logic of interiority—it is indicative of a hidden, different bodily structure as much as it simultaneously indicates a hidden, different mental structure. Like woman, a passive male homosexual (and eventually homosexuals writ large), now both sexed and gendered male by the visible marker of his penis, has to be understood as something else. No longer female gendered in sexual congress, his visible marker of both maleness and pleasure renders him...aberrant. For both women and gay men, what was previously a more mobile, isomorphic gender untethered to sex gives way, in the two-flesh model, to concepts of homomorphic difference that necessitate *examination* of both the mind and the body by "human sciences" such as sexology in an attempt to stabilize the woman, the homosexual, and their pleasures within an supposedly objective, *panoptic* knowledge.

Chapter one argues that sexological *examination*, in a manner parallel to obscenity law, became increasingly focused at the nexus between the mind and the body inasmuch as it is indicative of some form of narrative plotting. To show this, it looks at three historically representative sexological models. The early-20<sup>th</sup>-century model of Freudian psychoanalysis, it argued, is both discarnate and ideational. The decorticated and statistical midcentury models of both Kinsey and Masters & Johnson annex information about pleasures under the aegis of behavioral statistics and measures of corporeal response. Finally, Gagnon & Simon's groundbreaking 1973 anthology, *Sexual Conduct: The Social Sources of Human Sexuality* (a collection of essays published between 1966 and 1973), attempts to bring both the mind and the body under simultaneous *examination*, creating a social constructivist, narrative and plot-minded model for human sexual interaction. This model, termed "sexual scripting," occurs at the juncture of the ideational and physical body.

Chapter one closes by combining Gagnon & Simon's theory of "sexual scripting," Kenneth Burke's concept of "terministic screens," and the concept of "performativity" to introduce the concept of a *performatistic screen* for the filmed sex sequence. A

“terministic screen” is a language or thought system that determines an individual's perception and symbolic action in the world. A “sexual script,” like a “terministic screen,” is a blueprint and guideline for what one does, thinks, and feels in a sexual encounter to potentiate orgasm. And “performativity” describes the capacity of speech and gestures to act or to consummate an action, or to construct and perform an identity. These three terms, all at the nexus of the physical body and its mental activities and construction, combine in the concept of the *performatistic screen*, described in the first chapter as a base structure of bodily performance and engagement that underpins sexual displays as they are enacted over time in orgasmically-oriented, narrative hard core film.

The second chapter narrowed the compass of the first, focusing on the paired emergence of oral sex in American sexual practice and of orgasmically-oriented, feature-length, narrative pornography. It argued that sex, when embedded within feature-length, narrative pornography, takes on narrative plotting. This is best understood by the transition from stag film's static lure of “meat” to feature-length pornography's sexual cause-effect logic leading to a “money shot.” These elements—the rise of oral sex and a shifting focus on visual orgasm—combine in the *screen*, because it features narrativized sex that begins with oral and concludes its plotting with a visible male orgasm.<sup>1</sup> The *performatistic screen* is the standard, expected order for sexual operations that lead to visible shows of orgasm; all sex is understood inasmuch as it follows or breaks with the *screen*'s standard pattern.

This third chapter focuses on broad theoretical questions of *structure* and *process* in narrative. In order to enter into this conversation, it behooves us to return to this project's introduction. There, several scholars gave varying interpretations of *Sex and the City*. While some treated the series as a retrenchment of dominant patriarchy and patriarchal narrative structures, others treated it as something novel. Indeed, numerous scholars noted the show's twisted relationship to both dominant romance narratives as well as dominant feminist narratives. Film scholar L.S. Kim theorizes that the lure of *Sex and the City* lies in watching characters that believe in, but cannot realistically live within the limits of, such narratives: “the characters are conflicted and complicated...we want to see women in the process of working through these questions...the pleasure comes from the process...not the answers” (Smith “Real-Life Questions”). Here Kim reveals a strand common to both second and third-wave feminist thinking. She bemoans the death of grand narrative and, as a substitute for these supposedly once pleasurable and now-failing stories—stories with clear “answers” and satisfying “ends”—suggests that women now seek (or are left with) an open-ended, permutational pleasure-in-process.

I return to this discussion because it is an exact mirror of arguments advanced by Roland Barthes (and other narrative theorists) in the early 1970s (and contemporary to the emergence of both feature-length, narrative pornographic films and their embedded *performatistic screens*). As will be shown, Barthes, over the course of his writings, moves away from analyses of static cultural narratives (structure) and, by introducing the concept of a reader's desire into textual analysis, towards analysis of something similar to what the *Sex and the City* girls (and viewers) experience: a more open-ended, permutational pleasure-in-process (structuration). Barthes's later theoretical model seeks to differentiate two forms of reader engagement with text: one in which a preformed, ideologically simple work (like a dominant romance narrative) imposes itself on a passive

reader (*readerly*), and one in which an active reader functions alongside an ideologically complex text in mutual (perhaps even untrusting) production (*writerly*). Barthes makes a greater effort to describe and analyze the *writerly* than the *readerly*, even though he indicates that the *readerly's* application precedes the *writerly*.

This chapter asks of Barthes: Who is this reader? What does this reader seek to gain from a text? What animates this reader's interaction with a text? Unfortunately, because of both lack of specificity and preformed biases (those of his formative models as well as his own), Barthes never really develops a solid answer. He appears to assume the universal reader is gendered male, white, able-bodied, bourgeois, heterosexual, and forged within the crucible of Western patriarchal epistemology.<sup>2</sup> He also appears to indicate but simultaneously overlook or dismiss something quite basic about this reader's engagement with narratives: plot...and how his previous knowledge of plot as well as (following Barthes's logic) a preformed, Oedipal, interest in its dynamics are the primary factors shaping his engagement with text. Barthes's writing does, however, provide components that other scholars have since utilized to better understand this reader's interaction with narrative plot. These scholars<sup>3</sup> have extended this hinted-at link between plot, narrative, desire, and Oedipus, bringing these concepts into conversation with issues of gender and sexuality.

This chapter provides a suppositional answer to a seemingly simple set of questions: what kind of textual engagement and textual enjoyment does a *readerly* reader desire from a *readerly* narrative, and what does this indicate about narrative itself? To answer these questions, this chapter's two sections follow a cumulative approach, taking seemingly disparate terms, concepts, and arguments and methodically bringing them into one another's gravitational orbits to reveal their dense connotational interworkings. It does this by focusing on noteworthy "structuring absences" that appear to animate engagement with—and the emergence of—narrative.

This chapter's first section discusses Roland Barthes's shift from Structuralist to post-Structuralist narratology. This is both contemporary to the emergence of the *performatistic screen* and representative of dominant thinking in then-contemporary narrative theory. This movement, as shown via Barthes, rests upon the introduction of Structuralism's "structuring absence": a reader desirous of some form of meaning—a reader and desire commonly understood and articulated via recourse to psychoanalytic concepts as formed by absence or lack and centered around the Oedipal. This *readerly* reader, as will be shown, is primarily gendered male, and his primary object of investigation is gendered female—a female possessed of either an isomorphic or a wholly different logic of plot, narrative, and desire.

The second section, following from the first, takes a step back to one of psychoanalysis's (and narrative theory's) grand mythical objects: Oedipus.<sup>4</sup> It, in line with what came before, reconsiders the Oedipus myth's structuring absences (or lacks) to further contemplate how one can think through this nexus of Oedipus, plot, narrative, desire, gender, and also sexuality. These analyses will speak to both contemporary narratives as well as to the historical emergence of narrative itself.<sup>5</sup>

This chapter redeploys several concepts presented in the two previous chapters: the linking of power, knowledge, and pleasure; the one-sex versus the two-sex model; the Freudian Oedipal complex; and the temporality of male versus female orgasmic pleasure. In addition, this chapter utilizes the so-called "language of theory" (and its broad

theoretical models) in both an inductive and deductive manner. The terms and models presented are in no way intended to be understood as exhaustive; many of their limitations have been and will be addressed. They are, at best, indicative. By working both alongside and within this corpus of primarily late 1960s to mid 1980s texts and their linking of Oedipus, plot, narrative, desire, gender, and sexuality, this chapter seeks to highlight, enlarge, and redeploy a still influential (and still problematic) core constellation of academic texts.

## II. Roland Barthes: Structure, Structuring Absences, and Structuration

### A. Structure

The Roland Barthes quote that opens this chapter comes from a 1966 essay titled “Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narratives.”<sup>6</sup> Broadly defined, Structuralism is a theoretical paradigm positing that constant laws of abstract culture stand behind the surface of individual phenomena such as films and literature. Because of this, analysis of any particular work will look to its relationship to larger structures such as genre, intertextual connections, models of universal narrative, or systems of recurrent patterns or motifs. In performing this operation, Structuralists treat both the phenomena at hand and the larger structure within which it occurs as stably given. Curiously enough, though Barthes’s essay on the vertical (“hierarchical”) integration of narrative instances and levels of description in the James Bond novel, *Goldfinger*, like those of his peers in *Communications*, presents a powerful model via which one can analyze the logic of a narrative’s possibilities for arranging its units, it does not concern itself with issues of desire and narrative. De Lauretis explains of structural narratology, “none of these models would support or even admit of a connection between sadism and narrative that may presuppose the agency of desire...that is to say, one by which the agency of desire might be seen somehow at work in that logic, that ‘higher order of relation,’ that ‘passion for meaning’ which narrative, Barthes says, excites in us” (104). Here, de Lauretis is referring to feminist film theorist Laura Mulvey’s influential 1975 edict that “[masculine] sadism demands a story [of women], depends on making something happen, forcing a change in another person, a battle of will and strength, victory/defeat, all occurring in a linear time with a beginning and an end” (*Film Theory and Criticism* 840). In her article, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,” Mulvey argues that a patriarchic logic shapes both popular Hollywood film narratives and their consumption, and that these films deploy women as either static, fetishistic objects of beauty or masochistic objects of masculine, sadistic inquiry—a sadistic inquiry that is productive of narrative as knowledge. De Lauretis builds from Mulvey’s claim to suggest that, in addition to sadism demanding a story, stories might demand sadism. The act of narrating might both fill a sadistic demand for story while simultaneously, fundamentally engendering it. She thus suggests the connection between sadism and story might be one of mutual implication.

To advance this claim, de Lauretis turns to two comments within Barthes’s early, Structuralist essay that prove quite curious in light of this later, feminist tethering of masculine desire to narrative. The first is an errant statement that appears four sentences from the essay’s close: “the passion which may excite us in reading a novel is not that of a ‘vision’...rather it is that of meaning, that of a higher order of relation which also has its

emotions, its hopes, its dangers, its triumphs” (*Image* 124). Narrative theorist Peter Brooks writes of this comment, “what animates us as readers of narrative is *la passion du sens*, which I would want to translate as both the passion *for* meaning and the passion *of* meaning: the active quest of the reader for those shaping ends that, terminating the dynamic process of reading, promise to bestow meaning and significance on the beginning and the middle” (*Reading* 19). If readers read out of a passion *for* and *of* meaning, then where does this passion originate? De Lauretis and Brooks (and Mulvey) would suggest starting with the sentence that closes Barthes’s essay: “it may be significant that it is at the same moment (around the age of three) that the little human ‘invents’ at one sentence, narrative, and the Oedipus” (*Image* 124). Why, after so rigidly separating out the question of desire’s role in narrative’s structure, would Barthes close his essay with this statement tying narrative to the Oedipal? Brooks comments, “it may be significant, as Roland Barthes notes, that the child appears to ‘discover’ the Oedipus complex and the capacity for constructing coherent narratives at about the same stage in life” (*Reading* 64). De Lauretis takes a stronger position, opining that, “once suggested, the connection between narrative and the Oedipus, desire and narrative, not only appears to be incontestable but, divesting itself from Barthes’s singular critical *iter*, urges a reconsideration of narrative structure—or better, narrativity” (*Alice* 104-5).

## **B. Structuring Absences: “Desire in Narrative” and the *Readerly Plot***

The second quote that opens this chapter claims, “a structuring absence...refers to an issue, or even a set of facts or an argument, that a text cannot ignore, but which it deliberately skirts around or otherwise avoids” (Dyer *The Matter* 14). Perhaps we can consider what de Lauretis terms “desire in narrative” as structural narratology’s “structuring absence.” Indeed, Barthes’s own trajectory supports this claim. In a 1971 essay titled, “From Work to Text,” Barthes writes, “the work can be held in the hand, the text is held in language...*the Text is experienced only in an activity of production*” (*Image* 157). This shifting interest from what Barthes terms static (“work”) to an activity experienced in irreversible time (“text”) implicates the presence of a reader, and this reader must have both a reason and method for approaching any given “text.” This logic can be seen in Barthes’s movement from the semiological model of both his 1957 *Mythologies* and “Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narratives” towards the more process-based approaches presented in his 1970 *S/Z*, his 1973 *The Pleasure of the Text*, and his 1980 *Camera Lucida*. In particular, *S/Z* (translated into English in 1975) stands prominently at the juncture of Structuralism and post-Structuralism by arguing that the text itself and the systems of knowledge (and the reader) that produce it are porous, shifting, and must be understood via recourse to some concept of desire’s temporal operation as mediated by language. Interestingly enough, the publication of these volumes and the timing of this shift directly corresponds to the emergence of issues of social construction and use value as tethered to narrative in the law, Simon & Gagnon’s theory of sexual scripting (presented in articles published between 1967 and 1973), and the emergence of American feature-length, narrative pornographic film and its *performatistic screen* (codified between 1970 and 1972). As chapter one presented it, sexual scripting occurs at the juncture of the ideational and physical body. It “occurs not only in the making of meaningful interior states, but in providing the ordering of bodily

activities that will release these internal biological states” (*Sexual Conduct* 15). This theory, correcting those that came before, reintroduced the actor as agent of orgasmic pleasure into sexology. American feature-length, narrative pornography narrativizes sex by embedding it within narrative plot. Additionally, its narratives tend to focus on issues of personal agency, sexual desire, and sexual pleasure. Barthes, sexology, and feature-length, narrative pornographic film all concern themselves with the relation between an agent’s actions and a narrative-like path to an erotic pleasure or an orgasmic bliss.<sup>7</sup> Barthes’s later texts, published concurrently to Simon & Gagnon’s introduction of sexual scripting and the emergence of both feature-length, narrative pornography and its *performatistic screen*, focus on the relations between narrative, desire (as engendered by some form of absence or lack), and Oedipal structuration as figured within the combine of a reader’s engagement with text.

### 1. S/Z: *Readerly and Writerly*

In *S/Z*, his massively influential study of Honoré de Balzac’s short story “Sarrasine,” Barthes opens a section titled “Contract-Narratives” with the simple and profound declaration, “at the origin of Narrative, desire” (89). This use of desire Barthes equates to commerce or exchange, and the narrative provides the dilatory *béance* within which this exchange is measured and takes place. “A desires B, who desires something A has; and A and B will exchange this desire and this thing, this body and this narrative: a night of love for a good story” (89). At its simplest, and mirroring “Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narratives,” narrative is an exchange of the reader’s desire for some form of experience (power in knowledge, affect, an aporic lack of closure, knowledge of another, knowledge of the self, etc.) fueled by the flow of time. At its most complex (and perhaps mirroring de Lauretis’s claim that, in addition to sadism demanding a story, stories might demand sadism), Barthes argues, “narrative becomes the representation of the contract upon which it is based,” or “narrating is the (economic) theory of narration...one narrates in order to obtain by exchanging; and it is this exchange that is presented in the narrative itself” (89).

In *S/Z*, Barthes breaks down the frame tale of a sculptor’s mad love of a castrato into 561 lexias (syntagmatic parts), tracing them as flow through five codes interwoven “into a kind of network, a topos through which the entire text passes (or rather, in passing, becomes text)” (20).<sup>8</sup> These codes are broadly connected with five “voices” analogized by Barthes to the commentary flowing adjacent to a performance. Though Barthes tells his reader there will be no other codes throughout the story, because each lexia will fall under one of these five codes, but he refuses to lay claim to a definitive, closed reading.<sup>9</sup> Of Barthes’s five codes, “only three establish permutable, reversible connections, outside the constraints of time...the other two impose their time according to an irreversible order” (30). The codes are broadly defined as follows:

#### Sequential (Irreversible) Codes:

1. The Hermeneutic Code (HER); tied to the voice of truth: “Under the hermeneutic code, we will list the various (formal) terms by which an enigma can be distinguished, suggested, formulated, held in suspense, and finally disclosed...This is the place for multivalence and for reversibility” (19). This code is sequential inasmuch as once an answer is known, it cannot be lost (17, 29-30). It is the overarching code of narrative knowing.
2. The Proairetic Code (ACT); tied to the empirical voice: This code “is never more than the result of an artifice of reading: whoever reads the text amasses certain data under some generic titles for

actions (stroll, murder, rendezvous), and this title embodies the sequence; the sequence exists when and because it can be given a name...its basis is more empirical than rational" (19-20). This code is also sequential inasmuch as it ties together small, non-narrative sequences (19).

Non-sequential (Reversible) codes:

3. The Semic Code (SEM); tied to the voice of the person: This code is the connotations, both stable and unstable, of character (a person, a place or an object). Barthes writes, "the seme is the unit of the signifier" (17). This code allows the text to use terms like "party" and "mansion" to connote the signified "wealth"; it allows the text to "show" instead of "tell" (18).
4. The Symbolic Code (SYM); the voice of symbols: This code is the merger of blocked or antitheticals into a lexia (17-18). These transgressions of taboo create an "unrestrained metonymy" within the text (216). This code is understood via recourse to taboo in models of rhetoric (transgression of the rhetorical figure antitheses), sex (transgression of gender, sex, or sexuality), and economy (transgressions of the origin of wealth) (18, 215).
5. The Referential Code (REF); the voice of science: This code is constituted by reference to common bodies of knowledge (18).

Barthes's model is a powerful combination of both poles of structural narratology, the syntagmatic and the paradigmatic (or, better stated, the metonymic and the metaphoric), as well as an astute consideration of both the role the reader's desire plays in actively constituting the text and the role the text (writ large) plays in soliciting and shaping a kind of reader and reading. To this end, Barthes distinguishes between two hypothetical textual engagements broadly parallel to "work" and "text": the *readerly* and the *writerly*. *Readerly* texts make no requirement of the reader to "write" or "produce" his or her own meanings; instead, s/he may passively locate "ready-made" meanings "controlled by the principle of non-contradiction" and legible plotting (156). *Readerly* texts (and readers) do not trouble the *doxa* ("common sense") of surrounding culture; these texts must be understood as proximate to "work." In contrast, *writerly* texts aspire "to make the reader no longer a consumer but a producer of the text" (4). *Writerly* texts (and ways of reading) constitute an active rather than passive method of interaction with a culture and its texts; these texts must be understood as proximate to "text." Different readers and different texts will invoke Barthes's five codes (particularly the three non-sequential ones) in different manners based on their cultural competencies, rendering any study of the text finite in application. To prove this claim and though he calls "Sarrasine" *readerly*, Barthes's work in *S/Z* seeks to open up the short story's *writerly* aspects. The active, *writerly* reader, the one clearly favored by Barthes, cannot claim to master the text; indeed, this reader and his/her cultural presumptions is partially "undone" in the effort of textual unraveling—s/he lends a piece of his/her own diachrony and desire to the text. In fact, in Barthes's view the reader is always a virtual text; s/he is a composite of competences and trainings in textual production and analysis.

## 2. Plot (Hermeneutic > Proairetic) and the Referential Code

Brooks, discussing *S/Z*, writes that "Barthes's allegiance to the 'writeable text' (*texte scriptible*: that which allows and requires the greatest constructive effort by the reader) and to the practice of 'new new novelists' make him tend to disparage his irreversible codes as belonging to an outmoded ideology" (*Reading* 20). Barthes's clear biases in *S/Z* lead him away from a solid analysis of what forms the bourgeois *readerly* (or, as he terms it, the "classic text"). However, following from the descriptors he does give of *readerly* texts, one can readily assume that a core formation of this mode of

textual engagement is plot—which one could easily argue (as Brooks does) is prior to those non-sequential elements critics (like Barthes) tend to discuss, because plot “has been disdained as the element of narrative that least sets off and defines high art” (4). Brooks theorizes that the relationship between the sequential (irreversible) codes—the hermeneutic (best represented by the detective story) and the proairetic (best represented by the picaresque tale)—forms the basis of plot itself. “Plot,” he writes, “might best be thought of as an ‘overcoding’ of the proairetic by the hermeneutic, the latter structuring the discrete elements of the former into larger interpretive wholes, working out their play of meaning and significance” (18). This operation of hermeneutic mastery is best displayed by the typical detective story. It opens with both a crime and a seemingly disparate set of agents and facts. Over time and through a scientific kind of deductive<sup>10</sup> logic, the protagonist detective (and the reader) will take these seemingly proairetic elements (discrete pieces of information, actors, circumstance, etc.) and order them into a closed hermeneutic chain that satiates some aspects of *la passion du sens*. The detective’s skill and mastery (and the reader’s satisfaction) is inversely proportional to the amount of errant detail remaining once he solves the crime.

Brooks also observes that, because of his allegiance to the *writerly* and his relative failure to focus on the seemingly obvious movement and dynamic of narrative plot, “Barthes discusses less well...the relation of the sense-making operations of reading to codes outside the text, to the structuring of ‘reality’ by textual systems” (19). This is particularly apparent in the different treatment he affords the referential code and the symbolic code. Barthes tends to dismiss the referential code as a “babble” conveying preformed stereotypes and opinions; he saves his greatest admiration for the symbolic, which troubles and disorients the referential, because it allows one to enter the text anywhere and play with its stagings of language (19-20). This dismissal of the cultural code, plot, and the *readerly* in favor of the symbolic code and the *writerly* is strange—particularly because one’s ability to engage with text is primarily shaped by one’s experience of other “common bodies of knowledge” such as cultural biases, assumptions, preformed dogma, and simple, *readerly* narrative plots. The referential code must, by virtue of its attachment to common bodies of knowledge, both express and understand itself again and again via plot, or via the overcoding of events by a passion for simple, preformed types of meaning.

This bias is made clear in Barthes’s first major discussion of the *readerly* in *S/Z*, occurring in a section titled “The Readerly I: ‘Everything Holds Together’” (156). Barthes stresses that the “readerly is controlled by the principle of non-contradiction...by multiplying solidarities, by stressing at every opportunity the compatible nature of circumstances, by attaching narrative events together with a kind of logical ‘paste’” (156). This operation points, in both the *readerly* text and the *readerly* reader, to “the careful and suspicious mien of an individual afraid of being caught in some flagrant contradiction...some disturbance of ‘common sense’” (156). The *readerly* reader and text is subservient to the *doxa* of the referential code and operates within a desire for hermeneutic mastery that does not contradict these masters.

Directly following his criticism of the *readerly*, Barthes’s next section, titled “How an Orgy is Created,” analogizes the proairetic, that which the hermeneutic successfully overwrites in the *readerly* plot but cannot fully contain in the *writerly*, to the visual frenzy of an orgy. In “Sarrasine,” Barthes explains, the character approaches the



scene of an orgy. However, though he might try to “analyze it, give its moments, the signifieds which compose it,” producing what Barthes terms both “a rhetoric of the orgy” and “an empirical knowledge of the orgy,” eventually these hermeneutic operations fall short. “A certain moment of this orgy, given under its generic name, *abandonment*,” he writes, “can no longer be analyzed...but *illustrated* by certain items of its behavior (sleeping, spilling wine): we are in an inductive logic of the orgy (based on *exempla*)” (158). Like the orgy—which Barthes claims inevitably tips beyond the hermeneutic’s grasp—the proairetic’s “series of actions, natural, logical linear as it may appear, is not controlled by a single rule of order; not only can it ‘divagate,’ accommodating endless expressions, it refracts different disciplines, orders, codes” (158).

In making this claim regarding the proairetic, Barthes performs two interesting maneuvers. First, he positions deductive, plot-driven, *readerly* analysis as anterior to recognition of the *writerly*. If the *readerly* text is best exemplified by plotting, or by the deductive overcoding of the proairetic by the hermeneutic in accordance to the *doxa* of the referential code, then the *writerly* text is best exemplified by the breakdown of plotting and the emergence of an inductive reasoning, or by the inability of the hermeneutic to adequately overcode the proairetic and the inability of the referential code to adequately master and tame the symbolic. This would indicate that, before one can recognize the proairetics of the *writerly*, one must exhaust the hermeneutics of the *readerly*—particularly as implemented via the relation of the sense-making operations that link reading to codes found in common bodies of knowledge outside the text. Second, Barthes positions sex—particularly viewed sex—as somehow exhaustive of hermeneutic analysis. This “inductive logic of the orgy” tips beyond the *readerly* and into the *writerly*. It moves beyond the “top-down” logic of deduction from *doxa*, necessitating a frenzied attempt at the “bottom-up” logic of induction.

Following Barthes, seeing sex places the hermeneutic, *doxastic*, referential mastery of the *readerly* in crisis. However, if the genre of feature-length, narrative pornography stages and restages sex within the simple, plot-like logic of a preformed *performatistic screen*, how can we understand or process this assumed logic of the orgy? What balances take place, and what shifts are necessary? In other words, what kind of limits does a *readerly* reading place on sexual pleasure?

### C. Structuration

Though his writing in *S/Z* and beyond clearly favors the “new new novelists” of the *writerly*, Barthes’s body of work provides a powerful model via which to think about *readerly* narrative structuration. Broadly defined, structuration is the study of the creation and reproduction of social systems based on analysis of both structures and agents. De Lauretis writes of this shift in Barthes’s (and others’ approach), “since the early structural analyses, semiotics has developed a dynamic, processual view of signification as a work(ing) of the codes, a production of meaning which involves a subject in a social field”; this reworking means that, “the object of narrative theory, redefined accordingly, is not therefore narrative but narrativity; not so much the structure of narrative (its component units and their relations) as its work and effects” (*Alice* 105). In other words, the shift from structural narratology to narrative structuration necessitates answering two questions: a structural question regarding component units and their relations, and a

structuration question regarding what work these do to produce what kinds of effects for what readers. Film scholar Linda Williams poses similar questions of heterosexual feature-length, narrative pornographic film in *Hard Core: Power, Pleasure, and the "Frenzy of the Visible."* In a chapter titled "Generic Pleasures: Number and Narrative," she writes, "we must begin, then, with a basic question: of what, apart from the essential ingredient of the money shot, and its placement within some kind of narrative, does the genre consist?" (121). To this she presents a structural response: "on its face, the answer is easy: hard core consists of sexual action in, and as, narrative" (121). Where Barthes, in *S/Z*, indicates that sexual iconography breaks down narrative plotting, Williams presents the then-contemporary and emergent genre of feature-length, narrative pornography as doing something different: it places sexual action within narrative and, by virtue of doing this, deploys sexual action as a narrative. Pages later, she appends the following:

We can ask of the current hard-core genre, What problems does it seek to solve? What is it "talking to itself" about? Obviously it is talking to itself about sex—specifically, about masturbatory, straight, "lesbian," oral, ménage à trois, anal, orgiastic, and sadomasochistic sex. By the same token, it is *not* talking to itself, except as a structuring absence, about male homosexual sex. We can also ask, What problems does the development of this iconography seek to solve? (129-130)

"To answer these questions," Williams hints towards issues of structuration: "we need to understand more about how sexual iconography works with narrative" (130).

And to do this, as this section has shown, we need to return to the basics of narrative. Barthes writes in *S/Z*, "at the origin of Narrative, desire" (89). And he closes "Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narratives" by writing, "it may be significant that it is at the same moment (around the age of three) that the little human 'invents' at one sentence, narrative, and the Oedipus" (*Image* 124). Understanding this nexus between desire, narrative plotting, and the Oedipus, appears necessary to enter into any conversation of how sexual iconography works with narrative—particularly narrative built around sex. Interestingly enough, all three of these spaces find themselves animated by difference brought about via structuring absences.

Peter Brooks writes, "'desire' is a concept too broad, too fundamental, almost too banal to be defined" (*Reading* 37). Despite this, "desire is always there at the start of a narrative" (38). Brooks theorizes this desire, "often in a state of initial arousal, often having reached a state of intensity such that movement must be taken, action undertaken, change begun," is, at rock-bottom, about overcoming or avoiding some deadly obstacle and maintaining life's forward momentum (38). However, at the same time, desire is also a movement backwards. To support this claim, Brooks refers to a moment in Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* where the psychoanalyst quotes Goethe's *Faust I*, "the repressed instinct never ceases to strive for complete satisfaction, which would consist in the repetition of a primary experience of satisfaction...and it is the difference in amount between the pleasure of satisfaction which is demanded and that which is actually achieved that provides the driving factor which will permit of no halting at any position attained, but, in the poet's words, 'unbegänndigt immer vorwärts dringt'" (*Pleasure* 50-51). Desire, in this formulation, comes into being via a structuring absence in the present. The present is neither the past—where the primary experience of fulfillment is supposed to have occurred, nor is it the future—where the possibility of a "complete satisfaction" still exists. Instead, the present is torn between these two positions. It is

present, but it is pallid and needs supplement. “Desire,” Brooks writes, “is inherently unsatisfied and unsatisfiable since it is linked to memory traces and seeks its realization in the hallucinatory reproduction of indestructible signs of infantile satisfaction” (*Reading* 55). In this way, he argues, “perhaps we would do best to speak of the *anticipation of retrospection* as our chief tool in making sense of narrative, the master trope of its strange logic” (*Reading* 23).

De Lauretis, in a similar vein, writes that “all narrative, in its movement forward toward resolution and backward to an initial moment, a paradise lost, is overlaid with what has been called an Oedipal logic—the inner necessity or drive of the drama—its ‘sense of an ending’ inseparable from the memory of loss and the recapturing of time” (*Alice* 125). But this Oedipal logic, in the majority of formulations, reveals yet another major structuring absence. “Whose desire is it,” de Lauretis asks, “that speaks, and whom does this desire address” (112). Her answer: “the desire is Oedipus’s, and though its object may be woman (or Truth or knowledge or power), its term of reference and address is man: man as social being and mythical subject, founder of the social order, and source of mimetic violence” (112). A similar argument was previously established in this project’s first chapter’s discussion of Freud’s deployment of the one-sex and two-sex models. There, it was observed that Freud differentiates the male and female Oedipal. The male, across his development, maintains identification with his father as subject and woman as object. His penis becomes and remains the core of his libidinal narcissism, and his Oedipal incepts the soldering of his sexual object to his sexual aim (a substitute mother for intercourse that leads to orgasm). The female, however, does not fare as well. She has to give up her masculine investment in her clitoris for a proper, feminine investment in her vagina. She does so, supposedly, under the belief that a future baby boy will serve as compensation. Because of this, the female’s sexual object and sexual aim remains confused. On the one hand, her sexual object and sexual aim could be isomorphic to that of the male: the soldering of the girl in intercourse with an exogamous male partner. However it could very well be that, while her sexual object is an exogamous male, her sexual aim is quite different: the post-coital birthing of a male child.

Though Freud must have known claims regarding the primacy of the vagina for mature female sexual pleasure did not hold up to scientific scrutiny, he needed them to manoeuvre from his isomorphic one-sex logic of early childhood development to a more culturally acceptable two-sex logic of mature adult sexuality. This split from an undifferentiated state to a state of difference, and the male’s subsequent attempt to return to something approximating the previous state, is *the* Freudian narrative. Chapter one claimed that it introduces a primary problematic: that of the concept and the temporality of male and female pleasure. In his essay, “Femininity,” Freud observes, “One gets an impression that a man’s love and a woman’s are a phase apart psychologically” (*Women and Language* 33). Indeed, if psychoanalysis’s grand myth is the division of the child from its mother as it enters into adulthood, and if its grand narrative plot is that of the adult’s (both male and female’s) attempts to move towards a repetition of this (or some similar) primary experience of plenary satisfaction, then this schism is troubling. It requires difference as its primary engine while it simultaneously seeks (primarily from the male’s perspective and at the woman’s expense) closure. This closure can be thought of in two ways: it is either, as Laura Mulvey postulates in her edict that “sadism demands

a story,” a stable confession of difference (two-sex)—that she wants a substitute phallus, or it is a closure of difference in analogous, undifferentiated pleasure (one-sex)—the reciprocation of the soldering of the male child’s sexual object to his sexual aim (a substitute mother for intercourse leading to orgasm) within a confession of pleasure that is his pleasure’s isomorphic mirror and anchor. De Lauretis, writes, “the work of narrative... is a mapping of differences, and specifically, first and foremost, of sexual differences into each text” (*Alice* 121). However, the work of narrative, this “mapping of difference,” is simultaneously attempting to secure what Barthes would describe as “non-contradiction... by multiplying solidarities, by stressing at every opportunity the compatible nature of circumstances,” (*S/Z* 156). Desire in narrative, it appears, seeks to return to some primary experience of satisfaction by plotting a path to either a stable, isomorphic reciprocal experience of *pleasure* or a stable, heteromorphic *knowledge* of woman’s difference; both of these substantiate man. The former does so by fully recentering him within a Ptolemaic system, and the latter does so by stabilizing him as master against a fully differentiated Other. In the end, “if desire is the question which generates both narrative and narrativity as Oedipal drama, that question is an open one, seeking a closure that is only promised, not guaranteed” (*Alice* 134)

In order to make this move from an undifferentiated state to a differentiated one—one productive of desire, both the Oedipus’s and, if we follow de Lauretis, broader *readerly* narrative’s (and its hermeneutic insistence on *doxa* and *The Referential Code*’s) structuring absence is woman, woman’s desire, woman’s pleasure, and the temporality of each. She is present as the object of hermeneutic inquiry at narrative’s inception; she is interrogated to confess her desire and her pleasure; but she is not allowed to speak. In an essay titled “Rereading Femininity,” Shoshanna Felman points to just this issue. Discussing Freud’s interrogation of the “riddle” of femininity (his asking Marie Bonaparte the infamous question, “Was will das Weib?”) she first quotes Freud:

Throughout history people have knocked their heads against the riddle of the nature of femininity... Nor will *you* have escaped worrying over this problem—those of you who are men; those of you who are women this will not apply—you are yourselves the problem. (19)

Femininity, Freud posits, is a riddle. Men worry about this; they seek to know the solution to the riddle of femininity. Is it same or different? If it is different, what is this difference? How can it be known? Women are the problem; they are the object of men’s inquiry into sameness and difference. Felman continues, “a question... is always a question of desire; it springs out of a desire which is also the desire for a question. Women, however, are considered merely as the *objects* of desire, and as the *objects* of the question” (21)

De Lauretis powerfully pulls all of these threads together when she writes the following:

Oedipal desire requires in its object—or in its subject when female, as in Freud’s little girl—an identification with the feminine position. And while “the aim of biology” may be accomplished independently of women’s consent, the aim of desire (heterosexual male desire, that is) may not. In other words, women *must either* consent *or* be seduced into consenting to femininity. This is the sense in which sadism demands a story or a story demands sadism, however one prefers to have it. (*Alice* 134)

As Thomas Laqueur quotes, in the one-sex model it was widely believed that, without orgasm, “the fair sex [would] neither desire nuptial embraces, nor have pleasure in them, nor conceive by them” (*Making* 2-3). Because men ejaculate at orgasm and women were isomorphic men, there was a widespread belief that women had to

experience congruent pleasures. “Near the end of the Enlightenment,” Laqueur writes, “medical science and those who relied on it ceased to regard the female orgasm as relevant to generation” (3). The man’s orgasm continued to hold its primary position but, in a two-sex model, “the newly ‘discovered’ contingency of delight opened up the possibility of female passivity and ‘passionlessness,’” and this “purported independence of generation from pleasure created the space in which women’s sexual nature could be redefined, debated, denied, or qualified” within the objective language of knowledge and via the examination of “human science” (3). In Freud’s overcoding of his one-sex model of early childhood by the two-sex model of the Oedipal, Woman’s sexual pleasure increasingly becomes the object of masculine inquiry. In a reciprocal twist, this is a masculine inquiry born of the Oedipal need for lost symmetry. While a post-Oedipal man’s sexual object and sexual aim is soldered together in finding a woman with whom he can achieve some form of complete satisfaction, which would consist in the repetition of a primary experience (his lack of differentiation from his mother and her love), hers are not. In Freud’s model, the man requires the woman’s presence as either an isomorphic mirror of his experiential endeavors or a heteromorphic proof of his position and knowledge...but she does not necessarily need him in the same way. Because of this, “women *must either consent or be seduced into consenting to femininity*” (*Alice* 134).

If sadism demands a story, it is because a story demands sadism. And the object of the sadistic demand for and of a story is woman, woman’s desire, and the temporality of woman’s pleasure. It is either an isomorphic mirror of man’s *pleasure*, or it is something different that must be studied and *known*. Here we find, once again, the linking of *knowledge* and *pleasure* within *panoptic examination*. Woman’s *pleasure* is either the isomorphic mirror of man’s, or it is something that is different and must be studied and *known*. Both of these operations engender narrative—narrative articulations of some *doxastic* norm, or narrative confessions and proofs of difference.

### III. *Oedipus I: the Man, the Myth, and the Elisions*

The previous section argues that the shift from questions of narrative structure to narrative structuration pivots on a structuring absence: the presence of a reader possessed of what Teresa de Lauretis terms “desire in narrative.” This desire, an Oedipal *la passion du sens*, stands at narrative’s inception. In looking at Roland Barthes’s era-defining work, *S/Z*, the previous section argues that the reader’s primary reason and method for approaching any given text are to be found in *readerly* systems of textual engagement, what Peter Brooks terms “reading for the plot.” This system, seeking a seamless overcoding of the proairetic by the hermeneutic in accordance with both *doxa* and The Referential Code, must be exhausted before a *writerly* engagement can emerge. In thinking of this “desire in narrative” as primarily an act of *readerly* “reading for the plot,” the previous section ties together desire, narrative plotting, and the Oedipus around one primary structuring absence and one primary *readerly* reader. The reader is man; his structuring absence (and hence the structuring absence that informs the Oedipal, desire, and narrative plotting) is woman. Woman stands as “desire in narrative’s” *la passion du sens*’s great unknown. She is both narrative’s object of desire as well as the object of narrative’s primary hermeneutic question, “Was will das Weib?” Man seeks to either

experience woman as his one-sex *pleasure's* isomorphic mirror; or he seeks to *know* her as his two-sex, homomorphous Other.

If, following Barthes, Brooks, and de Lauretis, the Oedipal stands as both *the* Freudian narrative of desire as well as the basic engine of narrative itself, it introduces a primary problematic to these theories: that of the temporality of male and female pleasure. This second section continues to probe the different narrative qualities and temporalities ascribed and attached to masculinity and femininity. It also asks what these ascriptions and attachments indicate about narrative itself. To do this, it takes a step back—very far back—to Oedipus. The tale of Oedipus, particularly as laid out in Sophocles's play, *Oedipus the King*, has, as has been and will be shown, a central place in theories of narrative and approaches to narrative analysis. This section, following the first, both further articulates Oedipus's place in the history of narrative while also asking questions of the Oedipus myth's structuring absences. What do they reveal of the anxieties driving the surface formation of Oedipus, and how do they function as a cornerstone to concepts of *readerly* narrative plotting and “desire in narrative?”

### **A. Intro: *Oedipus the King* and Oedipus**

It goes without saying that Oedipus—particularly Sophocles's play, *Oedipus the King* (also known by its Latin title, *Oedipus Rex*)—occupies a central position in the Western intellectual firmament. First performed circa 429 BC (and now considered the first part of Sophocles's three Theban Plays), this particular retelling of the Oedipus myth has, time and again, proven to be a touchstone. In his circa 335 BC work, *Poetics*, also the oldest surviving text in the Western canon dealing with narrative, dramatics, and literary theory, Aristotle outlines the ingredients necessary for a good tragedy. He bases his arguments on what he considers to be the perfect tragedy: *Oedipus the King*. In a similar manner, Sigmund Freud famously replaced his earlier *Verführungstheorie* (Seduction Theory) with his theory of the Oedipal complex.<sup>11</sup> In a letter to Wilhelm Fliess dated 15.October.1897, Freud writes, “one single thought of general value has been revealed to me...falling in love with the mother and jealousy of the father...I now regard it as a universal event of early childhood,” and he continues, “if that is so, we can understand the riveting power of *Oedipus Rex*...each member of the audience was once, in germ and in phantasy, just such an Oedipus, and each one recoils in horror from the dream-fulfillment here transplanted into reality” (*Freud Reader* 116). Years later, Freud closes his 1913 book, *Totem and Taboo*, by noting, “the beginning of religion, morals, society and art converge in the Oedipus complex,” and “this is in complete agreement with the psycho-analytic finding that the same complex constitutes the nucleus of all neuroses” (194). De Lauretis writes of this, “what must be stressed...however obvious it may seem, is that Freud's evocation of the myth of Oedipus is mediated by the text of Sophocles” (*Alice* 112). And finally Claude Lévi-Strauss, in his 1955 article, “The Structural Study of Myth,” later included in his 1958 *Structural Anthropology*, presents a now-classic analysis of Oedipus to illustrate his structural approach to the analysis of myth. This work, as will be shown in the next chapter, has proven central to the analysis of film genre (which many scholars argue is a contemporary myth system).

However, before delving into the Oedipal combine, it would behoove us to begin with a simple question: what are Oedipus's (and *Oedipus the King's*) structuring absences? In response, this chapter proposes two answers: the riddle Oedipus solves—the Sphinx's riddle—and the origin of the prophetic curse that hangs over Oedipus—the curse on the house of Laius.

As is well known, Sophocles's play begins *in medias res*. Oedipus is already king, and Thebes now suffers from a plague that Creon, returning from the oracle at Delphi, claims to be the result of religious pollution caused by Laius's murderer remaining unfound. Much of what seemingly constitutes the myth of Oedipus has already taken place. In the world of the play, these constituent events belong to a past that is gone but not forgotten; they are either overtly referred to or assumed to be within the audience's ken. But, if the reader takes a step back, it could be argued that Oedipus's story originates not at his birth, but at the origin of a cause-effect logic that overtakes his existence—at the events that incept a prophetic curse that envelops his, Laius's, and Jocasta's lives. And, as is referred to several times within *Oedipus the King*, his ascension to both Jocasta's bed as well as the heights of the throne—his assumption of a heroic position that, over the course of Sophocles's play, comes to an end in his tragic downfall—is presaged in his successfully answering, some 16 years before the staged events, the Sphinx's riddle.

If the term “structuring absence...refers to an issue, or even a set of facts or an argument, that a text cannot ignore, but which it deliberately skirts around or otherwise avoids,” these two absences, when brought forward and interpreted, recast both *Oedipus the King* and the Oedipus myth itself in terms that complement our findings in the previous section (Richard Dyer *The Matter of Images* 14).

## **B. Vladimir Propp on Oedipus: Prophecies and Sphinxes**

In *Morphology of The Folktale* (which we will encounter at greater length in the next chapter), folklorist Vladimir Propp writes that the hero's quest or action in the wonder tale is directed toward “the sphere of action of a princess (a sought-for person) and of her father” (79). He continues, “the princess and her father cannot be exactly delineated from each other according to functions,” because they both have a role in the hero's ascension (79-80). De Lauretis writes that, though Propp works “outside the psychological tradition of mythical exegesis,” *Morphology* can be read in light of his later and lesser-known work: “he presents convincingly the hypothesis that the intimate connection between the functions of the princess and her father in folk narratives derives from her historical key role in dynamic succession, the transfer of power from one ruler to another and from one form of succession, in a matriarchal system, to another in the patriarchal state” (*Alice* 113).

In particular, de Lauretis cites a 1944 (translated to English in 1979) essay titled “Oedipus in the Light of Folklore.” In this essay, Propp makes similar claims regarding the importance of what we are calling Oedipus's structuring absences: the prophecy and the sphinx. “In Sophocles's *Oedipus*,” he writes, “events unfold before the spectator from the end to the beginning,” but, “at the moment when the king appears on stage before the people, all the important events of his life are already in the past... the life of Oedipus was predetermined before his birth” (82). Here, Propp combines analyses of synchronic

(or “morphological”) motifs and plot types (the kind of analysis he does in *Morphology*) with an analysis of their diachronic or historical transformations. These transformations, he argues, are due to the relationship between a society’s folklore production and its modes of material production. These shifting elements do not directly “reflect” a single social order; they emerge out of the conflicts and contradictions of different social orders as they coexist and one eventually replaces another. Propp argues that Oedipus comes into being at the historical crossroads of two forms of succession: an earlier one in which power was transferred from the king to the son-in-law via marriage to the king’s daughter (through the agency of the “princess”), and a later one in which power descended from the king to his son. In other words, Propp's view of Oedipus is that the tale represents the historical clash of an older, matrilineal order in which succession to the throne is achieved by the son-in-law who kills his father-in-law (the old king), and a newer, patrilineal one in which a son succeeds his father. De Lauretis writes, “these hybrid formations continue to appear in tales until the full establishment of patriarchy, when the importance of the paternal function is manifested in the theme of the child-hero who does not know his father and sets out to find him” (*Alice* 115).<sup>12</sup>

Propp’s assumption that matrilineality precedes patriarchy, though questionable, is in itself interesting when mapped into other cultural systems of representation such as those found in the “human sciences” and beyond. Freud writes, in “Femininity,” that when “we speak of a person, whether male or female, as behaving in a masculine way in one connection and in a feminine way in another,” we usually mean “active” when we say “masculine” and “passive” when we say “feminine,” and this is because “the male sex-cell is actively mobile and searches out the female one, and the latter, the ovum, is immobile and waits passively” (*Women and Language* 21). Freud continues, “the behavior of the elementary sexual organisms is indeed the model for the conduct of sexual individuals during intercourse...the male pursues the female for purpose of sexual union, seizes hold of her and penetrates into her” (21). Here, Freud presents the matrilineal hub of the womb as something to be penetrated and conquered. The gendered-male spermatozoa, like Oedipus, penetrates into the female kingdom. This is in contrast to patrilineal logic, where, as philosopher Luce Irigaray has argued, culture’s fundamental “commodity” is the exchange of women in exogamous alliance formation (*Sex* 170).<sup>13</sup> In matrilineal logic, the woman is situated, and the kingdom descends via daughter to male suitors who penetrate their way into kingdom; in patrilineal logic, the son not only inherits his father’s kingdom, he will also, ideally and because of a Salic-like law, accumulate that of his wife’s father.

## 1. The Prophecy

Propp argues that, because the transfer of power implied the death of the king, the later form of succession gave rise in folklore to themes of patricide and its corollary, the prophecy. In the earlier tales reflecting matrilineal succession, the theme of prophecy is absent; this is because a son-in-law who is a stranger, unrelated by blood, and can be feared by the king performs the function of regicide. This fear often extends to the daughter through whom property is deeded. With the strengthening of patriarchy and the tightening of paternal power in the state, “fear of the son ceases to make sense,” because “now, on the contrary, sons are desired,” so now “the fear of the son must be motivated



by the outcome, by the denouement” (Propp “Oedipus” 87-88). Because of this, “prophecy arose and replaced direct fear of the son” (88). Additionally the hero, because he could not desire to kill his father lest he be a criminal, now commits unintentional murder. Propp writes, “deliberate murder is replaced by unwitting murder, intentional murder by one's own will is replaced by murder willed by the gods, for gods, too, appear in this stage” (88).<sup>14</sup>

Regarding Sophocles's *Oedipus*, Propp observes that the prophecy is given in two parts: Jocasta relates that Laius was told “that he should die a victim at the hands of his own son, a son to be born of Laius and me,” and the “second part of the prophecy, that the son will marry the king's widow, his mother, is revealed only much later after many years, and not to the parents but to the young Oedipus himself” (82). He comments on this, “such a disposition of the prophecy is not at all in keeping with folk tradition,” because “normally in folktales, prophecy, whichever of its varied forms it takes, is given immediately and in full at the birth or even before the birth of the child” (82). In this way “the parents know of the prophecy, but the child does not” (82) Sophocles, by making the hero himself aware of his fate, gives the whole story tragic meaning, because Oedipus falls victim precisely to that which he sought to avoid. “If Oedipus did not know of the prophecy,” Propp writes, “there would be no tragedy; there would simply be an accident of fate, as usually happens in folklore” (82). Though Propp dedicates a section of his essay in this way to the historical origins of “The Prophecy” in Oedipus and similar tales, he does not discuss the specific reasons why the prophecy in the Oedipus myth takes on the form it has. This chapter will, in a short while, spend some time contemplating this precise topic.

## 2. The Princess Sphinx

In addition to the emergence of the prophecy, Propp argues that this move from matrilineal to patriarchal succession shifts the role of the princess and condenses functions upon this shift. In a standard fairy tale, the hero goes to the kingdom of his future wife and performs a difficult task set by the princess before marrying her (106). This marriage is oftentimes followed by the regicide of the wicked king. Oedipus, however, returns to the his father's kingdom. “As a hero of the new patriarchal order,” Propp writes, “he heads for his father's family, the family to which he belongs, rather than for his wife's family” (107-108).<sup>15</sup> Though Oedipus completes the same basic functions as a fairy tale hero: he solves the riddle; he receives the queen's hand; and he kills the king, he does them out of order (kills king, solves riddle, and marries queen). This is the result of his father being the king he kills and his mother being the queen he marries. To clear the way for his marriage, Oedipus must kill the king first. Because she is no longer a necessary persona, the princess is attenuated. The “sphinx-woman,” Propp writes, “in our view is the result of a combination of the princess who sets the task with the dragon who demands tribute in human blood”; Oedipus's solving the Sphinx's riddle is solving a difficult task (109). In Oedipus, Propp argues, the task has a utilitarian character; by solving the riddle, Oedipus saves Thebes and gains access to the throne he cleared.

Of this formation, and with an eye to Sophocles's *Oedipus*, Propp writes the following:

The riddle of the Sphinx was created by transferring the task from the princess to a dragon. The Sphinx clearly has the attributes of a woman, and in some versions Oedipus deprives her of her

power just as the princess-sorceress in fairy tales is deprived of hers-by sexual intercourse. But the transfer of setting the task to a different figure introduces the element of coincidence into the plot: The Sphinx is motivated not by anything in Oedipus's past, but rather by his future, as preparation for his marriage and accession to the throne. If one takes Sophocles's *Oedipus* in isolation, there seems to be a lack of connection between Oedipus's past and the appearance of the Sphinx. (110)

This quote is notable for several reasons. It tethers together concepts of plot coincidence as it ties to futurity, the feminine Sphinx as obstacle, and the idea that sexual intercourse is a means to overcome and solve feminine obstacles. Though Propp continues his analysis by quickly assuring his reader that, “through comparison with the fairy tale of folklore it is possible to see a consistency in the sequence of events that has been obscured in Sophocles,” he has opened the door to a rethinking of the historical position Oedipus occupies as well as the operations of gender and desire within it (110).

### C. Structuring Absence I: The Sphinx's Other Riddle

Propp argues that Oedipus emerges at the historical clash of two conflicting social orders: an older, matrilineal one and a newer, patrilineal one. Because of this, he claims both the prophecy and the Sphinx can be read as particularly representative of this overwriting of the matrilineal by the patrilineal. They are both moments where the new order slips and, by virtue of trying to cover this up, reveals its connection to the past. Discussing the Sphinx, Propp makes three main claims. The first is that she emerges from the compacting of the princess onto the dragon. Both are isomorphic obstacles; the princess sets a task and the dragon guards a passage. The second claim Propp makes is that, in some versions of the myth, Oedipus conquers the Sphinx by having sexual intercourse with her. The third claim Propp makes is his observation that there appears to be some lack of connection between Oedipus's past and the Sphinx's presence in his story—particularly as told by Sophocles. Her appearance in his story is, at best, motivated by what he does after he encounters her. She is, because of this, a figure that introduces an element of coincidence and, perhaps, retrospective causality (*post hoc ergo propter hoc*) into the plot.

Though it does allude to it several times, Sophocles's *Oedipus* never presents the content of the Sphinx's riddle; instead, it appears to rely on the audience's awareness of the Oedipal story. Classics scholar Lowell Edmonds argues that early narrators did not specify the Sphinx's exact riddle, and that it was not standardized until late in Greek history (*The Sphinx* 4). Quite a few versions of the riddle are now available, and most of these probably represent slight variations of the form familiar to Sophocles's audience. Probably the most familiar today reads something like this: "What goes on four feet in the morning, two feet at noon, and three feet in the evening?" (*History for Kids*). Ancient Greek sources such as Apollodorus give a slight variation. Apollodorus's version reads as follows: "What is that which has one voice and yet becomes four-footed and two-footed and three-footed?" (*Apollodorus*).

As is well known, the answer to the Sphinx's riddle is “man.” When he is young (“in the morning”), he crawls on “four feet”; when he is in his prime (“at noon”), he walks on “two feet”; and when he is old (“in the evening” and, perhaps, because he's blinded himself), he uses a cane and has “three feet.” And this man, in an ideal world of symmetry where the answer Oedipus seeks is Oedipus himself, has one voice with which he names and articulates his world.

However, what if behind this riddle there was another one...an older one? Some more recent accounts, rereading ancient Gascon manuscripts in light of increased knowledge of the historical flow of populations, texts, and languages, have claimed that, before the commonly known riddle above, there are histories of tales that indicate the Sphinx asked something entirely different of Oedipus. Historian Julian d'Huy argues, "a tale from Gascony mirrors the story of Oedipus and the Sphinx, but the Gascon monster asks many riddles" ("L'Aquitaine" 1). One of these riddles is as follows: "The brother is white, the sister is black. Every morning, the brother kills the sister. Every evening, the sister kills the brother. Nevertheless, the brother and the sister never die." (15). This, she argues in a recent paper, "is an inverted copy of a fragment from an Oedipus attributed to the fourth-century tragedian Theodectes" (15). Theodectes's riddle is as follows: "There are two sisters: one gives birth to the other and she, in turn, gives birth to the first. Who are the two sisters?" (Grimal 324; d'Huy 15; Katz 10). The answer to this riddle is "day and night," and both words are feminine in Greek (d'Huy 19).

Could the historical Oedipus, situated at the junction of the matrilineal and the patrilineal and itself part of the larger project, according to Propp and de Lauretis, of overwriting the former by the latter, attempt to bury and forget this Sphinx's riddle? Why? What does this newly discovered set of facts indicate about both Oedipus and its deployment in discussions of desire, narrative plotting, and the Freudian Oedipus complex? What does it indicate of sadism's relationship to narrative? And what does it indicate of the relationship between woman and man's pleasure?

## 1. Jurij Lotman: The Origin of Plot

In order to answer why the Sphinx emerges, why her riddle shifted, and what light this shift might shed on our aforementioned concerns, this section turns to a 1970 essay titled "The Origin of Plot in Light of Typology" by soviet semiotician Jurij Lotman. Lotman opens his article by observing that, though "the question of the origin of plot can be posed both as a historical and as a typological problem," much attention has been paid to the former and little to the latter (161). "To initiate our typological analysis," Lotman writes, "we can presuppose the existence of two essentially contradictory types of text": cyclical myths and "oral tales about 'incidents,' 'news,' various happy and unhappy excesses" (161, 163).

These cyclical myths, Lotman explains, form the text-generating mechanism "at the center of the cultural *massif*" and are coextensive with the origins of culture itself (161). "Texts created in this way are not," he writes, "in our sense of the word, plot-texts" (161). Indeed, they are also not what we commonly label myths, because "their first characteristic is the absence of the categories of beginning and end: the text is thought of as a mechanism which constantly repeats itself, synchronized with the cyclical processes of nature: the seasons of the year, the hours of the day, the astral calendar" (161). Because of the repetitive, cyclical logic of these texts, linear-temporal concepts like beginning, end, or discrete events are not pertinent; additionally, human life itself is not individuated, because it forms part of a grander, recurrent structure. Any telling of the myth, Lotman reasons, can begin at any point which fulfills the role of beginning for the given narration, because the broader, cyclical myth does not belong to either the speaker

or the listener. Rather, “texts engendered by the central text-forming mechanism played a classifying, stratifying and regulating role,” because “they reduced the world of excesses and anomalies which surrounded man to norm and system” (162). The function of these myths was to establish legible equivalents in the non-discrete world. These equivalences extend through both space and time, creating iso- and homo-morphisms (e.g. the day, the year, the cyclical chain of life, and the death of man or god). These iso- and homo-morphisms, Lotman argues, are not “a metaphor as the consciousness of today would interpret it,” because “they are one and the same thing (or rather, transformations of one and the same thing)”; they operate more like today’s science (162).

This central, cyclical mechanism “needed as contracting party a text-generating mechanism organized in accordance with linear temporal motion and fixing not laws but anomalies” (163). These, Lotman writes, were things like “oral tales about ‘incidents,’ ‘news,’ various happy and unhappy excesses” (163). Where the central mechanism fixed a principle or law, the other described the discrete, chance occurrence. Lotman explains, “if historically from the first there developed statutory and normative texts of both a sacral and a scientific character, the second gave rise to historical texts, chronicles and annals” (163). This second text-generating mechanism, following etymology, was primarily responsible for the historical emergence of the novel (descending from *novella*, or “piece of news”).

Thinking of these two text-generating mechanisms in relation to one another and with Propp’s essay in mind, one can argue that it was the overwriting of the former, the cyclical myth, by the latter, the linear incident, that gave rise to both myths as we now know them and, as will be shown, what Lotman calls “plot-texts.” Lotman writes, “the destruction of the cyclical-temporal mechanism of texts, (or, at least, the sharp decrease of the sphere of its functioning) led to the mass translation of mythological texts into the language of discrete- linear systems” (164). This shift must be understood as an initial breakdown in the tight iso- and homo-morphisms governing cyclical myth. Returning to Oedipus, Propp claims the myth emerges at the moment the *matrilocal* was being overwritten by the *patrilineal*. One of the telltale signs of this shift, he claims, is the Sphinx figure. In her way, she represents the push-pull dynamic of this change. He makes three main claims about this enigmatic Sphinx figure. The first is that she emerges from the compacting of the *matrilocal* tale’s princess onto the dragon. Both are isomorphic obstacles; the princess sets a task and the dragon guards a passage. The second is that, in some versions of the myth, Oedipus conquers the Sphinx by having sexual intercourse with her. He overcomes her obstacle by, quite literally, entering into her. The third claim Propp makes is his observation that the Sphinx is a figure that introduces an element of coincidence and, perhaps, retrospective causality (*post hoc ergo propter hoc*) into Oedipus’s plot. Her presence, in this way, is tied to linear temporal motion, anomalies, and, quite possibly, plotting. The Sphinx, it appears, rests directly atop the fault lines between both the *matrilocal* and the *patrilineal* as well as those between cyclical myth and “plot-text.”

This claim is further supported by both Sphinx’s riddles and their answers. “Day and night” answers the question, “There are two sisters: one gives birth to the other and she, in turn, gives birth to the first. Who are the two sisters?” Both parts of this riddle—the question and the answer—are feminine (*matrilocal*), and they both deal with cyclical, isomorphic notions of time and space. The Sphinx’s second and more widely known

riddle, "What goes on four feet in the morning, two feet at noon, and three feet in the evening?" has a far different answer: man. And, as intuited by the riddle, this man ages and dies; he is singular, and his life is linear, consisting of a beginning, a middle, and an end (patrilinear). Where the older, cyclical myth belonged neither to the speaker nor to the listener (as the kingdom belonged neither to the princess nor her mother, but vested via their marriage), this new myth, Oedipus being its exemplar, imbricates the two in a contract of sorts—the contract of their mutual, yet individuated, “desire in narrative.”<sup>17</sup>

Here, again, we see a reduplication of the split from an undifferentiated, isomorphic state to a state of difference. In the cyclical and matrilocal, night and day are two sisters giving birth to each other. They are mataphorized as one another’s isomorphic mirror. They are both one-sex and one-flesh, and they, in turn, endlessly reduplicate one another. In the patrilineal “plot-text,” however, sets of individuated figures emerge, and the narrative of the “plot-text” creates the dilatory *béance*, as Barthes would term it, within which some exchange of knowledge takes place between the speaker and the listener. Furthermore, it makes sense that this text, so invested in the overwriting of the matrilocal by the patrilineal, would structure the isomorphic and undifferentiated as woman and the individuated and unique as man. It is, after all, emerging from the perspective of patriarchy, so that isomorphic past is, though described as feminine, also effectively gendered male. In this way, by having some versions of the myth wherein Oedipus deprives the Sphinx of her power by sexual intercourse, one can assume it is either because his carnal knowledge of his own pleasure is also hers, or because once he knows her...he knows her.

This overwriting of the text-generating system at the “at the center of the cultural *massif*” by “a text-generating mechanism organized in accordance with linear temporal motion” gave rise, over time, to plays and novels as we now know them (163). Lotman writes, “the modern plot-text is the fruit of the interaction and reciprocal influence of these two typologically age-old types of text,” and the most obvious result of this linear unfolding of iso- and homomorphisms is the breakdown of the isomorphism between levels of text and the emergence, amongst many other emergences, of character doubles, of character clusters, of differentiated characters, and of “the distinctiveness and marked modeling function of the categories of beginning and end of the text” (168). In his introduction to *Oedipus the King*, classicist Bernard Knox writes the play as a dramatic embodiment of the “fifth-century Athenian spirit” in similar terms: “the fifth century in Athens saw the birth of the historical spirit; the human race awakened for the first time to a consciousness of its past and a tentative confidence in its future” (*Three Theban* 140). In this new view, “the past came to be seen no longer as a golden age from which there had been a decline if not a fall, but as a steady progress from primitive barbarism to the high civilization of the city-state” (140).

Another notable result—perhaps even more notable—is the emergence of narrative protagonists, narrators, narratees, and readers of narrative. In the cyclical system, the differentiation between these rhetorical positions did not matter, because the myth itself secured them as isomorphic; “such a narration does not aim to inform any particular reader of something of which he is unaware...and content...does not belong to the narrator; rather it comprises a part of a chronologically secure ritual, conditioned by the course of the natural cycle” (162). Individuated identity—that of the protagonist, the

narrator, the narratee, and the reader—only emerges within the new system; “identity, which is established as a result of the translation to the linear system and the clear emergence of the categories of beginning and end, between these concepts and the biological boundaries of human existence, is a relatively late phenomenon” (179). Writing about Sophocles’s *Theban Plays*, Bernard Knox parallels this when he unpacks a “chorus in *Antigone* that sings the praise of man the resourceful. ‘Man the master, ingenious past all measure.../he forges on...’” (141). Three of man’s most celebrated achievements articulated in this ode are his supposed conquests of the earth, the sea, and the animals. “Oedipus,” Knox observes, “in the pages of the play, is presented to us as hunter, sailor and plowman...the figure of Oedipus represents not only the techniques of the transition from savagery to civilization and the political achievements of the newly settled society but also the temper and methods of the fifth-century intellectual revolution” (141-142). In this way, Oedipus stands as representative of the emergence of linear history as it centers on the emergence of individuals: narrative protagonists, narrators, narratees, and readers of narrative.

## 2. De Lauretis on Lotman: Male-Gendered Heroes and Female-Gendered Obstacles

Oedipus—situated at the overwriting of *matrilocality* by *patrilinearity*—emerges as an exemplary text modeling the anxieties present in this moment when narrative (or “plot-text”) emerged from cyclical myth. The core of all these anxieties, according to Teresa de Lauretis, is the threat of woman. To make this claim, de Lauretis reads between the lines of Lotman’s theory. Though, as Lotman claims, “plot-texts” emerged via the breakdown of the iso- and homo-morphisms of cyclical myth, these “plot-texts” maintain a core memory of their origins. “In this manner,” de Lauretis writes, “he [Lotman] explains the widespread recurrence in modern comedy, drama, and novels of character doubles (twins or functional pairs), who in a mythical system would be ‘precipitated’ in one single or cyclical text-image” (*Alice* 117-118). Because of this vestigial trace, Lotman argues that the totality of different characters distributed across the linear “plot-text” have their genesis in the cyclical myth. He writes:

Characters can be divided into those who are mobile, who enjoy freedom with regard to plot-space, who can change their place in the structure of the artistic world and cross the frontier, the basic topological feature of this space, and those who are immobile, who represent, in fact, a function of this space. Looked at typologically, the initial situation is that a certain plot-space is divided by a *single* boundary into an internal and an external sphere, and a *single* character has the opportunity to cross that boundary; this situation is now replaced by a more complex derivative. The mobile character is split up into a paradigm-cluster of different characters on the same plane, and the obstacle (boundary), also multiplying in quantity, gives out a sub-group of personified obstacles - immobile enemy-characters fixed at particular points in the plot-space ("antagonists" to use Propp's term). (167-168)

Amongst these characters, personified as obstacles situated at (or standing for) a boundary the hero must cross, one must immediately recognize the Sphinx (relative Oedipus). To this, de Lauretis will add Jocasta (relative Oedipus) and, from another famous myth, Medusa and Andromeda (relative Perseus) (118). In Oedipus, the Sphinx clearly stands at the threshold to Thebes. She kills those who cannot solve her riddle. When Oedipus solves the Sphinx’s riddle, the common myth has it that the Sphinx kills herself. *Oedipus the King* presents a striking parallel. In Sophocles’s play, Oedipus searches to solve the riddle of Laius’s killer and, by this, that of his own origins and the

prophetic curse. Once he discovers the answer, Jocasta, she who stands at the threshold of his origins, his crime, the prophecy, and his insight, kills herself. Oedipus blinds himself but does not die. Rather, in *Oedipus at Colonus*, he finally dies within a hidden threshold. Furthermore, “by reducing the...dramatis personae to the two involved in the primary conflict of hero and antagonist (obstacle), Lotman outlines a pattern of mythical narrative strongly suggestive of the one Mulvey ascribes to sadism,” and the one this chapter has, to this point, ascribed to the inception of narrative in *readerly* Oedipal desire (118). And finally, because “Lotman finds a simple chain of two functions, open at both ends and thus endlessly repeatable: ‘entry into a closed space, and emergence from it’” as the core constituents of cyclical myth and “plot-text,” it must be that “in this mythical-textual mechanics...the hero must be male regardless of the text-image, because the obstacle, whatever its personification, is morphologically female and indeed, simply, the womb” (119). Woman is obstacle to man’s movement. She must either relinquish her position as obstacle, allow him passage, and die; or she must join him in isomorphic plenary bliss (orgasm, *jouissance*, *la petit mord*, death, or a return to the womb). If that woman is the Sphinx, some versions of Oedipus make no difference between these two options, because to know her is to kill her.

What one can take from this is substantial: if the work of cyclical myth is to establish and map the world via law-like iso- and homo-morphisms, then the primary distinction from which all others descend is sexual difference. “In other words,” writes de Lauretis, “the picture of the world produced in mythical thought since the very beginning of culture would rest, first and foremost, on what we call biology,” and other famous distinctions such as activity/passivity, invisible/visible, body/mind, “inside/outside, the raw/the cooked, or life/death appear to be merely derivatives of the fundamental opposition between boundary and passage” (119). The hero, then, is “the mythical subject”; he “is constructed as human being and as male; he is the active principle of culture, the establisher of distinction, the creator of differences,” and the “female is what is not susceptible to transformation, to life or death; she (it) is an element of plot-space, a topos, a resistance, matrix and matter” (119).

Oedipus, emerging at this transition, is a cautionary tale about both the *pleasure* of isomorphic similarity and the *knowledge* of heteromorphic difference. As anthropologist Renè Girard has discussed, Oedipus comes to desire the same thing as his father: his mother. This “mimetic desire,” as Girard terms it, destroys difference and puts men into competition for the same objects (156). Oedipus serves as a surrogate victim for his audience, and his story serves as a cautionary tale regarding the danger of the seamless iso- and homo-morphism of cyclical myth. Oedipus kills his father and marries his mother, and Jocasta, as Sophocles notes, gives birth twice: a husband from a husband and a child from a child. As Girard argues, ritual sacrifice (such as the Sphinx’s suicide, Jocasta’s suicide, and Oedipus’s self-inflicted blinding) re-establishes linear order and difference threatened by the corruption of “violent reciprocity” and non-difference. It is worth noting, however, that Oedipus does not die. He is punished (blinded), but he does not die; both the Sphinx and Jocasta die; they are no longer needed for Oedipus’s narrative.

This echoes chapter one’s discussion of Laqueur, Freud and the movement from a one-sex to a two-sex model for gender, sex, and sexuality. Chapter one argues that

studies of Knowledge/Pleasure and Gender/Sex operate amidst two crucial junctures: that of the visible and the invisible and that of activity and passivity. In the transition from the one-sex to the two-sex model, female pleasure, previously assumed as a male's isomorphic reflection, is rendered different and suspicious. Chapter one argues that objective knowledge is visible and shareable; subjective pleasure is hidden. Male organs and orgasms can be visible; female organs and orgasms are, for lack of a better term, mostly "invisible."<sup>17</sup> The penis shows erection and ejaculation. In the one-flesh model, this was both inverted and mapped into the female, or it was imaginatively tweaked to explain anally passive male homosexuality (isomorphic). In the one-sex model, mutual orgasm was assumed to be a necessity for procreation. In the two-flesh model, however, the "invisibility" of woman's pleasure takes on a double logic of interiority and otherness—it is indicative of a hidden, different bodily structure as much as it simultaneously indicates a hidden, different mental structure. In the two-sex model, the belief (now supported by science) emerged that woman could conceive without orgasm. All of these invisibilities required interrogation by what Foucault terms the "human sciences"—the hidden, different bodily structure by science; the hidden, different mental structure by psychoanalysis; and, as has been, is being, and will be argued, the hidden, different temporality of female pleasure by a narrative commingling of both science and psychoanalysis. All of these maneuvers attempt to stabilize the woman within an always-masculine objective knowledge. Following Barthes, Brooks, Propp, Lotman, and de Lauretis, one can understand that these always-masculine operations of *pleasure* and *knowledge* (The Referential Code) interrogate woman as obstacle within the Oedipal movement of *readerly* "desire in narrative" and its *la passion du sens*. She is either man's isomorphic mirror, or she is his Other. In the former, her pleasure is his *pleasure*; in the latter, her Othered pleasure is his object of *knowledge*.

Regarding homosexuality, the one-sex model's consideration of vaginal penetrative heterosexual intercourse readily mapped onto male anal intercourse, gendering the passive male female. In the two-sex model, however, though heterosexual males still penetrate females, a passive male homosexual (and eventually all male homosexuals), now both sexed and gendered male by the visible marker of a penis, had to be understood as something else. No longer female gendered in sexual congress, his visible marker of both maleness and pleasure becomes warrant for...well...probing. In this way, what was a more mobile gender untethered to sex gives way to further interrogation of the mind and body as anatomy becomes the primary marker of gender.

#### **D. Structuring Absence II: The Prophecy, or The Curse on the House of Laius**

As Propp argues, Oedipus emerges at a moment when the patrilineal was overcoding the matrilineal. He highlights two notable features of the myth that indicate this: the Sphinx and the prophecy. Using Lotman's work on the origin of plot, both the Sphinx and her two riddles were analogized as a recognition that this creation of masculine narrative came at the disenfranchising of both the matrilineal and the feminine. Where narrative protagonists (heroes), narrators, narratees, and readers of narrative were all gendered male, that which narrative genders female operates as a site of both lack and lack of differentiation; she "is not susceptible to transformation, to life or death; she (it) is an element of plot-space, a topos, a resistance, matrix and matter" (*Alice* 119). Oedipus,



emerging at this transition from matrilineal inheritance and cyclical myth to patrilineal inheritance and plotted narrative, is a cautionary tale about the anxieties attached to both the isomorphic similarity of *pleasure* and the heteromorphic difference of *knowledge*.<sup>18</sup>

Anxiety of the different and unknown, coupled with an anxiety of similarity and lack of individuation, is also what animates the historical reinterpretation and repositioning of Oedipus's other structuring absence: the prophecy. In Sophocles's play, the prophecy is related as having been given in two parts. Jocasta relates to Oedipus that Laius was told he would die at the hands of his son, and Oedipus reveals that, when he was younger, he was told he would marry his mother. Sophocles's play does not indicate the origin of this prophecy. Instead, as with the Sphinx's riddle, it is either assumed that the audience already knows or that it was not considered important enough for presentation.

However, the dehortation against childbearing as embedded in a prophetic curse on the house of Laius does have a source. This source is presented at length by George Devereux in his essay, "Why Oedipus Killed Laius; A Note on the Complementary Oedipus Complex in Greek Drama," in the compendium of Greek references, *Homosexuality in the Ancient World*. Devereux writes, "Laius's early life is vaguely reminiscent to that of Oedipus," because he, too, was banished from his throne when young. Laius came of age exiled in King Pelops's Pisa. "At the time of his restoration to the throne," Devereux writes, "Laius was already burdened with a curse, which he had brought on himself through an act of homosexual rape" (117). Devereux continues, "it was this curse which eventually culminated in the Oedipus tragedy" (117). In fact, "numerous Greek sources and fragments reveal that Laius was deemed to have been the inventor of pederasty" because, "in his early manhood, long before he married Jocasta and fathered Oedipus, Laius fell violently in love with Chrysippus, son of King Pelops" (117).

Devereux narrates, citing numerous sources, that Laius was tasked with tutoring Chrysippus and fell madly in love with the boy. Rather than courting and winning the youth and asking his father's approval in a manner that would be deemed appropriate by latter-day Greeks, Laius kidnapped Chrysippus during the Nemean games. Pelops, in a rage over his son's kidnapping, placed the famous curse that resulted in the events that constitute the Oedipus myth and Sophocles's *Oedipus the King*. "Pelops's wrath over the abduction of Chrysippus," Devereux writes, citing 20th century German historian Hans Licht, "should be understood as follows: 'The father (Pelops) is not driven to the curse because Laius loved a boy and was intimate with him, consequently not by the 'unnatural nature' of his passion...but simply and solely because Laius steals the boy, and abducts him against his father's wishes'" (136). To the latter-day Greeks, "Laius is guilty of a breach of manners, rather than morals," and this breach is "an unusually clear-cut expression of 'hubris'—excess and overbearingness—which, in Greek tragedy, is the cause of man's ultimate downfall" (136).

The story of Laius has, for numerous reasons, historically fallen to the wayside. In the Greek era, Laius was guilty of *hubris*, what legal scholar David Cohen describes as an action that shamed and humiliated the victim for the pleasure or gratification of the abuser ("Law, Society, and Homosexuality" 64). Though violations of *hubris* were often

sexual in nature, they could also be understood as analogous to today's assault and battery. Laius' original infraction was, essentially, both against proper manners and against another man's right of self-determination. He once again displayed this *hubris* during his meeting with Oedipus. This is reflected in Sophocles's play when Oedipus recounts that Laius struck him on the head (*Three Theban* 206). In the moment when cyclical myths were descending into linear myths, Laius's crime is that of obstacle. In Pelops's, in Chrysippus's, and particularly (physically) in Oedipus's story, Laius is an obstacle/villain; in the proper functioning of Greek manners and mores, Laius is a transgressor of the situated cultural norms that myths uphold.

As time progressed, however, the story of Laius has taken on different meanings, and both his crime and its interpretation has taken on new shadings. Devereux claims that, through the Christian era, if not bowdlerized from the myth of Oedipus (due to both the omnipresence of Sophocles's play and a mounting animosity to male-male relations), Laius's crime "took on a new shade" (137). "The important point in all these considerations," he writes after surveying several newer variants on the Oedipus myth, "is the fact that our sources emphasize primarily the homosexual element in the causation of Laius's death" (134-135). Devereux's paper calls for a rethinking of Laius's crimes, particularly with the aim of supplementing the Freudian Oedipal complex. "The early history of Laius," he writes, "seems to provide us with data which are fundamental for the understanding of the entire Oedipus myth...the male child's tendency to view his father as a homosexual ogre, and of his desire to exchange roles with the father also in this respect" (139). Because of this, he suggests that "the Oedipus complex appears to be a consequence of the child's sensitiveness to its parents' sexual and aggressive impulses," and that "it might be worthwhile to investigate to what extent heterosexual impulses directed to the parent of the opposite sex include and/or disguise also [sic] homosexual impulses directed to the parent of the same sex" (139).

Thinking through this in terms of chapter two's discussion of sodomy law, Laius's crime becomes one of non-procreative pleasure. His punishment: should he procreate, it will destroy him. Thinking through Laius's crime via Laqueur's one-sex and two-sex model, he is guilty in the one-sex model of *hubris*, a crime of abnormal appetite. In the two-sex model, he is guilty of taking on the mental qualities of a female, particularly irrationality. Though it is assumed Laius is the active sexual partner, which would render him male in the one-sex model, he is described as having fallen madly in love with Chrysippus—so in love, in fact, that it overrides his better knowledge of decorum. This would render him problematic in the two-sex model, and it would warrant both legal sanction and medical and psychoanalytic *examination*.

Finally, thinking through Laius's crime in terms of Freudian theory and the Oedipal, one approaches several rather underdeveloped parts of the Freudian canon. French psychoanalytic theorist Marie Balmory, in her study *Psychoanalyzing Psychoanalysis: Freud and the Hidden Fault of the Father*, argues that Laius's faults form the heart of the Oedipal myth. The origin of the tragic events that befall Oedipus, she writes, "is the fault committed by Laius; the abduction and homosexual violation of the young son of his host... The original fault in this study is therefore committed not by Oedipus, murderer of his father and husband of his mother, but by Laius" (8). Balmory argues that Freud makes only one reference to Laius, and that it occurs in context of Oedipus. She claims this happens because Freud repressed the Laius-like qualities of his

own father, Jacob Freud, and that the consequence of this (personal) repression was the (theoretical) repression of Laius. Furthermore, and both problematic but also highly indicative of the historical rethinking of Laius, Balmory blames Oedipus's faults not on the father, but on homosexuality and homosexual violation.

Laura Mulvey, in her essay "The Oedipus Myth: Beyond the Riddles of the Sphinx," observes that "most commentators, including Freud, leave out the question of why Oedipus and Laius and Jocasta were cursed, and Laius's responsibility for bringing the curse down on them" (38). She suggests that forgetting Laius and shifting guilt to the child "is essential to the shift in formal and narrational structure in the Oedipus story" (39). This is because "Laius, the guilty father, exists in a sphere of pure action, outside self-consciousness," but "the Oedipal trajectory gives Oedipus the metaphysical power to reconstitute his own history through the process of narration... It is here that the process of narration in psychoanalysis and the collective compulsion to repeat that generates narrative in culture come together in the Oedipus story" (39). In Mulvey's analysis, Laius represents the primal father—possibly the primal father of *Totem and Taboo*—inasmuch as he is controlled by hubris and knows no bounds in its use of others for pleasure. "The image of the primal father," she writes, "confuses the neat polarization between mother and father," because "perhaps, even more 'unspeakable', hardly even achieving symbolization in the collective fantasy of popular culture, is the threat embodied by the primal father" (40). She goes on to suggest that "perhaps, desire for and fear of a powerful mother and the misogyny it generates conceals something even more disturbing, desire for and fear of a violent father," because "perhaps... it is the 'unspeakable' ghost of Laius that haunts relations between men, generating homophobic anxieties and an attraction bonded by physical violence" (40). Laius, the primal father, breaks down the division between the Freudian father, who both bears and imposes the cultural laws that establish and regulate desire in the Oedipus complex, and the mother, who becomes both the lost object of plenary satisfaction as well as a silhouette for future objects of desire. His hubristic presence, because it runs contra both social and sexual barriers, disintegrates the possibility of the Oedipal.

Looking specifically at *Totem and Taboo*, Freud argues that the father of the primal horde "keeps all the females for himself and drives away his sons as they grow up" (175). Perhaps this was not the case? What if this hubristic father also took some men or boys for himself? Would both those sons selected and those sons rejected have complex, shifting attractions and repulsions to the possibility of existing within the horde... in this passive position? Furthermore, Freud argues that the incest prohibition has its practical origins in the fact that, as the sons killed and consumed the primal father to take back the women of the primal horde, they recognized that "sexual desires do not unite men but divide them" (174). This statement appears at odds with the fact that, just a page later, he tosses off but then ignores the fact that the brothers might have engaged in incestuous homosexual acts with one another while in exile. He writes, "in this way [by instituting the law against incest] they rescued the organization which had made them strong—and which may have been based on homosexual feeling and acts, originating, perhaps during the period of their expulsion from the horde" (174-175). Though rivalry over a commonly desired female does seem adequate explanation for the incest prohibition, Freud's second reason—that the brothers were expunging their own homosexual history—seems more than specious. Here, in these omissions and

avoidances, Freud indicates the potential power Laius, his hubristic actions, and the cursed prophecy could hold on the Oedipal complex.

A final potential avenue through which to investigate the structuring absence of Laius and the prophecy is Freud's historical shift away from seduction theory. In his earliest work, Freud assumed that "an aetiological precondition for hysterical symptoms" and obsessional neurosis was repressed memories of an early childhood sexual abuse or molestation ("Aetiology" 189). This theory was first presented in his 1896 paper, "The Aetiology of Hysteria." There, Freud described three basic scenarios for childhood sexual experience. The second one, "cases in which some adult looking after the child—a nursery maid or governess or tutor...has initiated the child into sexual intercourse and has maintained a regular love relationship with it – a love relationship, moreover, with its mental side developed," appears to perfectly describe the relationship between Laius and Chryssipus (193). Of these relations, Freud writes, "people who have no hesitation in satisfying their sexual desires upon children cannot be expected to jib a finer shades in the methods of obtaining that satisfaction" (197). Laius, overwhelmed by a mad love and full of hubris, broke Greek decorum. He showed no hesitation in satisfying his sexual desires upon children. In later years, interpreters of Laius's actions could see his crime as breaking an interdiction against sodomy, non-procreative sexual relations, intergenerational sexual relations, and even incestuous sexual relations.

Freud, however, famously abandoned his seduction theory and replaced it, as Laius was replaced on the throne, by his Oedipal complex. This was first introduced in kernel in 1896 and 1897. In the Freudian Oedipal, the father is considered a stable entity. The boy's proper psychosexual development depends upon the father's unchanging presence as heterosexual model and bearer of the law. The structuring absence of the Laius ectype remains troubling for several reasons. Amongst them: What happens to this theory when the grand passion of the archetypal father turns out to be an adolescent boy? Could this paternal figure be effectual in helping to bring the conflict with the son to a heterosexual resolution? And what does this ectype indicate or inform regarding the so-called "negative Oedipus" in boys? Needless to say, Freud, when presenting his Oedipal, ignored (purposely or not) the assumed origins (both hubris, impropriety, and homosexuality) of the prophecy and the root causes for the curse on the house of Laius, choosing instead to present the father as stable and unchanging in both his heterosexuality and his masculine agency.

#### **IV. Conclusion: Oedipus, Desire, Narrative, and Pornography**

If Structuralism's structuring absence is "desire in narrative," then this desire, in its *readerly* formation, is a masculine-gendered one primarily invested in plots and plotting. This chapter has, through a careful examination of Barthes's *S/Z*, argued that this investment in narrative plot seeks two types of narrative closure: one that provides *knowledge* of difference, or one that isomorphically mirrors the reader's *pleasure*.

In looking to the historical origin of the Oedipal myth, this chapter has argued that Oedipus's two structuring absences are the Sphinx's riddle and the prophecy, or the curse on the house of Laius. These both reveal the myth's historical location at the overcoding of matrilocality by patrilinearity and cyclical myth by linear "plot-text." The first, again, structures woman as the object of *readerly* "desire in narrative" and its *la passion du*

*sens*. She is either man's isomorphic mirror, or she is his Other. Either her pleasure is his *pleasure*, or her Othered pleasure is his object of *knowledge*. The second structuring absence, the curse on the house of Laius, plays off of a similar set of anxieties as those of the Sphinx and her riddle: anxiety of the different and unknown, coupled with an anxiety of similarity and lack of individuation. Though Laius's crime was initially understood as one of hubris, or of an abnormal appetite and lack of control, over time it became one of transgression of ordered gender and sexuality. Through various reinterpretations and redeployments of the figure of Laius, this chapter observed a complex set of issues centered on him and his crime; all of these are repressed from the Freudian Oedipal model's insistence on a stable, unchanging father representative of culture and law.

As was shown in chapters one and two, the 1960s saw an increasing interest in the importance of narrative plotting in both legal discourse on obscenity and sexological discourse, and the early 1970s saw the rise of feature-length, narrative pornographic films as a plotted genre. The *performatistic screen*, embedded within the broader narrative of the pornographic feature and with a focus shifted from the static image of "meat" to the linear ordering towards "money" is filmed sex that has taken on the qualities of narrative plotting. In moving, as chapter two terms it, "from the smoker to the theater," pornography emerged as a bona fide film genre, and it (and its *performatistic screen*) secured a place in America's mass, bourgeois consciousness of narrative. Genre, as will be shown, is a reduplicative narrative logic; part of its power comes from its reliance on preformed sets of cultural markers and cues. Like those other bourgeois entertainments denigrated by Barthes (and numerous other scholars of literary theory) as *readerly*, part and parcel of the pleasure derived from any individual iteration of genre resides in its repetition of known form.

Film scholar Linda Williams asks of feature-length, narrative pornography, "of what, apart from the essential ingredient of the money shot, and its placement within some kind of narrative, does the genre consist?" (121). To this she presents a structural response: "on its face, the answer is easy: hard core consists of sexual action in, and as, narrative" (121). Where Barthes, in *S/Z*, indicates that sexual iconography breaks down narrative plotting, Williams presents the then-contemporary and emergent genre of feature-length, narrative pornography as doing something different: it places sexual action within narrative and, by virtue of doing this, deploys sexual action as plotted narrative. Pages later, she appends the following:

We can ask of the current hard-core genre, What problems does it seek to solve? What is it "talking to itself" about? Obviously it is talking to itself about sex—specifically, about masturbatory, straight, "lesbian," oral, ménage à trois, anal, orgiastic, and sadomasochistic sex. By the same token, it is *not* talking to itself, except as a structuring absence, about male homosexual sex. We can also ask, What problems does the development of this iconography seek to solve? (129-130)

"To answer these questions," Williams hints towards issues of structuration: "we need to understand more about how sexual iconography works with narrative" (130).

The next chapter attempts to explain just that. It continues to think about this nexus between desire, narrative plotting, gender, and the Oedipus in narrative structuration as directly applied to feature-length, narrative pornographic film. It deploys this *readerly* approach, combining it with the formative narratological writings of

Aristotle, Freytag, and Lévi-Strauss's as a means to better understand feature-length, narrative pornography and its generic, *readerly* dynamics.

## Chapter 4: The *Performatistic Screen* in Feature-Length, Narrative Pornography

### (Structure & Process)

The archetype of all fiction is the sexual act... For what connects fiction—and music—with sex is the fundamental orgiastic rhythm of tumescence and detumescence... When we look at fiction with respect to its form alone, we see a pattern of events designed to move toward climax and resolution, balanced by a counter-pattern of events designed to delay this very climax and resolution.  
(Robert Scholes *Fabulation and Metafiction* 26)

In his major study, *Narration in the Fiction Film*, film theorist David Bordwell presents three basic approaches via which cinematic storytelling can be studied: as *representation*, as *structure*, and as *process*. A study of *representation* looks to the world that is depicted in the narrative or the broader body of ideas from which a given narrative receives its content. A study of *structure* seeks to ascertain how a narrative's elemental units are combined to make a whole. Finally, a study of narrative as *process* looks at “the activity of selecting, arranging, and rendering story material in order to achieve specific time-bound effects on a perceiver” (Bordwell *Narration* xi).

This final chapter focuses on questions of *structure* and *process* in “Golden Age” pornographic films—how feature-length, narrative hard core's units combine to make a whole, and what time-bound effects these combinations might achieve. This chapter provides a suppositional answer to a seemingly simple question: what kind of textual engagement and textual enjoyment does feature-length, narrative pornographic film (especially that which emerged during the so-called “Golden Age”) and its *performatistic screen* offer its *readerly* viewer?

### I. Where Were We? (Reviewing Chapters One, Two, and Three)

Before turning to this, it would behoove us to quickly review some pertinent concepts and arguments presented in the preceding three chapters. This project's first two chapters primarily focus on *representation* and *structure*—on the broader body of ideas from which feature-length, narrative pornography emerged and on how its sex act's units combine. The first chapter focuses on the twin Foucaultian poles of law and “human sciences” as represented by the metonyms of American obscenity jurisprudence and sexology. It finds in both a late 1960s pivot to issues of social construction and utility as tethered to narrative and plot. Sexology, it argues, operates at the nexus of power, knowledge, and pleasure. Where pleasure is individual, knowledge is communicable. Using Thomas Laqueur's insightful study, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud*, it claims that sexology as we know it emerged when a one-sex model of gender, sex, and sexuality gave way to a two-sex model. In the one-sex model, both women and passive gay men were essentially thought of as men turned outside in, and both were thought to be isomorphic variations on one basic flesh: man's. In this logic, sex and gender were not connected. Because of this, all sexual pleasures were considered isomorphic mirrors of a man's visible pleasure (erection and orgasm). The two-flesh theory, on the other hand, takes as its primary epistemological principle the ontological

difference between man and woman and, subsequently, the primacy of heterosexuality. Because of this, the invisibility of woman's pleasure takes on a double logic of interiority—it is indicative of a hidden, different bodily structure as much as it simultaneously indicates a hidden, different mental structure. Like woman, a passive male homosexual (and eventually homosexuals writ large), now both sexed and gendered male by the visible marker of his penis, has to be understood as something else. For both women and gay men, what was previously a more mobile, isomorphic gender and pleasure untethered to sex gives way, in the two-flesh model, to concepts of homomorphic difference that necessitate *examination* of both the mind and the body's pleasure by "human sciences" such as sexology.

The first chapter reviews three major moments in 20<sup>th</sup> century sexology, arguing that sexological *examination* increasingly focused on the nexus between the mind, the body, and narrative plotting. To show this, it looks at three historically representative sexological models. The early-20<sup>th</sup>-century model of Freudian psychoanalysis, it argued, is both discarnate and ideational. The decorticated and statistical midcentury models of both Kinsey and Masters & Johnson annex information about pleasures under the aegis of behavioral statistics and measures of corporeal response. Discussing Masters & Johnson, the first chapter observed that, though not interested in what people actually do to one another with their bodies during sex, Masters & Johnson's 1966 study of *Human Sexual Response* introduces an element of narrative plotting into its study of orgasmic pleasure. They claim, in *Human Sexual Response*, that human sexual excitement for both males and females passes through four linearly ordered stages—the *excitement phase*, the *plateau*, *orgasm*, and *resolution*—with distinct types of corporeal reactions (muscle contraction, blood flow, fluid secretion, tumescence, etc.) (3). Masters & Johnson reveal that, whereas men required a refractory period post-orgasm, all women are not only potentially orgasmic, but potentially multi-orgasmic (7 and 65). In addition, their work seeks to quell the longstanding vaginal/clitoral orgasm debate. They ask, "are clitoral and vaginal orgasms truly separate anatomic entities?" They respond, "from a biologic point of view, the answer to this question is an unequivocal no," and, "from an anatomic point of view, there is absolutely no difference in the responses of the pelvic viscera to effective sexual stimulation, regardless of whether the stimulation occurs as a result of clitoral-body or mons area manipulation, natural or artificial coition, or, for that matter, specific stimulation of any other erogenous are of the female body" (66). Finally, Gagnon & Simon's groundbreaking 1973 anthology, *Sexual Conduct: The Social Sources of Human Sexuality* (a collection of essay published between 1966 and 1973), attempts to bring both the mind and the body under simultaneous *examination*, creating a social constructivist, narrative and plot-minded model for human sexual interaction. This model, termed "sexual scripting," occurs at the juncture of the ideational and physical body.

Chapter one closes by combining Gagnon & Simon's theory of "sexual scripting," Kenneth Burke's concept of "terministic screens," and the concept of "performativity" to introduce the concept of a *performatistic screen* for the filmed sex sequence. A "terministic screen" is a language or thought system that determines an individual's perception and symbolic action in the world. A "sexual script," like a "terministic screen," is a blueprint and guideline for what one does, thinks, and feels in a sexual encounter to potentiate orgasm. And "performativity" describes the capacity of speech



and gestures to act or to consummate an action, or to construct and perform an identity. These three terms, all at the nexus of the physical body and its mental activities and construction, combine in the concept of the *performatistic screen*, described in the first chapter as a base structure of bodily performance and engagement that underpins sexual displays as they are enacted over time in orgasmically-oriented, narrative hard core film.

The second chapter narrows the compass of the first, focusing on the paired emergence of oral sex in American sexual practice and of orgasmically-oriented, feature-length, narrative pornography and its embedded *performatistic screen*. Oral sex in filmed pornography commonly takes three forms: fellatio, cunnilingus, and anilingus. One form of oral sex, the first element of the *performatistic screen*, is common to both pornographies (fellatio). Others tend to be more common in heterosexual pornography (cunnilingus) or homosexual pornography (anilingus). Unlike heterosexual vaginal intercourse and male anal intercourse, however, oral sex has not come to stand as metonym for any form of “sexuality.” Historically, it has been categorized four ways: as a pathology (especially anilingus), as a perversion adjacent to male anal intercourse (especially the fellator’s role in fellatio), as an accepted component of foreplay leading to vaginal penetration (especially the fellatrix’s role in fellatio as well as male-female cunnilingus), and, more recently, as a fully pleasurable act in its own right (especially female-male fellatio). Fellatio also happens to be the core focus of both 1970’s *Mona the Virgin Nymph* (Benveniste & Ziehm)—America’s first widely released feature-length narrative pornographic film—and 1972’s *Deep Throat* (Damiano)—considered the work that brought awareness of feature-length narrative pornographic film to more mainstream audiences. The second chapter traces the rise of both oral sex and sexological writing on oral sexuality, finding that these acts were frequently read alongside or through homosexuality.

The authors of the 2000 study, *The Social Organization of Sexuality*, write, “if there has been any basic change in the script for sex between women and men, it is the increase in the incidence and frequency of fellatio and cunnilingus” (102). To support this, they present a survey of lifetime occurrence of oral sex by birth cohort. This survey indicates that the highest lifetime incidence of any form of oral sex (“active or receptive” or “both active and receptive”) occurs for males who reached 18 between the years 1966 and 1971 and for females who reached 18 between the years 1976 and 1981. The researchers write of their findings, “the overall trend...reveals what we might call a rapid change in sexual technique, if not a revolution” (103). This “rapid change” takes place precisely contemporaneous to the emergence of feature-length, narrative pornography and its *performatistic screen*.

Discussing filmed sex, this chapter argues that sex, when embedded within feature-length, narrative pornography, takes on narrative plotting. This is best understood by the transition from stag film’s static lure of “meat” to feature-length pornography’s sexual cause-effect logic leading to a “money shot.” These elements—the rise of oral sex and a shifting focus on visual orgasm—combine in the *screen*, because it features narrativized sex that begins with oral and concludes its plotting with a visible male orgasm.<sup>1</sup> The *performatistic screen* emerges as the standard, expected order for sexual operations that lead to visible shows of orgasm in both gay male and heterosexual

pornography; all sex is understood inasmuch as it follows or breaks with the *screen's* standard pattern.

The third chapter presents a theoretical model for both the primary form of engagement a reader maintains with narrative as well as the emergence of plot itself. It opens, via the exemplary work of Roland Barthes, with the theoretical pivot from Structuralism to post-Structuralism. This pivot was precisely contemporary to the emergence of the genre of feature-length, narrative pornography and its embedded *performatic screen*. To make this transition, Barthes (and his peers) introduces Structuralism's "structuring absence," the concept of a reader possessive of an Oedipal "desire in narrative," into textual analysis. This reader, it was argued, maintains a primary relationship (and approach) to text that is *readerly*. This *readerly* approach is best exemplified by plotting, or by the overcoding of Barthes' proairetic code by the hermeneutic code in accordance to the *doxa* of the referential code. Because of this, the male-gendered *readerly* reader's *la passion du sens* can best be understood as primarily indebted to the staging and restaging of the Freudian question, "Was will das Weib?" Woman, woman's desire, and woman's pleasure operates as the *readerly's* primary structuring absence, and its temporality is the *readerly's* prime locus of interest. "Desire in narrative" seeks to return to some primary experience of satisfaction by plotting a path to either a stable, isomorphic experience of *pleasure* or a stable, heteromorphic *knowledge* of woman's difference. Both of these serve to reify man. The former does so by centering his *pleasure*, and the latter does so by stabilizing him as master (via *knowledge*) of a fully differentiated Other.

Continuing with the concepts of structuring absences, narrative, desire, and Oedipus, the third chapter also interrogates the emergence of plot itself. To do this, it begins by presenting two structuring absences in the historical Oedipus myth: the Sphinx's riddle and the prophecy, or the curse on the house of Laius. Using Vladimir Propp, it argues that Oedipus emerges at a moment when matrilineal inheritance was being overwritten by patrilineal inheritance. In the popular version of the myth, the Sphinx asks a question of Oedipus whose answer is both man and linear time. In the popular version, Oedipus is his own answer. However, recent sources have argued that, in earlier versions of Oedipus, the Sphinx asked a far different question with a far different answer. This question, one of cyclical time, has as its answer the feminine, or woman. This chapter argues that the Sphinx (and this second riddle) is a reminder of the gendered emergence of narrative plot. Turning to Jurij Lotman's work on plot typology, it argues that, parallel to Propp's arguments, Oedipus emerges as an exemplary text modeling the anxieties present when narrative (or "plot-text") attempted to overwrite cyclical myth. Using Teresa de Lauretis' critical feminist analysis of Lotman, it argues that, at their core, all contemporary narrative plots are extrapolated from two basic, open-ended functions: entry into a closed space, and emergence from it. The hero (and extrapolated from him, narrators, narratees, and readers of narrative) must be gendered male regardless of the text-image, because the obstacle, whatever its personification, is gendered female. The obstacle that must be overcome in narrative plot, mirroring the discussion of *readerly* "desire in narrative," is woman. She must either let man *know* her as his Other; or she must join him as the isomorphic mirror of his *pleasure* (orgasm, *jouissance*, *la petit mord*, death, or a return to the womb).

Oedipus' second structuring absence, the curse on the house of Laius, appears to have increased in importance with the shifting fortunes of male homosexuality. Laius, madly in love, kidnapped Chrysippus and took him as a lover. Because of this hubristic breach of decorum, the prophetic curse that eventually consumes Laius, Jocasta, and Oedipus comes into being. Laius' punishment: that, should he procreate, it will destroy him. Over time, Laius' crime becomes either one of non-procreative sexual pleasure, or one of a transgression of identity. As was shown, several scholars, keeping with this critical shift, have called for a reconsideration of the positions Laius, the father, and homosexuality hold in the development of the Freudian Oedipal complex.

## II. Where We Are

As was shown in chapters one and two, the 1960s saw an increasing interest in the importance of narrative plotting in both legal discourse on obscenity and sexological discourse, and the early 1970s saw the rise of feature-length, narrative pornographic films as a plotted genre. Chapter three presents a model for the primary, *readerly* engagement with narrative plots. This final chapter focuses on questions of *structure* and *process* in "Golden Age" pornographic films—how feature-length, narrative hard core's units (including the *performatistic screen*) combine to make a whole, and what time-bound effects these combinations might achieve.

The *performatistic screen*, embedded within the broader narrative of the pornographic feature and with a focus shifted from the static image of "meat" to the linear ordering towards "money" and an assumedly mutual pleasure, is filmed sex that has taken on the qualities of narrative plotting. In moving, as chapter two terms it, "from the smoker to the theater," pornography emerged as a bona fide film genre, and it (and its *performatistic screen*) secured a place in America's mass, bourgeois consciousness of narrative. Genre, as will be shown, is a reduplicative narrative logic; part of its power comes from its reliance on preformed sets of cultural markers and cues. Like those other bourgeois entertainments denigrated by Barthes (and numerous other scholars of literary theory) as *readerly*, part and parcel of the pleasure derived from any individual iteration of genre resides in its repetition of known forms and pleasures.

To study the *readerly* aspects of feature-length, narrative pornography's plotting, this chapter begins by presenting three notable, non-psychoanalytic models for narrative analysis that have utilized Oedipus as their base: Aristotle's work in *Poetics*, the oldest surviving work on narrative structure; Gustav Freytag's reworking of Aristotle in his 1863 study, *Die Technik des Dramas* (Technique of Drama), a formative model for contemporary bourgeois playwrights and novelists; and Claude Lévi-Strauss' classic Structuralist reworking of the Oedipus myth. Aristotle and Freytag present the basic form of so-called "perfectly unified" plotting. Lévi-Strauss' argument that, though the surface content of myths may appear arbitrary, their deeper structure is always about moving from awareness of oppositions to their resolution has been a cornerstone of studies of genre and film. These analyses all lead back, in the fourth section, to a focused consideration of feature-length, narrative pornographic film. To close, this chapter analyzes the structure and structuration of feature-length, narrative pornographic film and its embedded *performatistic screen* in order to propose a model for how feature-length, narrative hard core's units combine to produce time-bound effects on a spectator. This

will construct a broad theory of what kind of *readerly* textual engagement and textual enjoyment feature-length, pornographic film and its *performatistic screen* offers its viewers.

To make these moves, this chapter presupposes (or brackets) several things: that both heterosexual and male homosexual feature-length, narrative pornographic film's primary audience in the "golden age" is male; that feature-length, narrative pornography operates primarily within what Barthes terms the *readerly*—a *readerly* that is primarily about males asking questions of females in order to somehow reify their masculinity—and that, though homosexual identity within the two-sex model rests at a crosshairs, this reification of masculinity also dominates homosexual pornography. Because of these presuppositions, this chapter primarily focuses on heterosexual film; it will extend arguments to issues of homosexuality and homosexual pornographic film when needed.

This chapter redeploys several concepts presented in the previous three chapters: the linking of power, knowledge, and pleasure; the one-sex versus the two-sex model; the Freudian Oedipal complex; the temporality of male versus female orgasmic pleasure; and the logic of *readerly* "desire in narrative." This chapter also refers to films only when necessary to make specific points. Like the previous chapter, it utilizes the so-called "language of theory" (and its broad theoretical models) in both an inductive and deductive manner. The terms and models presented are in no way intended to be understood as exhaustive. They are, at best, indicative.

Finally, both the arguments and the model of narrative structuration presented here are not exhaustive; they are suppositional, and must be read as such. Though the arguments and conclusions presented in this chapter can support a more mobile, shifting form of viewer cathexis that would be more (to use Barthes' term) *writerly*, its primary focus remains on the broad, basic issues of the *readerly* structure and structuration of feature-length, narrative pornography.

This project's conclusion seeks to address some of these shortcomings and point towards potentially fruitful, corrective avenues of for ongoing interrogation.

### **III. *Oedipus II: the Man, the Myth, and the Analytical Models***

This section presents three notable, non-psychoanalytic models for narrative analysis that utilize Oedipus as their base: Aristotle's *Poetics*, the oldest surviving work of narrative theory; Gustav Freytag's reworking of Aristotle in his 1863 study, *Die Technik des Dramas* (Technique of Drama); and Claude Lévi-Strauss' classic Structuralist reworking of the Oedipus myth. Aristotle and Freytag present the basic form of so-called "perfectly unified" plotting. This plot arc, as will be shown, shares a homomorphic resemblance to Masters & Johnson's 1966 study of male sexual response. Lévi-Strauss' Structuralist argument that, though the surface content of myths may appear arbitrary their structure is always about moving from awareness of oppositions to their resolution, has become a cornerstone of genre studies. Tracing from Lévi-Strauss' masterful analysis of Oedipus to its deployment in analyses of genre, this section closes by considering what the surface of pornographic film might stand as cover for. These analyses lead back, in the fourth section, to the structure and structuration of feature-

length, narrative pornography and its *performatistic screen* in order to propose a model for how feature-length, narrative hard core's elemental combine to produce *readerly* time-bound effects.

### **A. Aristotle and Freytag: the “Perfectly Unified” Plot**

Before turning to its 20<sup>th</sup> century incarnation in Claude Lévi-Strauss, one must begin an analysis of plot by presenting two major early touchstones in narratology, or the study of narrative and narrative structure. The first of these, the extant first book of Aristotle's two-volume *Poetics*, is also the oldest surviving work in the Western canon dealing with dramatics and literary theory. The second of these, Gustav Freytag's reworking of Aristotle in his 1863 study, *Die Technik des Dramas* (Technique of Drama), presents Freytag's famous pyramidal structure for the “well made” play. This graphic representation of plot, often encountered nowadays without proper attribution to Freytag, has had a strong and often unacknowledged impact on late-19<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup>, and now 21<sup>st</sup> century narrative production—particularly those “perfectly unified” plots contemporary critics deride as simpleminded, generic, or bourgeois. David Bordwell observes, “Freytag's *Technik des Dramas* was translated in 1894, but was quoted frequently before that by drama critics and theorists,” because “many of the most-popular English-language playwrights of the day—Pinero, Shaw, Wilde—had been influenced by the well-made play, as had Ibsen” (*Classical Hollywood* 168). Despite this broad impact, “after the turn of the century, the rigid structure derived from Freytag was dropped by critics, and there was a general reaction against the well-made play (and perhaps a tendency to underplay its continuing influence)” (169). In looking at these two theorists, the first two parts of this section (“Aristotle's *Poetics*” and “Freytag's *Technik des Dramas*”) will present the origins of what we now term syntagmatic plot analysis. The third part of this section (“Aristotle, Freytag, and Masters & Johnson”) will bring Aristotle and Freytag into conversation with the mid-1960s sexologic research of Masters & Johnson.

#### **1. Aristotle's *Poetics***

In the remains of this work, originally produced in 335 BC, Aristotle ruminates on what he calls the imitative, or mimetic, processes of poetry,<sup>2</sup> focusing particular attention on those of tragedy<sup>3</sup> (Aristotle 15). Tragedy, Aristotle claims, has several basic properties that distinguish it from other poetries: its imitations tend to display people who are “better than the average”; it is to be taken seriously; it “tries as hard as it can to exist during a single daylight period,” meaning its presentational frame for conveying “an action which has serious implications, is complete, and possesses magnitude,” is compact enough to be recalled from memory; its “language has been made sensuously attractive” by means of rhythm and harmony; it is “enacted by the persons themselves and not presented through narrative,” and it takes the viewer through a dramatic arc, or “through a course of pity and fear completing the purification of tragic acts which have those emotional characteristics” (18, 24, 24/25, 25, 25, 25). These properties are tied to six constitutive elements: Plot, Characters, verbal expressions (diction), thought, visual adornment (spectacle), and song composition (26-27).

Of these, Aristotle considers plot (*mythos*) tragedy's primary element.<sup>4</sup> He writes, "the structure of events, the plot, is the goal of tragedy, and the goal is the greatest thing of all" (27). Plot is defined as "the imitation of an action [praxis]," or the imitation of persons "primarily for the sake of their action" (28). A well-formed tragedy "is an imitation of an action which is complete and whole," meaning it has a beginning that need not follow upon something else, a middle that both follows upon something while allowing for something to follow from it, and an end that follows something but needs nothing following after it (30). "Well-constructed plots," Aristotle writes, "should neither begin nor end at any chance point but follow the guidelines just laid down"; they should display a unity of time, place, and action, leading forward to a proper conclusion (30). It is notable that Aristotle's conception of plot focuses on both the action as well as the format of its display—the way the tragedy metes action as information to the viewer. Ideal plots, following this logic, show information; the audience must unpack action's significance as it explicates character, thought, etc. "The [tragedy's] component events," Aristotle writes about formatting, "ought to be so firmly compacted that if any one of them is shifted to another place, or removed, the whole is loosened up and dislocated" (32).

Without explicitly stating so, Aristotle's writing clearly favors 'straight stories,' or plots with linear sequencing and temporality. Every element of the plot should link to its adjacent element(s), leaving little to no possibility of rearrangement. Looser, episodic plots are therefore dismissed as the work of bad poets, because they do not exhibit well-honed unity, and because "there is no probability or necessity for the order in which the episodes follow one another" (34). Though the best plots can and do contain surprises, Aristotle finds these are events that, in retrospect, "seen to have come about as if on purpose" and not by the forced hand of a *deus ex machina* (35). Indeed, all tragic plots contain surprise reversals or sudden shifts in fortune, but these reversals are not all equal. To explain this, Aristotle identifies three sub-elements of plot: *peripety*, *recognition* (*anagnorisis*), and *pathos* (37). *Peripety* occurs when a character's intention and effect are oppositional, *recognition* is "a shift from ignorance to awareness," and *pathos* is "a destructive or painful act, such as deaths on stage, paroxysms of pain, woundings, and all that sort of thing" (35-37). *Pathos* can be considered the keystone of tragic structure; its occurrence or the threat of its occurrence is the *sine qua non* of tragedy, and it usually occurs adjacent the dominant reversal.

Aristotle divides plots into two kinds, simple and complex, based upon how they deploy *peripety* and *recognition* in leading to the moment of greatest *pathos*. He writes, "the actions of which the plots are imitations already fall into these two categories," and "by 'simple' action I mean one the development of which...the reversal comes without *peripety* or *recognition*, and by 'complex' action one in which the reversal is continuous but with *recognition* or *peripety* or both" (35). A "complex" plot's surprise is brought about by simultaneous *peripety*, or reversal of fortune, and/or *recognition*; in the finest plots—such as *Oedipus*—they are simultaneous (35-36). Using an extended metaphor, Aristotle describes a good plot as progressing like a knot that is tied with increasing complexity until the moment preceding the reversal; after the reversal, the knot is gradually untied until it reaches a completely unknotted conclusion (49-50). Following from Lotman and de Lauretis, *peripety*, *recognition*, and *pathos* are all effects of the

male-gendered hero's interaction with the female-gendered obstacle. In *Oedipus the King*, these are all effects of Oedipus' *la passion du sens* for his origins and the curse.

In addition to favoring 'straight story,' or linear plots, Aristotle's arguments also tend to conflate the position of the protagonist and the main character. In *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*, "protagonist" is defined as "the first actor in a play; thence the principal actor or character...the protagonist has come to be the equivalent of the hero" (706). This definition originates from the fact that, "in Greek tragedy...the playwright was limited to the protagonist (first actor), deuteragonist (second actor), and tritagonist (third actor)" (706). This origin, perhaps, explains Aristotle's conflation. The earliest Greek dramas featured only one protagonist and a chorus. Over time, more characters were added with whom the protagonist could converse, and these roles were spread across increasingly complex forms of storytelling and character positioning. David Bordwell writes of so-called Classical Hollywood film narratives, "the most 'specified' character is usually the protagonist, who becomes the principle causal agent, the target of any narrational restriction, and the chief object of audience identification" (*Narration* 157). In Classical film narratives, the protagonist can be thought of as the character that changes emotions or worldview over the course of the plot; the protagonist is, following Bordwell, the principal causal agent.

Though this term is used interchangeably with main character, these two are not equivalent. In her guide, *Screenwriting Updated: New (and Conventional) Ways of Writing for the Screen*, scriptwriter Linda Aronson presents the following explanatory anecdote:

Some years ago I was asked to write a film about a bizarre and eccentric elderly fan dancer on a mission of revenge. I couldn't understand why this woman kept turning into a 1950s-style housewife. Eventually, I realized the reason was that I had assumed that she, as the major character, was the protagonist. In trying to get inside her head to give her a normal point of view and understandable motives, I had robbed her of her personality—her eccentricity, her "differentness." The defining and interesting thing about this woman was that she was the sort of character, like Raymond in *Rain Man* (1988), who defied logic and could not change. To be depicted properly, with all the comedy and mystery that she deserved, she had to be seen from the outside.

The problem was solved by inventing a new protagonist who was an ordinary person (a truck driver) and making the fan dancer the antagonist who came into his life and dragged him into her comic journey of revenge, changing him but remaining unchanged herself. The fan dancer remained the major character, but she was not the protagonist. (61-62)

In this anecdote, Aronson demarcates the protagonist—the character who undergoes some change—from what she terms both the "major character" and "the antagonist." This "major character/antagonist" she describes as defying logic, as unchanging, and as something that "had to be seen from the outside." Aronson's description of this character, and her subsequent choice to create a male protagonist who changes by spending time with this "bizarre and eccentric elderly fan dancer," falls perfectly in line with de Lauretis' critical feminist reinterpretation of Lotman. It also partially helps to establish a difference between the protagonist and the main character.

Mulvey writes, "there are three different looks associated with the cinema: that of the camera as it records the pro-filmic event, that of the audience as it watches the final product, and that of the characters at each other within the screen illusion" ("Visual Pleasure" 843). In Classical Hollywood narrative, "the conventions...deny the first two and subordinate them to the third, the conscious aim being always to eliminate intrusive camera presence and prevent a distancing awareness in the audience" (843). In the

simplest Classical Hollywood narrations, the protagonist will be the dominant bearer of the look.

In *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*, narrative theorist Mieke Bal presents the concept of a *focalizer*. “A choice is made from among the various ‘points of view’ from which the [narrative] elements can be presented,” she writes, “the resulting *focalization*, the relation between ‘who perceives’ and what is perceived, ‘colors’ the story with subjectivity” (8). The *focalizer* can be understood as the character from whose subjective point of view the story is told, and “the subject and object of focalization must be studied separately” (146). In Classical Hollywood films, where the convention is to push viewers to align with the gazes of the characters as they look at each other, the *focalizer* at any given moment is often shifting. However, over the course of the Classical Hollywood plot one character, usually the protagonist, will emerge as a primary *focalizer*—both the embodiment of the gaze as well as the affective lensing of it. This is not always the case. Sometimes the protagonist is not the same as the primary *focalizer*. Broadly, the protagonist can be defined as the character that is the plot’s principle causal agent who undergoes some form of change; the main character can be defined as an (often unchanging) character that represents a plot’s primary *focalizer* (dominant point of view, or dominant affective lens). Following Lotman and de Lauretis, the protagonist will always be an isomorph of the male-gendered hero. The main character, when not the protagonist, can vacillate between being an isomorph of a female-gendered antagonist or obstacle (as she is in Aronson) or a male-gendered isomorph of the protagonist (such as a buddy character, a helper, or a primary narrator).

The main character is often the titular character in a film, and it is also possible for the main character, when not the protagonist, to have more screen time than the protagonist. In the pornographic feature film *Talk Dirty to Me* (Spinelli 1980), for example, self-proclaimed ladies’ man Jack (John Leslie) brags to his friend that he can seduce Marlene (Jessie St. James). Marlene suffers from an inability to ask men for what she most desires sexually: dirty talk, and Jack has the ability to seduce women by talking dirty to them. The film establishes this in two early scenes: one in which Jack verbally comes on to a secretary and one in which Marlene cannot bring herself to ask her husband to talk dirty to her. Through her interactions with Jack, Marlene develops the ability to ask men (first Jack and then her husband) to talk dirty to her. In this film, though Jack is the main character, his escapades occupy the majority of screen time, and he is the film’s primary *focalizer*, Marlene is the protagonist. She undergoes a change, and her desires function as the primary causes of narrative motion and change. The audience is cued to understand that Jack, though the *focalizer*, is present precisely because of Marlene’s desire for dirty talk. The film’s title, *Talk Dirty to Me*, is the very request that Marlene cannot make in the beginning but can make in the end.

Aristotle’s work provides several base rules from which to assess the ‘straight story,’ linear narrative favored by both Classical Hollywood and genre films. First, narrative’s primary element is plotting. . .its ordering of action, and plot supports and organizes all other constitutive elements. Second, a solid plot’s action consists of a beginning, a middle, and an end; it is complete unto itself and ordered such that there can be little variance in the position of its constitutive elements. The tragic plot, understood as exemplary for all plots, consists of that which is before a reversal, the reversal, and that which comes after the reversal. These shifts must be understood in two ways: they



serve, as Peter Brooks terms it, an “anticipation of retrospection”; and they affect a character that changes, a protagonist (*Reading* 23). This protagonist need not be the main character. Finally, the plot must be of such size that it can be taken into memory—it must be compact enough that the audience’s “anticipation of retrospection” can recall and ascertain the relation between the beginning, middle, and end.

## 2. Freytag’s *Die Technik des Dramas*

In 1863 Gustav Freytag, a German dramatist, published *Die Technik des Dramas*, a book-length study of the craft of theatrical storytelling. Drawing inspiration from both Aristotle’s and Horace’s writings on poetics while also accommodating for works by playwrights and authors such as Shakespeare and Goethe, Freytag took the basic structure Aristotle presents, that a dramatic action must have a beginning, a middle, and an end, and expanded upon its interstice motivations. Keeping with Horace’s edict that “no play should be longer or shorter than five acts,” Freytag produced his famous five-part structure for the drama (line 189).

In a section titled “The Classical Paradigm” in his introductory volume, *Understanding Movies*, Louis Giannetti writes

Aristotle implicitly suggested the structure of classical drama in *The Poetics*, but it was not until the nineteenth century that the inverted V structure was diagrammed by the German scholar Gustav Freytag. This type of narrative structure begins with an overt conflict, which is increasingly intensified with the rising of the action of the following scenes. Details that don’t relate to this conflict are eliminated or kept incidental. The battle between the main character and his or her antagonist reaches its highest pitch in the climax. Someone wins, the other loses. In the resolution, the strands of the story are tied up and life returns to normal with a closing off of the action. (341)

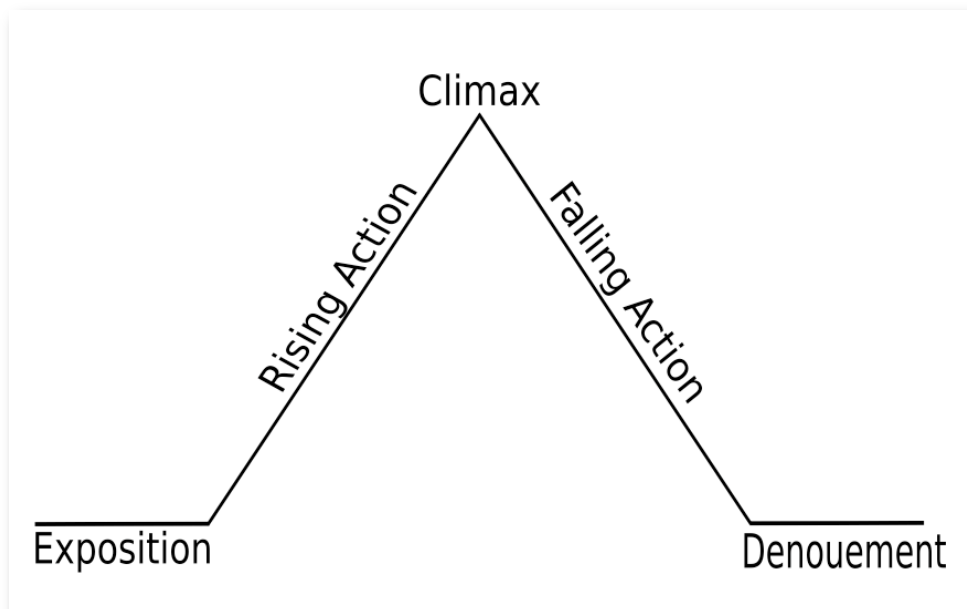


Fig. 1: Freytag’s 5-Part Structure

The drama's beginning and end are connected, Freytag claims, by a ratcheting of forces enunciated along causal chains. "It rises from the *introduction* [*exposition*] with the entrance of the existing forces to the *climax*, and then falls from here to the *catastrophe* [*denouement*]," Freytag writes, and "between these three parts lie (the parts of) the *rise* [*rising action*] and *fall* [*falling action*]" (*Technique* 114-115). In his reworking of Aristotle's tripart structure, Freytag's triangle still acknowledges that the *climax* and the moment of greatest *pathos*, need not be the same instance. For example, in Sophocles' *Oedipus*, the protagonist's recognition he murdered his father and violated the incest taboo occurs one scene before both Jocasta's suicide and his self-inflicted blinding. Between the five sections of the dramatic arc, Freytag recognizes "three important scenic effects through which the parts are separated as well as kept together" (115). These three effects are located 1) between the exposition and rising action (inciting incident), 2) between the climax and the falling action (tragic moment), and 3) between the falling action and the denouement (last suspense). Freytag writes, "the operation of the first is necessary to every play; the second and third are good but not indispensable accessories" (115).

Freytag's total structure looks as follows:

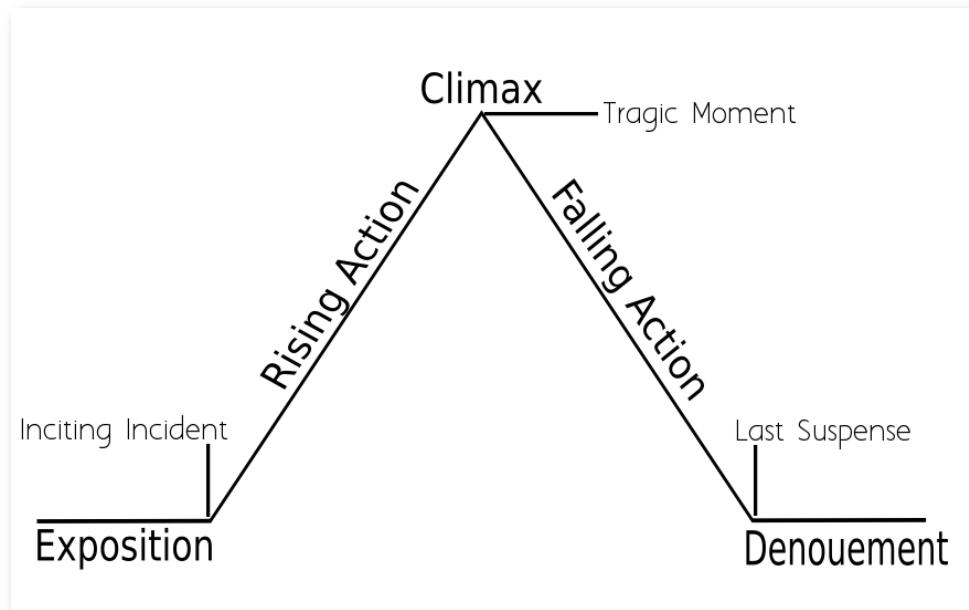


Fig. 2: Freytag's Reworking of Aristotle

Freytag's reworking of Aristotle structures the beginning, middle, and end of a complete action along five main component parts with one necessary and two optional scenic effects. Like Aristotle, Freytag's writing implicitly favors 'straight stories' in which protagonists and main characters are the same. Furthermore, and keeping with Lotman and de Lauretis, Freytag's three important scenic effects can all be understood as moments of conflict and boundary crossing; they are all highlighted instances of the male-gendered hero's interaction with the female-gendered obstacle or boundary. After introducing the characters, settings, etc. in the *exposition*, an *inciting incident* pivots the plot by causing some form of conflict. This conflict and its attendant tension increases in complexity along *rising action* until it reaches a *climax*, or a moment of supreme tension.

Following this, a *tragic moment* or reversal might occur, inciting the *falling action*. Aristotle's *peripety* and/or *recognition*, a shifting of the protagonist's fate forever for the worse (*peripety*) and/or the protagonist's recognition of his/her major error (*recognition*), will commonly happen after the climax and adjacent to, or in concurrence with, the *tragic moment* (130-31). This typically leads to the moment of highest *pathos*, the final tragedy or the *catharsis*—the moment when the audience can purge its built up tension (131). Following this end of the suspense and purgation of tension, the plot can quickly close any remaining loose ends in its *denouement*.

### 3. Aristotle, Freytag, and Masters & Johnson

Both Aristotle and Freytag argue that any given plot must have a beginning, a middle, and an end. Both theorists favor 'straight stories,' that are "well made" and "perfectly unified," or plots whose beginnings and ends exhibit some form of symmetry. Additionally, both Aristotle and Freytag implicitly argue via their use of *Oedipus the King* that the efforts and effects of plotting focus on a master character—a protagonist—who also serves as the primary point of reference for the audience (a main character). Finally, both authors claim that the tensions of the plot lead to a climax, or moment of supreme tension, after which the plot can quickly untie any other knots that need untying to maintain its symmetry.

This structure recalls Masters & Johnson's 1966 claim, in *Human Sexual Response*, that human sexual excitement for both males and females passes through four linearly ordered stages—excitement, plateau, orgasm, and resolution—each with distinct types of corporeal reactions (muscle contraction, blood flow, fluid secretion, tumescence, etc.) (3). According to their research, the male resolution has two-stages: in the first, termed the refractory period, the penis decreases from its erect state to about fifty percent larger than its flaccid state; in the second (after the refractory period is finished), the penis decreases in size and returns to flaccidity (7). Masters & Johnson's found no such refractory period in women. Because of this, they conclude that women, unlike men, are capable of multiple, adjacent orgasm. The following diagram plots both male and female sexual response:

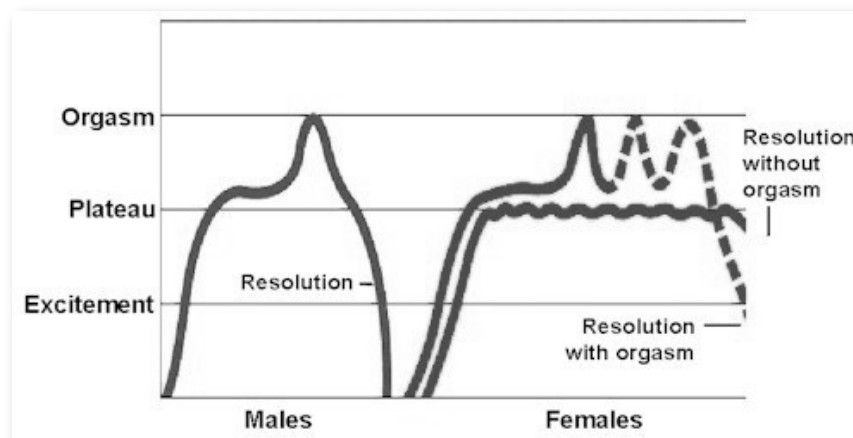


Fig. 3: Male and Female Sexual Response Cycles

Gagnon and Simon write of this model, “the language of Masters and Johnson—‘arousal, plateau, climax, and resolution’...[is] a conception resembling somewhat an Aristotelian notion of the dramatic” (*Sexual Conduct* 16). Indeed, when diagrammed, Masters & Johnson’s model for male sexual response (also their model for the uniorgasmic woman) is very close to Freytag’s pyramid. The same cannot be said of their model(s) for multiorgasmic and nonorgasmic female sexual response. Given the homomorphic structures of Freytag’s inverted V for dramatic narratives and Masters & Johnson’s diagram of male sexual response, we have further proof that the primary marker and driver of this *readerly* nexus between desire, narrative plotting, and the Oedipus is man.

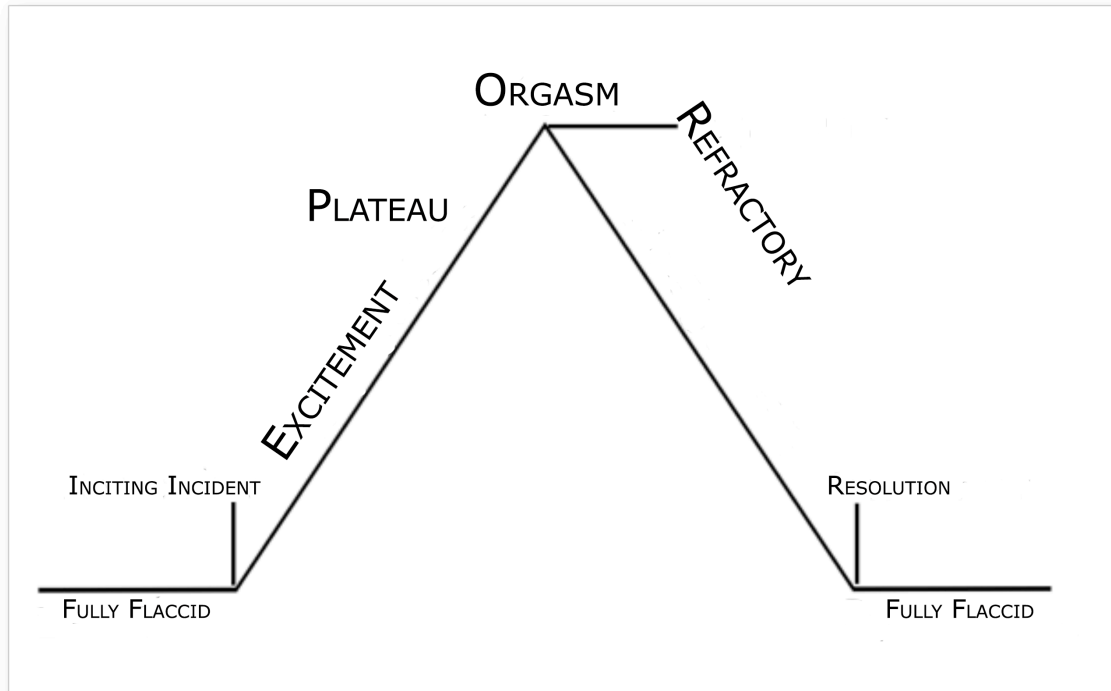


Fig. 4: Male Sexual Response Plotted

The previous chapter argues in that the split from an undifferentiated state to a state of difference, and the male’s subsequent attempt to return to something approximating the previous state, is *the* Freudian narrative. This split, it claims, introduces a primary problematic: that of the concept and the temporality of male and female pleasure. In his essay, “Femininity,” Freud observes, “One gets an impression that a man’s love and a woman’s are a phase apart psychologically” (*Women and Language* 33). In effect, this split means that *readerly* narrative closure can be thought of primarily in two ways: it is either, as Laura Mulvey postulates in her edict that “sadism demands a story,” a stable confession of homomorphic difference that closes the possibility of unity under a *knowledge* of two-sex logic, or it is the one-sex closure of difference in isomorphic sexual *pleasure*—the reciprocation of the soldering of the male child’s sexual object to his sexual aim (a substitute mother for intercourse) within a confession of her pleasure that both centralizes and mirrors his pleasure. “Whose desire is it,” de Lauretis asks, “that speaks, and whom does this desire address” (*Alice* 112). Her answer: “the desire is Oedipus’, and though its object may be woman (or Truth or knowledge or

power), its term of reference and address is man: man as social being and mythical subject, founder of the social order, and source of mimetic violence” (112). Understanding this nexus between desire, narrative plotting, the Oedipus, and gender appears necessary to enter into any conversation of how sexual iconography works with narrative—particularly narratives built around sex.

## **B. Claude Lévi-Strauss’ Oedipus, Genre Studies, and Feature-length, Narrative Pornography**

In his famous study of Oedipus, structural anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss presents a powerful model for the analysis of both mythology and, as will be shown, genre. Mythology, Lévi-Strauss claims, broadly approximates a universal system that has an underlying, fundamental structure (*Structural Anthropology* 208). He makes this claim because, though the surface content of any given myth appears arbitrary, the myths of different cultures prove surprisingly similar; “on the one hand it would seem that in the course of a myth anything is likely to happen,” he writes, “but on the other hand, this apparent arbitrariness is belied by the astounding similarity between myths collected in widely different regions” (208). Therefore the problem: if the content of myth is contingent [i.e., arbitrary], how are we to explain the fact that myths throughout the world are so similar? He answers that the proper objects of inquiry are the aspects of how a collection of individual myths collectively illuminate a particular group’s cultural formation (209). Lévi-Strauss writes, “The technique which has been applied so far by this writer consists in analyzing each myth individually, breaking down the story into the shortest possible sentences [mythemes], and writing each sentence on an index card bearing a number corresponding to the unfolding of the story” (211).

### **1. Claude Lévi-Strauss’ Oedipus**

He arranges Oedipus as follows:

<b>Overrating of blood relations</b>	<b>Underrating of blood relations</b>	<b>Slaying monsters</b>	<b>Difficulty walking and standing upright</b>
Cadmus seeks his sister Eurpoa, ravished by Zeus		Cadmus kills the dragon	
	The Spartoi kill one another		
			Labdacus (Laius' father) = lame (?)
			Laius (Oedipus' father) = left-sided (?)
Oedipus marries his mother, Jocasta	Oedipus kills his father, Laius	Oedipus kills the Sphinx	Oedipus = swollen-foot (?)
	Eteocles kills his brother, Polynices		
Antigone buries her brother, Polynices, despite prohibition			

Fig 5: Lévi-Strauss' Oedipus (*Structural* 214)

Lévi-Strauss begins by breaking the myth into mythemes. He rearranges these along two axes, preserving an approximate chronological order on the horizontal axis and introducing categories of recurring motif on the vertical axis. The plot of the myth reads from left to right going from the top to the bottom; the underlying, fundamental structure of the myth appear if one reads from top to bottom. Lévi-Strauss identifies *overrating of blood relations* as one feature of the myth; he also identifies its inverse, *underrating blood relations*, as another. He also identifies *slaying monsters* and the fact that several names in Oedipus' father-line refer to *difficulty in walking and standing upright*.

If the relationship between the first two columns is clearly inverse; the relationship between the second two is less apparent. Lévi-Strauss argues that monsters are chthonian beings; “the dragon...has to be killed in order that mankind be born from the Earth; the Sphinx is a monster unwilling to permit men to live” (215). Men kill both of these chthonian beings; Lévi-Strauss argues the third column deals with the “denial of the *autochthonous origin of man*” (215). He continues, “In mythology it is a universal character of men born from the earth that at the moment they emerge from the depth, they either cannot walk or do it clumsily...the common feature of the fourth column is: *the*

*persistence of the autochthonous origin of man*” (215-216). In this way, column four is to column three as column one is to column two, and *Oedipus* opens onto a structural meaning:

The myth has to do with the inability, for a culture which holds the belief that mankind is autochthonous, to find a satisfactory transition between this theory and the knowledge that human beings are actually born from the union of man and woman. Although the problem obviously cannot be solved, the Oedipus myth provides a kind of logical tool which, to phrase it coarsely, replaces the original problem: born from one or born from two? born from different or born from same? By a correlation of this type, the overrating of blood relations is to the underrating of blood relations as the attempt to escape autochthony is to the impossibility to succeed in it. Although experience contradicts theory, social life verifies the cosmology by its similarity of structure. Hence cosmology is true. (216)

Lévi-Strauss reads the myth as not about killing or incest, but as mediating a form of cultural cognitive dissonance—between the belief that human beings were originally born from the earth, which is marked out by the two right-hand columns (and which also forms a major element of the Theban cycle), and the knowledge that they are born of sexual union between man and woman, the major concern of the two left-hand columns. The myth does not solve a problem; it presents a mediating cover for sets of seemingly incompatible beliefs. Bringing Lévi-Strauss into conversation with both Propp and Lotman, one can easily see how this core antagonism—born from earth *versus* born from man—is a reduplication of their antagonisms: matrilineal *versus* patrilineal and cyclical myth *versus* linear “plot-text.” In all these spaces, there is an anxiety of similarity and differentiation as tied to the activity of desire in linear time, and the major factor from which this differentiation declines is a gendered-female *topos* (as indicated by the concepts “born from one,” “autochthony,” and “overrating of blood relations”).

## 2. Genre and Myth

Thomas Schatz, in both his 1978 article, “The Structuralist Influence: New Directions in Film Genre Studies,” as well as in his 1981 article, “Film Genre and the Genre Film” uses Lévi-Strauss to equate film genre with myth. In “Structural Influence,” Schatz argues genre is not purely defined by content; it is defined by its embodiment of specific cultural concerns (96). This argument allows Schatz to tether his understanding of genre to myth; he writes, “the conception of the genre film as a unique functional structure is closely akin to the work of Claude Lévi-Strauss in his structural analysis of myth” (97). When theorists move towards a view of genre film as a form of contemporary myth, they open the possibility “for examining genres not only as individual, isolated forms, but also as related systems that exhibit fundamentally similar characteristics” (98). Schatz furthers this argument in “Film Genre and the Genre Film,” writing of these two terms that, “whereas the genre exists as a sort of tacit ‘contract’ between filmmakers and audience, the genre film is an actual event that honors such a contract” (644). Following from Robin Wood’s 1977 observation in “Ideology, Genre, Auteur” that audiences and critics are so accustomed to genre films they tend to isolate particular types from each other and overlook how they might all represent different strategies for dealing with similar ideological tensions, Schatz writes, “Our ultimate goal is to discern a genre film’s quality, its social and aesthetic value,” and, “to do this, we

will attempt to see its relation to the various systems that inform it” (Wood 671 and Schatz “Film Genre” 645).

Schatz proceeds to present a map for doing this. He argues genres are not determined by physical settings, but by a “social community” or “a cultural milieu where inherent thematic conflicts are animated, intensified, and resolved by familiar characters and pattern of action” (646). These “social communities” or “cultural contexts” create a grammar of sorts—they operate as a system of convention or “narrative shorthand whereby significant dramatic conflicts can intensify and then be resolved through established patterns of action and by familiar character types” (646-647). These dramatic conflicts, representing the transformation of some social, historical, or geographical aspect of American culture, form the identifying feature of any genre. Schatz presents several examples when clarifying his point: law and order is a core problem in gangster films and detective films, but it is generally not a problem in musicals; individualism is celebrated in the gangster film (the hero’s rise and fall) and the detective genre (the hero’s occupation and world view), but characters in musicals compromise their individuality to romance and the social community. “In each of these genres,” Schatz writes, echoing both Propp and Lévi-Strauss, “the characters’ identities and narrative roles (or ‘functions’) are determined by their relationship with the community and its value structure”; the generic character “is the physical embodiment of an attitude, a style, a world view, of a predetermined and essentially unchanging cultural posture” (647).

Genres like the western, detective, gangster, war, and science fiction “have conflicts that, indigenous to the environment, reflect the physical and ideological struggle for its control... animated and resolved either by an individual male hero or by a collective,” and others like the musical, screwball comedy, and family melodrama “have conflicts that are not indigenous to the locale but are the result of the conflict between the values, attitudes, and actions of its principal characters and the ‘civilized’ setting they inhabit... generally... animated by a ‘doubled’ hero—usually a romantic couple whose courtship is complicated and eventually ideologically resolved” (648). The former set he terms *genres of determinate space*; the latter he terms *genres of indeterminate space* (648-49). In *genres of determinate space*, “a specific social conflict is violently enacted within a familiar locale according to a prescribed system of rules and behavioral codes” (649). The iconography oftentimes features an individual or collective hero who enters the locale, “incorporates a rigid, essentially static attitude in dealing with this very dynamic, contested world,” and then leaves (649). In *genres of indeterminate space*, “a doubled (and thus dynamic) hero in the guise of a romantic couple who inhabit a ‘civilized’ setting” operate within “a civilized, ideologically stable milieu, which depends... on a highly conventional value system” (649). Conflicts in these films “derive not from a struggle over control of the environment, but rather from the struggle of the principal characters to bring their own views in line either with one another’s or, more often, in line with that of the larger community” (649).

Schatz argues that the difference between these two groupings rests on inversely related factors: *genres of determinate space* feature static and singular protagonists (one lead or one likeminded group) engaging with an ideologically contested setting, and *genres of indeterminate space* feature dynamic and doubled protagonists (usually a heterosexual pair) struggling to bring their own views in line with one another or the larger community in ideologically stable settings (649). Because of these differences,



*genres of determinate space* tend to deploy dense visual (and geographic) iconographies, whereas *genres of indeterminate space* tend to be less visual and more abstractly ideological, focusing, as they tend to do, on (mostly male-female) progressions from romantic antagonism to embrace (649). “Ultimately,” Schatz writes, “*genres of indeterminate*, civilized space (musical, screwball comedy, social melodrama) and *genres of determinate*, contested space (Western, gangster, detective) might be distinguished according to their differing ritual functions,” because “the former tend to celebrate the values of *social integration*, whereas the latter uphold the value of *social order*” (649).

Schatz’s articles present three instructional maneuvers: they recast the difference between genre films and film, and they move away from thinking of genre types as discrete entities, instead claiming that many have similar structural operations and ideological logics. Finally, they present two basic operations in two basic types of genre films: *genres of determinate space* seek social order and *genres of indeterminate space* seek social integration. The former seeks to promulgate and uphold *knowledge* of order, social difference, and individuated roles while the latter seeks to enact the *pleasure* of conquering difference in mutual integration. These two goals directly mirror the previous chapter’s claim that the closure of *readerly* narrative desire is either a heteromorphic *knowledge* of woman’s difference or a stable, isomorphic, and reciprocal experience of *pleasure* wherein woman’s pleasure is man’s pleasure’s mirror. This closure operates in two ways: as either a stable confession of difference that closes the possibility of unity (enacting a stable social order), or as the closure of difference in some form of sexual pleasure—the reciprocation of the soldering of the male child’s sexual object to his sexual aim within a confession of her pleasure that is both his pleasure’s isomorphic mirror and anchor (enacting a social integration).

### 3. Feature-length, Narrative Pornography

Film scholar Linda Williams furthers both Wood’s and Schatz’s claims that genres might represent “different strategies for dealing with the same ideological tensions” in her 1991 article, “Film Bodies: Gender, Genre, and Excess.” In this article, Williams attempts to reassess features of three types of film genres: heterosexual pornography, horror, and melodrama. “This essay,” she writes, “explores the notion that there may be some value in thinking about the form, function, and system of seemingly gratuitous excesses in these genres,” because “by thinking comparatively about all three ‘gross’ and sensational film body genres we might be able to get beyond the mere fact of sensation to explore its system and structure as well as its effect on the bodies of spectators” (702). These three genres, considered totemic examples of *readerly* “low culture,” all traffic in shows of a (primarily female) “body caught up in the grip of intense sensation or emotion,” namely those associated with sex, violence, and emotion (703). Furthermore, they tend to break down the “critical distance” *writerly* works of so-called “high culture” assumedly cultivate between the text and the viewer. They all cull some form of mimetic physical response from their viewers. In fact, their very success is often measured by their ability to affect the spectator’s bodily response. “The body spectacle,” Williams writes, “is featured more sensationally in pornography’s portrayal of orgasm, in horror’s portrayal of violence and terror, and in melodrama’s portrayal of weeping”

(703). Grouping these genres under the hypernym “body genres,” Williams proposes “that an investigation of the visual and narrative pleasures found in the portrayal of these three types of excess could be important to a new direction in genre criticism that would take as its point of departure—rather than as an unexamined assumption—questions of gender construction, and gender address in relation to basic sexual fantasies” (703).

Williams’ main argument: “though quite differently gendered with respect to their targeted audiences, with pornography aimed, presumably, at active men and melodramatic weepies aimed, presumably, at passive women, and with contemporary gross-out horror aimed at adolescents careening wildly between the two masculine and feminine poles, in each of these genres the bodies of women figured on the screen have functioned traditionally as the primary embodiments of pleasure, fear, and pain” (704). From this, she maps the various perversions, temporalities, and fantasies that attach to each genre. These mappings result in the following schema:

<b>An Anatomy of Film Bodies</b>			
Genre:	Pornography	Horror	Melodrama
<b>Bodily excess</b>	sex	violence	emotion
<b>Ecstasy: — shown by</b>	ecstatic sex orgasm ejaculation	ecstatic violence shudder blood	ecstatic woe sob tears
<b>Presumed audience:</b>	men (active)	adolescent boys (active/passive)	girls, women (passive)
<b>Perversion:</b>	sadism	sadomasochism	masochism
<b>Originary fantasy:</b>	seduction	castration	origin
<b>Temporality of fantasy:</b>	on time!	too early!	too late!
<b>Genre cycles: “classic”</b>	stag films (20’s-40’s) <i>The Casting Couch</i>	“classic” horror: <i>Dracula</i> <i>Frankenstein</i> <i>Dr. Jekyll/Mr. Hyde</i> <i>King Kong</i>	“classic” women’s films: maternal melodrama: <i>Stella Dallas</i> <i>Mildred Pierce</i> romance: <i>Back Street</i> <i>Letter from an Unknown Woman</i>
<b>contemporary</b>	feature-length hard core porn: <i>Deep Throat</i> , etc. <i>The Punishment of Anne</i> Femme Productions Bi-sexual Tri-sexual	post- <i>Psycho</i> : <i>Texas Chainsaw Massacre</i> <i>Halloween</i> <i>Dressed to Kill</i> <i>Videodrome</i>	male and female “weepies” <i>Steel Magnolias</i> <i>Stella</i> <i>Dad</i>

Fig. 6: Williams’ “Anatomy” of Body Genres

Though Williams' essay owes a primary debt to psychoanalysis and psychoanalytic-inflected theories (Freud, Clover, Silverman, Doane, Deleuze, Laplanche and Pontalis, etc.), it proves quite productive to rethink these three culturally adjacent "body genres" via Lévi-Strauss and Schatz, and via Barthes, de Lauretis, Brooks, Propp, and Lotman. If, as Lévi-Strauss argues, myth does not solve a problem but instead presents a mediating cover for sets of seemingly incompatible beliefs; and if, as Williams writes, "the deployment of sex, violence, and emotion is thus in no way gratuitous...it is instead a cultural form of problem solving...[and] there is a great deal of work to be done to understand the form and function of these three body genres in relation to one another," could the generic myths and meanings presented by any one of these "body genres" operate as mythic cover for the incompatibilities proffered by the other two (710 & 714)? If, as Wood claims and both Schatz and Williams theorize, these seemingly different genres maintain a form of engagement with one another, could it not be that they serve, via a triangulation, as each others' set of incompatible beliefs? Could heterosexual pornography's tales, addressed to men, of activity; sexual ecstasy, orgasm, and ejaculation; sadism and seduction, operate as cover for the seeming incompatibility of the ecstasies, addresses, and temporalities found in the spasms of bodies rent apart or the sobbing of those in emotional turmoil? Perhaps, hidden behind feature-length, narrative heterosexual pornography and its *performatistic screen's* path to the *sine qua non* of an "on time" show of male ejaculation, one finds, amongst others, the anxieties of being temporally diphasic (which tends to be more common in gay male pornography's presentation of sequential orgasms), asynchronous (which Masters & Johnson's concept of the multiorgasmic woman and the possibility that woman's sexual aim is a child would support), or even atemporal (which Freud's tethering of the female to the unconscious and de Lauretis' tethering, via Propp and Lotman, of the woman to cyclical myth and the matrilocal would support)?

If the closure of *readerly* narrative desire is either a heteromorphic *knowledge* of woman's difference that shares some internal logic with *genres of determinate space* and social order or a stable, isomorphic experience of *pleasure* that shares some internal logic with *genres of indeterminate space* and social integration, what is the function of this "on time" in feature-length, narrative pornographic film? Could it mediate both? Could both of these concerns find their solution in "on time"? This concept is made more plausible when thinking the following: Williams' article appears to privilege a particular spectacular moment in each distinct narrative genre as its *sine qua non* and interpretive key, but her core argument locating this moment in the show of the female's body does not quite account for the *performatistic screen's* visual and narrative mechanics—particularly when thinking of the role it plays relative the broader narrative. In pornography, though Williams' argument places the woman's body as the genre's central site of sexual saturation, her gridding clearly privileges the *sine qua non* of the "money shot" as its interpretive key. This is an odd maneuver, because this last component of the *performatistic screen* signals a massive shift away from the saturated female body back to the male's as proof and measure of pleasure achieved "on time." Indeed, within pornography's sex act, the woman—the primary *focalizer* of sex (the main character)—is not the protagonist. The male undergoes visible change; she either stays the same or is assumed to follow his shifting sexual pleasure. Though the visible show of the male's

orgasm can stand as assumed proof of the woman's simultaneous achievement, it could just as easily represent her falling into invisibility and illogic.

Perhaps, to better understand this, one must think about the roles of protagonist and main character within the film's broader narratives as well as within their moments of bodily excess. The melodrama, the horror movie, and the pornographic film all feature repeated instances of weeping, violence and terror, and orgasm. Williams' argument making the woman's body the primary embodiments of pleasure, fear, and pain is only true for melodrama, because its narrative protagonist and main character tend to be one in the same. There, Williams' *sine qua non* is clearly the most pathos-laden moment of loss. It is, as pictured and captioned in the article, "Stella (Barbara Stanwyck), after sacrificing herself for her daughter, stand[ing] in the rain with a crowd of curious passersby to watch the wedding" (707). This penultimate moment—commonly also foregrounded by the film's narrative—is one abounding with the masochism of "too late." It is also a moment when the protagonist (Stella) is quite literally also operating as the *focalizing* main character. In heterosexual pornography, as we have argued, the arc of the *performatistic screen* features a female main character, but it is cued to a male protagonist. This need not be true, however, of the broader narrative. The two films presented as "Contemporary" examples of the genre, *Deep Throat* and *The Punishment of Anne* (Metzger 1975), feature far different protagonists in the broader narrative. In *Throat*, Linda (Linda Lovelace) is the protagonist of the broader narrative. She searches for—and finds—her orgasm ("To untangle her tingle"). In *Anne*, Jean (Carl Parker) is the Protagonist. He runs into a friend named Claire (Marilyn Roberts) at a party, and she invites him into a world of S&M wherein they torture Anne (Mary Mendum). In *Throat*, though Linda is the broader narrative's protagonist and main character, she can only function as a main character in the sex scenes. In *Anne*, Jean functions as the protagonist in both the broader narrative and the sex acts.

In horror, the interpretive *sine qua non*'s location is not as clear. Is it the gory death of the sexually active "bad" girl that occurs in the first two acts of the film, or is it the penultimate moment when the sexually passive "good" girl fights the monster and takes on power? This lack of clarity is, perhaps, partially explained by what Williams describes as "how identification seems to oscillate between powerlessness and power" in the horror film; it is also explained by the fact that the role of *focalizer* (and, perhaps, main character) shifts between the monster and a character like the final girl. Regardless, it presents a strangely odd temporality. On the one hand, the "bad" girl and, arguably, the monster die "too early" as victims of a sadistic killer; the so-called "final girl," however, manages to find and wield her sadistic power "just in time" after a jarring string of sadistically-imposed "too lates."

When thinking of the role of "on time" in pornographic film and its possibility to present a *readerly* narrative closure, the role of protagonist and main character in the broader narrative versus these roles in the *performatistic screen* appears to be of particular importance. If narrative desire seeks either a heteromorphic *knowledge* of woman's difference that shares some internal logic with *genres of determinate space*'s interest in social order or a stable, isomorphic experience of *pleasure* that shares some internal logic with *genres of indeterminate space*'s interest in social integration, can the "on time" of feature-length pornographic film solve both? Is there something more

complex in pornography's structure and structuration that explains this seeming inconsistency between protagonist and main character in the mapping of the temporality of "on time" sexual pleasure and the broader narrative concerns?

#### **IV. Structure & Structuration: The *Screen* (Number) within the Film (Number & Narrative)**

To present a suppositional answer to this question about the structure and structuration of feature-length, narrative pornography that attempts to bring together the aforementioned issues of desire, narrative plotting, and the Oedipus; gender and gendered dynamics within core plot dynamics; the difference between protagonists and main characters; and the temporality of "on time" sexual pleasure, this final section looks at how sexual iconography in pornographic films works with narrative. Building from the previous two chapters' arguments, the emergence of sex embedded within nationally exhibited narrative pornographic films must be understood as a novel rupture. Mirroring this, Schatz argues that the identifying features of film genres come from the transformation of some social, historical, or geographical aspect of American culture. Genres emerge to mediate anxieties brought by change; they create some system of convention or "narrative shorthand whereby significant dramatic conflicts can intensify and then be resolved through established patterns of action and by familiar character types" (Schatz "Film Genre" 646-647).

As chapter two argues at length, oral sex was a recent addition to most Americans' sexual script. Furthermore, the "variable obscenity" of film ratings broke open the longstanding barriers of the Motion Picture Production Code, and the "X" designation created a space for explicit sex to move, as chapter two terms it, "From the Smoker to the Theater." As that chapter details, films exhibited in movie theaters with both advertising and acknowledged authorship could and did, for the first time, show explicit sex, and this sex tends to begin with oral and end with visible shows of male orgasm. We termed this pattern for narrativized sex embedded within feature-length, narrative pornography a *performatistic screen*.

The previous chapter argued that the difference between male and female desire and its temporality is an age-old question; it could, in fact, be the very one from which narrative emerges. If, as both that chapter and this is claiming, the closure of *readerly* narrative desire is either a heteromorphic *knowledge* of woman's difference or a stable, isomorphic experience of reciprocal *pleasure* wherein woman's pleasure is man's pleasure's mirror, then the 1966 emergence of Masters & Johnson's study is quite telling. It placed both male and female orgasmic pleasure at the forefront of the national consciousness. In doing so, it introduced scientific proof that female orgasmic response could either drastically differ from male orgasmic response or match it exactly.

This section will argue that, in coming to narrative form, heterosexual pornography overwrites the female sexual response cycle as a staging and restaging of the *performatistic screen*, or a version of the male sexual response cycle, wherein the solution to a narrative's problem (be it one of social order or social integration) is found in the male's orgasm. Though the protagonist and the main character of the broader narrative in feature-length, narrative pornography is often a woman investigating herself and her own pleasure, her desire's *la passion du sens* finds its *readerly* answer in man's

pleasure. In effect, though the protagonist of the broader narrative might be female, the protagonist of the sex act is male, and his pleasure is her desire's solution.

In the "Generic Pleasures" chapter of *Hard Core*, Linda Williams writes of the early 1970s, "in becoming legal, feature-length, and narrative hard-core film joined the entertainment mainstream" (120). Though still regarded as a cultural pariah, "the new 'porno' was now more a genre among other genres than it was a special case," because it "went about imitating other Hollywood genres with a vengeance" (120). This imitation of other genres, one could claim, works to diffuse attention from what was truly novel about the genre: the sex it showed. Though the broader narrative of the new "porno" could present itself in a chameleon-like fashion (as do *genres of indeterminate space*), its basic structure, Williams argues, remains relatively stable and, in fact, closest to that of another chameleon *genre of indeterminate space*: the musical. "To a great extent," she writes, "the hard-core feature film is a kind of musical, with sexual number taking the place of musical number" (124). To support this claim, Williams presents and utilizes extensive information from Stephen Ziplow's 1977 *Film Maker's Guide to Pornography*. In this guide, Ziplow presents numerous rules and suggestions detailing how to create a heterosexual pornographic film that rests within the genre's conventionality. Amongst other suggestions, Ziplow details that hard core pornographic film should have a narrative, and that it should serve as a vehicle to the sexual numbers. The ratio between the two, Ziplow advises, should be approximately 40 percent narrative to 60 percent number, and Williams reminds her reader, "the money shot is crucial: 'If you don't have the come shots you don't have a porno picture'" (130).

### **A. Number: The *Performatistic Screen***

In his guide, Ziplow "provides a checklist of the various types of acts that should be included in a porno, along with the best way to film them" (126). Included in this list are "masturbation," "straight sex" (male-female, penis-to-vagina), "lesbianism," "oral sex" (both cunnilingus and fellatio), "ménage a trois," "orgies," and "anal sex" (with the female assumed to be the receiving partner) (126-127). To this list, Williams appends "sadie-max," or "a scene depicting sadomasochistic relations such as whipping, spanking or bondage, performed with or without paraphernalia" (127). Both Williams and Ziplow treat these numbers as interchangeable inasmuch as they can appear across the body of the film.

Though these groupings are, in their own way, informative, they say relatively little about the actual arrangements of bodies and actions that appear on the screen. Furthermore, they present a fundamental definitional problem: is a sexual encounter that features whips but proceeds, as most do, from "oral sex" to "straight sex" to the "cum shot" to be classified as "sadie-max," "oral sex," or "straight sex?" For example, the sex act that closes *Insatiable* (Segall 1980) features oral, vaginal penetration, anal penetration, and then a money shot. Popular writing on the film describes this as an "anal" scene. This could be for several reasons: it is the only sex act in the film to feature anal; it closes the film and occurs after "insatiable" Sandra Chase (Marilyn Chambers) begs for "more," which might make the previous distinction seem important; it is the only sex scene to feature two porn superstars, Marilyn Chambers and John Holmes (who was

famously well-endowed, perhaps making the “anal” part of this scene seem like more of a physical accomplishment); and the film’s promotional imaging draws attention to Chambers’ behind.<sup>5</sup> Despite these potential explanations, one could also argue that this “anal” scene is actually a very typical ordering of sex itself. It opens with oral and ends with a money shot. Again, Ziplow note (and Williams highlights) that “the money shot is crucial: ‘If you don’t have the come shots you don’t have a porno picture’” (130). Given this maxim, isn’t every scene that features a money shot actually just that, and aren’t the bulk of Ziplow’s and Williams’ distinctions a fundamental mistaking, as they say, of the trees for the forest?

This problem—between the surface features and their deeper logic of presentation—is a direct analogy to that encountered by famed folklorist Vladimir Propp when he sought to study the Russian wonder tale. Like Propp, this chapter presents a similar interpretation of Williams: these classifications utilize misleading categories and themes, and they miss the basic plot-like ordering that informs and undergirds all variations of sex in feature-length, narrative pornographic film: the *performatistic screen*.

## **B. Vladimir Propp and Sex’s Master Plot**

In 1928, Vladimir Propp published his *Morphology of the Folktale*. Though generally unnoticed in the West until it was translated in 1958, it is now regarded as a masterwork of 20<sup>th</sup> narrative analysis—something against which later scholars have defined themselves. This section will do three things: it will present Propp’s basic analysis and reasoning (“Propp 101”). From there, it will present three seeming inconsistencies Propp encountered and his solutions to them (“Propp 102”). These insights will then be applied to the *performatistic screen* (“Propp and the *Performatistic Screen*”) to argue, counter Ziplow’s (and, as we will see later, Williams’) arguments, that, as was presented in chapters one and two, there is a basic pattern for filmed sex against which variations are adjudicated variant.

### **1. Propp 101**

*Morphology* was published, as Propp describes, to address a flaw in the classification systems employed by scholars of the tale. Surveying the field, Propp finds the majority of thinkers segregate the broad corpus following two methodological dividers: categories and themes (“types” in Aarne’s index). The most common category “division is a division into tales with fantastic content, tales of everyday life, and animal tales” (5). At first, Propp contends, these appear to hold, but they soon reveal distributional flaws. For example, would a tale about a fisherman and wish-granting fish be classified as an animal tale or a tale with fantastic content? (5). “If a division into categories is unsuccessful,” Propp continues, “the division according to themes leads to total chaos,” because it maintains the following logic: “a part of the tale is selected (often haphazardly, simply because it is striking), the preposition ‘about’ is added to it, and the definition is established” (7). This leads, as do Ziplow’s (and Williams’) division of the pornographic sex into “various types of acts,” to a looping, confusedly overlapped classificatory schema. To counter this confusion, Propp presents a new model—one

based upon syntagmatic morphology—that seeks to delineate common component parts of 100 Russian “wonder tales” (19). In *Morphology*, Propp argues the spectrum of

Russian wonder tale<sup>6</sup> narratives can be reduced to a single master plot, comprised of thirty-one sequential elements<sup>7</sup> (*functions*), and that only seven basic dramatis personae (*roles*) interacting provide the momentum to cross these thresholds. Propp accomplishes this by looking beyond the particular content (characters, problem, setting, etc.) of any given tale, registering instead the formal dynamic of functions, which he defines “as an act of a character, defined from the point of view of its significance for the course of the action” (21). Function stands as the base unit of analysis from which the tale is composed. The characters can variously slot into the seven roles Propp identifies: villain, donor, helper, the sought-for-person (and her father), the dispatcher, the hero, or the false hero (79-83). The set of characters capable of filling roles is large; the set of functions is small. These two dimensions (function and character) lead to a combinatorial diversity.

After an intricate explication of the thirty-one functions (see endnote 7), Propp presents a few general inferences and individual, important deductions. He infers that the action of tales develop within the limits of the functions; that functions develop out of their adjacent functions with “logical and artistic necessity”; that no function excludes another; and that all the functions belong to a single axis (64). From this, he deduces that several functions are arranged in pairs (ex: struggle-victory); that other functions might appear in groups; and that there are a few singular functions (punishment, marriages, etc.) (64).

## 2. Propp 102

Following his inferences and deductions, Propp tackles three supposed inconsistencies. The first is the seeming overlap of functions. Propp argues that, though the content may appear similar, the context—the location of these functions relative other functions, clarifies both what function is taking place as well as if an act serves a single or double function (69-70). Second, Propp handles the issue of residual material in the tale—material such as characters not in a role, description, anecdotal knowledge, etc. to which no function corresponds. Though troubling, Propp suggests dividing this material into two non-functional categories: connectives and motivations (74). Connectives help to link functions, even if these functions do not follow one another, and to reduce trebling, or the repetition of function arcs, to a single function (74-75). Propp concludes that motivations, “all reasons and aims of characters which give rise to their deeds,” may have an origin in a tale of their own (75).

The third (and most pertinent for our present analysis of the *performatistic screen*) inconsistency Propp handles is that, across the tales he analyzes, two sets of paired functions, STRUGGLE(H)|VICTORY(I) and DIFFICULT TASK(M)|SOLUTION(N) appear mutually exclusive. He writes that, though no single function excludes another, “there are two such pairs of functions [and their function groups] which are encountered ...so rarely that their exclusiveness may be considered regular, while their combination may be considered a violation of the rule” (102). In the 100 tales Propp details, (H)|(I)



appears 41 times, (M)|(N) appears 33 times, and the two combined appear only 3 times (102-5). Propp writes that, though these tales “are essentially tales of different formation,” they are all still amalgamable to his master structure because, in tales where both (H)|(I) and (M)|(N) appear, they always appear in the same order: (H)|(I) followed by (M)|(N) (104).

This allows for four basic tales: tales lacking both (H)|(I) and (M)|(N), tales with (H)|(I) and no (M)|(N), tales with no (H)|(I) but with (M)|(N), and (least frequently) tales with both (H)|(I) and (M)|(N). A very simplified diagram of Propp’s master tale that does not take into account the possible presence of an “Introductory Sequence”:

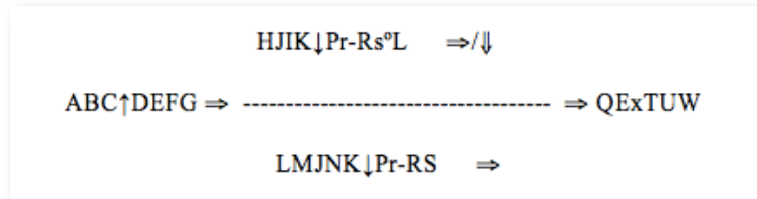


Fig. 7: Propp’s Master Tale (105)

Propp closes by noting that “isolated tales present an incomplete form in relation to the basic type,” because “one or another function is absent in all tales,” but, “if a function is absent, this does not in the least influence the structure of the tale—the remaining functions keep their places” (108). Additionally, where slight variations appear in the ordering of functions, Propp writes them off as either interesting inversions of dominant order, “only fluctuations and not a new compositional system or new axes,” or “humorous tales...recognized as a result of dissolution” (108). Every variation is understood as variant against the norm presented by Propp’s master tale.

Propp’s study is notable for its dense engagement with the form of the selected tales. In our current era of ideology-minded criticism, it is also notable for its lack of engagement with the Russian (or Indo-European) culture from which these tales sprung. Though his masterful application of inductive reasoning is a powerful tool with which to look beyond the varied surface structures of the wonder tale, Propp fails to address, for example, how the final function 31, “WEDDING” (W), indicates a great deal regarding the Russian wonder tale’s teleology. His work stops short of tying back to the cultures from which these stories sprung and pressing them for their suppositional limits; he does not address what the form these tales derive says of the aspiration, commitments, and desires of the people who told them and held them dear.

### 3. Propp and the *Performatistic Screen*

That being said, Propp’s study is also notable precisely because it takes the spectrum of Russian wonder tale narratives and reduces them to a single master plot. This ordering, Propp claims, holds as the base from which all of the studied wonder tales emerge. If a wonder tale is missing a component function, or if it repeats a set of functions via trebling, or if it takes on a particular cast via residual material, Propp claims it still maintains the master ordering of the remaining elements present. Indeed, this master plot becomes the standard from which all variations of the tale can be understood as variant; it serves, effectively as the “average” or the “norm.”

Bringing Propp’s analysis into conversation with the *performatistic screen*, if one considers oral (fellatio, cunnilingus, and anilingus), vaginal penetrative, anal penetrative, and external ejaculation the building block paradigms of bodily engagements for narrative pornography’s representation of two-or-more (male/female) and (male/male) actors engaged in sex, one will find time and again the following combinations:

1. Fellatio → Ejaculation (Male)
2. Fellatio → Cunnilingus → Vaginal Penetration → Ejaculation (Male)
3. Fellatio → Anilingus → Anal Penetration → Ejaculation (Male) [with an additional, trebled Ejaculation (Male) in homosexual pornography]
4. Fellatio → Cunnilingus → Vaginal Penetration → Anal Penetration → Ejaculation (Male)

These orderings tend to hold when two people engage in sex, when multiple people mutually engage in sex, and when multiple people broken into subgroups engage in sex (read: across various types of connectives, motivations, and trebling). Regardless of the specifics of the arrangement of the bodies (missionary, *coitus more ferarum*, etc.), sex tends to follow one of these orders.<sup>8</sup> In fact, in films where characters are taught how to have sex or articulate preferences for the order of sex acts [for example, *The Opening of Misty Beethoven* (Radley Metzger 1976), *Talk Dirty To Me* (Anthony Spinelli 1980), and *Trashy Lady* (Steve Scott 1985)], they almost invariably utilize one of these orders. If this typing seems familiar, perhaps it is because one can, following Propp, rearrange it as follows:



Fig. 8: The *Performatistic Screen*’s Master Tale

Of the 100 tales Propp details, he finds that (H)|(I) and (M)|(N) rarely appear together. The former appears 41 times; the latter appears 33 times, they are both absent 23 times, and they appear together only 3 times (102-5). Propp reasons that, though still amalgamable to a master structure; tales with (H)|(I) and (M)|(N) “are essentially tales of different formation” (104). However, in the rare instances when these elements do appear together, they always appear in the same order: (H)|(I) followed by (M)|(N) (104).

In chapter two’s analysis of sodomy law, it was observed that early statutes presented a familiar logic: heterosexual sex is normalized as a cultural goal, and male homosexual anal sex is normalized as its sinful opposite. Applying this logic to the diagram above, one can infer that the *performatistic screen* operates similarly. A sex act featuring vaginal penetration is essentially a “different formation” from a sex act featuring anal penetration; the former tends to dominate heterosexual porn, and the latter tends to dominate homosexual pornography. However, and with an eye to the fact that it is neither mentioned alongside cunnilingus and fellatio in both the “oral sex” portion of Ziplow’s *Film Maker’s Guide to Pornography* and Williams’ discussion of “oral sex” in *Hard Core* in addition to the fact that it did not receive any direct mention in the various sexologists presented in chapter two, the most notable shift from heterosexual to gay

male pornography might not be the presence of anal sex in gay male pornography (the two pornographies have some overlap in this regard) but rather the presence of a form of oral sex, anilingus (or rimming), in gay male pornography. Anilingus is a common feature in gay male pornography from the so-called “golden age of porn”; it does not appear to enter heterosexual pornography until the start of gonzo porn, notably John Stagliano’s mid-1980s Buttman series. In gay male pornography, anilingus usually precedes anal penetration. In all the heterosexual pornographic movies surveyed for this project that visibly featured anal sex [among them: *Burning Desires* [aka *Inside Georgina Spelvin*] (1973), *China Doll* (1975), *The Opening of Misty Beethoven* (1976), *Appointment With Agony* (1976) *Youngblood* (1979), *Live Show* (1979), *Hot Teenage Assets* (aka *Debbie Does Anal*) (1979), *Insatiable* (1980), *Place Beyond Shame* (1980) *Caught From Behind* (1982), and *Loose Ends* (1984)], not one featured anilingus (though *Misty* did feature a woman kissing a man’s buttocks). Though this study is in no way exhaustive, this fact proves quite evocative.

The base *performatistic screen* for heterosexual sex in classical era pornography is Fellatio → Cunnilingus → Vaginal Penetration → Ejaculation (Male). In the relatively limited instances of heterosexual anal sex in classical era pornography, the *performatistic screen’s* base ordering is Fellatio → Cunnilingus → Vaginal Penetration → Anal Penetration → Ejaculation (Male).<sup>9</sup> In homosexual sex in classical era pornography, the *performatistic screen’s* base ordering is Fellatio → Anilingus → Anal Penetration → Ejaculation (Male) [most often with an additional, trebled Ejaculation (Male)].<sup>10</sup>

In both of these orders (heterosexual and male homosexual), the male operates as the *performatistic screen’s* protagonist—his visible climax is the proof marker of change. The female in heterosexual pornography, though she might operate “as the primary embodiments of pleasure,” is, at best, the main character (Williams “Film Bodies” 704). This chapter argues that a main character, when not the protagonist, can vacillate between being an isomorph of a female-gendered antagonist or obstacle or a male-gendered isomorph of the protagonist function. It also argues, following Lotman, that the protagonist function can be split amongst multiple male-gendered isomorphs. In gay male pornography, it is common for both partners to have visible orgasms; this is similar to the men in an orgy in heterosexual pornography. In both, each male who orgasms maintains his status as male-gendered isomorph of the male-gendered protagonist function. In gay male pornography, the roles of protagonist and main character are frequently evenly split amongst the two actors. Though the systems of identification and narrative beyond the gay male *performatistic screen* might privilege the top as star and protagonist,<sup>11</sup> the two actors’ orgasms within the gay male *performatistic screen* are typically trebled and presented as equally important visible proof of sex’s closure. However, in gay male pornography, one sexual partner can take on greater shading and greater importance by also dominating the main character role. In heterosexual pornography, though the female (or several females) may operate as the main character, the male (or several males) operates as the protagonist. This explains the fact that, in both the gay male *performatistic screen* as well as during orgies in heterosexual pornography, the males’ orgasms are trebled and shown, at the close of the sex act, one after the other. They function, to paraphrase Aristotle, as knots the *performatistic screen’s* plotted sex must untie to maintain its narrative symmetry.

Thinking of the *performatistic screen* in terms of its historical emergence, the fact that it opens with oral and closes with visual orgasm seems to tie directly to both the 1966 and 1970 Masters & Johnson research on human sexual response as well as to rising rates of oral sex in males and females in the late 1960s and 1970s. Masters & Johnson released *Human Sexual Response* in 1966; four years later they released *Human Sexual Inadequacy*. Both of these books placed orgasm front and center. The first famously did two things: it outlined different patterns for male and female sexual response, and it famously argued, contra Freud, that the physiology of the potentially multiorgasmic female's sexual response was identical whether stimulation was clitoral or vaginal. The second focused on human sexual dysfunction, proposing new methods to help people achieve orgasm. The second chapter notes an increased level of discourse about oral sex starting in the late 1960s. It also argues that, alongside this increase in discourse about oral sex, there was also a spike in behavior. To support this claim, it cites the 1994 *The Social Organization of Sexuality: Sexual Practices in the United States*. In this study, the authors write in agreement with the Kinsey results, "the emergence of oral sex as a widespread technique practiced by opposite-gender sex partners probably began in the 1920s, and over the past seventy years it has become more common in various social contexts and among most social groups" (102). Referring to sexual scripting theory, they continue, "if there has been any basic change in the script for sex between women and men, it is the increase in the incidence and frequency of fellatio and cunnilingus" (102). Looking over a survey of "Lifetime Occurrence of Oral Sex, by [birth] Cohort," chapter two observes that men who show the highest lifetime incidence of both fellatio and cunnilingus reached 18 between the years 1966 and 1971. For women, the highest lifetime incidences of cunnilingus and fellatio occur for those who reached 18 between the years 1976 and 1981. The researchers write of their findings, "the overall trend of figure...reveals what we might call a rapid change in sexual technique, if not a revolution" (103). If America's sexual script was changing in the 1960s, and if there was a concurrent heightened interest in orgasm, it makes sense, historically, that the *performatistic screen*'s plot would address both these things.

### C. The Film (Number & Narrative)

In her discussion of the broader film within which the *performatistic screen* is embedded, Williams continues to allegorize pornographic features to musicals. She writes, "any of the sexual practices in the above list [the Ziplow checklist with Williams' addition of "sadie-max"] could be found somewhere in a stag film," but "what is different about the hard-core feature...is the assumption, implicit in Ziplow's guide, that as many of these practices as possible will be worked into, or called forth by, the newly expanded narrative" (130). As witnessed in chapter one, Justice Clark's dissent in the *Fanny Hill* trial took specific issue with this relationship of narrative and number. There, he claimed that the book's plot was nothing more than window dressing for obscenity, writing that, though "there are some short transitory passages between the various sexual episodes...for the most part, they only set the scene and identify participants for the next orgy, or make smutty reference and comparison to past episodes" (*Memoirs* 440). This is parallel to numerous critics of genres like pornography and the musical. Williams writes that, though "it is a commonplace for critics and viewers to ridicule narrative genres that

seem to be only flimsy excuses for something else—musicals and pornography in particular are often singled out as being *really* about song and dance or sex,” recent work studying the movie musical has demonstrated that “the episodic narratives typical of the genre are not simply frivolous...part of the pleasure of the movie musical resides in the tension between these different discursive registers, each seeking to establish its own equilibrium” (130). Because of this relationship, Williams argues that “narrative informs number, and number, in turn, informs narrative,” and it is even the case that number can inform number (130).

Williams argue that musicals, like all mainstream cinema, “moves from relative equilibrium to disequilibrium and back” (130). Citing Stephen Neale’s work on the musical and the melodrama, she writes, “narrative is set in motion...by the ‘eruption of (hetero)sexual desire into an already established social order,” and “disequilibrium is specified as the process of desire itself and the various blockages to its fulfillment” (131). What is unique about the musical, Williams argues, is that music—especially song and dance—is inscribed into the narrative movement from equilibrium through disequilibrium and back; these performances become “the key to particularly intense statements, and sometimes resolutions, of narrative conflicts” (131). These resolutions come about “not through the narrative, or through any one number, but through the relation of number to narrative and number to number” (132). This logic, Williams asserts, “can help us understand the similar function of sexual numbers in the pornographic feature” (132). As a musical number can solve a narrative problem that is rearticulated (but not solved) in other musical numbers, Williams claims that hard core sex operates in four ways in hard core narrative: as regular moments of pleasure that can gratify viewers or the characters performing the acts; as statements of sexual conflicts manifest in the number, as statements, or restatement; of conflicts stated either in the narrative or in the other numbers; or as resolutions of conflicts presented either in the narrative or in the other numbers (134).

Williams argues that the interaction between narrative and number in feature-length pornography can be understood via analogy to two theoretical models for analyzing musicals. The first is Rick Altman’s highly influential “dual-focus” argument as presented in *The American Film Musical* and *A Theory of Narrative*. In the dual-focus narration, the narrator does not follow one protagonist, but rather alternates between two (*Theory* 56). In the typical musical, these dual protagonists are commonly male and female, and they represent both opposing genders as well as opposing characteristics and values. In *Gigi* (Minnelli 1958), for example, Gigi (Leslie Caron) and Gaston (Louis Jourdan) are of opposing genders as well as of opposing ages (she is young and he is older), of opposing means (she is poor but beautiful and he is wealthy and handsome), and of opposing social inclinations (he wants to have affairs and she wants to marry). Over the course of the musical, the heterosexual couple comes together, which also, and primarily, serves to mediate the secondary oppositions: Gigi becomes rich, and Gaston decides to settle down (*American Film Musical* 19-20).

The other theoretical model Williams analogizes to narrative pornography is Jane Feuer’s concept of the “myth of entertainment” as presented in her book, *The Hollywood Musical*. Feuer argues that movie musicals like *Singin’ in the Rain* (Kelly and Donen 1952) suffer from a core contradiction: their song and dance sequences are highly planned, but they want to present them as if they are spontaneous and unrehearsed (6). To

achieve this illusion, Feuer argues that the movie musical teaches its audience how to read the difference between what is planned and canned and what is not, and that this legibility of spontaneous entertainment usually hinges upon the integration of the diegetic into the performance via both the “spontaneous” use of its physical elements (puddles and lampposts in Gene Kelly’s “Singin’ in the Rain” solo, for example) and the *focalizing* response of an appreciative diegetic audience (the crowd’s response to Gene Kelly’s and Debbie Reynolds’ “You are My Lucky Star” duet) (3-4).

To support her analogies, Williams reads *The Opening of Misty Beethoven* (Metzger 1975) as analogous to Altman’s dual-focus narration, and she reads *Taboo* (Stevens 1980) as analogous to Feuer’s “myth of entertainment” (*Hard Core* 136-150). *Misty Beethoven* is easily analogized to a musical because it, like *My Fair Lady* (Cukor 1964), is a retelling of *Pygmalion*. In *Misty*, Dr. Seymour Love (Jamie Gillis) spots the titular heroine (Constance Money) selling handjobs in a down-market porno theater in Pigalle. He follows her to a warehouse where she presents him with her dos and don'ts: “Listen, I do a straight fuck. I don’t take it in the mouth. I don’t take it in the ass. And I don’t take it in the bed....But I give a terrific handjob.” As in *Pygmalion* and *My Fair Lady*, Dr. Love and his sidekick, Geraldine Rich (Jacqueline Beudant), take on *Misty* and train her in sexual technique with the goal of making her the next “Golden Rod Girl,” or the most popular new member of the international jet set. As in *Gigi*, *Pygmalion*, and *My Fair Lady*, *Misty* and Seymour present opposites. She is female; he is male. She is vulgar and uneducated; he is classy and a doctor. She is poor; he is wealthy. Over the course of the film, he instructs her in how to have sex (which is shown over several montages of her performing fellatio and then reiterations of the *performatistic screen*); she becomes the “Golden Rod Girl”; and they have a falling out. The close of the film, like that of *Gigi* and *My Fair Lady* but not like that of *Pygmalion*, is *Misty*’s return to Seymour. In the final number, which is a reference to the opening number in which *Misty* gives a man a handjob while he is watching a pornographic film, Seymour is receiving fellatio while watching a film of *Misty*’s training. Now internationally famous, *Misty* has made the transition from giving handjobs in down-market theaters to occupying a position akin to a screen siren. Unbeknownst to Seymour, *Misty* enters and replaces the woman fellating him. Once he realizes the switch, the two proceed to a bed where they have vaginal penetrative intercourse and Seymour ejaculates. In *Misty Beethoven*, though the narrative proffers up any number of ancillary dynamics that are mediated by the sex act, the final, mediatory sex act follows the logic of the *performatistic screen*. *Misty*, the film’s titular character and co-protagonist in the broader dual-focus narrative, becomes the main character to Seymour’s protagonist in the final rendition of the *performatistic screen*.

A similar movement happens in *Taboo*, the film Williams analogizes to Feuer’s “myth of entertainment.” This film is particularly noteworthy. First, it is based upon the Freudian Oedipal. Second, it also provides an answer to whether the “on time” of feature-length, narrative pornography can provide closure for both axes of *readerly* desire: either a heteromorphic *knowledge* of woman’s difference that shares some internal logic with *genres of determinate space* and social order or a stable, isomorphic experience of *pleasure* that shares some internal logic with *genres of indeterminate space* and social integration? The answer: in pornography’s *readerly* world it can. In *Taboo*, married couple Barbara (Kay Parker) and Christopher Scott (Turk Lyon) have an unsatisfying sex

life. This is shown in the opening scene; Barbara and Chris disagree on whether to leave the light on while having sex. He wins, and she perfunctorily fellates him in a well-lit room before they proceed to vaginal penetrative sex. Though his orgasm is shown, both are clearly dissatisfied. Barbara is unfulfilled, and Chris is irritated that Barbara is unfulfilled. Packing his bag, Chris announces he is leaving. Frustrated, Barbara starts exploring single life, both inasmuch as she finds a job working for an old friend, Jerry Morgan (Michael Morrison), and inasmuch as she starts dipping her toes into the dating pool. While all this is happening, her relationship with her son, Paul (Mike Ranger), starts taking on an increased sexual dynamic. On her first post-separation date, Barbara goes out with Charlie (Lee LeMay), who would like her to participate in an orgy. She refuses, and he abandons her to take part in the action. While sitting alone on a couch in the waiting room adjacent the orgy room, a younger man comes on to Barbara. She rebuffs him, exclaiming, "My God! You're young enough to be my son!" Despite her refusal to participate, Barbara does wander through the orgy, witnessing various people engaged in various activities that culminate in several shows of male orgasm. Once back home, Barbara finds herself restless in her empty marital bed and with images of what she witnessed at the orgy intercutting through her thoughts. She goes to Paul's bedroom and, finding him asleep, begins to fellate him. This wakes him up, and they proceed to have intercourse that culminates in Paul's orgasm. Barbara leaves a note for Paul the next morning informing him that they will have to chat when she returns from work. She is clearly troubled at work. Sensing this, Jerry suggests they take the day off. The two are shown in montage having a fun and romantic day of activities, including a kiss on the beach at sunset. Dropping Barbara off at home, Jerry suggests she invite him in, saying "It's been years since I've seen Paul; I'd like to see him again." She begs him off by inviting him to dinner the next night, and he responds, "Oh well. Good guys always get laid last." Barbara goes into her home to have her conversation with a waiting Paul. Though she initially tries to stop their budding incestuous relationship, Paul insists on continuing. She vacillates, commenting that, "it was lovely...holding my darling boy in my arms again...just like when you were little...but it was so wrong." Paul makes an advance, reasoning that, "Nobody has to know...it's you, and it's me, and that's all." Incapable of resisting, they proceed to have sex; Paul performs cunnilingus on Barbara, he vaginally penetrates her, and he orgasms. Still troubled the next day, Barbara goes to seek the advice of her older, more sexually adventurous friend, Sherry (Dorothy LeMay). Barbara says that she can't resist Paul sexually, but she thinks she's falling in love with Jerry. Hearing this, Sherry begins masturbating; she presents no negative judgment. Barbara goes home and has Jerry over for dinner. At the dinner table, the conversation is awkward, and Paul exits in a huff. Barbara and Jerry proceed to have sex (cunnilingus, fellatio, vaginal penetration, and a money shot). The film ends with Jerry proposing to Barbara, and her asking him not to rush her, saying, "Please don't rush me. I just have to rearrange my priorities...My life is my life, and I'm going to do things my way, and part of my way is keeping you as my lover." To this he asks, "and the other part of your way?"

I present this extended synopsis of *Taboo* because it reveals, via its staging and restaging of sex, several telling things. The first is that Barbara, keeping with Feuer's concept of the "myth of entertainment," goes from bad and stilted sex to good, spontaneous sex. The sex she has, fundamentally, is the same sex; but, at the level of

broader narrative dynamics, the repetitions of the *performatistic screen* are rendered as good or bad with a trend to good. This good sex emerges with the disappearance of the father. Once Christopher leaves, it opens up all the possibility for all the repressed sexual tensions that animate the various characters to find expression. Barbara, wanting both the incestuous relationship with her son as well as the socially acceptable relationship with Jerry, finds she can have both. In fact, by virtue of admitting her desire, she has found entry to regaining a place in social order. In this way, because of pornography's "genre among other genres" imitative structure and its proximity to Schatz's *genres of indeterminate space*, this film can even stage and enact a provisional *genre of determinate space* resolution. The secret is twofold: Barbara has to admit what she wants so it is open *knowledge*, and what she wants has to be what the men around her want; she has to want their *pleasure*. Barbara can tell Jerry what he wants to hear and do with him what he wants to do, and she can tell Paul what he wants to hear and do with him what he wants to do. And, as long as those wires do not cross, then she can have what she wants. Once they do cross, however, then Barbara will once again prove herself not an isomorph helper of the male protagonist, but an obstacle blocking both Paul and Jerry from having what they want. As Teresa de Lauretis says, "Oedipal desire requires in its object—or in its subject when female, as in Freud's little girl—an identification with the feminine position...in other words, women *must either consent or be seduced into consenting to femininity*" (*Alice* 134).

In the logic of feature-length, narrative pornography, the broader narrative can present any number of tensions, but these tensions will tend to find mediation in the *performatistic screen*, its privileging of the male as protagonist, and its closure in the money shot. Though both *Misty Beethoven* and *Taboo* present different types of dramatic conflicts in their broader narrative, the sex that mediates and solves the narrative's conflicts is fundamentally the same. In both films, the conflicts that animate and motivate the broader protagonists of the narrative (be they dual-focus or singular) are resolved via some repetition of the *performatistic screen* in which the man functions as protagonist and the woman as main character. Strangely enough, this *screen* can also open the film as the bad sex that seeks resolution. *Misty* and Seymour reunite in a sex act that ends with his orgasm, and Barbara has spontaneous, pleasurable sex with both Paul and Jerry; each of these three sex acts in *Taboo* follow the base logic of the *performatistic screen*. If *Misty's* broader narrative seeks to bring together the dual-focus protagonist function and mediate their secondary, antagonistic differences via the *performatistic screen*, *Taboo's* does something different. In *Taboo*, Barbara is both the protagonist and the antagonist of the broader narrative. She is gendered male inasmuch as she is trying to learn the knowledge of her own pleasure, and she is gendered female inasmuch as she is also the obstacle she needs to overcome. This basic structural amalgamation of the broader narrative's protagonist and antagonist into one character searching for her own pleasure is operative in numerous pornographic films [*Deep Throat*, *Insatiable*, *The Devil in Miss Jones* (Damiano 1973), the *Taboo* series, etc.], and the thing she is searching for is invariably shown as male orgasm. *The Devil in Miss Jones* highlights this logic: it ends in hell, and hell, for Justine Jones (Georgina Spelvin), now a raging sex addict, is a small room with an impotent, sexually uninterested man.



In this way, I argue, pornographic film—particularly heterosexual pornographic film—presents a partial cover for the anxieties presented by the basic Oedipal, narrative itself, and the 1966 findings of Masters & Johnson. It presents a logic of “on time” in which questions of pleasure—often woman’s pleasure—are staged, restaged, and solved via the *performatistic screen* as man’s isomorphic mirror. In its own way, this staging and restaging of the *performatistic screen* can be seen as the remapping of Masters & Johnson’s model for female sexual response under the aegis of male sexual response. By bringing pleasure, and oftentimes the question of female pleasure, into the structure of basic narrative plotting (a plot structure that resembles the male’s sexual response), feature-length, narrative pornography presents numerous male orgasms over the course of its plot to closure. These orgasms will, over the course of the film and through its repeated deployment of the *performatistic screen*, be proven to align “on time” with the female’s. Over time and via the movement of the broader narrative plot, the staging and restaging of the *performatistic screen* moves from presenting a problem to being a solution, and the mysterious temporality of the woman becomes the man’s isomorphic mirror.

## Conclusion

Vision, desire, and the drive toward knowledge become connected through narrative in a newly eroticized sense of time as the medium of desire and its possible realization.  
(Brooks *Body Work* 11)

But if you want to know how I really feel  
Get the cameras rollin'  
Get the action goin'  
Baby you know my love for you is real  
(Andrea True "More, More, More")

### I. *Knowledge and Pleasure*

In both the money shot and its fetishistic sightedness, what Williams terms the "frenzy of the visible," we see a fundamental feature of societies that produce (and are both sustained and produced by) narrative and image-making technologies. Foucault describes *panopticism* as "a form of power that rests not on the inquiry but on... 'examination'" (*Power* 58). *Panopticism*, operating via *examination*, seeks to continuously observe and study an individual to see if he is "behaving as he should, in accordance with the rule or not"; it organizes itself "around the norm, in terms of what was normal or not, correct or not, in terms of what one must do or not do" (59). In Aristotle's formulation, *pleasure* is subjective whereas *knowledge* is objective. Pleasure is individual, and knowledge is communicable (*Ancient Greek* 690). Panopticism, via constant observation and recalibration of the norm, transacts *pleasure* into *knowledge* and *knowledge* into *pleasure*.

All of the paired terms and paired models this project has utilized emerge when a tight isomorphism is unsettled. *Pleasure* and *knowledge*, one-sex and two-sex, cyclical myth and "plot-text," woman and man, matrilineal and patrilineal, etc. are all different stagings of the same anxiety. In different areas, different pairs may become more legible, but they are all fundamentally the same.

As we have argued, desire emerges from this rent. Desire, in its *readerly* operations, seeks to either stabilize gender difference as *knowledge* or to return to a state of *similitude*.

What it finds, unfortunately, are variations. These variations are, as Lotman presents, the breakdowns in tight iso- and homomorphisms that both engender narrative plotting, necessitate it, and continually challenge it

If this project has made one argument, it is that these variations, brought under the careful *examination of panoptic* "human sciences," find their *knowable* form via narration and narrative plotting, because narration and narrative plotting is currently the most fruitful way to understand and express the juncture of the mind, the body, and desire. This can be the narration of literary scholars describing a questionable work's merit by placing it in the constellation of literature and art, or it can be the narrative of

*Fanny Hill* avoiding censure at trial. It can be the concept of an average person who applies contemporary community standards. This person, like the object of sexology, is not just discrete genital events and discrete preferences; he is a history of acts and mentalities that map over time into a story.

In this way, this project has mapped the emergence of feature-length, narrative pornography as a genre by focusing on its most salient feature: sex. I have traced concepts and formations that I believe led to the early 1970s emergence and sedimentation of both feature-length, narrative pornography and its embedded *performatistic screen*. This *screen*, I argue, is staged and restaged in narrative pornography.

Interestingly enough, where Oedipus blinds himself when he learns the truth, feature-length, heterosexual pornography does just the opposite. Coming ever closer to a potential non-show of pleasure, it retreats into a fetishistic sightedness. Film scholar Linda Williams, in a striking insight, claims that this money shot operates as a fetish in both the Marxist and the Freudian definitions of the term (*Hard Core* 104). In both writers, she argues, fetishism is an operation “by which individuals fall victim to an illusory belief in the exalted value of certain (fetish) objects” (104). Indeed, the money shot in feature-length, narrative pornography, by closing the *performatistic screen*, recenters the male as fundamental protagonist of- and solution to the broader narrative’s tensions, and it comes to substitute for that which both pornography and narrative seems to ask itself so much about without ever finding an answer: “Was will das Weib?” If pornography, operating under a maxim of maximum visibility, cannot show woman’s pleasure, then it will endlessly restage man’s until the two can be thought of as the same. In this way, man takes part of himself as his own fetish object and deludes himself, via narrative plotting, that his *pleasure* is simultaneously her pleasure and *knowledge* of her Otherness. In heterosexual pornography, the answer to the Sphinx’s riddle appears to be that what the woman wants—her desire, her temporality, and her narrative—is only viable when it is an isomorphic mirror of the *pleasure* the male protagonist wants. In this way, by confessing to him the *knowledge* that her *pleasure* is his, she can have what she wants. But, of course, only if what she really wants is exactly what the man wants. In this way, as in *Taboo* (Kirdy Stevens 1980) even a seemingly sexually saturated space reignites the Oedipal. If this is sounding endlessly cyclical, it is with good reason. It is a pure example of *circulus in probando*.

In gay male pornography, though the presentation appears to be slightly different, the fundamental operation remains the same. What the gay male appears to want (and, perhaps more appropriately, what the bottom appears to want)—his desire, his temporality, and his narrative—is to be an isomorph of the *knowledge of pleasure* contained by a split male protagonist function. Here, we have those “perpetual spirals of power and pleasure” Foucault famously wrote about (*History* 45). As supposedly repressed sexualities express themselves and solidify as both confessing subjects and objects of inquiry, we witness that *pleasure* in *knowledge* and *knowledge* in *pleasure* is experienced both by those studying sexuality as much as it is by the so-called “perverted.” Both sides engage in what might, on the surface, appear to be an act of transgression. But, effectively, both sides are the recto-verso of the operations of

*panoptic* power. With the establishment of the norm, people start acting normal. Which one comes first is too chicken-and-egg to think about, but the effects are patently obvious.

When I started conceiving this project, the thing that struck me was exactly what I started this written project with: the *Sex and the City* episode “Three’s a Crowd.” To set the scene one more time, Charlotte (Kristin Davis) is discussing her new beau’s proposal to introduce a third into their sexual repertoire.

Charlotte: Jack wants us to do a threesome.

Miranda: Of course he does. Every guy does.

Samantha: Threesomes are huge right now—they’re the blowjob of the nineties.

Charlotte: What was the blowjob of the eighties?

Samantha: Anal sex.

Carrie: Any sex, period.

(Bicks, Jenny & Darren Star)

I was fascinated by the fact that the *performatistic screen* endlessly repeated in pornographic films so closely approximates historical concerns and metaphors following its emergence. Feature-length, narrative pornography in America started with 1970’s *Mona the Virgin Nymph* (Benveniste & Ziehm), and it broke into the mainstream of porno chic with 1972’s *Deep Throat* (Damiano). Gathered around these fellatio films, I saw any number of other instances of oral sex tied to cultural transgression. The most controversial scene in Vilgot Sjöman’s 1967 film *I Am Curious (Yellow)*, a film more infamous for its trials and tribulations than its quality, is when Lena (Lena Nyman) kisses her lover’s flaccid penis. In a 2006 *Vanity Fair* article titled “As American as Apple Pie,” Christopher Hitchens traces a history of the blow job, writing, “Through the 1950s, then, the burgeoning secret of the blowjob was still contained, like a spark of Promethean fire, inside a secret reed...the big breakthrough occurs in the great year of nineteen *soixante-neuf*, when Mario Puzo publishes *The Godfather* and Philip Roth brings out *Portnoy’s Complaint*...and the entire lid blew off in 1972” (“As American”). And third, but not least, in his 1972 *Top of the Pops* performance of “Starman,” David Bowie mimed fellatio on his guitarist Mick Ronson. This was a regular part of the gender-bending glam rocker’s act.



Fig. 1: David Bowie and Mick Ronson at London's Hammersmith Odeon in 1973

A 2012 Guardian article describing this moment quotes Dylan Jones, who has written a 200-page book titled *When Ziggy Played Guitar* about this performance, ““It was thrilling, slightly dangerous, transformative...For me, and for those like me, it felt that the future had finally arrived” (“David Bowie”).

If there were numerous markers that the late-1960s and early-1970s had an oral fixation, surveying the rest of pornography’s Golden Era only seemed to further support my notion that historical concerns and metaphors in the late-1960s to the mid-1980s followed the *performatistic screen*’s pattern. Following this early 70s emergence of feature-length, narrative pornography in two films focused on oral sex, feminists—including those in the then-heavily psychoanalytic field of Film Theory—deployed numerous metaphors of vaginal-penetration to explicate gender roles and power dynamics. In a parallel manner, authors in the nascent gay rights movement placed particular emphasis, when choosing to discuss or metaphorize sex, on tropes of anal penetration. However insidiously limiting, these two sex acts (vaginal penetrative and anal receptive) became dominant metonyms in the seventies and early eighties for both imagining and theorizing heterosexuality (vaginal penetration) and male homosexuality (anal penetration). In the early eighties, by some strange coincidence, numerous strands concerning sexuality, identity, and personal pleasure brutally and explosively met in the era of HIV/AIDS—with a focus placed specifically on semen as vector of disease and orgasmic pleasure as it links to death. In effect, HIV/AIDS, like the *performatistic screen*, brought male ejaculation out and into visibility.

I suppose where this is all going is simple but large. If the *panopticon*, as it annexes *knowledge of pleasure* to create a narrative norm, also constitutes the norm by which those it is *examining* will come into both awareness and articulations of themselves, then perhaps this plotting of sex in the *performatistic screen* had some power in shaping the plotting of broad cultural rhetoric about sex? This is a very large and strange claim, but, thinking through the isomorphic connections this project establishes between *pleasure* and *knowledge*, one-sex and two-sex, cyclical myth and “plot-text,” woman and man, matrilineal and patrilineal, etc., it doesn’t feel like all that big of a leap.

One thing this project analyzes at length is myth. It looks at the emergence of myth as we know it (linear myth) from what Lotman terms cyclical myth, and it looks at the emergence of the Oedipal myth as the overwriting of the matrilineal by the patrilineal. In both movements, the breakdown of tight isomorphisms was tied to an increasing complexity in plot and plot’s deployment (and engagement) with “desire in narrative.” In discussing Claude Lévi-Strauss’ work on myth, which was utilized to analogize genre film to myth, it found that, though the surface content of myths may appear arbitrary, their deeper structure is always about moving from awareness of oppositions to their resolution. In a similar manner, Thomas Schatz argues that the dramatic conflicts in genre films represent the transformation of some social, historical, or geographical aspect of American culture. Both myth as we know it (and, hence, genre) would operate, in all of these thinkers’ work, as something in-between the complex heteromorphisms of difficult narratives and the simple isomorphisms of cyclical myth. They serve a mediating function.

Is this not similar to the *panopticon*’s construction of the norm? Doesn’t the norm—particularly as it is figured in narrative plot—create a standard that mediates the

complexity of isolation in solitary *pleasure* and loss of individuation in *knowledge*? Isn't this what a myth or a genre does? And if these things, as this *entire* project has attempted to argue, do share this core operation, then could it not be that, when a new myth emerges, it functions like a new norm? And if it functions like a new norm, then wouldn't the world of meanings bend to reduplicate it?

This is a very broad and...perhaps...empty thought. But it seems particularly pertinent in this frenzied moment of fetishistic sightedness, when we are all produced (and our society is both sustained and produced by) narrative and image-making technologies.

## Endnotes

### Introduction

- 1) *Sex and the City* was the first cable show to win an Emmy for best comedy (2001). It still airs in syndication worldwide, and it has been listed on *Entertainment Weekly's* end-of-the-decade "best of" list as well as one of *Time* magazine's 100 Best TV Shows of "All-TIME."
- 2) Akass, Kim, and Janet McCabe. *Reading Sex and the City*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2004. Print.
- 3) Though James' comparison is between *Sex and the City* and its contemporary, the *More Tales of the City* television miniseries, it can easily hold for Maupin's novel as well.
- 4) It shouldn't be surprising that these academics use *Sex and the City* to advance their already-staked feminist positions. Showalter, the most senior of the scholars cited, takes the greatest umbrage towards the series. Perhaps Cary James obliquely touches on one reason for this when she writes, "In the brash new comedy series 'Sex and the City,' the heroine cultivates an anti-romantic pose that suits Manhattan in the 90's, with its post-politically correct attitudes?" *Sex and the City*, it could be claimed, emerges as a popular discursive rejoinder to Showalter's gynocritical "Female Phase" as outlined 2001 book, *Inventing Herself*.
- 5) This trope was and is still quite common in film. Some early examples include *Damaged Goods* (Tom Ricketts, 1914) and *Shoes* (Lois Weber, 1916). Even the hugely popular early serial, *The Perils of Pauline* (Louis Gasnier & Donald MacKenzie, 1916), is structured upon the knowledge that Pauline will both come into her fortune and find safety from her "perils" upon marriage.
- 6) "Was It Good For You?" *Sex and the City*. *Sex and the City: The Complete Series*. Ex Prod. Michael Patrick King, Cindy Chupack, John Melfi, and Jennie Bicks. DVD. HBO Home Video, 2005.
- 7) "A 'Vogue' Idea." *Sex and the City*. *Sex and the City: The Complete Series*. Ex Prod. Michael Patrick King, Cindy Chupack, John Melfi, and Jennie Bicks. DVD. HBO Home Video, 2005.
- 8) "Models and Mortals." *Sex and the City*. *Sex and the City: The Complete Series*. Ex Prod. Michael Patrick King, Cindy Chupack, John Melfi, and Jennie Bicks. DVD. HBO Home Video, 2005.
- 9) "The Turtle and the Hare." *Sex and the City*. *Sex and the City: The Complete Series*. Ex Prod. Michael Patrick King, Cindy Chupack, John Melfi, and Jennie Bicks. DVD. HBO Home Video, 2005.
- 10) "The Freak Show." *Sex and the City*. *Sex and the City: The Complete Series*. Ex Prod. Michael Patrick King, Cindy Chupack, John Melfi, and Jennie Bicks. DVD. HBO Home Video, 2005.
- 11) "The Cheating Curve." *Sex and the City*. *Sex and the City: The Complete Series*. Ex Prod. Michael Patrick King, Cindy Chupack, John Melfi, and Jennie Bicks. DVD. HBO Home Video, 2005.
- 12) "La Douleur Exquise!" *Sex and the City: The Complete Series*. Ex Prod. Michael Patrick King, Cindy Chupack, John Melfi, and Jennie Bicks. DVD. HBO Home Video, 2005.
- 13) From what I ascertained, he was identifying as "deaf" and not "Deaf" in his interactions with Kevin.
- 14) There is a definite occidental-bias in his subjects. Loftus writes on page xiii of his interviewees, "They came from all over the United States as well as Canada and Britain. A few grew up in Australia, New Zealand, France, Norway, Finland, Switzerland, Spain, and the Netherlands."
- 15) Blumenthal, Ralph. "Porno Chic; 'Hard-core' Grows Fashionable-and Very Profitable." *New York Times Magazine* 21 Jan. 1973. Print.
- 16) This "golden age," lasting roughly from 1970 to the mid-80s, coincides with the dominance of filmed, feature-length narrative pornography. Its end is tied to, variously, the emergence of VHS, the rise of HIV/AIDS, the coordinated machinations of cultural conservatives and anti-sex feminism, and various scandals such as the 1986 one surrounding Traci Lords.
- 17) See, for example, Linda Williams' study of the shift from "meat" to "money" and the emergence of feature-length narrative pornography in *Hard Core: Power, Pleasure, and the "Frenzy of the Visible."*

## Chapter One

- 1) These future works, of course, were his 1975 triumph, *Discipline and Punish*, and his 1976 masterpiece, *The History of Sexuality Volume 1: The Will To Knowledge*.
- 2) “I would define the episteme retrospectively as the strategic apparatus which permits of separating out from among all the statements which are possible those that will be acceptable within, I won’t say a scientific theory, but a field of scientificity, and which it is possible to say are true or false. The episteme is the ‘apparatus’ which makes possible the separation, not of the true from the false, but of what may from what may not be characterized as scientific.” (Foucault *Power* 197).
- 3) For more on the Pentad, see this chapter’s second section. For further insight, see Burke’s “Questions and Answers.”
- 4) See Lewis, Bernstein, or Jacobs.
- 5) Walter Kendrick, in his *The Secret Museum: Pornography in Modern Culture*, details at length how the myth of what he terms a “Young Person” consistently formed the basis for rhetorical and tactical maneuvers by censors. Primarily, censors sought to tether the dangers of obscenity to the idea that a certain segment of the population will be irreparably harmed by exposure to sexual material. He differentiates between American and European approaches, claiming the “scenario of a maiden corrupted by pornography” dominated early 20<sup>th</sup> century European discourse whereas Americans, notably Anthony Comstock, were in “the habit of imagining the threatened Young Person as male” (142). Broadly stated, female Young Persons are weak sexual neuters who, when exposed to porn, collapse in psychotic hysterics and/or turn to lives as sex workers; Male Young Persons are either “bright and intelligent young men” led down a path to ruin or latently violent rapists whose buried tendencies will be unleashed and justified by exposure to porn (142). In a parallel manner, Freud posits, in his *Three Essays*, that children have a polymorphously perverse disposition, writing, “in this respect children behave in the same kind of way as an average uncultivated woman...under ordinary conditions she may remain normal sexually, but if she is led on by a clever seducer she will find every sort of perversion to her taste” (*Reader* 268).
- 6) Who aided to help circumnavigate potential tests of constitutionality (*Hollywood* 232).
- 7) One example of this debate can be found in the emergence of Pop! Art—a form of art that elevated the low and/or mundane.
- 8) This shift was contemporary to the American New Criticism movement, which placed emphasis on the close analysis of the whole system of a literary text (frequently to the exclusion of the reader’s response, the author’s intention, historical/cultural contexts, and moralistic bias).
- 9) Indicating, I believe, that the essence of Justice Stewart’s hard-core is located in its ability to elicit an autonomic sexual response.
- 10) “6. Publishers, Censorship and the Law,” “7. Changing Social Attitudes,” and “Appendix: The *Fanny Hill* Case,” focusing on the trials of *Fanny Hill*—which would subsequently reach the Supreme Court.
- 11) Hyde’s claim that the “worthless and unaesthetic pornographic product” causes “nausea and disgust” echoes Justice Stewart’s tethering of hard-core to autonomic response. He, like Stewart, fails to consider that much of what disgusts us is epistemological (and not ontological).
- 12) In humanist study—particularly in my chosen discipline, Film Studies—the works of Sigmund Freud have proven immeasurably influential. Many films rely on Freudian logic for their representational schema, and numerous major film theoretical writings have derived particular explicatory power from analogizing cinema to dreams, searching for Oedipal/fetishistic/uncanny/etc. structures in cinematic representation, or applying to film the insights of numerous other theorists indebted to Freud.
- 13) Foucault, interestingly enough, locates this shift at the same moment Francis Bacon introduced his “Baconian method” to the world. Bacon’s method focused on inductive reasoning derived from repeated, empirical observation. It was a major shift away from Aristotelian methodology, occurring during the transition period from the Renaissance to the early modern era and serving as a basis for early scientific inquiry.
- 14) Foucault ties this knowledge formation to the rise of what he terms a *scientia sexualis* (“science of sexuality”), or an abstracted knowledge of sexual pleasure extracted from individuals via confession. It is intellectual rather than sensual. It concerns not one’s own sexual experience, but the sexual experiences of others as parsed via a supposedly neutral and scientific filter. He contrasts this



knowledge formation to an *ars erotica* ("erotic art"). Foucault locates the *ars erotica* in the cultures of Rome, China, Japan, India, and the Arabic-Muslim world. These cultures have also treated sex as an object of knowledge, Foucault contends, but the knowledge passed on within *ars erotica* is a knowledge of sensual pleasure itself: how pleasure can be experienced, intensified or maximized. This knowledge is individual and personal, and it can only be passed from an experienced master to an initiated novice.

- 15) "The leading erotogenic zone in female children is attached to the clitoris, and is thus homologous to the masculine genital zone of the glans penis" (Freud *Three Essays* 97).
- 16) In keeping with his epistemological moment, Freud calls on science to clarify things.
- 17) "If we are to understand how a little girl turns into a woman, we must follow the further vicissitudes of this excitability of the clitoris. Puberty, which brings about so great an accession of libido in boys, is marked in girls by a fresh wave of repression, in which it is precisely clitoral sexuality that is affected. What is thus overtaken by repression is a piece of masculine sexuality" (Freud *Three Essays* 98)
- 18) Freud co-authored his first major work, 1895's *Studien über Hysterie*, with Josef Breuer.
- 19) This "polymorphous perversity" explains, amongst other salient things, erotic investments in particular parts of one's body, one's parents, etc.
- 20) This, clearly, being an obsession we share with pornography. And, as Laqueur argues, one Freud's insistence on the two-sex model appears to have.
- 21) See page 89 in *Three Essays*. The Female's orgasm, if it even matters at this point, must also be vaginal.
- 22) Freud writes in a footnote to "The Differentiation Between Men and Women" in *Three Essays*, "It is essential to understand clearly that the concepts of 'masculine' and 'feminine', whose meaning seems so unambiguous to ordinary people, are amongst the most confused that occur in science. It is possible to distinguish at least three uses. 'Masculine' and 'feminine' are used sometimes in the sense of activity and passivity, sometimes in a biological, and sometimes, again, in a socio logical sense. The first of these three meanings is the essential one and the most serviceable in psycho-analysis" (97).
- 23) For example, in *Three Essays* Freud writes, "it seems that *pædicatio* with a male originates on the analogy of a similar act performed with a woman" (31).
- 24) The quote continues, "When, at the climax of a discovery, he could survey a large portion of the whole nexus, he was overcome by emotion, and in ecstatic language praised the splendor of the part of creation that he had studied, or--in religious phraseology--the greatness of his Creator" (22).
- 25) There is no explanation why the non-white respondents were discarded from the final sample.
- 26) This can be read as in-line with Laqueur's argument that, in the shift to a two-sex model, the female's orgasm (and the gay male orgasm in the Kinsey studies) became both less important and infinitely interesting. Additionally, regarding the myth of the frigid woman was propagated by Freud, we can see the lack of interest in the Female's orgasm in these studies as a continuation of this cultural argument.
- 27) "Homosexual material, although recorded in both behavioral and physiologic context for both sexes, has not been included" in the report (Masters & Johnson *Human Sexual Response* 22)
- 28) In Chapter 19 of *Human Sexual Response*, "Study-Subject Sexuality," the parameters of the study's optic are clear. Presenting a few case studies, heterosexual subjects appear to have been questioned about incidents of masturbation and coitus, and male homosexual subjects appear to have been questioned about incidents of masturbation and anal intercourse.
- 29) There is some small discussion of masturbatory technique in women and the effects heterosexual intercourse positions have on clitoral and vaginal stimulation. See pages 45-100 of *Human Sexual Response* on "The Clitoris" and "The Vagina."
- 30) Clearly Burke's theory favors action over time to instances. We can think of this in relation to Bordwell's cognitive descriptions of Classical Hollywood film reception—that the viewer's conjectural activity is reinforced as the plot unfurls, making the core of the Classical Hollywood text legibly stable.
- 31) And, as has been shown in *DORA*, even the patient will profess to kissing; unlike the sexual, its disavowal is not compulsory.
- 32) The presence of any one of these elements will qualify a film as obscene.
- 33) By the erect penis or, if the vagina/anus, by either the penis or a penis-like substitute.

## Chapter Two

- 1) Furthermore, I'd argue the numerous works looking at the emergence of the "homosexual species" are *de facto* studying the history of discourses on anal sex.
- 2) Freud does not equate anal sex with homosexuals. Though he does tend to use it as operative metaphor, his work calls this link between what he terms the "sexual instinct" and the "sexual object" (and, given this, the "sexual aim") "merely soldered together" (*Three Essays* 26).
- 3) Though there are various other searchable terms that will provide minute results ("mouth love," "oral pleasure," "irrumare," "fellare," etc.), this set adequately displays the broad trend.
- 4) This is not to say sex was not discussed. In fact, Michel Foucault argues there was a proliferation of discourses about sex and sexuality in this era—particularly in cloistered spaces such as medicine, law, etc.
- 5) The terms *actus reus* and *mens rea* developed are derived from the principle stated by Edward Coke, *actus non facit reum nisi mens sit rea*, which means: "an act does not make a person guilty unless (their) mind is also guilty." Following this, the general test of guilt is one that requires proof of fault, culpability or blameworthiness both in behavior and in mind.
- 6) "[T]he terms sodomy and buggery...shall be understood to be a carnal copulation by human beings with each other against nature, *res veneria in ano*, or with a beast, and shall be taken to cover and include the act or acts where any person shall willfully and wickedly have carnal knowledge, in a manner against nature, of any other person, by penetrating the mouth of such person; and any person who shall wickedly and indecently suffer or permit any other person to wickedly penetrate, in a manner against nature, his or her mouth, by carnal intercourse, he, she, and every such person committing any of the acts aforesaid, or suffering the same to be committed as aforesaid, shall be guilty of the crime of sodomy or buggery" (Eskridge 50).
- 7) See page 13 ("Procreation a Divine Purpose"), 67, 160 ("Divine purpose of procreation"), 180 ("congenital *instinct of procreation* underlying the sexual need"), and 449 of *Psychopathia Sexualis* for examples.
- 8) The standard common law test of criminal liability is usually expressed in the Latin phrase, *actus non facit reum nisi mens sit rea*, which means "the act is not culpable unless the mind is guilty." Using Krafft-Ebing's logic, a congenital homosexual accused of oral copulation could argue that his congenital homosexuality diminishes his culpable *mens rea*, and therefore his overall criminal guilt.
- 9) Indeed, Krafft-Ebing famously opposed Paragraph 175, a part of the German Kingdom's legal code (adopted in 1871) that criminalized homosexuality precisely because he considered inversion indicative of a debilitated *mens rea*.
- 10) *Sexual Inversion* was originally published in German in 1896; its first English publication was in 1897.
- 11) The "first volume" of the series, *Studies in the Psychology of Sex, Volume 1 - The Evolution of Modesty; The Phenomena of Sexual Periodicity; Auto-Erotism*, was published in 1899. The full series was published between 1896 and 1928.
- 12) Ellis does seem in some ways very much indebted to 19<sup>th</sup> century notions of masculinity and femininity, but he reaches interesting conclusions from these beliefs. He rejects the notion of female passionlessness, but he does claim men are characteristically aggressive, active, and easily excitable whereas women are "modest." Unlike his peers, Ellis does not reason from this that men must practice sexual restraint; rather, he believes the slower arousal of the woman requires extensive foreplay so that she, too, can have sexual satisfaction (D'Emilio and Freedman 224-25).
- 13) Ellis also distinguishes sexual inversion and homosexuality from what he terms "sexo-esthetic inversion" or "Eonism" (transvestism): "Inversion of this kind leads a person to feel like a person of the opposite sex, and to adopt, so far as possible, the tastes, habits, and dress of the opposite sex, while the direction of the sexual impulse remains normal" (*Sexual Inversion*).
- 14) A cursory search reveals a depth of, breadth of, and persistence of fascination with America's Freudian turn. Historian John C. Burnham, editor of *After Freud Left: A Century of Psychoanalysis in America*, terms the current historiographical turn "New Freud Studies." Books such as *Shrink: A Cultural History of Psychoanalysis in America* and *Freud on Madison Avenue: Motivation Research and Subliminal Advertising in America* by Lawrence R. Samuel, *Freudian Fraud: The Malignant Effect of Freud's Theory on American Thought and Culture* by E. Fuller Torrey, and *Freud on Broadway: A*

*History of Psychoanalysis and the American Drama* by Wieder David Sievers attest to both Freud's impact and his ongoing importance in various cultural spaces.

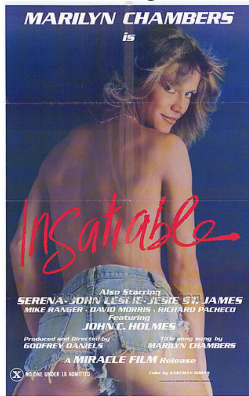
- 15) I'd argue, contra the broad field of Freud studies, that there is a major conflict here. A man's sexual object and sexual aim dovetail at intercourse with a woman and his orgasm. However, a woman's desire, in Freudian theory, must be understood as much more temporally complex. Given her source desire for a child as substitute phallus, I wonder if her object and aim dovetail like the man's. My contention: does she take a man as her object with the aim of birthing a child, and does this not indicate a shifted temporality and narrative logic underlying woman's desire?
- 16) In the original German, Freud writes "Kotlecken, Leichenmißbrauch" in the parenthesis. "Kot" is a German word for "feces;" "lecken" is a German word for "to lick." His is an interestingly idiomatic choice of term precisely because it is neither "coprophilia" nor "anilingus." Freud most certainly had familiarity with these two terms either at the volume's publication or by its revision ("coprophilic" appears in the forty-first footnote of the 1910 revision of *Three Essays*). I'll leave it to Freudians to debate what this condensation and displacement of the two terms ("Kot" for "copro" and "lecken" for "lingus") possibly indicates regarding Freud's views on anilingus.
- 17) All three focus on male homosexuality much more than female homosexuality, and all three tie oral sexuality to their analyses of homosexuality.
- 18) Unfortunately, Freud was working from a mistranslation of da Vinci's text. The bird that Leonardo imagined was not a "vulture" but a "kite." This, however, does not affect the important presentation of Freud's broader theoretical operations.
- 19) See, for example, Freud's 1935 "Letter to an American Mother;" the relationship between Freud, Freudian psychoanalysis, and homosexuality is much denser than its incorporation into American popular culture.
- 20) See, for example, characters in literature, theater, movies, television and music like "Sissy Man," Blair Niles's *Strange Brother, Rebel Without a Cause* (Nicholas Ray 1955), Tennessee Williams's *Suddenly Last Summer* (Joseph L. Mankiewicz 1959), *Psycho* (Alfred Hitchcock 1960), E.M. Forster's *Maurice* (James Ivory 1987), *Will and Grace* (James Burrows 1998-2008), *East is East* (Damien O'Donnell 1999), and *All About My Mother* (Pedro Almodovar 1999)...amongst numerous others.
- 21) It is interesting to note that in recent years (and perhaps purely for political expediency more so than any scientific proof), the pendulum has once again swung towards asserting homosexuals are "born this way."
- 22) This project's fourth chapter returns to this curious moment in the Kinsey text.
- 23) "Paradigm" is a term from structural linguistics meant to indicate the selected elements that, when combined, form a "syntagm." In the sentence, "See Spot run," the words "see," "Spot," and "run" are individual paradigms. Their selection and linear arrangement forms the syntagm, "See Spot run."
- 24) Shots of participants "enjoying" appear to be of importance. This is also interesting in how it mirrors Kuleshov's experiments in cinematic montage and meaning making.
- 25) There is no comparison made to pornographic output from other countries; one is left to assume the message is intended solely for American viewers in terms of establishing an American/Danish comparison.
- 26) This was spoken at a screening of *Censorship* at San Francisco's Yerba Buena Center for the Arts on Jul 21, 2011 as part of their *Smut Capital of America* series.
- 27) My research has indicated that a 1970 film titled *Tomatoes* might actually take this honor (<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0197046/>).
- 28) As did films such as *Stewardesses* (Allan Silliphant 1969)—see *Black and White* pg 245.

## Chapter Three

- 1) To make this claim, the second chapter read backwards from the Golden Age of pornography to the first notable American feature, *Mona*. Where *Mona* utilizes any number of semiotic cues to indicate orgasms (both male and female) it doesn't show, Golden Age pornography uses one: visible male ejaculation.
- 2) This is the same master viewer (and character) addressed in Golden Age pornography.
- 3) See, for example, writings by Carol Clover, Luce Irigaray, Julia Kristeva, Teresa de Lauretis, Laura Mulvey, Kaja Silverman, Linda Williams, etc.
- 4) Oedipus is, for better or for worse, fully a part of this tradition that considers a male gendered, white, able-bodied, bourgeois, heterosexual, and forged within the crucible of Western patriarchal epistemology reader as the ideal subject.
- 5) These authors all use Oedipus to create a teleological history of narrative that moves from something cyclical to classical narrative. These moves, as will be shown, tend to do two things: they either normalize and evacuate broad anxieties of difference, rendering Oedipus, the corpus of texts, and even the body of the ideal reader as isomorphic doubles, or they introduce a dominant, structuring antagonism.
- 6) This essay first appeared in a 1966 issue of *Communications* devoted to Structuralism's potential for narrative analysis. Film scholar Teresa de Lauretis calls this issue of *Communications* "a seminal work in what has become known as narratology and undoubtedly a cornerstone in narrative theory" (*Alice* 104).
- 7) In his 1973 *Pleasure of the Text*, Barthes divides the effects of texts into two types: *plaisir* (translated as "pleasure") and *jouissance*. *Jouissance* is translated as "bliss," but the French word also carries the meaning or implication of "orgasm." Bliss is tied to the *readerly*; pleasure is tied to the *writerly*.
- 8) Brooks writes in *Reading for the Plot*, "The source of the codes is in what Barthes calls the *deja-vu*, the already read (and the already written), in the writer's and the reader's experience of other literature, in a whole set of intertextual interlockings" (19).
- 9) Barthes specifically claims that, though "Sarrasine" is *readerly*, his work will open it up to the *writerly*.
- 10) This project discusses deductive logic in chapter one's section titled "Linking Power/Knowledge/Pleasure in Sexology."
- 11) This all, according to historical anecdote, happened after his father died and he saw a staging of Sophocles's play.
- 12) Here we also witness the anxiety of paternity. The fecund female body internalizes both conception and gestation. Because of this, both production and reproduction become sites of masculine anxiety.
- 13) In addition, woman is analogized to her uterus. Both are situated or controlled. Hysteria derives from anxiety of a motile uterus, and this can be analogized to a similar anxiety regarding a motile woman who moves outside the control of man.
- 14) As we will see, Jurij Lotman's claims regarding the breakdown of iso- and homo-morphisms also support this claim regarding the distinction between man and god.
- 15) Here we have a collapse of two basic plot logics: going somewhere new and coming back home.
- 16) By doing this, it also embodies speakers and listeners as individuals with distinct, albeit intersecting, corporeal temporalities.
- 17) This "invisibility" extends to the female gamete, the act of conception, and the process of gestation. We have attempted to bring all of these to sight and render them known and visible.
- 18) It should come as no surprise that the Sphinx's riddle finds its answer in Oedipus.

## Chapter Four

- 1) Using Bordwell's language, the first and second chapters argue there was a late-60s/early-70s codification of filmed sex into a narrative-like *template schema* that now operates as an *extrinsic norm* for sex on film (*Narration in the Fiction Film* 34-36 & 150).
- 2) A term that includes both comedic and tragic dramas, epic poetry, lyric poetry, satyr poetry, and dithyramb.
- 3) The lost second volume deals with comedy.
- 4) The remaining he ranks as listed.



- 5) *Insatiable's* lobby poster.
- 6) Propp is quoted on ix of *Theory and History of Folklore* as follows: "To make the book more attractive, the editor replaced the word *wonder tale* and in this way led everybody...to believe that the book would concern itself with the general law of the folktale...I examined only one strikingly distinctive type, viz., the folk wonder tale" Indeed, though translated as "Morphology of the Folktale," Propp limits his studies to Aarne-Thompson Index tale types 300-749.
- 7) After the initial situation is depicted (0), the tale takes the following order of 31 functions (broken into 4 "sequences"):

### **THE INTRODUCTORY SEQUENCE:**

Seven preliminary functions that set the action going. These are not universally present, and some tales begin at function 8.

1. ABSENTATION (β): A member of a family leaves the security of the home environment. This may be the hero or some other member of the family that the hero will later need to rescue. This division of the cohesive family injects initial tension into the storyline. The hero may also be introduced here, often being shown as an ordinary person.
2. INTERDICTION (g): An interdiction is addressed to the hero ('don't go there', 'don't do this'). The hero is warned against some action (given an 'interdiction').
3. VIOLATION of INTERDICTION (d) . The interdiction is violated (villain enters the tale). This generally proves to be a bad move and the villain enters the story, although not necessarily confronting the hero. Perhaps they are just a lurking presence or perhaps they attack the family whilst the hero is away.
4. RECONNAISSANCE (e): The villain makes an attempt at reconnaissance (either villain tries to find the children/jewels etc.; or intended victim questions the villain). The villain (often in disguise) makes an active attempt at seeking information, for example searching for something valuable or trying to actively capture someone. They may speak with a member of the family who innocently divulges information. They may also seek to meet the hero, perhaps knowing already the hero is special in some way.
5. DELIVERY (z): The villain gains information about the victim. The villain's seeking now pays off and he or she now acquires some form of information, often about the hero or victim. Other information can be gained, for example about a map or treasure location.
6. TRICKERY (h): The villain attempts to deceive the victim to take possession of victim or victim's belongings (trickery; villain disguised, tries to win confidence of victim). The villain now presses further, often using the information gained in seeking to deceive the hero or victim in some way, perhaps appearing in disguise. This may include capture of the victim, getting the hero to give the

villain something or persuading them that the villain is actually a friend and thereby gaining collaboration.

7. **COMPLICITY (J)**: Victim taken in by deception, unwittingly helping the enemy. The trickery of the villain now works and the hero or victim naively acts in a way that helps the villain. This may range from providing the villain with something (perhaps a map or magical weapon) to actively working against good people (perhaps the villain has persuaded the hero that these other people are actually bad).

**THE BODY OF THE STORY:**

8. **VILLAINY or LACK (A or a)**: Villain causes harm/injury to family member (by abduction, theft of magical agent, spoiling crops, plunders in other forms, causes a disappearance, expels someone, casts spell on someone, substitutes child etc., commits murder, imprisons/detains someone, threatens forced marriage, provides nightly torments); Alternatively, a member of family lacks something or desires something (magical potion etc.). There are two options for this function, either or both of which may appear in the story. In the first option, the villain causes some kind of harm, for example carrying away a victim or the desired magical object (which must be then be retrieved). In the second option, a sense of lack is identified, for example in the hero's family or within a community, whereby something is identified as lost or something becomes desirable for some reason, for example a magical object that will save people in some way.

Propp divides Villainy into two parts, since it is essentially the first move that creates the tale. To that end, Propp goes into great detail subheading varying forms present in tales. He also notes, "The first seven functions may be regarded as the preparatory part of the tale, whereas the complication is begun by an act of villainy" (31).

9. **MEDIATION (B)**: Misfortune or lack is made known, (hero is dispatched, hears call for help etc./ alternative is that victimized hero is sent away, freed from imprisonment). The hero now discovers the act of villainy or lack, perhaps finding their family or community devastated or caught up in a state of anguish and woe.

10. **BEGINNING COUNTER-ACTION (C)**: Seeker agrees to, or decides upon counter-action. The hero now decides to act in a way that will resolve the lack, for example finding a needed magical item, rescuing those who are captured or otherwise defeating the villain. This is a defining moment for the hero as this is the decision that sets the course of future actions and by which a previously ordinary person takes on the mantle of heroism.

11. **DEPARTURE (↑)**: Hero leaves home;

**THE DONOR SEQUENCE:**

12. **FIRST FUNCTION OF THE DONOR (D)**: Hero is tested, interrogated, attacked etc., preparing the way for his/her receiving magical agent or helper (donor);

13. **HERO'S REACTION (E)**: Hero reacts to actions of future donor (withstands/fails the test, frees captive, reconciles disputants, performs service, uses adversary's powers against him);

14. **RECEIPT OF A MAGICAL AGENT (F)**: Hero acquires use of a magical agent (directly transferred, located, purchased, prepared, spontaneously appears, eaten/drank, help offered by other characters);

15. **GUIDANCE (G)**: Hero is transferred, delivered or led to whereabouts of an object of the search;

16. **STRUGGLE (H)**: Hero and villain join in direct combat;

17. **BRANDING (J)**: Hero is branded (wounded/marked, receives ring or scarf);

18. **VICTORY (I)**: Villain is defeated (killed in combat, defeated in contest, killed while asleep, banished);

19. **LIQUIDATION (K)**: Initial misfortune or lack is resolved (object of search distributed, spell broken, slain person revived, captive freed; pairs with A)

**THE HERO'S RETURN:**

20. **RETURN (↓)**: Hero returns;

21. **PURSUIT (Pr)**: Hero is pursued (pursuer tries to kill, eat, undermine the hero);

22. **RESCUE (Rs)**: Hero is rescued from pursuit (obstacles delay pursuer, hero hides or is hidden, hero transforms unrecognizably, hero saved from attempt on his/her life).

Propp notes, "A great many tales end on the note of rescue from pursuit. The hero arrives home and then, if he has obtained a girl, marries her, etc..." However, "A tale may have another misfortune in store for the hero...In a word, an initial villainy is repeated, sometimes with the same forms as in the beginning, and sometimes in other forms which are new for a given tale. With this a new story

commences...everything begins anew: i.e., again an accidental meeting with a donor, a successfully completed ordeal or service rendered, etc.” This, Propp claims, “attests to the facts that many tales are composed of two series of functions which may be labeled moves. A new villainous act creates a new “move,” and in this manner, sometimes a whole series of tales combine into a single tale.” Regardless, “the process of development...does constitute the continuation of a given tale.” (58-59)

23. UNRECOGNIZED ARRIVAL (O<sup>o</sup>): Hero unrecognized, arrives home or in another country;

24. UNFOUNDED CLAIMS (L): False hero presents unfounded claims;

25. DIFFICULT TASK (M): Difficult task proposed to the hero (trial by ordeal, riddles, test of strength/endurance, other tasks);

26. SOLUTION (N): Task is resolved;

27. RECOGNITION (Q): Hero is recognized (by mark, brand, or thing given to him/her);

28. EXPOSURE (Ex): False hero or villain is exposed;

29. TRANSFIGURATION (T): Hero is given a new appearance (is made whole, handsome, new garments etc.);

30. PUNISHMENT (U): Villain is punished;

31. WEDDING (W): Hero marries and ascends the throne (is rewarded/promoted).

Some functions occur, when they occur, in necessary pairs, e.g., ↑ and ↓; some functions may be freely trebled, e.g., D.

- 8) These functions can also, as Propp observes for the tale, be trebled (*Morphology* 74-75). For example, oral and vaginal penetration is sometimes trebled; the performers switch from one back to the other and/or flit between the two. It is far less common, however, for either oral or vaginal penetration to follow anal penetration. It is my belief that this is indicative of cultural views on bodily waste, bodily orifices, sex acts, and levels of abjection. Anal represents a limiting threshold.
- 9) This order holds even for the famous “pegging” scene in *The Opening of Misty Beethoven*. In this scene, though the woman wears a strap-on to penetrate the man, the overall order of sex follows the *performatistic screen*.
- 10) To research their 1979 study, *Homosexuality in Perspective*, Masters and Johnson randomly assigned gay men into couples and then observed them having sex. They write, “Assigned male homosexual study subjects A, B, and C..., interacting in the laboratory with previously unknown male partners, did discuss procedural matters with these partners, but quite briefly. Usually, the discussion consisted of just a question or a suggestion, but often it was limited to nonverbal communicative expressions such as eye contact or hand movement, any of which usually proved sufficient to establish the protocol of partner interaction. No coaching or suggestions were made by the research team” (55). This indicates the presence of a dominant sexual script for gay male intercourse.
- 11) In the earlier years of gay pornography, many major performers were versatile or tops. In the eighties, performers tended to be exclusively top or bottom, and the tops tended to receive top billing. It wasn’t until the 1990s that Joey Stefano emerged as gay male pornography’s first bottom superstar.

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