

**THE UNIVERSE OF GAY VIDEO PORNOGRAPHY:
"THE UTTERLY CONFUSED CATEGORY"
(A Conceptual and Theoretical Analysis)**

by

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in the

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ABSTRACT

**The Universe of Gay Video Pornography:
"The Utterly Confused Category"
(A Conceptual and Theoretical Analysis)
J.C. Lord**

This thesis is a discursive and theoretical analysis of the gay video porn universe. It contextualizes the debate on the 'problem' of gay pornography, i.e., that it is misogynist and/or homophobic in its gender representations. Analyzing the two major streams of thought in the current literature (the 'substitute' and 'hyper/masculine' theses), it finds them to be too conceptually limiting on a presuppositional level to address all aspects of this 'universe' adequately. The thesis recontextualizes common theoretical binarisms (i.e., masculine/feminine, active/passive, male/female, powerful/powerless, etc.) in terms of a broader sociosexual binarism of 'sodomitical versus anti-sodomitical' discourse, based in part on Foucault's notion of "the utterly confused category," i.e., sodomy.

Numerous examples are given from the universe of gay porn videos (scenes, sexual acts and positions, dialogue, porn stars themselves) to show that this terminological shift to sodomitical/anti-sodomitical discourse more effectively captures moments which in current heterosexist discourse remain either paradoxical or inarticulable. The thesis also disrupts the contemporary equation of the penis and the phallus and introduces the concepts of an 'anti-phallus,' a 'gay sodomizer,' 'emergent gender identities,' and 'tangled gender hierarchies.' While the immediate aim of this thesis is a defense of gay video porn via its discursive reconceptualization, the implication is that, with further re-theorizing, our commonly held notions/connections of sex and gender can themselves be less restricting.

DEDICATION AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to dedicate this thesis to the loving memory of my grandmother

I must acknowledge, with much gratitude, the help of numerous friends who shared their porn viewing habits and fantasies with me during the writing of this thesis. I also thank Craig Francis whose patience, understanding, and care made the writing of this thesis possible. I am deeply grateful to Tom Waugh who inspired this work, and Fran Shaver who constantly kept me on course in its writing. I also thank Robert Martin who sparked my interest in literary theory. Finally, I would like to acknowledge my family who have supported my academic pursuits.

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Munich 2654, cup by Makron, ARV 462.47 97

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AN INTRODUCTION

Foucault's general principle is that every form is a compound of relations between forces. Given these forces, our first question is with what forces from the outside they enter into a relation, and then what form is created as a result. These may be forces within a man: the force to imagine, remember, conceive, wish, and so on. One might object that such forces already presuppose man; but in terms of form this is not true. The forces within man presuppose only places, points of industry, a region of the existent. In the same way forces within an animal (mobility, irritability, and so on) do not presuppose any determined form. One needs to know with what other forces the forces within man enter into a relation, in a given historical formation, and what form is created as a result from this compound of forces. We can already foresee that the forces within man do not necessarily contribute to the composition of a Man-form, but may be otherwise invested in another compound or form: even over a short period of time. Man has not always existed, and will not exist for ever. For a Man-form to appear to be delineated, the forces within man must enter into a relation with certain very special forces from the outside.

--Gilles Deleuze¹

¹ Gilles Deleuze, *Foucault*, trans. Sean Hand (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 124

For several years now, public and academic discussions have been replete with references to the demeaning and degrading qualities of pornography. Many of those who have written such materials have done us the service of drawing attention to the many difficulties women face in society by focusing awareness on issues of gender. Increasingly, women's groups, political parties and other organizations interested in social policy have been calling attention to the 'harm' that pornography causes women. Although the social support behind this claim is manifold, the impact of the pornography debates is becoming clear. There is a growing pro-censorship tendency emerging across North America. This change in social attitudes promises a great improvement of the status of women—or so its backers claim. Paradoxically, the anti-porn project of many feminists may eventually reposition female sexuality in a sociosexual discursive framework which will oppressively limit 'positive' representations of female sexuality, rather than liberate women from sexual inequality, and directly or indirectly eliminate more marginalized forms of pornography. My point here is not that anti-porn feminists have not made any legitimate claims with respect to negative representations of women in pornography, but rather that the historical structuring of the debate has produced the undesirable effect of universalizing the 'problem' of pornography to include all of its multiple forms and has provided a discursive vehicle for conservative forces to suppress representations of 'nontraditional' sexual activities. This situation does not seem to me to imply that feminists should give up their struggle of criticizing and condemning misogynist representations; rather it implies a need to radically rethink and reconceptualize the terms of the debate in more sophisticated theoretical frameworks. I

strongly believe that it is only by creating a conceptual system which recognizes a plurality of gender and sexual identities while simultaneously pursuing an ethical system which recognizes the sexual integrity and personhood of the individual that a more satisfactory sexual politics will emerge

This thesis is a defence of gay video pornography. My sole focus on videos is not intended to imply that the conclusions I reach have no bearing on other forms of gay pornography I think they do I do not intend to argue that homosexual and heterosexual pornography are wholly disparate or discrete (not to mention bisexual, transvestite, transsexual, transgendered, SM, etc pornography) It is, I think, a mistake to collapse heterosexual and homosexual forms of pornography into a single category. Each of these "pornographies" has had its own unique sociosexual history and has evolved within, or outside, using Sandra Harding's term, "oppositional consciousness"² I believe it is of enormous social and political interest for queers and women alike to look attentively at the ways in which various pornographic texts carry out a variety of sociosexual and sociopolitical functions, operate on various levels of reality and fantasy, exhibit different *internal* gender structures and sexual behaviors, and the ways each of these various forms has been "policed" (or not) in distinctly different ways I believe that a defence of gay pornography not only has crucial implications for the homosexual erotic community, but may also offer important insights into the ways in which gender and sexual activities are discursively constructed and understood in other genres of pornography. My defence of gay pornography, then, should not be construed as an indirect condemnation of *all*

² Sandra Harding, *The Science Question in Feminism* (Ithica Cornell University Press, 1986), 193

heterosexual forms of pornography I remain highly unconvinced by many feminist arguments that claim that heterosexual pornography causes *harm* to women

The central question that I wish to raise in this thesis concerns the representation of gender and sexual activities in the gay porn video text. Can gay porn be construed to be homophobic and misogynist? I will make the argument that the theoretical distinctions presently employed to answer such a question are not in themselves critical enough, on a presuppositional level, of the nature of gender and sexual activities themselves to determine, or describe, the gender positionings of actors within the gay porn text. Thus, it is not sufficient, in my opinion, to argue whether gay porn is, or is not, homophobic and/or misogynist without first questioning whether the theoretical and conceptual tools that are utilized for such gender analyses operate on an ideological level that predetermines and discursively constrains possible responses. I shall argue that the academic discourse surrounding the subject of gay pornography effectively limits the debate. The question then becomes how is their role in this process being presented at a presuppositional level and in which ways do their conceptual frameworks restrict gender readings of the gay porn text? What gendered positions are effaced within the debate?

Contemporary developments in queer theory and postmodern epistemology have provided the platform from which a reconceptualization of gender sites in gay pornographic materials is made possible. These theoretical and conceptual advances give impetus to the first sections of this thesis, as unfortunately much of the gay porn debate has been articulated within modern conceptions of gender. I will present the two major analytic approaches which have been invoked by various theoreticians, and will expose

the ways in which their criticisms either implicitly or explicitly heteronormalize the sexual activities in gay porn videos by incorrectly locating sexual 'positions' and gendered identities solely in terms of heterosexist conceptions of gender. These approaches effectively erase 'gay desire' and also entail a conceptual inability to recognize gendered positions which can be located *in-between* traditional gender polarities.

I will proceed to develop an alternative conceptual and theoretical model which operates to cut across traditional sexual binarisms, i.e., male/female, masculine/feminine, heterosexual/homosexual, powerful/powerless. I will argue that gay pornography should be analyzed within the broader sociosexual binary of sodomitical versus anti-sodomitical discourse. This shift allows for a conceptual site wherein certain sociosexual identities, i.e., women and gay men, are not fallaciously situated in antithetical positions concerning the sexual and gender performances in the gay porn text. The original question is again altered from one of whether or not gay porn is homophobic/misogynist to one of how gay porn functions as a sodomitical text. This conceptual shift is offered in order to decenter heterosexist approaches to the gay porn text as well as to enable the recognition that gendered definitions of sexual activities are more tangled than many anti-porn theoreticians have thus far been willing to acknowledge. The 'sodomitical' approach displaces the tendency to assume that the penis and the phallus are synonymous terms and that any representation of the penis and/or penile-centric sexual activity necessarily entails an occasion of phallocentric patriarchal male sexuality. The conceptual strategy I am offering, I believe, de-essentializes notions that particular sexual activities can be solely delineated along traditional biological and gender axes.

In the final sections of the thesis I will move away from a discursive and conceptual analysis of the gay porn debate to focus more directly on the text itself. Gay porn videos are of enormous interest as they offer a conceptual site in which various sociosexual discursive frameworks intersect and visibly generate multiple gender paradoxes that cannot adequately be explained by invoking traditional heterosexist gender binarisms. I will demonstrate that the gendered positions in gay porn are best understood in terms of emergent gender positions or tangled gender hierarchies. The question of whether gay video pornography is to be considered emancipatory or oppressive with respect to women (misogyny) and gay men (homophobia) is one, I believe, that should be determined within what I term 'sodomitical discourse' (if, in fact, it still makes sense to ask *that* particular question). This thesis attempts to shift theoretical focus away from heterosexist conceptions of gender and sexual activities to notions of gender plurality and, finally, to a 'universe' of sodomitical practices. I argue that the tensions and contradictions which exist in the gay porn text between various traditional gender constructions and sexual categories, e.g., masculine/feminine, straight/gay, result in a series of dialectical interplays on various sociosexual discursive axes which operate to subvert the very categories the gay porn text adopts to 'contain' the sexual performances of the actors.

This thesis is interdisciplinary. I shall be drawing from a wide range of material. On some points reference will be made to Christian and Greco-Roman mythologies and representations. On other points I will use literary examples to bring some of my arguments into focus. In many respects this thesis is not an orthodox exposition of the

gay porn 'problem.' It should be said that this thesis is not intended to be a scientific survey of gay pornography although on occasion I will single out stills, sequences, scenes, porn stars, dialogue, and the visual syntax of the video. Where relevant, I have included images to accompany the text.

My interest and method in approaching gay video pornography can best be characterized as 'philosophical' rather than 'empirical'. Much of this thesis has been inspired by the work of Michel Foucault; it has also gained its impetus to a large degree from the work of 'Gender Fluidists' such as Judith Butler. Unfortunately, space restrictions have prevented any detailed discussions of their respective works. I also owe a debt of gratitude to the numerous scholars who have already broached the topic. Many of these scholars (Bronski, Dyer, Pronger, Pendleton, Waugh, etc.) have influenced my own ideas and thinking, and it is not my intention to refute, but rather to build on, their work.

Although I will be referring to specific videos in this thesis, my analysis is not centered on individual videos as discrete texts. Early in my research, I wanted to analyze and compare several porn videos. I especially wanted to document either explicit or implicit *appearances* of women in gay porn narratives and come to some conclusion as to whether or not the *use* of these female manifestations was misogynist. I also considered documenting 'homophobic' remarks, but often found that within the plotline of the video these *moments of homophobia* ended, in my opinion, on a gay-positive note. As I continued to watch videos, thinking and rethinking what anti-porn feminists and some gay theorists found objectionable in gay pornography, I found it less useful to

insulate particular texts from anti-porn attacks. Of course, after seeing the enormous thematic variety in gay porn texts, I questioned whether I could approach gay porn as *representing* a "singular text." But it is implicit in my argument that, although there are differences between each porn video (e.g., theme), these texts, inasmuch as they all *represent gay sex*, do form a singular sexual discourse, i.e., sodomitical discourse (it would be more precise to describe gay porn as a subset of sodomitical discourse).

Several points should here be emphasized. First, I have watched well over two hundred gay porn videos for this thesis. Many of them were my own choice. Others were chosen by my roommate, or were given to me by friends and colleagues who insisted on their 'quality.' Still others were suggested by the employees of Wega (Montreal's major gay porn video store) who were kind enough to give me the most 'popular' titles. In this sense, the films viewed for this thesis were chosen completely at random. This is not to say, however, that I placed no restrictions on them. I chose to analyze the most common current form of gay pornography. I opted to ignore any gay porn films which contained bisexual scenes. Although I strongly believe that there is a great need to examine this "intermediate" form of pornographic representation, the "bisexual" element in gay pornography is rare and not stereotypical of the genre. Moreover, bisexual pornography has, in its own right, become a distinct pornographic form and deserves to be analyzed as such. I have also excluded non-American video productions from this thesis. I also decided early in the project that I would strictly examine "all-white" videos. The gay porn industry at present is predominantly a 'white' phenomenon, although not every performer in every video is white, and although there are growing sectors of the industry which

specialize in 'minority' forms of pornography, e.g. Black Forest Productions, these 'specialized' forms of pornography are sub-genres which only compose a small percentage of the market. The issue of racism in gay pornography deserves much more attention than I could possibly pursue in this thesis. However, with this said, I would like to add that I believe that the theoretical framework proposed in this thesis for analyzing gay pornography does have some interesting conceptual and theoretical implications for reading racial discourse in the pornographic text.

Secondly, some of the videos that are discussed in this thesis have already been analyzed by other individuals, notably videos starring Jeff Stryker. I have chosen to echo this choice of earlier commentators on gay pornography for two reasons. First, Stryker and his work have been invoked by several academics to demonstrate *why* gay pornography is misogynist and/or homophobic. These analyses are of interest not only because they reveal and exemplify the theoretical approaches and fundamental assumptions which many scholars have taken and used to analyze gay pornography, but also because the analyses suggest and reveal what *type* of performer is considered the *most* problematic—that is, the *most* homophobic or the *most* misogynist—figure in gay pornography. Second, and following from the first, these films should be the least likely candidates in the gay porn universe to be acquitted of the charge of being homophobic or misogynist.

Thirdly, this thesis does not attempt to survey *all* gay sexually explicit material. I have generally excluded written pornographic materials and, with a few exceptions, have ignored gay pornographic films produced before the 1980s. The 1980s marked a

transitional period in the gay porn industry. *Frat House I* (1980, Laguna), the first gay porn shot on video and produced by the now-defunct company College Station, ushered in the age of video. Today, most porn films are shot on video, which has fundamentally altered both their distribution and their consumption. The introduction of video gave the consumer a comparably cheap and accessible product.

Although the videos viewed for this thesis have been heavily censored, I have attempted to consider equally the absence of various sexual activities from the text while formulating the theoretical framework that I provide. In some cases in my research I compared descriptions of the videos offered in American reviews to the actual video available in Canada (although this is not explicitly discussed in the text) For example, the synopsis of the video *Leep in Hot Water* (1989, Falcon) in the *Adam Gay Video 1995 Directory* describes a scene in which garden hoses are used to give the performers enemas.³ This scene never made it past Canadian censors (e.g., the Régie du Cinéma du Québec)

In choosing the films discussed in this thesis I was, more than many citizens of other countries (e.g., the United States), restricted in what I could legally obtain. Thus, while some other nationalities have a greater access to a larger gamut of sexual representations, as a Canadian I am limited by government-prescribed morality. I make immediate mention of this fact as it has resulted in an increased standardization of the sexual content of gay porn videos legally available in Canada. All of the sexual activities that are discussed in this thesis are common components of the genre and are not unique

³ Dave Kinnick, comp. *Adam Gay Video 1995 Directory*, vol. 2, no. 10 (1995) 67

to the videos that I mention. In fact, with the recent Butler Decision,⁴ any *riskier* representations of varying forms of sexual activities are suppressed.

Before any video is distributed in Quebec it must receive a "stamp" (of approval and classification) from the Régie du Cinéma du Québec. In many cases the video must be heavily edited before it is permitted to enter into the Canadian marketplace or made available for rental purposes. For example, the Canadian version of *Abduction* (1991, Falcon) runs approximately twenty minutes less than its American counterpart. Notably, all fist-fucking scenes have been edited out. Ironically, *Busted* (1991, Stryker Productions) opens with the following statement:

In the year 1991, the FBI made massive raids on the adult film industry. These raids focused on video distributors, bookstores and productions across the nation closing many business's [sic] and sending people to jail all for the sale and distribution of sex video tapes. The people of the nation are now faced with the government of the United States trying to dictate the sexual practices Americans should have. People are losing their rights... This is the new sexual revolution,

⁴⁴ *R v Butler* 1 S C R 452 (1992, Canada)

Donald Victor Butler owned and operated the Avenue Video Boutique in Winnipeg Manitoba. His store, on August 21, 1987, was raided by the police. He was charged in two separate indictments with a total of 250 counts under section 159 (now section 163) of the *Criminal Code*. This section states that "any publication a dominant characteristic of which is the undue exploitation of sex, or of sex and any one or more of the following subjects, namely crime, horror, cruelty, and violence" is obscene.

In *R v Butler*, the trial judge, J. Wright described the videos and magazines seized:

The crown and the accused agree that the content of the magazines and videos (there are 80 video tapes which run a minimum of 60 minutes and up to 90 minutes) is what is commonly described as hardcore pornography. The scenes depicted in this material are entirely sexual in character, are extremely explicit, and represent an exploitation of sex as not only a dominant characteristic but the only characteristic. There is no redeeming feature of a literary, artistic, political, scientific or other social character. The material includes the presentation of sexual intercourse, anal intercourse, acts of *cummlingus* and *fellatio*, men and women masturbating, men ejaculating in the face and other parts of the body of women and other men, lesbianism, homosexuality, incestuous sexual relations, group sex, very colourful and highly magnified, prolonged and vivid views of male and female genitalia, and the use of various kinds and descriptions of sexual devices. [at p. 100 C C C.]

Butler argued that section 163(8) violated the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* 2(b). The court held that section 163(8) of the *Criminal Code* did in fact violate this section but argued that this intrusion could be justified. The court affirmed that pornography is likely to be harmful if it depicts (1) sex with violence, horror, or cruelty, (2) the representation of explicit sex in which any of the individuals involved are degraded or dehumanized. Pornography that does not contain elements from (1) and (2) will not be considered obscene.

and like prohibition, time will pass and the government will realize that they were wrong "again."

I say this is ironic as, under present Canadian law, the copy of *Busted* that I viewed for this thesis (which was legally available for rental purposes) contains material which is now illegal. One scene contains a double-fuck (two penises in the anus at the same time) According to the "Motif de Refus de Classement des Films de Sexploitation à la Régie du Cinéma du Québec," the representation of this sexual activity is now strictly forbidden.⁵

In effect, Canadian censorship laws have increasingly produced a *homogenization* of gay porn videos (as is increasingly the situation in the United States due to the pressure of anti-porn activists and conservatives on government agencies). As a resident of Quebec, therefore, I only have legal access to *twinkie* porn (what some SM practitioners may describe as *vanilla sex*). The sexual content of the videos is (usually) restricted to masturbation-suck-finger-fuck-cum scenarios which, at present, are deemed legally allowable. For these reasons, the films cited in this thesis are typical of the Canadian version. I believe, however, that the argument I offer is equally applicable to many of the gay porn videos that have been censored in Canada or are not available

This thesis is divided into four chapters. Chapter one provides an overview of the various arguments that have been brought against the gay porn text, and the subsequent responses of various theoreticians. This is supplemented with a discussion of the

⁵ The text reads

Les comportements suivants sont considérés comme contrevenant à l'ordre public ou aux bonnes mœurs : Pénétration anale de deux penis en même temps
Office of the Régie du Cinéma du Québec, "Motif de Refus de Classement des Films de Sexploitation à la Régie du Cinéma du Québec, " (February 3, 1995) 5-6

'problems' of gay hyper/masculinization and substitution. The chapter concludes with a critique of the concept of the phallus which is mirrored in the final section of the following chapter where I introduce the notion of an *anti-phallus*, borrowing from Ancient Greek mythologies. Chapter two develops several theoretical and conceptual tools which resituate gay porn within a 'sodomitical' conceptual framework. Chapter three returns to the substitute and hyper/masculine theses in light of these discussions and argues that traditional binary approaches to the gay porn text have effaced the notion of male-male desire by consistently erasing the concept of a 'gay topman'. In this chapter I begin characterizing the gay porn text as sodomitical and attempt to bring to the surface various sociosexual identities which have remained inarticulable within traditional heterosexist gender binarisms. The chapter discusses trade as an example of an emergent gender category, and concludes with a discussion of dirty talk. In the final chapter of the thesis I focus attention onto the visual component of the gay porn text. I discuss orgies, dyads, sodomitical bodies and spaces before finally bringing the thesis to a conclusion.

CHAPTER ONE

AN IN-QUEER-Y: THE GAY PORN DEBATE

[A] damaging bias toward heterosocial or heterosexist assumptions inheres unavoidably in the very concept of gender. This bias would be built into any gender-based analytic perspective to the extent that gender definition and gender identity are necessarily relational between genders--to the extent, that is, that in any gender system, female identity or definition is constructed by analogy, supplementarity, or contrast to male, or vice versa. Although many gender-based forms of analysis do involve accounts, sometimes fairly rich ones, of intragender behaviours and relations, the ultimate definitional appeal in any gender-based analysis must necessarily be to the diacritical frontier between different genders. This gives heterosocial and heterosexual relations a conceptual privilege of incalculable consequences.

---Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick¹

¹ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 31

LITERATURE REVIEW

PART I: FEMINISM

*In the long-running debate on sexual representation, gay men's pornography has proved as controversial as its heterosexual counterpart, if only because the two have so often been equated*²

In this section I propose to examine a select group of feminist theorists who have either directly or indirectly affected the ways in which gay pornography is analyzed. I would like to begin with a short preamble to contextualize better their conceptual frameworks and also to begin outlining the trajectory of my own argument.

The general enterprise of protecting the sexual integrity of women is apparent in all of these writers' works although their approaches to pornography vary enormously. Early feminist writers set out quite explicitly to protect women from 'unacceptable' sexual representations. In doing so, many of these writers maintained and retained particular normative definitions of human sexuality. Certain sexual activities, e.g., anal penetration, were denoted to be incompatible with the liberation of women from patriarchy and were defined as forms of sexual violence. These assumed forms of sexual violence were explicitly associated with male sexuality and were discursively constructed to be alien to the "natural" desires of the female sexual subject. Attempts to distinguish erotica and pornography, a theme I shall briefly address in the following chapter, also contributed to the false assumption that only certain sexual activities were acceptable forms of sexual behavior. The *silence* of many feminists, as will be seen, on the issue of gay pornography (as well as other forms of pornographies) exposes the extent to which

² Mandy Merck, *Perversions* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 217

the issue of pornography and the history of the debate has been almost strictly formulated along an axis of biological sex

These early approaches to pornography unfortunately framed the debate in a dialectic which presupposes a sexual division and natural opposition between the dynamics of male and female sexual desire. In order to understand more clearly this assumed essential polarity between the sexes, the issue of gender construction became an increasingly prevalent component of the debates. Although the introduction of social constructionist theories in analyzing the pornographic text resulted in more complex and sophisticated analyses, the conceptual possibilities and terminological tools used to analyze sexually explicit materials continued to be firmly grounded in a linguistic framework based on sexual universalisms and gender polarities. Consequently, attempts to decipher the gay pornographic text have been linguistically and conceptually constrained by a language which presupposes *a priori* the sole existence of sexual and gender binarisms which, when carefully examined, reveal a deep affinity to heterosexual constructions of sexual behavior and gender. In this sense, anti-porn feminists have the advantage of utilizing linguistic and conceptual frameworks which have had a long-standing cultural tradition. Firstly, they can easily invoke and transfer deeply embedded and culturally accepted definitions of sexual divisions, e.g., male/female, masculine/feminine, onto the gay porn text. The assumption that *all* sexual and gender dynamics operate within, and are confined by, heterosexual/heterosexist-based models of sexuality and gender becomes explicit in what I shall term the '**substitute thesis**'

Secondly, dissenting theoreticians who wish to articulate an alternative position must, in some ways, adopt a linguistic and conceptual framework which is far less suitable for their task. This is evident in the feminist debates surrounding the issue of lesbian sadomasochism. Thirdly, radical feminist sex theorists must somehow attempt to accommodate the positioning of the sexual subject within hegemonic sociosexual structures while simultaneously asserting and systematically demonstrating the existence (or the possible existence) of marginalized sexual epistemologies. While this particular strategy is evident in pro-sadomasochistic feminist writings, it has also become increasingly apparent in discussions concerning 'less problematic' sexually explicit materials. There is no coherent understructure of ideas presented by feminists on the issue of pornography but they are all equally marked by a linguistic tradition that pits the universal against the particular, male against female, masculine against feminine. The following is not a comprehensive survey of feminist writings on pornography but rather serves to situate the question of gay pornography in the larger debate from which it emanated.

The discursive process of conceptually and theoretically equating the gender dynamics of homosexual and heterosexual pornography first emerged in the late 1970s. Gloria Steinem, in her article "The Difference Between Pornography and Erotica," published in the November 1978 issue of *Ms.* magazine, argued that pornographic materials reinforce power imbalances between men and women. Steinem distinguished and defended erotica as being "mutually pleasurable," "really making love," and "usually a sensuality and touch and warmth, an acceptance of bodies and nerve endings." On the

other hand, pomography "is sex being used to reinforce some inequality, or to create one, or to tell us a lie that pain and humiliation (ours or someone else's) are really the same as pleasure. If we are to feel anything, we must identify with the conqueror or victim."³ Steinem's article appeared in the wake of the release of such films as Fred Halsted's *I...I. Plays Itself* (1972, HIS), *Sex Garage* (1972, HIS), *Sextool* (1972, Cosco) and Roger Earl's *Born to Raise Hell* (1972, Marathon). All of these films depict gay male sadomasochistic practices and were, as John Burger notes, "mostly devoid of any traces of tenderness or romance."⁴ Within this historical context, and with these particular definitions in mind, it is perhaps not surprising that Steinem, if we read her argument very charitably, suggested that gay male porn "may imitate this [heterosexual] violence by putting a man in the 'feminine' role of the victim."⁵ As is immediately apparent, Steinem adopted a normative conception of human sexuality, conflated sadomasochistic sex with violence (rather than recognizing it as the performance of violent sex), and collapsed all forms of male sexuality into a monolithic model. Particular sexual positions/activities were categorized as 'feminine,' and described in terms of 'victimhood.'

Soon after Steinem had put forth her position on gay pornography, Kathleen Barry almost precisely echoed her remark. In 1979, Barry published *Female Sexual Slavery*. The hesitation that Steinem had displayed with her use of "may imitate" was transformed in Barry's argument to an assertion of *fact*. Barry stated

The most prevalent theme in pornography is one of utter contempt for women. In movie after movie women are raped, ejaculated on, urinated on, anally

³ Gloria Steinem, "Erotica and Pornography: A Clear and Present Difference," *Ms* (November 1978) 54.

⁴ John Burger, *One-Handed Histories: The Eroto-Politics of Gay Male Video Pornography* (New York: Haworth Press, 1995), 17.

⁵ Steinem, "Erotica and Pornography," 53.

penetrated, beaten, and, with the advent of snuff films, murdered in an orgy of sexual pleasure. Women are the objects of pornography, men its largest consumers, and sexual degradation its theme. There are variations on this basic format which are made to appeal to tastes that become eroded or saturated from repetition. Variations include an escalation of violence and the use of children and animals as "exotic" objects. Homosexual pornography, which acts out the same dominant and subordinate roles of heterosexual pornography, appeals not only to gay men but also to the straight man.⁶

There is little difference between Steinem and Barry's approach to the issue of gay pornography. The obvious contrast between Steinem and Barry, however, is Barry's underpinning assumption that it is *violence* rather than the sexual content of pornography that attracts particular viewers. Like Steinem, Barry creates a totalizing conception of male sexuality and blatantly ignores the mechanics of homophobia within patriarchy. Moreover, Barry categorizes certain sexual behaviors, e.g., 'ejaculated on,' 'urinated on,' and 'anally penetrated,' as manifesting a form of contempt for women. The tendency to describe certain sexual activities as violence was taking root.

Neither Steinem nor Barry would have the same impact on the universe gay video pornography as Andrea Dworkin. Dworkin is one of the most influential anti-porn feminists, and her work has had incredible sociopolitical ramifications. Consequently, I shall throughout this thesis be referring to her arguments and will later in this chapter more carefully detail some of their aspects. Unlike Steinem, who found the *combination* of sex and violence problematic, Dworkin insisted that pornography itself is violence and discrimination against women. In *Pornography: Men Possessing Women*, published in 1979, Dworkin draws heavily from such diverse sources as Greg Anderson and Jessie Miller's literary works, *Hustler* and *Playboy*'s pictorial presentations, and Georges

⁶ Kathleen Barry, *Female Sexual Slavery* (New York: Avon Book, 1979), 206.

Bataille and the Marquis de Sade's lives and works, to support her argument. Her analysis of pornography is based on a series of axioms which supposedly capture the fundamental tenets of male-supremacist ideology. Dworkin holds that the sexual act can only be defined in terms of phallic power. In her eagerness to problematize pornography, Dworkin states "In the male system, sex is the penis, the penis is sexual power, its use in fucking is manhood."⁷

Dworkin's attribution of a kind of reified power to the penis inevitably forces her into a position where she must condemn *all* males, believing that they *all* participate in the subordination of women.⁸ In effect, the force of Dworkin's thesis rests on the simple equivalence of the 'penis,' 'the phallus,' and 'masculinity.' Dworkin's argument is anchored on a disturbing naturalization between biological sex and gender (although some may view Dworkin's project as social constructionist). Dworkin writes

Mother, whore, beauty, abomination, nature or ornament, she is the thing in contradistinction to which the male is human. Without her as fetish—the charmed object—the male, including the male homosexual, would be unable to experience his own selfhood, his own power, his own penile presence and sexual superiority. Male homosexual culture consistently uses the symbolic female—the male in drag, effeminacy as a style, the various accoutrements that denote female subjection—as part of its indigenous environment, as a touchstone against which masculinity can be experienced as meaningful and sublime. Male homosexuals, especially in the arts and in fashion, conspire with male heterosexuals to enforce

⁷ Andrea Dworkin, *Pornography: Men Possessing Women* (New York: The Women's Press, 1979), 23.

⁸ John Preston, a gay activist and pornographer, writes of his memories of Andrea Dworkin:

Dworkin used to run a lesbian discussion group in the center. One of her favorite antics back then was to deface any poster or other material that promoted male homosexuality. "THIS OPPRESSES WOMEN!" she'd write all over the place. I've come to understand that it's the expression of *any* male sexuality that she feels fuels the oppression of women in our society. **That makes gay men not allies, but a big part of the problem.**

John Preston, "Whose Free Speech?" *Boston Phoenix* (October 1993), quoted in Nadine Strossen, *Defending Pornography: Free Speech, Sex, and the Fight for Women's Rights* (Toronto: Scribner, 1995), 169.

the male-supremacist rule that the female must be that made thing against which the male acts to experience himself as male.⁹

It would be deceptive on my part to suggest that gay pornography has been a central issue for Dworkin and other anti-porn feminists. For example, in the following year, the influential anti-porn anthology *Take Back the Night* was first published. Containing no less than thirty-five articles on porn-related themes, three of which were contributed by Dworkin, the authors in the anthology make no allusion to gay pornography in its three-hundred and fifty-nine pages. Indeed, so great has been the influence of traditional binarisms, and underpinnings of essentialism, that few anti-porn feminists have even considered gay or other marginalized forms of pornography.

The rise of a parallel politics of sexual liberation occurred alongside the intensification of the anti-porn position. Not all feminist writers concurred with authors like Steinem, Barry, and Dworkin. From a broad range of disciplinary practices and theoretical approaches, anti-censorship and pro-porn feminists voiced their opposition to anti-porn feminists.

Before discussing any of the work of these dissenting feminists, I should quickly remark that anti-censorship and pro-porn feminists do not necessarily represent two congruent positions. One of the principle polemics of feminism in the United States revolves around the distinction between the construction of different constitutionally guaranteed freedoms. In other words, the 'right to expression' rivals the 'right not to be harmed'. Therefore, anti-censorship feminists can consistently assert the need to *defend* pornography while also holding to the belief that pornography is problematic. On the

⁹ Dworkin, *Pornography*, 128

other hand, pro-porn feminists not only claim that censoring pornography is unjustified, but wish to make the stronger claim that pornography is *beneficial* ¹⁰

It would appear that the conflicting 'rights' view often veils and neglects the fact that these positions are contingent upon certain assumptions about sexual activities: what sexual activities *are* and what sexual activities *are not*. With alarming regularity, anti-porn feminists have rendered invisible other forms of sexuality that are not based on heterosexual sexual acts (by either completely ignoring their existence or immediately assuming that they are the same, i.e., substitute thesis). The internalization and valuation of traditional heterosexual gender constructions, and an *a priori* understanding that all sexual relationships somehow explicitly or implicitly mirror heterosexual sex and gender constructions, have restricted the ways in which various feminists have analyzed the pornographic universe. The assumed connection between gender and sexuality/sexual acts, previously considered unremarkable or simply *natural*, was being questioned by non-heterosexually defined women within feminism. Notably, lesbian theorists were dissatisfied with much of the literature being produced by heterosexist feminists.

Coming to Power, a collection of articles written by members of Samois, a San Francisco-based lesbian/feminist SM support group, was published in 1981. Mixing together poetry, prose, letters and theory, the members of Samois wished to re-examine the "politics of sex and power," and "talk about [their] sexuality *as it is*." ¹¹ In radical contrast to Steinem's notion of 'tenderness,' and Dworkin's belief that violence is *innately male*, Samois, crossing traditional gender binarisms, explain their position:

¹⁰ Susan Dwyer, ed. *The Problem of Pornography* (Toronto: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1995), 7-20

¹¹ Samois, *Coming to Power* (Boston: Alyson, 1981), 8

Anti-S/M attitudes are embedded in many areas of lesbian-feminist ideology. As S/M lesbians, we say that our experience contradicts many of those closely held theories, and that this examination of our experience is a feminist inquiry. Because we have some fundamental disagreements with existing theories, anti-S/M lesbian-feminist theorists correctly perceive us as a threat, but we are only a threat insofar as we are a threat to their status. The wall of resistance is strong. Lesbian-feminist politics have lost their flexibility. Our own presence cannot be resolved by the currently accepted politics, therefore some of us are being caught in the odd situation where we must, politically, disown ourselves. Those of us who have been working actively in the movement for many years are being labeled anti-feminist, mentally ill, or worse. Lines are drawn and we find ourselves, quite unexpectedly, on the "other" side. We are being cast out, denied. We become heretics.¹²

The internal tensions within feminism were becoming more evident. One year later, in 1982, the same year as the controversial Barnard College conference,¹³ Robin Linden wrote in *Against Sadomasochism*

Throughout *Against Sadomasochism* it is argued that lesbian sadomasochism is firmly rooted in patriarchal sexual ideology, with its emphasis on the fragmentation of desire from the rest of our lives and the single-minded pursuit of gratification, sexual or otherwise. There can be no doubt that none of us is exempt from the sphere of influence of patriarchal conceptions of sexuality and intimacy. For this reason, I believe that the recent interest by some women in sadomasochism is testimony to the profoundly alienated and objectified conceptions of erotic desire that our culture has produced and from which lesbians and feminists are by no means exempt. Sadomasochism is as much an irreducible condition of society as it is an individual "sexual preference" or lifestyle; indeed, sadomasochism reflects the power asymmetries embedded in most of our social relationships.¹⁴

In 1984, Carol Vance's *Pleasure and Danger: Exploring Female Sexuality* was published. Gathering together a variety of articles first presented at the Barnard conference "Toward a Politics of Sexuality," Vance says the main theme of the anthology

¹² Samois, *Coming to Power*, 8.

¹³ For a more detailed discussion of the political controversy and the tension that arose between various feminist groups at the Barnard College conference, see Carol S. Vance, "Epilogue," in *Pleasure and Danger: Exploring Female Sexuality*, ed. Carol S. Vance (London: Pandora, 1989), 431-439.

¹⁴ Robin Linden et al., eds. *Against Sadomasochism: A Radical Feminist Analysis* (San Francisco: Frog in the Well, 1982), 4.

is an exploration of "the ambivalent and contradictory extremes women experience in negotiating sexuality."¹⁵ In its four-hundred and sixty-two pages, containing thirty-seven articles from an enormously diverse group of feminist writers, there are no extended discussions of gay pornography. However, as Carol Vance suggests in her introduction to the 1992 edition, in the interim years between the conference and the publishing of this more recent edition, queer discourse has become more influential in feminist debates

In many ways, the porn debate has been structured (as exemplified in the above debate over sadomasochism) by the language/discourse of anti-porn feminists. Concerned with the sociopolitical positioning of women in Western society, anti-porn feminists structure their arguments in terms of strict binary oppositions, e.g., male/female, masculine/feminine, subject/object, violent/non-violent, powerful/powerless, etc. Representations of female sexuality and the feminine within pornography are consistently described in terms of female victimization and objectification (the politics of injury). The female sexual subject becomes an *inconceivable entity*. In other words, the universe of sexual representations can only contain images of (either/both) women as sexual objects or images of women creating the *illusion* of sexual subjectivity (recall Linden's comments).

An increased social preoccupation with sexual violence occurred alongside the intensification of the porn debate. The language of *female powerlessness*, and *victimization*, and terms such as *female degradation* and *demeaning women* were filtering down from academic circles to the general public. Today, of course, this style of

¹⁵ Carol S. Vance, "More Danger, More Pleasure: A Decade After the Barnard College Conference," in *Pleasure and Danger: Exploring Female Sexuality*, ed. Carol S. Vance (London: Pandora, 1989), xvi.

discourse is familiar to most people. The roots of this form of discourse, to a large degree, can be attributed to, and were popularized by, Andrea Dworkin and Catharine MacKinnon. In 1983, Dworkin and MacKinnon combined forces, and together they drafted a model piece of anti-porn legislation for the city of Minneapolis. In varying forms, this piece of legislation has been introduced in several other American cities and has been exported to Canada (the Butler decision) in an attempt to regulate pornography. theory becoming practice.

The underlying tension between queerness and heteronormative assumptions was clearly present in their draft. Unlike the weaker claims of Steinem and Barry, i.e., they both criticize the sexual content/activities of pornography from more of a moral perspective, Dworkin and MacKinnon insisted that gay male porn is not substantively different from heterosexual porn as gay males are simply used 'in the place of women.' Consequently, gay porn *is*, as they argue that heterosexual pornography *is*, a means to subordinate and silence women. It is a form of institutionalized *violence* against women. Tagged on at the end of their definition of pornography, the ordinance reads. "The use of men, children, or transsexuals in the place of women ..is pornography for the purposes of...this statute."¹⁶ It is essential to note the importance of the phrase "in the place of women." Dworkin and MacKinnon are, in effect, identifying 'gay men' by connecting the *representation of their sexual performances* with the assumption that these representations are a *duplication of sexual representations* within a sexist heterosexual context. Throughout this thesis, this will be referred to as the "substitute thesis."

¹⁶ The key provisions of the Minneapolis ordinance have been reprinted in *FACT, Caught Looking: Feminism, Pornography and Censorship* (East Haven: Long River Books, 1986), 88

In 1986, the same year as the Meese Commission released its report on pornography,¹⁷ Susanne Kappeler published *The Pornography of Representation*. In her book, Kappeler disturbingly essentializes and fuses the relationship between gender and biological sex. She writes.

The objectification of women is a result of the subjectification of man. He is pure subject in relation to an object, which means that he is not engaging in exchange or communication with that objectified person who, by definition, cannot take the role of a subject¹⁸

Kappeler's absolute delineation of male/female, masculine/feminine, subject/object, reflects, in many ways, a trend in anti-porn rhetoric¹⁹ These rigid binaries of gender and sex difference, however, have not been assumed to be so

¹⁷ Linda Williams writes

As early as page seventy-eight of the commission's two-volume, 1,960-page report, it becomes apparent how thoroughly the feminist anti-pornography position had, by the mid-1980s, altered the terms of the public debate on pornography. In 1970, an earlier Presidential Commission on Pornography had concluded that, unlike explicit depictions of violence, pornography had no measurable adverse social effects. Richard Nixon rejected this liberal commission's recommendations. The 1986 commission, in contrast, appointed by Ronald Reagan and dominated by moral majority conservatives, came to the overwhelming conclusion that hard-core pornography is violence, and that this violence hurts women most of all. The Meese Commission members gained new leverage against some forms of obscenity; anti-pornography feminists got to assert the abnormality of a graphically depicted phallic power that was once considered a natural aspect of sexual pleasure. But license to outright condemn was granted to neither the Meese Commission, in the case of all unorthodox sexualities—unless these could be construed as violent—nor the radical feminists, in the case of all patriarchal phallocentrism—except as it constituted sexual violence. So although the two sides had very different notions of what the norms of sexual behavior should be, in the end they struck an uneasy bargain on what the norms should *not* be. The unfortunate result—and a result that I do not believe to be in the best interests of any kind of feminism—is the strengthening of the idea of sexual norms altogether.

Linda Williams, *Hard Core: Power, Pleasure and the "Frenzy of the Visible"* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 16-20.

For further discussions of the Meese Commission's report, see Pat Califia, *Public Sex* (Pittsburgh: Cleis Press, 1994), 95-104; Carole Vance, "Negotiating Sex and Gender in the Attorney General's Commission on Pornography," in *Sex Exposed: Sexuality and the Pornography Debate*, ed. Lynne Segal and Mary McIntosh (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1993), 29-49.

¹⁸ Susanne Kappeler, *The Pornography of Representation* (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 1986), 50.

¹⁹ For further examples, see Susan Griffin, *Pornography and Silence* (New York: Harper and Row, 1981), Susan Griffin, *Rape: The Power of Consciousness* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1979), Robin Morgan, "Theory and Practice: Pornography and Rape," in *Take Back the Night: Women on Pornography*, ed. Laura Lederer (New York: Morrow, 1980), 134-140.

inflexible by other feminists aside from, as seen above, the members of Samois, who offered a far more sophisticated theory of gender and sexual orientations. In the same year that Kappeler published her book, members of FACT (Feminist Anti-Censorship Task Force) published *Caught Looking*. This anthology places side by side numerous pornographic images (gay, lesbian, transsexual, heterosexual, from different historic periods, both hard and soft-core), drawings (including comics), and essays on the relationship of feminism to pornography and censorship. Notably, *Caught Looking* attempts to transgress binarisms. As Paula Webster in "Pornography and Pleasure" writes

I am convinced that the current anti-porn campaign holds significant dangers for feminists interested in developing an analysis of violence against women and extending an analysis of female sexuality. The provocative claims of the campaign create an enormous obstacle in the form of moral righteousness, they feed the old and voracious anxiety we experience when confronted with sexual imagery. Even more important, the campaign has chosen to organize and theorize around our victimization, our Otherness, not our subjectivity and self-definition. In focusing on what male pornography has done to us, rather than on our own sexual desires, we tend to embrace our sexually deprived condition and begin to police the borders of the double standard that has been used effectively to silence us²⁰

Paula Webster's challenge to restructure feminist theories in terms of female subjectivity and self-definitions rather than grounding it in a rhetoric of victimization and 'otherness' was, in the case of Dworkin, met with deaf ears. In 1987, Dworkin published *Intercourse*.²¹ Her argument clearly collapses any distinction between the penis (as a biological organ) and the phallus (power). Dworkin, analyzing a series of literary texts written by authors ranging from Tolstoy to Vargas Llosa in her colourfully named chapters ('Repulsion,' 'Skinless,' 'Stigma,' 'Communion,' 'Possession') proceeds to

²⁰ Paula Webster, "Pornography and Pleasure," in *Caught Looking: Feminism, Pornography and Censorship*, ed. FACT (East Haven: LongRiver Books, 1986), 34

²¹ Andrea Dworkin, *Intercourse* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1987)

conclude that heterosexual intercourse is the foundation/cause of women's subordination

Dworkin describes intercourse as:

[A] literal erosion of the body's integrity and its ability to function and to survive...her insides are worn away over time, and she, possessed, becomes weak, depleted, usurped in all her physical and mental energies and capacities by the one who has physically taken her over...²²

In short, Dworkin redefines the act of penile penetration *to be and mean* the act of subordinating another individual. They are indistinguishable. The notion of penile penetration conceived by Dworkin serves to obliterate the prospect of asserting or recognizing both female and gay male sexual subjectivity in representations of vaginal or anal intercourse. Women and gay men (as substitutes) can *only* be victims, for Dworkin, within the pornographic universe.

The Canadian anti-porn feminist Susan Cole, in her book *Pornography and the Sex Crisis* published in 1989, expresses a linguistic and conceptual allegiance to Dworkin's analysis of pornography. Cole claims that pornography is the "practice of sexual subordination in which women's inferior status is eroticized and thus maintained."²³ In her discussion of gay and lesbian pornographies, which are dealt with briskly in two paragraphs, Cole quickly concludes that homosexual pornographies mirror their heterosexual counterparts. Providing no evidence, and adopting the substitute thesis, Cole sweepingly asserts

The fact that the ideology of dominance and submission can transcend heterosexuality speaks to the power of gender stereotypes. In gay male pornographic scenarios of dominance and submission, the person doing the fucking is often called "he," while the fuckee is called "she." This is the way gay pornography, even though it is same-sex material, still marries to gender

²² Dworkin, *Intercourse*, 67

²³ Susan Cole, *Pornography and the Sex Crisis* (Toronto: Amanita, 1989), 9

sexuality. The sexes are the same but the roles remain different—masculine and feminine, powerful and powerless.²⁴

In contrast with Cole's uninformed argument, Linda Williams's silence on the issue of gay pornography perhaps says more²⁵ *Hard Core: Power, Pleasure and the Frenzy of the Visible* declares itself to be an analysis of solely heterosexual pornography. Williams, while recognizing the existence of other forms of pornography, believes that "their initial mapping as genres properly belongs to those who can read them better."²⁶ Williams, unlike her predecessors, whom she openly accuses as reading pornography "as the extreme case of patriarchal power" or "on a continuous pornographic tradition that runs throughout dominant culture"²⁷ focuses her analysis on the ways in which pornography, as a cinematic genre, is structured to sexually excite the viewer. Williams, in her concluding sentence, challenges women to decide whether or not they wish to make the journey into the pornographic universe.

There have already been numerous publications in the first half of this decade questioning earlier feminist positions on pornography. In varying degrees, feminist sexual politics are being re-examined, heterosexist assumptions probed, definitions of sexual relations interrogated, the notion of sexual identities and communities scrutinized, and multiple attempts at (re)locating female and male sexual subjectivity made. *Dirty Looks: Women, Pornography, Power*, an anthology which clearly situates itself as anti-

²⁴ Cole, *Pornography and the Sex Crisis*, 35

²⁵ Since the publication of *Hard Core*, Williams has more directly addressed the issue of gay pornography. See, Linda Williams, "Second Thoughts on Hard Core: American Obscenity Law and the Scapegoating of Deviance," in *Dirty Looks: Women, Pornography, Power*, ed. Pamela Gibson and Roma Gibson (London: BFI Publishing, 1993), 46-59; Linda Williams, "Pornographies on/scene or different strokes for different folks," in *Sex Exposed: Sexuality and the Pornography Debate*, ed. Lynn Segal and Mary McIntosh (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1992), 233-265.

²⁶ Williams, *Hard Core*, 7

²⁷ Ibid., 29

censorship, is but one example.²⁸ *Bad Girls & Dirty Pictures: The Challenge to Reclaim Radical Feminism*,²⁹ edited by Alison Assiter and Avedon Carol, similarly attacks earlier feminist positions on pornography. A final example, *Sex Exposed: Sexuality and the Pornography Debate* recognizes the effects that anti-porn rhetoric has had. Lynne Segal writes:

The problems we face as feminists tackling pornography today, however, are not just those of deciding to which women's voices we should pay most attention, and why. Nor do they reduce to questions of which types of explicitly sexual representation, or which contexts of pornographic consumption, produce the most coercively sexist behaviour from men, why, and what to do about them. They also—at least for some feminists—connect to fear that the setting of sexual agendas in Britain, as in the USA, is increasingly led by the conservative right, with its traditionally repressive attitudes towards sexuality generally, and towards women and sexual minorities in particular. It is the fear led by the knowledge that, in recent years, moral conservatives interested in attacking gays and lesbians, as well as in controlling women's sexuality, have become more successful precisely through focusing on pornography and, especially in the USA,³⁰ using the rhetoric and tactics of the feminist anti-pornography project.³¹

Anti-porn feminists have also made their contributions to the beginning of this decade. In an anthology which equals the size of the combined volume of the three texts immediately cited above, Catherine Itzin's *Pornography: Women, Violence and Civil Liberties*,³² is conspicuously silent on the issue of gay pornography. No references are given in the twenty page 'selected bibliography' to any articles or books on gay pornography. Admittedly, the collection does contain parts of John Stoltenberg's 1981

²⁸ Pamela Church Gibson and Roma Gibson, eds *Dirty Looks: Women, Pornography, Power* (London: BFI Publishing, 1993)

²⁹ Alison Assiter and Avedon Carol, eds *Bad Girls and Dirty Pictures: The Challenge to Reclaim Feminism* (London: Pluto Press, 1993)

³⁰ Published in 1992, neither Lynne Segal nor Mary McIntosh would have been aware that Canada would become the first country to adopt "MacDworkinite" legislation to regulate pornography

³¹ Lynne Segal and Mary McIntosh, eds *Sex Exposed: Sexuality and the Pornography Debate* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1992), 10-11

³² Catherine Itzin, ed *Pornography: Women, Violence and Civil Liberties: A Radical New View* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992)

and 1985 articles "Sexual Objectification and Male Supremacy" and "Pornography and Freedom" which, woven together, form one article. Stoltenberg's description of gay pornography, I believe, reveals another limited and frustrating account. Rather than addressing Stoltenberg's arguments here, I have opted to place his work in the next section.

It is helpful to end this section with a final observation concerning some feminist critiques of pornography before addressing the arguments that have been presented by queer theoreticians. Despite the earlier-mentioned advantages that various anti-porn feminists have in the porn debates, it seems to me that the conceptual resources available to theorists such as Dworkin are considerably more limited and narrow than those available to theorists who do not presuppose that pornography is *always* phallogocentric. The problem here is that the signifier of the phallus (power), i.e., the penis, is increasingly being misunderstood to *be* the phallus. In short, no distinction is made between the penis *qua* biological organ and the penis *qua* phallic signifier. This conflation effectively occludes the possibility that the penis can be resignified in terms which do not automatically reference it to power and oppression. But this synonymy has important consequences for any analysis of gay porn as it immediately positions the pro-gay porn theoretician in a position of defence. How can a queer theoretician defend gay pornography which is most easily characterized by its world of penises/phalluses and also maintain a pro-feminist position? This question has produced varying responses.

PART II: QUEER THEORETICIANS

Against the backdrop of feminist anti- and pro-porn discourse there has been a small group of queer academics attempting to determine some of the features that distinguish or fail to distinguish gay porn from its heterosexual counterpart. The most prominent theme that runs through most queer theorists' analyses of gay pornography is this: gay pornography cannot be adequately analyzed without taking into consideration the mechanics of homophobia. The general enterprise of protecting gays from homophobic messages is evident in almost all the queer theoreticians in this section, qualified to the extent that they often have different visions of what a non-homophobic society would look like. The 'breaking' of sociosexual taboos is a recurrent theme that underscores their texts, and in many ways gay pornography is seen to be an essential tool for sexual emancipation. But many of them are equally concerned with feminist issues and gender oppression. Analyses of the masculinization of gay men are becoming inseparable from analyses of the social status of women in our society. Although misogyny and homophobia are distinct mechanisms of oppression they are highly inter-related. This has had important consequences for many readings of the gay pornographic text and has produced what I shall term the '**hyper/masculine thesis**'. There is both a fundamental difference and a similarity between anti-porn feminists and pro-gay porn theoreticians. Both are attempting to free themselves from negative cultural representations of their sexuality, i.e., misogyny (=less pornography) and homophobia

(more pornography), and both are attempting to generate positive images of who they are as sexual subjects

I have attempted in the following to give a comprehensive survey of the literature presently available on gay pornography. I do not only deal with selected works that have a direct bearing on this thesis but have also included other analyses of gay pornography that are marginal to my focus. However, greater attention has been paid to those works that are more relevant to my own project.

In 1984, Michael Bronski published *Culture Clash: The Making of Gay Sensibility*. Bronski argued that any analysis of gay porn must take into consideration the sociopolitical importance that gay porn has in a society that is based on heterosexuality (heterosexism). For Bronski, gay pornography both *makes visible* and *affirms* a form of sexuality "in a society that desperately pretends that homosexuality does not exist."³³ As such, Bronski asserts, gay pornography not only *visually locates* homosexual desire, but subverts heterosexist discourse by asserting the *existence* of that desire. Taking up the earlier claims of Steinem and Barry, Bronski disavows their assumption that gay porn mimics heterosexual subject/object relations. He states

While it is true that the viewer, sexually aroused, lusts after the object, it is equally true that he may also want to *be* that object. This element of identification *with* as well as the desire *for* the sexual object distinguishes gay and straight porn. This is perfectly illustrated in the 1976 porn film *Heavy Equipment*. In an old magic book, a meek young clerk finds a formula which will transform his physical appearance. Looking through porn magazines, he finds a picture he likes, mixes his elixir, and, reciting the incantations, becomes the magazine image. The fact that identification exists simultaneously with objectification transforms the power relationships which some have presumed to be inherent in the viewing of sexual images.³⁴

³³ Michael Bronski, *Culture Clash: The Making of Gay Sensibility* (Boston: South End Press, 1984), 166

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 165

Richard Dyer, in his 1985 article "Male Gay Porn: Coming to Term ." discusses the narrative structure of gay male porn. While much of his article is devoted to sketching the representation of male sexuality in gay porn and its similarity to male sexuality in general, Dyer, like Bronski, asserts gay porn's sociopolitical importance for gay sexuality.

Homosexual desire has been constructed as perverse and unspeakable; gay porn does speak/show gay sex. Gay porn asserts homosexual desire, it turns the definition of homosexual desire on its head, says bad is good, sick is healthy and so on. It thus defends the universal human practice of same-sex physical contact (which our society constructs as homosexual); it has made life bearable for countless millions of gay men.³⁵

Dyer suggests that pornography does allow a *potential site* for disrupting what he terms the "masculine thrusting narrative."³⁶ He criticizes (although the argument is now outdated with the advent of AIDS) gay porn's focus on the cum shot. This emphasis, Dyer maintains, "is then part of the way porn (re)produces the construction of male sexuality."³⁷ There is nothing surprising in Dyer's observation that gay porn emphasizes males ejaculating. Yet Dyer fails to provide any description of the multiple scenarios and sexual acts which lead to this narrative 'closure' in varying porn films. He also ignores *where* and *how* the performers ejaculate, e.g., on the crack of another performer's anus while masturbating. Positing that gay porn is too phallic and too goal-oriented, Dyer asserts that the gay porn narrative "is never organized around the desire to be fucked."³⁸ In short, Dyer criticizes gay porn as presenting sexual performances that are "too

³⁵ Richard Dyer, "Male Gay Porn: Coming to Terms," *Jump Cut: A Review of Contemporary Media* 30 (March 1985).27

³⁶ Ibid., 28

³⁷ Ibid., 28

³⁸ Ibid., 28

masculine," "too phallic " Dyer's argument offered one of the first formulations of what will be termed throughout this thesis as the hyper/masculinization thesis.

The most original and in-depth comparison of heterosexual and homosexual pornography to date can be accredited to Tom Waugh.³⁹ Waugh's taxonomy of straight and gay porn, appearing in the same year and issue of *Jump Cut* as Dyer's article, carefully detailed similarities and differences between heterosexual and homosexual pornography. Waugh's comparison is divided into: 'Relations of Production,' 'Relations of Exhibition,' 'Relations of Consumption,' and 'Relations of Representation.' The latter is further subdivided into 'Depicted Sexual Practices,' 'Common Narrative Formulae,' and 'Extracting Some Ideological Essences.' Contrary to Dyer, Waugh located the phallic economy of gay porn in an "enclave within heterosexist society."⁴⁰ Gay pornography does not only play a sexual role in the lives of gay men but also serves as a political and philosophical vehicle to promote and secure the erotic lives of gay men—pornography becomes a gay cultural artifact. Waugh makes a more subtle and useful distinction between the 'phallus' as biological organ and 'phallocentrism' in which the penis is used as a signifier of power. He writes

³⁹ Tom Waugh, a cinema professor at Concordia University, has published numerous articles on gay representation and erotica. Mainly focusing on the sociopolitical importance of gay porn, he has written extensively on the history and implications of early homoerotic imagery. Waugh wishes to reclaim gay culture's erotic heritage. See Tom Waugh, "A Heritage of Pornography," *The Body Politic* (January 1983) 29-33, "Photography: Passion & Power," *The Body Politic* (January 1984) 29-33, "Hard to Imagine: Gay Erotic Cinema in the Postwar Era," *CineAction* 10 (October 1987) 65-72, "Erotic Self-Images in the Gay Male AIDS Melodrama," in *Fluid Exchanges: Artists and Critics in the AIDS Crisis*, ed. James Miller (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), "The Third Body: Patterns in the Construction of the Gay Male Narrative Film," in *Queer Looks: Perspectives on Lesbian and Gay Film and Video*, ed. Martha Gever, John Greyson, and Pratibha Parmar (Toronto: Between the Lines, 1993) 141-161, *Hard to Imagine: Gay Male Eroticism in Photography and Film from Their Beginnings to Stonewall* (Forthcoming).

⁴⁰ Tom Waugh, "Men's Pornography: Gay vs. Straight," in *The Problem of Pornography*, ed. Susan Dowling (Toronto: Wadsworth Publishing, 1995) 156. First published in *Jump Cut: A Journal of Contemporary Media* 30 (1985) 157.

—phallic obsession, the closeup a metaphor of corporeal fragmentation and alienation, phallocentrism however not an explicit text in this fantasy universe where people not divided according to presence or absence of cock everyone has one⁴¹

In the mid-1980s a dramatic shift began to take place in the pornography debate. The advent of AIDS, as Simon Watney discussed in his 1987 publication *Policing Desire: Pornography, AIDS and the Media*, repositioned pornography. Watney notes that the possibility of using pornography to promote safe(r) sex was curtailed by American and British censorship laws. Significantly, Watney rejects the term "pornography" itself. Refusing to adopt the language of anti-porn feminists, he insists

Whilst it would hardly be consistent for me to call for a quasi legal banning of the use of the term "pornography", I nonetheless suggest that at the very least we should exercise the greatest caution in using it. In this way we shall not be further contaminated by a discourse which can only identify us as perverts and agents of Satan or the patriarchy.⁴²

As was the case with Waugh, Watney maintained that gender roles in gay representations are not anatomically fixed. I here quote him at length.

Turning to the field of representation, it is apparent that homosexuality, as it is currently construed, contravenes both limited codes concerning the depiction of specific acts, such as sodomy between men, as well as much larger, regulative dichotomies which are derived from the anatomical distinction male/female, the attributes of which inform the entire taxonomic field of Western logic. Above all, homosexuality problematises the causal identification of primary power with the figure of the biological male as masterful penetrator. It equally problematises the parallel identification of powerlessness and passivity with the figure of the biological female as submissive and penetrated. For the gay man is truly polymorphous: he may fuck and be fucked, and is as much at home in the one fantasy-position as the other. He does not need the defensive refuge of an identity rooted in exclusive models of domination or submission, which can never make adequate sense of his psychic and physical mobility. To the extent, however, that these models constitute the major available iconography for sexual fantasy in our society, the gay man or lesbian is endlessly able to play off such roles against one

⁴¹ Ibid., 156

⁴² Simon Watney, *Policing Desire: Pornography, AIDS & the Media*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 76

another, thus effectively exorcising them without being damaged in the process by actual violence and hatred which are the inevitable products of sexuality and its categorical imperatives.⁴³

In 1989, Richard Dyer, in an interview with Simon Shepherd and Mick Wallis, addressed the question of how gay porn and women are related "even though there are few images of women in gay porn." He maintained that there is always "a sense of gender difference" and suggested that "the important thing is to ask whether it [gay porn] is merely 'different' or whether the difference entails an assertion of superiority." Following from this point, Dyer suggested that there is a difference: he maintained that the mere fact that he desires another man "is *also* to acknowledge that [he is] not a 'real man'. that [he is] not fulfilling a proper role, that [he is] socially inferior."⁴⁴

In the same year, Leo Bersani attempted to analyze more clearly the gender dynamics of gay pornography. In "Is the Rectum a Grave?" Bersani invoked the substitute thesis to align gay men and femininity. Concurring with a MacKinnon-Dworkinite perspective of pornography, Bersani proceeded from Dworkin and MacKinnon's analyses to a discussion of the *innate* but not *essential* power of the penis. From his position that sexual acts are defined as a relation of mastery and subordination (the penis denoting the master) he argued that the moment a man is fucked he experiences "a radical disintegration and humiliation of the self."⁴⁵ "Phallocentrism is exactly that. not primarily

⁴³ Ibid , 28

⁴⁴ Simon Shepherd and Mick Wallis, eds *Coming on Strong: Gay Politics and Culture* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 202-203

⁴⁵ Leo Bersani, "Is the Rectum a Grave?" in *AIDS: Cultural Analysis, Cultural Activism*, ed Douglas Crimp (London MIT Press, 1989), 217

the denial of power to women. .but above all the denial of the *value* of powerlessness in both men and women."⁴⁶

In 1990, Brian Pronger published *The Arena of Masculinity: Sports, Masculinity and the Meaning of Sex*. Pronger suggested that the masculinity in gay porn can be viewed as 'paradoxical masculinity.' Pronger defines 'paradoxical masculinity' as follows

Paradoxical masculinity is not a total rejection of the power given men in the [gender] myth—it constitutes a paradoxical relationship with that power. As *men*, homosexual men are accorded and may, in fact, take advantage of the power and prestige of patriarchy. But being *paradoxical men*, at a deep psychic level their desire for masculinity is also a desire to undermine masculine power. (Their sense of the paradox may or may not lead them to a more thorough rejection of patriarchy in their lives)⁴⁷

Pronger's emphasis on contextual transgression is of interest. Pronger asserted that the hyper/masculinization of gay porn subverts the very masculinity it mimics. Without the distinguishing features of anatomical differences or traditional gender positions which are often present within a heterosexual context, the 'sameness' of both individuals within the gay porn context, for Pronger, cancel each other out.

The pro-gay porn views that have been presented above have met with resistance, and it would be an error to assume that all gay men defend gay pornography. I now return to the work of John Stoltenberg as promised in the last section. One of the most vocal 'gay' anti-gay porn theoreticians, Stoltenberg, a self-confessed feminist, has written extensively on the subject of pornography. Stoltenberg, an avid supporter of Dworkin and MacKinnon, argues that there is no real difference between gay and straight pornography. He holds that gay porn reinforces male supremacist ideology. "[T]here is a sexiness in

⁴⁶ Ibid , 217

⁴⁷ Brian Pronger, *The Arena of Masculinity: Sports, Homosexuality and the Meaning of Sex* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 75

subordination, and its sexiness for gay men in particular has a lot to do with the fact that subordination in sex helps resolve a misogynist struggle to cling to male supremacy."⁴⁸

Stoltenberg summarily describes gay pornography as follows

Meanwhile gay pornography, which often appears to present an idealized, all-male, superbutch world, also contains frequent derogatory references to women, or to feminized males. In order to give vent to male sexual aggression and sadism in homosexual pornography and also to circumvent the cultural stigma that ordinarily attaches to men who are "treated like a women" in sex, gay male pornography has developed several specific "codes." One such code is a man who is "capable" of withstanding "discipline"—extremely punishing bondage, humiliation, and fistfucking, for instance—is deemed to have achieved a kind of supermasculinity, almost as if the sexual violence his body ingests from another man enhances his own sexual identity as a man. (This is quite the reverse in heterosexual pornography, where sexual sadism against a woman simply confirms her in her subordinate status.) Another code common in gay pornography, one frequently found in films, is that if a man is shown being assfucked, he will generally be shown assfucking someone else in turn—this to avoid the connotation that he is feminized by being fucked.⁴⁹

Stoltenberg, in the above passage, is presenting an extremely misleading account of gay pornography, as he conflates and collapses all genres of gay pornography and their contents into one monolithic category. He neglects to specify that gay porn can range in content from highly romanticized love stories, e.g., *Romeo and Julian: A Love Story* (1993, Forum Studios), and *Baby It's You* (1992, Bijou), to highly eroticized representations of SM sex, e.g., *Pleasure Torture* (1994, Shotgun), *Roadside Slaves* (1993, Live Video), *Roughed Up in Rotterdam* (1994, Close Up), and *First Time Broken III* (1994, Apollo Productions). He incorrectly assumes, as did Steinem and Barry, that

⁴⁸ John Stoltenberg, "Gays and the Pornography Movement: Having the Hots for Sex Discrimination," in *Men Confront Pornography*, ed. Michael Kimmel (New York: Meridian, 1991), 252.

⁴⁹ John Stoltenberg, *Refusing to Be a Man: Essays on Sex and Justice* (Markham, Ontario: Meridian, 1989), 132.

bondage, humiliation and fistfucking are *naturally* male and masculine and thus he concludes that they are demeaning and degrading to women

Moreover, Stoltenberg claims that gay porn "contains *frequent* derogatory references to women [*italics mine*]" Such remarks are totally misleading. Gay pornography does on *occasion* make remarks about women, but it does not logically follow from this that *all* gay pornography can be condemned and characterized as misogynist from these infrequent utterances.⁵⁰ Moreover, within the sexual power dynamics of gay porn, references to women may be reconstrued and reclaimed as 'sexual language games' which may, in fact, be interpreted as empowering the female sexual subject (more on 'language' later). In point of fact, references to women in gay pornography are usually made in the context of 'coming-out' narrative plot lines, e.g., *More of a Man* (1990, All Worlds Video), *'ummin' of Age* (1994, Surfside Studios), this is not surprising if one considers that to a large extent North American societies are still highly homophobic

It is of course only by invoking traditional binarisms that Stoltenberg is able to claim that such behavior creates a form of supermasculinity in gay porn, and on the other hand, continues the subordination of women. His analysis of the gender dynamics of 'switching' passive and active roles again exposes his binary conception of sexual activity. Stoltenberg, like Dworkin, has minimized the importance of co-temporal gender

⁵⁰ Neither Stoltenberg nor Susan Cole has considered the many gay porn films which have no dialogue. They are simply accompanied by a musical score, e.g., *Class Reunion* (1983, Catalina) is, with the exception of a few lines at the beginning and the end of the film, only accompanied by music. Personally, I also feel that there is a trend in gay porn where fewer and fewer references are being made to women. This seems to correspond with the growing solidification and acceptance of a 'gay identity'. It seems to me that there are, in fact, more references made to women (explicitly and implicitly) in earlier gay porn narratives than many of those presently being produced. Of course, this would demand further research.

mappings or successive 'switches' in traditional gender positions in gay porn.⁵¹ Central to his view, which we can call a 'spatiotemporal view,' is an underlying assumption that sexual activities are statically engendered by particular spacial relationships of the body. In other words, if fucking another person is identical to the fucker being masculine, then it would follow that it is necessary we believe that being on 'top' is masculine if and only if we believe that the 'top' is masculine. Conversely, if an individual being fucked by another individual is identical with being feminine, then it would follow that it is necessary that we believe that being on the 'bottom' is feminine if and only if we believe that the bottom is feminine. (This is, of course, a conventional image of 'phallic' sexual activity—the 'traditional positions' for heterosexual sex.) Stoltenberg recognizes that gender is 'disturbed' temporally in gay porn videos because of the actor's ability to 'switch.' Yet he reinvokes patriarchal heterosexist discourse with its *a priori* assumption that gender can *only* be constructed in two distinct polar opposites, and as such *silences* the multitude of gender sites which, under a more thoughtful analysis, are evident *in-between* heterosexist binary constructions.

It is of course to be granted that certain spatial positionings in Western societies have been highly gendered. The penile-vaginal *relation* serves as the foundation for most sexual discourse. I shall more closely examine this sexual combination at the end of this chapter and will later in the thesis develop an alternative conceptual model. Surely that fact is not a good enough reason to conclude that *all* sexual positions can be defined in terms of present constructions of sexual discourse. As it stands now, there is an implicit

⁵¹ This will be discussed in more detail later in the thesis

assumption that certain physical positions *necessarily* correspond to certain heterosexual psychological events. In other words, if a person is on 'top' then he necessarily views himself as masculine (as a straight male) or, if on the 'bottom,' as feminine (as a straight female). Moreover, there is a tacit understanding that viewers of gay porn will *believe* (supposedly seeing the world through heterosexist gender constructions) that the 'top' man is masculine and the 'bottom' man is feminine. Recall that Stoltenberg states "Another code common to gay male pornography, one found frequently in films, is that if a man is shown being assfucked, he will generally be shown assfucking someone else in turn—this to avoid the connotation that he is at all feminized by being fucked."⁵² Here we can see how Stoltenberg's account is restricted by his spatiotemporal conceptions of gender. Any modern-day gay porn viewer immediately recognizes this assertion as being blatantly false. For example, many lower-budget films are cut into four episodes with eight actors involved. Each episode contains a dyad having sex. The 'bottom' never goes on, using Stoltenberg's language, to be remasculinized. This is a common feature of many Vizuns Productions, e.g., *The Erector Set* (1993, Vizuns), *Nasty Rays* (1992, Vizuns), *The Legend of Mine 69* (1992, Vizuns), *Danger Alley* (n.d.,⁵³ Vidtex Video). Moreover, there are, in fact, many gay porn stars who are presently exclusively bottoms, e.g., Tom Katz is extremely popular precisely because he is a body-builder 'bottom' (he even has a fan club). Since Stoltenberg limits himself to an 'anti-masculine' perspective, many important features of gay pornography become obscured.

⁵² Stoltenberg, *Refusing to Be a Man*, 132.

⁵³ Although the video does not have any production date, it would have been produced in the early 1990s (it stars Wes Daniels).

In view of this, I find Stoltenberg's argument particularly invidious, for it amounts to the assumption that the 'passive role' is *always* effaced. In Stoltenberg's judgement, gay porn becomes blatantly misogynist as it appears to *privilege* the 'masculine.'

Unfortunately, he discards the possibility that being penetrated *is not* necessarily a position of submission or subservience. Distinctly grounded in a theoretical framework based on biological difference, Stoltenberg's work can only reify present oppressive gender divisions. In other words, he can only construct his argument in terms of male/masculine versus female/feminine. His insistence that being penetrated is equivalent to *always* being a moment of subordination could, ironically, be interpreted as being misogynist. Within this heterosexist discursive construction, gendered positions are limited by the assumed *naturalness* of heterosexuality, i.e., the relation between the penis and the vagina. In short, Stoltenberg presents the most extreme version of the hyper/masculine thesis in combination with the substitute thesis. The widespread tendency to view various sexual positions as either 'feminine' or 'masculine' (sexual hegemonies) will be used later in this thesis to demonstrate various gender paradoxes in the gay porn text.

In 1991, Michael Kimmel's *Men Confront Pornography* was published. It contains several essays on gay porn. I shall only give these essays brief mention here. Each can be simply read as a testimonial to, as Michael Bronski noted, the sexually affirmative power of gay pornography. Chris Clark, in "Pornography Without Power?," recognizes the importance of pornography in relation to the affirmation of his gay desires. However, Clark hesitates to take on a pro-porn position as he believes that he is

victimized by the objectification of bodies (which he believes problematic) in gay porn. Clark suggests, however, that more porn needs to be produced to address "our oppression and affirm our sexuality."⁵⁴ Jeff Weinstein's "What Porn Did,"⁵⁵ also argues for the socially liberating qualities of gay porn, while Scott Tucker's "Radical Feminism and Gay Male Porn,"⁵⁶ although somewhat more complex (he questions the work of Dworkin and Stoltenberg), concludes in much the same manner

In recent years, racial stereotypes in the production and consumption of gay male erotica have also been problematized. Richard Fung, in "Looking for My Penis: The Eroticized Asian in Gay Video Porn" in *How Do I Look?*, argues that Asian men, if present at all, are usually portrayed as exotics for the white male consumer (i.e., they appear as bottoms or servants).⁵⁷ Kobena Mercer, discussing the work of Robert Mapplethorpe in the same anthology, examines the 'anxiety' that exists for the black gay spectator in viewing the black fetishized body within a white male culture. "Thus, sharing the same desire to look as the author-agent of the gaze, I would actually occupy the position that I said was that of the white male subject."⁵⁸ Mercer concluded in this revision that the introduction of the 'homoerotic' "not only demonstrate[s] the disturbance

⁵⁴ Chris Clark, "Pornography Without Power?" in *Men Confront Pornography*, ed. Michael Kimmel (New York: Meridian, 1991), 284.

⁵⁵ Jeff Weinstein, "What Porn Did," in *Men Confront Pornography*, ed. Michael Kimmel (New York: Meridian, 1991), 277-280.

⁵⁶ Scott Tucker, "Radical Feminism and Gay Male Porn," in *Men Confront Pornography*, ed. Michael Kimmel (New York: Meridian, 1991), 263-276.

⁵⁷ Richard Fung, "Looking for My Penis: The Eroticized Asian Male in Gay Video Porn," in *How Do I Look?* ed. Bad Object-Choices (Seattle: Bay Press, 1991), 145-168.

⁵⁸ Mercer originally puts forth this point in Kobena Mercer and Isaac Julien, "Race, Sexual Politics and Black Masculinity: A Dossier," in *Unwrapping Masculinity*, ed. Rowena Chapman and Jonathan Rutherford (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1988), 97-164.

and decentering of dominant versions of white identity, but also confront[s] whiteness with the otherness that enables it to be constituted as an identity as such "⁵⁹

The relationship between pornography and safe(r) sex education, following the work of Watney, has been raised by several academics. Unfortunately, this thesis will not be directly addressing the issue of AIDS and its representation. For those interested, Cindy Patton has written several articles "Safe Sex and the Pornographic Vernacular" also appears in *How Do I Look?*,⁶⁰ and her 1991 article, "Visualizing Safe Sex: When Pedagogy and Pornography Collide," was published in Diana Fuss's anthology *Inside Out: Lesbian Theories, Gay Theories*.⁶¹ Richard Fung discussed the importance of using homoerotic imagery to promote safe(r) sex in his 1993 article, "Shortcoming Questions about Pornography as Pedagogy."⁶² Wieland Speck's article "Porno?,"⁶³ is in a similar vein as Richard Fung's, both appear in Martha Gever's *Queer Looks*.

Richard Dyer's argument that gay porn is 'too phallic,' although originally challenged by Tom Waugh, has also been more recently questioned by David Pendleton Waugh, countering Dyer's argument, suggested that the representation of anal pleasure could be located within the porn narrative in individual sequences.⁶⁴ In "Obscene

⁵⁹ Kobena Mercer, "Skin head Thing: Racial Difference and the Homoerotic Imaginary," in *How Do I Look?* ed. Bad Object-Choices (Seattle: Bay Press, 1991), 190.

⁶⁰ Cindy Patton, "Safe Sex and the Pornographic Vernacular," in *How Do I Look?* ed. Bad Object-Choices (Seattle: Bay Press, 1991), 31-63.

⁶¹ Cindy Patton, "Visualizing Safe Sex: When Pedagogy and the Pornographic Collide," in *Inside Out: Lesbian Theories, Gay Theories* ed. Diana Fuss (New York: Routledge, 1991) 373-386.

⁶² Richard Fung, "Shortcomings: Questions about Pornography as Pedagogy," in *Queer Looks: Perspectives on Lesbian and Gay Film and Video*, ed. Martha Gever, John Greyson, and Pratibha Parmar (Toronto: Between the Lines, 1993), 355-367.

⁶³ Wieland Speck, "Porno?" in *Queer Looks: Perspectives on Lesbian and Gay Film and Video*, ed. Martha Gever, John Greyson, and Pratibha Parmar (Toronto: Between the Lines, 1993), 348-354.

⁶⁴ Waugh writes

This may be true of many or most theatrical films (though I think it requires further research—certainly lots of individual sequences I remember contradict this), however passive penetration fantasies are extremely common as narrative principles in many non-commercial films and

Allegories, Narrative, Representation, Pornography," printed in the 1992 fall edition of *Discourse: Journal for Theoretical Studies in Media and Culture*, Pendleton posited that the 'switching sequences' ('top' and 'bottom' change positions) in gay porn undermine Dyer's reading that gay porn is hierarchical. Rather, Pendleton claimed that gay porn is rhapsodic and combinatory.⁶⁵ Pendleton makes a useful connection between Roland Barthes's reading of the Sadian text and the modern gay pornographic video to articulate a more comprehensive theoretical model. As I shall be returning to Pendleton's argument in the next chapter and will be later in the thesis investigating 'dirty talk,' I here quote him at length:

Barthes delineates the combinatory nature of the Sadian grammar: it organizes units into larger wholes. The smallest unit is the posture, the union of "one action and its bodily point of application" (28). Postures combine to form an operation, which can be considered diachronically as an episode and spatially as a tableau or, to use Sade's term, a figure. Finally, these operations combine to form a scene. This tension within the pornographic operation between its episodic and figural dimensions leads to the problem that porn has with narrative. Every few minutes, the story freezes in order to allow the display of the sexual scene. The bodies are arranged in a theatrical tableaux, nearly static (at least compared to the spatial scale of mainstream film), and must maintain these positions long enough to constitute an episode. Hence the importance of the *mise en scene*: the pornographic figure can be made more dynamic by breaking it into a series of shots alternating from full body shots to medium shots to closeups. Sound also works to make the figure more dynamic; hence the often frenzied grunts, groans, and dirty talk.⁶⁶

Richard Mohr, in *Gay Ideas: Outing and Other Controversies*, published in 1992, questioned the connection between biological sex and gender. In his chapter 'Knights,

anecdotes I have encountered (as are fellatio fantasies, active or passive, which do not seem to be organized around the narrator's ejaculation)

Waugh, "Men's Pornography: Gay vs. Straight," 160

⁶⁵ David Pendleton, "Obscene Allegories: Narrative, Representation, Pornography," *Discourse: Journal for Theoretical Studies in Media and Culture* 15.1 (Fall 1992): 154-168.

⁶⁶ Pendleton, "Obscene Allegories: Narrative, Representation, Pornography," 160.

Young Men, Boys," Mohr argues that, to a degree, gender's appearance is biologically determined, i.e., the moulding/sculpturing of the male body. He then explores the possibility of creating a non-misogynist 'male-identified' male. In short, Mohr wishes to resist the hyper/masculine thesis. Mohr states:

What I want to suggest generally, however, is that, when the gay hypermasculine appeals to objectionably stereotypical masculine tropes, it can and typically does do so in ways that undercut the tropes' possible uses in the oppression of women. The gay hypermasculine is not, on the one hand, the product of a trade in or over women's bodies. Nor, on the other hand, is the gay hypermasculine a flight from or an avoidance of the womanly. It does not get its charge, its sense of self, by distancing itself from women and from the derivative slur that gays are nellys, queens, invert. Nor does it get its charge, its potency, through attempting to assimilate to the dominant culture as an effort to gain acceptance and thereby indirectly degrade women.⁶⁷

Carl Stychin in "Exploring the Limits: Feminism and the Legal Regulation of Gay Male Pornography"⁶⁸ has more recently taken up the debate against the assumptions and arguments of Dworkin, MacKinnon and Stoltenberg. Stychin argues that Dworkin (and others) fails to recognize, as Bronski had articulated in 1984, that gay porn makes visible what the dominant male culture insists is non-existent, i.e., homosexuals. Stychin asserts that the viewer infuses his own meanings and codes into the narrative text. Finally, he contends that gay porn offers a fluidity due to the dynamics of same-sex sexual relationships. Echoing Bronski, Waugh, and Watney, he also asserts that the position of the 'subject' and 'object' are not fixed in the gay pornographic text.

⁶⁷ Richard Mohr, *Gay Ideas: Outing and Other Controversies* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992), 165.

⁶⁸ Carl Stychin, "Exploring the Limits: Feminism and the Legal Regulation of Gay Male Pornography," *Vermont Law Review* 16:3 (1992) 857-900.

In 1993, Dave Kinnick gave a 'voice' to the stars behind the debate. *Sorry I Asked* contains forty-six personal interviews with some of gay porn's most famous stars.⁶⁹ This book represents another example of the close association/connection that exists between the viewers of gay porn and its performers.⁷⁰ Appearing in the same year, "More of a man. gay porn cruises politics," written by Mandy Merck, presented perhaps the first analytic reading of a single gay porn text. Merck's critique of the video *More of a Man* was, to my knowledge, the first academic paper which interrogated the *representation of* modern gay politics within a single video.⁷¹ *More of a Man*, unlike many other gay porn videos, directly and consciously attempts to address several social issues, e.g., AIDS, ACT-UP, religion, gender-fucking, coming-out

Like Mandy Merck, Mark Simpson in 1994 also gave a reading of *More of a Man*. Simpson, in his *Male Impersonators: Men Performing Masculinity*, provided three distinct readings of the pornographic universe. Generally, Simpson furnishes an expansion of the hyper/masculine thesis. According to Simpson, the use of hyper/masculine performers in gay pornography, with its adoption of dominant masculine iconography/imagery, results in the construction not of a visual representation of *gay* men having sex, but rather a representation of *straight* men accidentally having homosexual sex (a concept that I shall explore in more detail later). Although in his reading of *More of a Man* Simpson endorses its more politicized gay content and the use of an

⁶⁹ Dave Kinnick, *Sorry I Asked: Intimate Interviews with Gay Porn's Rank and File* (New York: Masquerade Books, 1993).

⁷⁰ The gay press often includes stories or rumours about particular porn stars. In larger urban centers it is not unlikely to 'run into' a porn star at a local club. Studios promoting new releases often send the 'star' to meet his public. Some porn stars are also sex workers, masseurs, and/or strippers, and increasingly participate in safe(r) sex campaigns.

⁷¹ Merck, *Perversions*, 217-235.

"androgynous type of masculinity,"⁷² which he insists is more 'gay positive,' he finally concludes that it fails to reinvent gender. The sexual dynamics of the video, he states, simply repeat and reflect traditional gender divisions. However, he correctly argues that the question of, and debate surrounding, pornographic representations will, no doubt, become even more complex. Whether or not there will still be 'distinct' categories of sexual representations, and what these representations will be like, will be influenced enormously by technological advances. Simpson pronounces.

.. technological changes. are pushing porn into a realm of a polymorphously perverse media. Cyberporn (computer networking porn), dildonics (software-based porn), interactive video, telephone sex and virtual sex will soon bring home the dictum, the more realistic the image the more apparent the non-existence of the thing it is meant to represent. More than this, it becomes apparent that pornography will not just be a copy of something for which there is no original (i.e., sex): soon it will bear no relation to any appearances, any reality whatever.⁷³

The first full-book publication on the history of gay video porn from its emergence in the early 1980s to the present, written by John Burger, brings us to 1995 and also marks the final entry in this literature review. *One-Handed Histories*, in the same spirit as Tom Waugh's work, investigates the 'popular' modern history of gay porn. Invoking the work of the Popular Memory Group, Burger explores the historical transformation of gay porn, from its pre-AIDS content to its post-AIDS sensibilities. Burger raises central questions about the ways in which gay pornography has rewritten both the past and present by serving as "indicators of sexual preference" (i.e., sexual orientation) and the "presentation of self" (i.e., gay subjectivity) and by situating "gay men in their historical context" (i.e., gay history).⁷⁴ He also makes a concerted attempt to

⁷² Mark Simpson, *Male Impersonators: Men Performing Masculinity* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 139

⁷³ Ibid., 148

⁷⁴ Burger, *One-Handed Histories*, 33

elaborate on the problem of racism and ageism in gay porn narratives. Although Burger's text is an important contribution to the growing corpus of literature on gay pornography, his analysis unfortunately shies away from any detailed discussion of gender.

Let me say before I conclude this section on queer theoreticians that a similar conceptual scheme of binaries is recognizable in a large proportion of their work. Although I believe that these are more subtle attempts to understand the position of gay pornography in society, I also believe that their positions and arguments have been greatly troubled by an era that has increasingly solidified a radical division of sociosexual binarisms. It is important to recognize that some of the arguments that have been outlined above have assimilated elements from various parallel debates. One of particular importance for the focus of this thesis is the issue of gay masculinization and the place of the 'phallus' within a homosexual context. In the following section I shall examine in more detail various discussions which have focused on these issues to more fully elaborate on aspects of the hyper/masculinization thesis that only remain implicit in many of the arguments presented in the above literature review.

THE "PROBLEM" OF HYPER/MASCULINIZATION

When we speak of 'gay masculinity' we are tacitly assuming that gender is based on biological sex. Thus, any discussion of 'gay masculinity' begins with the initial presumption that *this form* of masculinity should be contextualized in terms of its traditional *conceptual* opposite—heterosexual female femininity, or its traditional

biological equivalent—heterosexual male masculinity. While it may be the case that *some* types of masculine behavior are oppressive to women and gay men, it does not logically follow that *all* types of masculine behaviors are oppressive. For example, the act of writing has been thought to be a *masculine* behavior, but I am sure that few people would suggest that writing in itself is oppressive. By extension, one could argue that different *clusters* of masculine behavior are oppressive if and only if each component of that cluster is present. By analogy, chili con carne is chili con carne if and only if it contains the spice Chili. (What would masculinity be if we began removing masculine traits one at a time? At what point would masculinity cease to be a 'problem'? Would the removal of certain attributes mean that 'masculinity' ceases to exist?) Framed in the context of the discussion thus far, we may well question what *forms* of masculinity are, or can be, generated in a conceptual framework in which the equation penis=phallus is disavowed, and if, in fact, these forms of masculinity can be considered *anti-phallic*. I shall develop more fully the concept of the *anti-phallus* in the course of the thesis.

It should not be assumed *a priori* that any analysis of gay masculinity must be constructed in relation to the female sex or to heterosexual men. In fact, assuming that any analysis of gay masculinity must always return to presently accepted conceptions of gender—polarized into the two extremes of masculinity and femininity, each being mapped onto male and female bodies respectively—essentially dismisses the possibility that alternative gender positions may not necessarily be constructed in relation to biological sex. The initial definition of gender in a heterosexist society may prove to be inadequate to capture alternative gender positions which queers (gay men, lesbians,

bisexuals, transvestites, etc.) inhabit. Moreover, it may well serve to obfuscate how different masculine gender clusters could operate in undermining patriarchy. Yet, with enormous frequency, the issue of gay masculinization has been constructed within these heterosexist binarisms.

Seymour Kleinberg, in his reflections on the masculinization of gay men, provides a fine example of the danger of too quickly adopting heterosexist and polarized conceptions of gender. Proceeding from the implicit assumption that 'straight masculinity' is the conceptual opposite of what *gay men should be like*, i.e., they should not be masculine, Kleinberg concludes that gay masculinization is, in a sense, equivalent to *becoming* 'straight.' In other words, gay masculinity is *as oppressive as* straight masculinity. By failing to criticize any of the heterosexist binaries that inform his position, Kleinberg states

The homosexuals who adopt images of masculinity, conveying their desire for power and their belief in its beauty, are in fact eroticizing the very values of straight society that have tyrannized their own lives. It is the tension between this style and the contents of their lives that demands the oblivion of drugs and sexual libertinism. In the past, the duplicity of closeted lives found relief in effeminate camping; now the suppression or denial of the moral issues in their choice is far more damaging. The perversity of imitating their oppressors guarantees that such blindness will work itself out as self-contempt.⁷⁵

Clearly, Kleinberg fails to distinguish between representations/images of 'gay masculinity' and the reality of being *masculine*, i.e., patriarchal/phallic. He assumes that gay men *duplicate* the position of heterosexual men (thus reifying patriarchy) rather than *mimic* (and sometimes imprecisely) masculine attributes, the latter may have the effect of disturbing/subverting the masculine tenets upon which patriarchy is itself constructed.

⁷⁵ Seymour Kleinberg, "The New Masculinity of Gay Men, and Beyond," in *Beyond Patriarchy: Essays by Men on Pleasure, Power and Change*, ed. Michael Kauffman (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1987), 123.

Moreover, he implies that forms of 'straight masculinity' are so socially fixed, static, and entrenched that they cannot be disturbed, co-interacted, and defeated from *within*.

A more complex discussion on gay masculinity has been offered by Jamie Gough. Gough is very careful not to base his argument simply on the sexual discursive axes of male=male=masculine=oppressive, and female=female=feminine=oppressed. He rejects earlier conclusions that gay masculinity is *ipso facto* oppressive and notes that "gender styles do not in themselves determine the man's form of participation in real gender relations."⁷⁶ For Gough, any sustained understanding of the masculinization of gay men must take into consideration broader sociosexual ideologies. It is from this wider perspective that Gough situates the construction of gay masculinity in terms of a sociopolitical movement to counter homophobic/heterosexist stereotypes and ideologies that equate homosexuality and effeminacy. Yet Gough does not want to dispense with social constructions of either gender or biology, and, as such, argues that the masculinization of gay men is neither completely oppressive nor liberating. He states

But the new styles *are* in many ways oppressive to women and gay men themselves. For gay men the immediate problems concern sex....[F]or gay men the masculine styles are based on a new self-consciousness as *sexual object*. They involve a sexual desire focused on the masculine, which is a particular quality abstracted from the person, and which within this desire substitutes itself for the person (which we may call a sexual 'fetish'). To the extent that this is socially dominant sexuality, one is both required to conform to this abstract model in order to be attractive, and at the same time to be sexually attracted to it in others. Yet no one is, or could be, nothing-but-masculinity, essence-of-masculinity, so these aims are logically unattainable and must to a considerable extent remain fantasies. Masculinity as a sexual fetish, is, therefore, oppressive not simply for dictating a certain norm, but for demanding something which cannot be achieved.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ Jamie Gough, "Theories of sexual identity and the masculinization of the gay man," in *Coming On Strong: Gay Politics and Gay Culture*, ed. Simon Shepherd and Mick Wallis (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 121.

⁷⁷ Gough, "Theories of sexual identity and the masculinization of the gay man," 121-122.

Yet we may well ask of Gough why he assumes that the emergence of the gay man who is recognizing himself as a *sexual object* is oppressive. For certainly, within wider sexual ideologies, the male body has resisted such a sexual classification. But Gough implicitly assumes that the trend of gay masculinization is an attempt to achieve, in some sense, straight masculinity. He neglects the multiple ways in which gender can be mismatched onto the male body in varying degrees, and in multiple combinations, creating gender identities which have been constructed by the many *misnegotiations* between gay men and the institution of masculinity. The very fact that the gay male desire *to become masculine* is constantly revealed as a failing project would seem to suggest, contrary to Gough's position, that the notion of 'straight masculinity' is subverted rather than reasserted. If, in fact, the site of *masculinity* is unachievable, in what way does gay masculinization reassert the unachievable? Gough himself states that no one is or could be nothing but masculinity but he fails to include in his critique any reference to straight men. He implicitly assumes that gay men are trying to capture/copy straight masculinity rather than redefining the terms of its construction. Furthermore, as Gough earlier in the article observes, this new form of gender style is rooted in physiology.⁷⁸ But again, we may well ask: if *even* this hyper/masculinization of the gay male body fails to reveal the male body as masculine does it operate to assert *masculinity* or does it disclose its mythical foundations?

⁷⁸ Gough states

[T]he body is to be what-is-specifically-male, thus apparently rooting the new gender style in physiology, the social in the biological

Gough, "Theories of sexual identity and the masculinization of the gay man," 120

Although Brian Pronger, whose work I discussed earlier, does not cite Gough's work in his book *The Arena of Masculinity*, his argument often parallels Gough's. Pronger's argument substitutes Gough's 'real gender relations' with the term 'orthodox masculinity.' According to Pronger, who focuses more extensively on sexual activities, the power difference between males and females (orthodox masculinity) is always present but is made the most explicit in rape. He writes

The violent rape of a woman is the ultimate consummation of the violence inherent in the myth of gender. The most masculine thing a man can do is to fuck a woman violently against her will. It is in this act that the mythic power difference between men and women is most clearly realized. It is the debasement of a woman, wherein she is not only made subordinate and brutalized, but she is also reduced to a mere object over which the man may run roughshod in his pursuit of the erotic incarnation of his mythic, masculine power. In our culture, the most feminine thing a woman can do is submit.⁷⁹

Unlike Gough, who analyzed gay masculinity *against* its heterosexual counterpart, Pronger wishes to determine the position/meaning of gay masculinity *within* an entirely masculine locale. He argues

By definition, homoeroticism emerges out of the gender myth—a man could not eroticize men if there weren't such a mythic category. Gender is fundamentally a patriarchal heterosexual distinction; the orthodox erotic incarnation of gender is . heteroerotic—the erotic confirmation of difference. The essence of manhood lies in its difference from womanhood; the eroticization of gender affinity violates the preeminence of difference and therefore manhood. Homosexual acts are the incarnation of that violation. Because homoerotic desire focuses on manhood but ignores the sexual acts that bring about the erotic incarnation of manhood (difference), preferring sexual acts that violate manhood, homoeroticism reflects a paradoxical sense of what it means to be a man. *Because it both embraces and violates masculinity, homoeroticism is paradoxical eroticism. A homosexual man is a paradoxical man.*⁸⁰

However, Pronger goes on to conclude

⁷⁹ Pronger, *The Arena of Masculinity*, 65

⁸⁰ *Idid*, 71

But because homosexuality is not a rejection of an oppressive myth but rather an option *within* the myth of gender difference, homosexuality also perpetuates the unjust myth and therefore shares in the patriarchal oppressiveness of gender ⁸¹

Pronger implicitly constructs two distinct images of the penis. In his category of 'orthodox masculinity,' the penis is a mark/symbol of both the oppressor and oppression. The penis *is* the phallus. Male homoerotic desire, on the other hand, is portrayed by Pronger as a *misuse* of the penis, its mythical power destabilized by the biological sameness between homosexual men. What is astonishing in Pronger's argument is his final conclusion. He assumes that the *internal restructuring* of the gender myth has no effect on the institution of masculinity itself. Yet, while Pronger is correct in suggesting that gay masculinity combines masculine imagery at the same time as drawing attention to the penis, he fails to discuss the implications of this probing gaze with respect to the continued conceptual association of the phallus and the penis.

Indeed, gay male masculine iconography obsessively contains images of cowboys with their chaps neatly framing a bulging crotch, and images of men wearing leather pants tantalizingly concealing while erotically emphasizing the shaft of the penis. Jeans with the top button left consciously undone draw attention to, and stimulate the fantasy of, a further revelation. The lack of underwear accentuates the hidden member. The hyper/masculinized gay body incessantly demands to be looked at, to be desired—to be the object of the gaze. But Pronger neglects to question what effect the transformation of the penis/phallus into an object of desire has on wider gender relations. This is a schism between gay and straight forms of masculinity.

⁸¹ Ibid., 79

At this point let me recapitulate some of the concepts that have been raised in this section. The problem is set by a need to construct a conceptual and theoretical framework that is sensitive to women's issues while, also taking into consideration the sociosexual and sociopolitical mechanisms of homophobia. This is a formidable task, since it demands that the phallus should not be defined by reference to its biological signifier. Yet attempts to deconstruct and undermine the conceptual association between the phallus and the penis would seem also indirectly to function to reify this connection. In short, the debate around gay masculinity has become 'phallogentric.' The conceptual and theoretical means to determine gay pornography's 'acceptability' and judge its 'value' have been conceptually and linguistically predetermined by the deep-rooted heterosexist myth that all sexual power and gender relations function in a system that necessarily pits the male against the female, masculine against feminine. It is not my intention here to suggest that present sociosexual and sociopolitical institutions have not been ordered by these oppositional binarisms, nor to espouse a form of gay separatism, but rather to claim that these binarisms do not encompass all of the possible variations in our sexual social order.

What the two main theses—the substitute and hyper/masculine—have in common is the enormous focus placed on the penis/phallus. The remarkable emphasis that has been placed on the penis as phallus has misdirected the debate into an insidious form of essentialism. This is perhaps most clear in the arguments of Dworkin, who is gay porn's most vehement feminist opponent and the topic of the next section.

THE "PROBLEM" OF SUBSTITUTION

Women are taught to relate to sexuality as whole beings in a society that celebrates parts, for example, measuring women by their breasts and men by their penises. "Women are so nice," my analyst once observed, "they never say, 'You call that a penis'"⁸²

In this section I will explore the extent to which Dworkin equates the penis and the phallus. Since Dworkin has been, as mentioned, the most vocal anti-gay-porn feminist it is worth examining her conception of the 'penis.' To start, consider Dworkin's most explicit statement concerning the objectification of women in gay pornography

Without the presence of the female, masculinity cannot be realized, even among men who exclusively want each other; so the female is conjured up, not just to haunt or threaten, but to confirm the real superiority of the male in the mind of the reader. In an interview in the *Gay Community News*, gay activist and writer Allen Young described and interpreted a photograph that has, as parts of its composition, this same sort of heterosexual reference

Quoting Young.

For example, [in gay male pornography] I've seen pictures of a guy jacking off to an issue of *Playboy*; in other words, a guy is looking at a naked woman jacking off and I as a gay man am supposed to look at the picture and feel more excited looking at the boy because he's straight. The message is that a straight man is more desirable than a faggot. Obviously this is a put down to the gay man.

Dworkin continues.

The excitement is supposed to come, in fact, from the visual reminder of male superiority to women in which homosexual men participate. Without the wider frame of reference, masculinity is essentially meaningless. *The feminine or references to women in male homosexual pornography clarify for the male that the significance of the penis cannot be compromised, no matter what words are used to describe his (temporary) position or state of mind.* [S]uperiority means power and in male terms power is sexually exciting. In pornography, the

⁸² Muriel Dimen, "Politically Correct? Politically Incorrect?" in *Pleasure and Danger: Exploring Female Sexuality*, ed. Carole Vance (London: Pandora, 1989), 145

homosexual male, like the heterosexual male, is encouraged to experience and enjoy his sexual superiority over women [*italics mine*].⁸³

Dworkin's argument (trans)forms and (re)defines the penis away from its physical materiality and into a world of the symbolic. Adopting a monolithic model of gender and male sexuality, Dworkin believes that *all* occasions of the penis are occasions of the phallus. Apparently, Dworkin cannot see the penis for the phallus. But we may well ask: What type of penis is being invoked in the above scenario? Is it a Dworkinite 'penis' or something else? To better understand why Dworkin would insist that the 'significance of the penis cannot be compromised,' let us more carefully consider her image(s) of the penis. Dworkin writes:

The symbols of terror are commonplace and utterly familiar. the gun, the knife, the bomb, the fist, and so on. Even more significant is the hidden symbol of terror, the penis. The acts and the symbols meet up in combinations, so that terror is the outstanding theme and consequence of male history. . .⁸⁴

In this first quotation, I concur with Dworkin's analysis that the *hidden penis* is a symbol of terror. But she mistakenly assumes that the hidden penis, which *is* the phallus (I shall discuss this in the next section), would have the same authority as the penis once it is uncovered and revealed. While the hidden penis for Dworkin (and others) may bring up associations with guns, knives, bombs and fists, the exposed penis for others will only reveal, in Dworkin's own words, "one piece of flesh only a few inches long."⁸⁵ By

⁸³ Andrea Dworkin, *Pornography: Men Possessing Women* (London: the Women's Press, 1979), 44-45, quoting Jil Clark, "Circulating Information," interview with Allen Young, *Gay Community News* (May 12, 1979), 9.

⁸⁴ Dworkin, *Pornography*, 15.

⁸⁵ Idid, 53.

Dworkin discussing a picture in *Hustler* states

The hunters are figures of virility. Their penises are hidden but their guns are emphasized (29)

Also

The aversion of women to the penis and to sex as men define it, must be seen not as puritanism (which is the male strategy to keep the penis hidden, taboo, and sacred) (56)

fallaciously collapsing the penis and the phallus into synonymous terms, Dworkin evacuates the penis of both its biological materiality and its erotic potential. She thus defines 'sex' as follows:

Sex, a word potentially so inclusive and evocative, is whittled down by the male so that, in fact, it means penile intromission. Commonly referred to as "it," sex is defined in action only by what the male does with his penis. Fucking—the penis thrusting—is the magical, hidden meaning of "it," the reason for sex, the expansive experience through which the male realizes his sexual power.⁸⁶

Although Dworkin here describes 'sex' as being whittled down to *mean* penile-vaginal sex, it is well worth asking who is really doing the whittling. Dworkin argues, without giving any evidence to support her claim, that 'sex' is only understood by men, simply stated, as *intromission*. She believes that within sexual relationships the penis is *power*. Dworkin precludes the possibility that women can objectify men (and their penises), be sexually active/dominant in various sexual relations/sexual configurations, and enjoy ('rough') vaginal intercourse. Unable to recognize the materiality of the penis *qua* biological organ, she fails to conceive of it as not only the 'subject' of pleasuring but also the 'object' of sexual pleasure.

Dworkin's text emphasizes the *impossibility* of disassociating the phallus and the penis. She constructs the penis beyond the somatic limits of male anatomy, and in a further metaphoric twist, transfigures the penis into cruelty, pain and violence itself. She states

Cruelty is the essence of sexual action; fucking is the most significant masculine act; the penis is the source and symbol of real manhood....⁸⁷

And:

The penis causes pain, but the pain enhances the pleasure. It is as if the ability of the penis to cause pain were an intrinsic quality of the penis, not a use to which

⁸⁶ Ibid , 23

⁸⁷ Ibid , 34-35

the penis is put The pain authenticates the power of the penis—its size, the force behind it.⁸⁸

Finally

The penis must embody the violence of the male in order for him to be male. Violence is male; the male is the penis; violence is the penis or the sperm ejaculated from it. What the penis can do it must do forcibly for a man to be a man. The reduction of the human erotic potential to "sex," defined as the force of the penis visited on an unwilling woman, is the governing sexual scenario in male-supremacist society.⁸⁹

For Dworkin, there is no divide between the penis and the symbolic order. Her essentializing claims reformulate the penis within a discursive framework which is inherently heterosexist. In fact, Dworkin's analysis of the penis is based on an assumption that there is an inevitable connection between the penis and the vagina. She is unable to imagine or conceive that there are alternative penile combinations which may undermine the phallic order by destabilizing this heterosexist association. The penis for her is exclusively defined in terms of the female body.

It is plain that in the thinking of many of the theorists I have discussed, and especially in the case of Dworkin, there are three assumed conceptual givens at work: the notion that the penis is the signifier of the phallus, that all sexual and gender relations necessarily entail the male/female binary; and that the phallus is a universal concept which orders all of Western logic and all sexual epistemologies. It is worthwhile at this point to examine more closely the notion of the phallus as it is, as I remarked earlier, the one feature that links both the substitute and hyper/masculine theses.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 42-43

⁸⁹ Ibid., 35

THE PHALLUS

I turn now to a discussion of the phallus for three reasons: (1) the concept of the phallus was historically constructed/generated in terms of procreation or procreative sex; (2) since the phallus has been constructed in terms of procreation, it emphasizes the penile-vaginal relation; and (3) the phallus gains its authority from its veiling or invisibility.

A great deal of contemporary discourse on the phallus often obscures its historical roots. If the reader looks up the word 'phallus' and its derivatives in an older dictionary to come to some understanding of what the term *means*, s/he will be faced with relatively few definitions. Yet, more modern dictionaries (especially if they include newly coined words) reveal the extent to which this word has been defined and redefined, expanded upon, and used as a root of a host of new terminology. I would like to begin this discussion with the most *simple* of these definitions. According to my *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary*, the phallus, phallic and phallicism are defined as

phallus: 1: a penis, representation of the penis 2: PENIS.

phallic. 1: of or relating to phallicism 2: of, relating to, or resembling a phallus 3. relating to or being the stage of psychosexual development in psychoanalytic theory during which a child becomes interested in his own sexual organs

phallicism: the worship of the generative principle as symbolized by the phallus

The earliest definition of the phallus relates to its generative properties. In ancient societies, the *meaning* of the phallus *directly* connected it with the reproductive function of the penis, even though it was a symbolic replacement for the biological organ. Early phallic symbols *looked like* the penis, and early phallic rituals were often celebrated not

by men but by women. Consider, for example, Herodotus's description of an Egyptian ritual surrounding the cult of Osiris

On the eve of the festival of Dionysus [Osiris], each one of them cuts the throat of his pig⁹⁰ in front of the doorway and then gives it, to take away, to the swineherd who has sold it to him. For the rest of the festival in honor of Dionysus, except for the dance choruses, the Egyptians celebrate it almost in everything like the Greeks. But instead of phalluses they have another invention, which are eighteen inch high images, controlled by strings, which the women carry round the villages, these images have a penis that nods and in size is not much less than all the rest of the body. Ahead there goes a fluteplayer, and the women follow, singing in honour of Dionysus. Now why the penis is so much bigger and is the only thing movable in the body—about this there is a sacred story told.⁹¹

In Plutarch we find a more detailed description of the origin of this ritual.

Plutarch writes

...[W]e are told moreover, that notwithstanding all her search, Isis was never able to recover the member of Osiris, which having been thrown into the Nile immediately upon its separation from the rest of the body, had been devoured by the Lepidotus, the Phragus and the Oxyrynchus, fish which of all others, for this reason, the Egyptians have in more special avoidance. In order to make some amends for the loss, Isis consecrated the Phallus made in imitation of it, and instituted a solemn festival to its memory, which even to this day is observed by the Egyptians.⁹²

Given these rituals, it is plausible to suggest that the image of the phallus is as much about women as it is about men. The original construction of the phallus as a symbol of the male procreative function is fundamentally defined in terms of cortical sex. Jean-Joseph Goux has argued that, "As the male organ of generation, the phallus is therefore essentially *logos*: rational power, or intelligible reason. The erect penis is not

⁹⁰ The use of the pig to symbolize the female reproductive mechanism was a common feature in ancient civilizations. For a more detailed discussion, see Eva Keuls, *The Reign of the Phallus* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 353-357.

⁹¹ Herodotus, *The History*, bk 2 ch 48.

⁹² Plutarch, *De Iside et Osiride*. Trans. in S. Squire, *Plutarchi de Iside et Osiride liber: Graece et Anglicè* (Cambridge n.p., 1744), quoted in Sir Wallis Budge, *Egyptian Ideas of the Future Life: Egyptian Religion* (New York: University Books, 1950), 74-75.

perceived by the Greeks primarily as a physical reality, but indeed as the emblem of the *logos* or, as it were, the *logos* itself made visible,"⁹³ but this by no means detracts from the fact that the phallus is defined by the penile-vaginal relationship and at the heart of this symbol of the *logos* is a male/female binary

Certainly, Freud's construction of the phallus is based on this relationship. Freud postulated in his account of the masculine and feminine Oedipus complexes that the initial object-relations of both girls and boys were symmetrical. Both boys and girls simultaneously discover the penis: boys discover that they *have* and girls that they *have not* its possession. He writes

It is self-evident to a male child that a genital like his own is to be attributed to everyone he knows, and he cannot make its absence tally with his picture of these other people. This conviction is energetically maintained by boys, is obstinately defended against the contradictions which soon result from observation, and is only abandoned after severe internal struggles (the castration complex). The substitutes for this penis which they feel is missing in women play a great part in determining the form taken by many perversions. The assumption that all human beings have the same (male) form of genital is the first of many remarkable and momentous sexual theories of children. It is of little use to a child that the science of biology justifies his prejudice and has been obliged to recognize the female clitoris as a true substitute for the penis. Little girls do not resort to denial when they see the boy's genitals are formed differently from their own. They are ready to recognize them immediately and are overcome by envy for the penis – an envy culminating in the wish, which is so important in its consequences, to be boys themselves.⁹⁴

According to Freud, the recognition of the *lack* of the penis by the female eventually develops into a contempt for those individuals who also lack the penis. Her initial love for her mother is transformed into anger. This hostility eventually leads her to

⁹³ Jean-Joseph Goux, "The Phallus: Masculine Identity and the 'Exchange of Women,'" *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*, trans. Maria Amuchastegui, Caroline Benforado, Amy Hendrix and Eleanor Kauffman 4.1 (1992): 49.

⁹⁴ Sigmund Freud, *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, trans. James Strachey (New York: Avon Books, 1962), 92–93.

her father as she desires his penis; the failure to achieve this goal is inevitably replaced with a desire for a child. As with girls, the final outcome of the Oedipus complex in boys is based on a penile-vaginal relation. Nancy Chodorow succinctly states:

In theory, a boy resolves his Oedipus complex by repressing his attachment to his mother. He is therefore ready in adulthood to find a primary relationship with someone *like* his mother. When he does, the relationship is given meaning from its psychological reactivation of what was originally an intense and exclusive relationship—first an identity, then a "dual-unity," finally a two-person relationship [Heterosexual/Cointal].⁹⁵

As in the ancient world, the construction of the phallus in Freudian terms is based on, and associated with, an inevitable connection with its generative function; yet Freud drastically expanded the ways in which the phallus could be symbolized. In the ancient world, as mentioned above, symbols of the penis *captured* or *looked like* the biological organ that they signified. In Freudian terms, however, the symbolization of the penis became metonymic. For example, in his *The Interpretation of Dreams*, the phallus could be symbolized by *all* elongated objects, such as sticks, tree-trunks, umbrellas, knives, daggers, pikes, nail-files, neckties, ploughs, hammers, rifles, revolvers, sabres, snakes, etc.⁹⁶ What is revealing here is the way in which the phallus has been transformed, in constantly broadening terms, to become the *privileged signifier* of all sociosexual dynamics of desire. Proceeding from its initial generative functions, the phallus (although now distanced to a certain extent from these functions) has become conceptually interchangeable or intricately linked with the entire symbolic ordering of the world.

⁹⁵ Nancy Chodorow, *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 192.

⁹⁶ Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, trans. James Strachey (New York: Avon Books, 1965), 118, 260, 382-4, 389-416, 419, 422, 425, 447.

Expanding on Freud's work, Jacques Lacan attempted to remove the phallus from any biological connection with the male body and to relocate it solely within the symbolic order. Lacan suggests:

The phallus is elucidated in its function here. In Freudian doctrine, the phallus is not a fantasy, if what is understood by that is an imaginary effect. Nor is it as such an object (part, internal, good, bad, etc...) in so far as this term tends to accentuate the reality involved in a relationship. It is even less the organ, penis, clitoris, which it symbolizes. And it is not incidental that Freud took this reference for it from the simulacrum which it represented for the Ancients. For the phallus is a signifier, a signifier whose function in the intrasubjective economy of analysis might lift the veil from that which it served in the mysteries. For it is to this signified that it is given to designate as a whole the effect of there being a signified, inasmuch as it conditions any such effect by its presence as signifier.⁹⁷

Thus the phallus, for Lacan, becomes a transcendental signifier. The phallus exists "prior to any awakening of the signified."⁹⁸ It is within the unconscious mind that the phallus "becomes a new dimension of the human condition."⁹⁹ And as such, the phallus is mediated and substantiated through the use of language, even as the phallus structures language's very use. For Lacan, it is the moment in which the 'Subject' encounters the 'Other' that the 'Subject' is able to find his or her "signifying place."¹⁰⁰

However, as Diana Fuss states, "To the extent that the phallus risks continually conjuring up images of the penis, that is, to the extent that the bar between these two terms cannot be rigidly maintained, Lacan is never far away from the essentialism he so vigorously disclaims."¹⁰¹ Fuss's worry that Lacan too closely borders on essentialism is not far off the mark. While Lacan's strategy is to eliminate this biological connection and

⁹⁷ Jacques Lacan, "The Meaning of the Phallus," *Feminine Sexuality: Jacques Lacan and the Ecole Freudienne*, trans. Jacqueline Rose, Juliet Mitchell, ed. (New York: Norton, 1985), 79-80.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 79.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 78.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 79.

¹⁰¹ Diana Fuss, *Essentially Speaking: Feminism, Nature, and Difference* (New York: Routledge, 1989), 8.

push the phallus into some kind of metabiology, he no sooner makes this claim than he reconstructs the phallus, as Teresa de Lauretis also notes,¹⁰² in terms of normative reproductive heterosexuality. Lacan tentatively writes:

The phallus is the privileged signifier of that mark in which the role of the logos is joined with the advent of desire. One might say that this signifier is chosen as what stands out as most easily seized upon in the real of sexual copulation, and also as the most symbolic in the literal (typographical) sense of the term, since it is equivalent in that relation of the (logical) copula. One might also say that by virtue of its turgidity, it is the image of the vital flow as it is transmitted in generation¹⁰³

The penile-vaginal relation is again invoked. I would like to stress once more that this has been the fundamental and foundational structure of the phallus since ancient times. Lacan demonstrates an exerted effort not to collapse the penis and the phallus into synonymous terms, and in his attempt to make this *disconnection*, Lacan affirms that the phallus as signifier can only maintain its symbolic force if it is veiled

All these propositions merely veil over the fact that the phallus can only play its role as veiled, that is, as in itself the sign of latency with which everything signifiable is struck as soon as it is raised (*aufgehoben*) to the function of signifier. The phallus is the signifier of this *Aufhebung* itself, which it inaugurates (initiates) by its own disappearance. That is why the demon of 'shame' in ancient mysteries rises up exactly at the moment when the phallus is unveiled¹⁰⁴

Elsewhere, Lacan writes

The object of desire is essentially different from the object of any need. Something becomes an object in desire when it takes the place of what by its very nature remains concealed from the subject: that self-sacrifice, that pound of flesh which is mortgaged in his relationship to the signifier. This is profoundly enigmatic, for it is ultimately a relationship to something secret and hidden.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² See Teresa de Lauretis, *The Practice of Love: Lesbian Sexuality and Perverse Desire* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994), 216-222

¹⁰³ Lacan, "The Meaning of the Phallus," 82

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 82

¹⁰⁵ Jacques Lacan, "Desire and the Interpretation of Desire in *Hamlet*," *Yale French Studies* 55/56 (1977) 28

So, we may well ask, what has the phallus become? I would suggest that it is only the 'hidden' penis, the penis that is concealed from sight and inquiry, that becomes the 'phallus.' It is only when the penis remains phantom-like that its physicality does not betray the schism that exists between the *real* and the *symbolic*. In the words of Serge Leclaire, the phallus has, in a sense, become God. Serge Leclaire states

Let us call the phallus "God." It's an old tradition. You don't have to see "God," properly speaking, you have no image of him. "God" (the Phallus) is invisible; therefore, the relation to the phallus is marked by a nonformalizable relation, a relation of exclusion. At the same time, everything is in relation to the phallus, everything is in relation to "God." Let's suppose that there is a child, Jesus, the son of God, who serves as a mediator. Now, let's replace the "child Jesus" with the penis, which happens to be the most convenient representative of the phallus. Because man has in his body a relation with his *penis as the representative of the phallus*, schematically, his natural inclination leads him to forget the fact that the phallus ("God") is invisible, unseizable, unnameable.¹⁰⁶

The conclusion that emerges from this analysis of the phallus is that discursive frameworks that presuppose an automatic referencing between males and females and assume the (heterosexist) phallus as a signifier of sexual desire are in quite a strong position vis-à-vis other potential sexual symbol-generating communities, i.e., gays, lesbians, bisexuals, etc. The legitimacy of the concept of the phallus is gained in part by the effectiveness with which society institutes compulsory heterosexuality, and in part by the willingness of other marginalized sexual identities to accept, or partially accept, its existence (theoretical and conceptual). The monopoly that heterosexist theorists have had in academia as well as society's general disgust for sexual 'deviants,' has translated into the power to restrict the possible ways of articulating gender sites and sexual identities.

¹⁰⁶ Serge Leclaire, "Sexuality: A Fact of Discourse, An Interview by Hélène Klibbe," trans. Hélène Klibbe in *Homosexualities and French Literature: Cultural Contexts Critical Texts*, ed. George Stambolian and Elaine Marks (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1979), 46.

that cannot be 'picked out' within these heterosexist terminological, conceptual and theoretical frameworks

This discussion of the phallus concludes this chapter. I shall make no attempt here to summarize all the arguments of the various theoreticians discussed. However, a few remarks are in order. Beginning with the notion that the gay porn debate evolved from the larger feminist debate on pornography, I attempted to begin problematizing the use of particular conceptual and theoretical systems to analyze gay pornography. I began to question the usefulness of these analytic tools by showing the extent to which many previous analyses adopted, or partially adopted, heterosexist binary-based models of sexuality inherited from essentialist forms of feminism and heterosexist discursive practices. Despite the conceptual and theoretical constraints that I mentioned, it was not my intent in this chapter to devalue the work and progress that has been made by many of these scholars. I find the works of Bronski, Burger, Dyer, Pendleton, Pronger, Stychin, Watney, and Waugh compelling in many respects and, inarguably, many of the feminist writers discussed have also paved the path for a greater understanding of the complexity of the 'problem' of gay pornography.

I introduced in this chapter the substitute and the hyper/masculine theses and intimated that neither was a satisfactory approach to the gay porn text as they both presuppose an economy of desire based on a heterosexist notion of the phallus. Importantly, I noted that both the substitute and hyper/masculine theses share the common feature of placing an enormous amount of emphasis on the penis as phallus. The collapsing of any distinction between the penis and the phallus permits, on the one

hand, substitute theorists to assert the presence of a 'phallic misogynist male' (who is implicitly accorded a 'straight male' identification, i.e., he is 'treating' other men as women). On the other hand, hyper/masculine theorists, construct an image of the 'phallic homophobic male' (and misogynist) who is 'too masculine,' (implicitly given a 'straight male' identification, i.e., looks/acts too much like a 'straight male'). In both theses, the *image or representation* of 'straight masculinity' (misogynist and/or homophobic) is seen to be the 'problem' in the gay porn text. Before more closely addressing the conceptual constraints inherent in these positions, I wish to develop an alternative theoretical and conceptual framework in which the gay porn text can be analyzed.

Determining appropriate techniques to analyze gay pornography is not a simple task. But the concepts we employ are an important issue if we are to come to any understanding of the gender and sexual identities which, I believe, become apparent in the gay pornographic text. In the next chapter, I shall shift the debate away from traditional sociosexual and sociopolitical binarisms and relocate it within a broader sociosexual framework which can be appropriately termed 'sodomitical discourse'. I shall then proceed to develop a concept of the *anti-phallus* in order to resignify the penis in non-heterosexual terms and in the following chapter will return to the substitute and hyper/masculine theses

CHAPTER TWO

SODOMITICAL DISCOURSE AND THE ANTI-PHALLUS

Consider for example the history of what was once "the" great sin against nature. The extreme discretion of the texts dealing with sodomy—that utterly confused category—and the nearly universal reticence in talking about it made possible a twofold operation: on the one hand, there was extreme severity (punishment by fire was meted out well into the eighteenth century, without there being any substantial protest expressed before the middle of the century), and on the other hand, a tolerance that must have been widespread (which one can deduce indirectly from the infrequency of judicial sentences, and which one glimpses more directly through certain statements concerning societies of men that were thought to exist in the army or in the courts). There is no question that the appearance in nineteenth-century psychiatry, jurisprudence, and literature of a whole series of discourses on the species and subspecies of homosexuality, inversion, pederasty, and "psychic hermaphroditism" made possible a strong advance of social controls into this area of "perversity"; but it also made possible the formation of a "reverse" discourse: homosexuality began to speak in its own behalf, to demand that its legitimacy or "naturalness" be acknowledged, often in the same vocabulary, using the same categories by which it was medically disqualified. There is not, on the one side, a discourse of power, and opposite it, another discourse that runs counter to it. Discourses are tactical elements or blocks operating in the field of force relations; there can exist different and even contradictory discourses within the same strategy; they can, on the contrary, circulate without changing their form from one strategy to another, opposing strategy. We must not expect the discourses on sex to tell us, above all, what strategy they derive from, or what moral divisions they accompany, or what ideology—dominant or dominated—they represent; rather we must question them on the two levels of their tactical productivity (what reciprocal effects of power and knowledge they ensure) and their strategical integration (what conjunction and what force relationship make their utilization necessary in a given episode of the various confrontations that occur).

—Michel Foucault¹

¹ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: Vol. 1 An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage, 1978) 101-102

INTRODUCTION

Consistent attempts to reduce the concept of sexuality consistently to male/female, masculine/feminine dichotomies, and to apply these dichotomies to gay porn, reveal a deep-rooted heterosexism that must be resisted. Distinctions and assumed differences between the sexes have been so privileged within Western discourse that even counter-hegemonic discourses, most notably essentialist forms of feminism, have clouded the possibility of reconceptualizing non-biological-sexed-based theoretical frameworks of sexual activities and gender constructions. Heterocentric or heterosexist attempts to dismantle present gender constructions and gender divisions will inevitably fail. Heterocentric and heterosexist discourses inhibit the making of substitutions which reveal the ways in which these categories can be 'confused' and 'transformed'. When attention is shifted from these traditional perspectives to those of homocentric and non-homophobic constructions, or what I will term 'sodomitical theory,' it will appropriately reveal a multiple set of independent, intersecting, and overlapping discursive planes, i.e., hegemonies, schisms, chasms. With regard to my study of videos, 'Hegemonies' are those 'moments' in the video which most closely mirror traditional gender constructions. 'Schisms' are those moments in which the image presents a gender *contradiction*. 'Chasms' are those moments that have remained inarticulable within traditional gender constructions.

In this chapter I begin questioning the discursive connections between various sexual activities and gender. I make several terminological shifts to reposition the gay pornographic text in an alternative sociosexual and sociopolitical discursive

framework(s) (influenced, in part, by Foucault's notion of multiple discourses and his conception of the "utterly confused category," i.e., sodomy) which, as a concept, effectively predates modern polarized conceptions that *all* sexual activities are gendered as either masculine or feminine. What distinguishes this approach from traditional binary-based models is that it places more emphasis on various sexual acts and how their meaning(s) are generated and also includes and emphasizes those sexual acts that have remained inarticulable within heterosexist models of sexuality. I will propose that gay porn can be better analyzed in terms of sodomitical/anti-sodomitical discursive practices rather than *within* traditional heterosexist sexual binarisms. To justify this shift several topics are discussed: a definition of 'sodomy,' erotica versus pornography, a short history of pornography; the emergence of distinct sexual categories; and censorship. I then proceed to sketch the relevance of this theoretical framework in relation to the gay pornographic text by developing some basic tools of analysis.

In the second half of this chapter I return to a discussion of the penis/phallus. The aim in this section is to develop a concept of the *anti-phallus* to relocate the penis/phallus in a sexual economy which is not based on the penile-vaginal relationship, i.e., a sodomitical sexual economy. To achieve this aim I explore various aspects of ancient Greek culture and consider the ways in which they represented and understood the penis and the phallus.

SODOMITICAL THEORY

To start, we must make fundamental distinctions between discursive planes which incidentally separate the sexes and those which negatively enforce difference. Moreover, it cannot be assumed *a priori* that sexual difference is of import on all discursive planes (homocentric). This also implies that particular symbols and linguistic constructions on one plane, even if 'duplicated' on another, will not have the same meanings and import. It is also essential to note that this sort of approach does not force us into a strange form of gender and sexual relativism, but rather opens up the conceptual possibilities of a multiplicity of gender positionings and sexual identities. The adoption of a multi-planar (sodomitical matrix) approach will permit an ever-improving sophistication of different theoretical frameworks which can be applied, not only to sexual relations, but to all human relations, e.g., class, race, religion. Finally, rejecting both over-simplified *universalizations* (in the form of: all sexual activity is . . .) and too narrowly confining *particularizations* (in the form: only gay sexual activity is . . .) will permit and promote the emergence of a more adequate approach to human sexuality.

Instead of tracing the historical engendering of particular sexual activities, e.g., being on top is masculine (a phallic construction), it may be more helpful to note that most sexual activities until this century were not engendered (and many are still on the 'border'²). Even as late as the 1950s, as Leslie Hall has uncovered by analyzing the many

² Rubin discusses present constructions of sexual acceptable practices as opposed to, and in contrast with, sexual activities that lie outside or on the margins of present sociosexual norms. The two diagrams that Rubin provides of sexual hierarchies in her article are also well worth noting. Rubin uses the term 'the

letters sent to the pioneering sexologist Marie Stopes, the sexual lives of 'average' males were in many cases limited to sexual intercourse (and most often in the dark)³

Homosexual activities have been 'hidden from history'⁴ and only more recently have been, and are being, colonized by heterosexist and heterocentric discourses. Even heterosexual sex has been heavily policed and many sexual practices between males and females have been disavowed and forbidden. This leaves a broad range of sexual activities 'outside' and 'beyond' what is considered acceptable/patriarchal sexual behavior, i.e., the heterosexual institution. There are numerous sexual activities that have not necessarily been, in the Western tradition, clearly associated with either the male or the female, the masculine or the feminine. It is extremely important, not only for queers but also for feminists, that these 'perverse' sexual activities remain uncolonized by rigid heterosexist definitions.

As I noted in the introduction, universal statements such as 'women are *always* depicted as *objects*' and 'pornography *demeans* and *degrades* women' have increasingly and insidiously infiltrated both political and popular thought. Dismantling these universal statements has important consequences not only for females who feel, and are, increasingly oppressed by this style of argumentation, but also for sexually marginalized

charmed circle' to capture the following practices: heterosexual, married, monogamous, procreative, non-commercial, in pairs, in a relationship, same generation, in private, no pornography, bodies only and 'vanilla'. These categories are presented in contrast with 'the outer limits' which include: homosexual, unmarried, promiscuous, non-procreative, commercial, alone or in groups, casual, cross-generational, in public, pornography, with manufactured objects, sadomasochistic. In her second diagram, Rubin, using a series of walls to separate sexual activities/identities, questions present sexual judgements that are used to enforce and dictate where the line is drawn between acceptable and non-acceptable sexual behavior. Gayle Rubin, "Thinking Sex," in *Pleasure and Danger: Exploring Female Sexuality*, ed. Carole Vance (London: Pandora, 1984), 267-310.

³ Leslie Hall, *Hidden Anxieties: Male Sexuality 1900-1950* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991).

The notion that sex should be had in the dark dates as far back as the ancient Greeks.

⁴ I here borrow the title of Martin Duberman's 1989 anthology *Hidden from History: Reclaiming the Gay and Lesbian Past*.

groups who have more closely felt its aftereffects (e.g., in the form of censorship) and have often been, as noted earlier, *neglected* or *ignored* within this debate. 'Alternative' sexually explicit representations, which differ significantly from what are presently construed to be acceptable forms of sexual behavior,⁵ cannot be simply addressed and analyzed along male/female and heterosexist discursive axes. It is certainly a mistake to assume that the term 'pornography' picks out any meaningful category of sexually explicit images. This has been reflected in the failure of numerous scholars who have made attempts to define these images, as exemplified by the work of Steinem and Barry. This is not to suggest that these efforts to define what pornography *is* have not had important effects on *how* the term is understood, nor does it presuppose that the invocation of the term 'pornography' to label particular sexual representations has not fundamentally altered people's perceptions about sex, gender, and sexuality. The influence of Dworkin, many of her anti-porn colleagues and the conservative right attests to this fact. To a large extent the debate has been constructed, limited, and confined by narrow conceptions of both male and female sexuality. It has been overwhelmingly submerged in a series of totalizing and universalizing gender and sexual binarisms, e.g., top/bottom, powerful/powerless, which have been utilized (either consciously or unconsciously) to discursively, socially, and politically efface representations of non-traditional sexual subject/object and gender positions.

I wish to forestall gay pornography's automatic referencing to heterosexual pornography (although the theory I am presenting also has implications for analyses of

⁵ I am here thinking of anti-porn feminists and the conservative right

heterosexual porn) There undoubtedly will be some readers who will immediately position themselves alongside anti-porn theorists, insisting on the value of such work in protecting and defending the rights of women, and will quickly assert in the popularized language of Andrea Dworkin or Catharine MacKinnon that *all* pornography is violence and that gay pornography is no different.⁶ It is my hope that the following sections will challenge and provoke such readers to reconsider the ways in which they view gender, sex, and sexuality, and will begin to interrogate the ways in which 'gay pornography' transgresses, renegotiates and ultimately undermines patriarchy by essentially decentering the symbols of patriarchal sexual dynamics, i.e., the (heterosexist) phallus

I would like to begin this discussion by, following the advice of Watney, relinquishing the term 'pornography', which is too heavily burdened with ambiguous definitions, negative connotations, and heterosexist assumptions. In its stead I would like to suggest that gay sexually explicit images can be more accurately described and defined as **'sodomitical representations'** (this would also be true for many other varieties of pornography, e.g., transsexual, transgendered, transvestite). This terminological shift should not be construed as a simplistic and unwarranted substitute for the term 'gay pornography' and it is not offered as a means to evade any of the issues. I have introduced the term as a means to relocate and rearticulate the debate within a broader sociosexual framework. The term 'sodomitical' should not be conflated with, or misunderstood as

⁶ See Andrea Dworkin and Catharine MacKinnon, *Pornography and Civil Rights: A New Day for Women's Equality* (Minneapolis: Organizing Against Pornography, 1988), Andrea Dworkin, *Pornography: Men Possessing Women* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1979), Andrea Dworkin, *Woman Hating* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1984), Catharine MacKinnon, "Not a Moral Issue," *Yale Law & Policy Review* 2 (1984) 321-45. In relation to gay porn John Stoltenberg adopts Dworkin and MacKinnon's positions. See John Stoltenberg, *Refusing to Be a Man: Essays on Sex and Justice* (Markham, Ontario: Meridian, 1990).

simply capturing, the act of anal penetration. Those familiar with the work of Michel Foucault, Alan Bray, and Jonathan Goldberg (and others) will recognize the term.⁷ For those unfamiliar with its sociosexual and sociopolitical connotations, I here borrow as a starting place Goldberg's definition, to contextualize more clearly the strategy that I am pursuing Goldberg writes.

[S]odomy is, as a sexual act, anything that threatens alliance—any sexual act, that is, that does not promote the aim of married procreative sex (anal intercourse, fellatio, masturbation, bestiality—any of these may fall under the label of sodomy in various early legal codifications and learned discourses), and while sodomy involves therefore acts that men might perform with men, women with women, men and women with each other, and anyone with a goat, a pig, or a horse, these acts....emerge into visibility only when those who are said to have done them also can be called traitors, heretics, or the like, at the very least, disturbers of the social order that alliance—marriage arrangements—maintained.⁸

The term 'sodomy' is not inextricably bound up in universalisms and as such does not necessarily gain its meaning(s) from the dominant culture's sociosexual symbolic order, even though this order is defined *against* the sodomitical. In a sense, the sodomitical can be understood as demarcating the outer limits of this dominant order and functions as a conceptual arena in which sexual *normalcy* is constantly contested and redefined. The terrain of the sodomitical can operate in at least three ways. First, it acts as a site in which sociosexual norms are consolidated, i.e., the dominant culture *labels* the sexual activity as *unacceptable*, e.g., bestiality (the *process of labeling* operates to define the boundaries of 'sex'). Second, it functions as a site in which certain sexual

⁷ See Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 3 vols., trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Random House, 1978-1986), Alan Bray, *Homosexuality in Renaissance England* (London: Gay Men's Press, 1982), Alan Bray, "Homosexuality and the Signs of Male Friendship in Elizabethan England," *History Workshop Journal* 19 (1990): 1-19, Jonathan Goldberg, *Sodometries: Renaissance Texts, Modern Sexualities* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), Jonathan Goldberg, *Reclaiming Sodom* (New York: Routledge, 1994).

⁸ Goldberg, *Sodometries: Renaissance Texts*, 19.

practices are incorporated into conceptions of *healthy* sexuality, i.e., certain sexual practices become *less* sodomitical, e.g., masturbation, (these activities may eventually be completely assimilated into sociosexual norms, e.g., males sucking on female nipples). Third, the sodomitical discursively aligns various sexual subjects, i.e., 'deviants,' in their attempts to undermine hegemonic sociosexual and sociopolitical norms (although the ways in which these various group are aligned, e.g., politically, socially, is not always clear. This is, I think, akin to Foucault's notion of Panopticism⁹)

Further, this terminological shift from 'gay pornography' to 'sodomitical representations' brings into question whether attempts to distinguish pornography from erotica can ever be finally or fully achieved. Vain attempts to construct a definitive answer to this question only serve to attest to the enormous instability, fluidity and transience of presently constructed sociosexual and gender norms. Any insistence on the notion that there are particular representations of sexual activities which are *innately* demeaning and degrading to queers/women/femininity, e.g., ejaculating on an individual's body (pornographic?), while other sexual activities are (deemed) acceptable, e.g., sexually explicit body massages or safe(r) sex videos (erotic?), only encourages an epistemic blindness to the *fact* that sexual subject/object positions, gender identities, and power relations are in a constant state of flux. It is far more helpful to recognize, as Gayle Rubin has convincingly argued, a system of sexual and gender hierarchies in which the penile-vaginal-procreative relationship (heterosexuality/masculine-feminine) maintains a privileged position at the *center* of the present sociosexual order, while other sexual

⁹ For a description of Foucault's Panopticon, see chapter three, part three of *Discipline and Punish. Birth of the Prison*, trans. A. Sheridan (London: Allen Lane and New York: Pantheon, 1977; reprinted Harmondsworth: Peregrine, 1979).

relations and gender positions, e.g., homosexuality, transgenderism, and lesbian SM, are accepted or rejected in varying degrees, and depending on how far they are located *outside* of this heterosexual vinculum¹⁰ Opposition to universal notions of sex, gender, and sexuality by marginalized sexual subjects has precluded the possibility that any concrete distinction can be given to these vexing categories. Queer and feminist theorists have shown that this *original position* (heterosexuality) is an artificial social construction that is in a constant state of renegotiation.

To legitimize further the terminological shift which I am suggesting here, it should be noted that the historical emergence of the category 'pornography' was itself a patriarchal formulation and a resistance to sodomitical representations and practices. While some feminists insist on the aetiology of the term 'pornography' (*porno graphos*, the depiction of prostitutes in sexually explicit images) to espouse their position that 'pornography' has been a transhistorical means to oppress women, they ignore the fact that the term only appeared in its modern usage in the English language in 1857 (in French in 1806) and was utilized as a political tool to control subversive texts.¹¹ Early usage of the term 'pornography' not only "denoted" images of sexually explicit activities, but also was invoked to describe any text which undermined, subverted or contravened the religious, political and moral philosophies of the nineteenth century. Most early modern sexually explicit materials, from Antonio Beccadelli's *Hermaphroditus* (1425), Antonio Vignali's *La Cazzaria* (1525-1526), *L'Ecole des filles, ou la philosophie des*

¹⁰ Gayle Rubin, "Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality," in *Pleasure and Danger: Exploring Female Sexuality*, ed. Carole S. Vance (London: Pandora Press, 1989), 267-319.

¹¹ For a more detailed discussion of the early modern usage of the term 'pornography,' see Lynn Hunt, "Introduction: Obscenity and the Origins of Modernity, 1500-1800," in *The Invention of Pornography: Obscenity and the Origins of Modernity, 1500-1800*, ed. Lynn Hunt (New York: Zone Books, 1993), 9-45.

dames (1655, anonymous) Cleland's *Fanny Hill* (1748), Sade's *Histoire de Juliette* (1792), to *La Philosophie dans la boudoir* (1795), gave the prostitute (libertine whore) and/or sodomite (see Goldberg's definition above) privileged voices to critique the social order.¹² These texts are best categorized as sodomitical, i.e., they do not simply function within 'heterosexual' sexual and gender dynamics.

It should not be ignored that the emergence of the modern category of pornography occurred after the eighteenth century, when sociosexual norms were being rearticulated. As Randolph Trumbach has noted, the eighteenth century marked the emergence of "new ideals of romantic marriage, conjugal companionship and the tender care of children," and "a new standard of sexual relations between males. Most men were now thought to desire sexually only women and this exclusive desire was largely what gave them masculine status."¹³ This reformulation of sexual roles and gender identities operated simultaneously to exclude marginalized forms of sexual activity, and to recolonize the female sex in terms of motherhood and sexual propriety. These new *real, feminine women* were characterized as being *modest* and *shy* concerning any matters dealing with sex and sexuality. Certainly, modern constructions of masculinity and femininity, rooted in this historical period, derive their force not only through a language of sexual opposition, but also through repeated sociosexual and sociopolitical proscriptions of gender transgression.

¹² For a detailed discussion of these early pornographic texts, see Lynn Hunt, ed. *The Invention of Pornography: Obscenity and the origins of Modernity, 1500-1800* (New York: Zone Books, 1993).

¹³ Randolph Trumbach, "Erotic Fantasy and Male Libertinism in Enlightenment England," in *The Invention of Pornography: Obscenity and the Origins of Modernity, 1500-1800*, ed. Lynn Hunt (New York: Zone Books, 1993), 254-255.

Interestingly, it was only in the nineteenth century that the privileged images of the whore and sodomite (recall that this 'category' includes numerous 'deviant' sexualities) disappeared from the pornographic text. The content of pornography shifted slowly away from its more overt political themes and was slowly replaced with an increased emphasis on various sexual pleasures. This structural alteration, I would suggest, was contingent upon, and existed in reaction to, increased social surveillance of sexual activity. In other words, sex *itself* became, as many modern feminists have suggested, a site of political contestation. The content of pornography functioned to valorize sexual activities that were increasingly excluded and rendered illegitimate by heterosexualization and the rigid gender designations that compulsory heterosexuality entailed. It is no coincidence that the term 'pornography' historically (re)emerged during a period in which sodomitical activities and identities, as Foucault has brilliantly argued, were being reconceptualized and reconstructed in terms of sexual pathologies and fixed sexual identities. I here quote Foucault at length:

This new persecution of the peripheral sexualities entailed an *incorporation of perversions* and a new *specification of individuals*. As defined by the ancient civil or canonical codes, sodomy was a category of forbidden acts, their perpetrator was nothing more than a juridical subject of them. The nineteenth-century homosexual became a personage, a past, a case history, and a childhood, in addition to being a type of life, a life form, and a morphology, with an indiscreet anatomy and possibly a mysterious physiology. Nothing that went into his total composition was unaffected by his sexuality. It was everywhere present in him, at the root of all his actions because it was their insidious and indefinitely active principle; written immodestly on his face and body because it was a secret that always gave itself away. It was consubstantial with him, less as a habitual sin than as a singular nature. We must not forget that the psychological, psychiatric, medical category of homosexuality was constituted from the moment it was characterized—Westphal's famous article of 1870 on "contrary sexual sensations" can stand as its date of birth—less by a type of sexual relations than by a certain quality of sexual sensibility, a certain way of inverting the masculine and the feminine in oneself. Homosexuality appeared as one of those forms of sexuality

when it transposed from the practice of sodomy onto a kind of interior androgyny, a hermaphrodism of the soul. The sodomite had been a temporary aberration; the homosexual was now a species.¹⁴

The effects of the sociosexual transition that Foucault describes above can clearly be seen in contemporary attitudes towards sex, gender and sexuality. The construction of marginalized sexual identities had important consequences both for these new sexual subjects and for women. Significantly, the deployment of the heterosexual imperative in the first half of this century resulted in the near-elimination of sodomitical representations by the 1950s. Any form of sexually explicit material that deviated from the heterosexual norm was quickly censored. Similarly, sodomitical representations of women who digressed from the recently constructed *image* of the *real, feminine* woman were, within this newly formed style of patriarchy, recategorized in negative terms (Are anti-porn feminists fighting misogynist or sodomitical representations? Recall, for example, the texts that Dworkin criticizes, e.g., de Sade.)

Here it seems crucial to ask how censorship has functioned within this century and how it has operated to secure heteronormativity. Any cursory examination of anti-censorship or pro-censorship arguments in this century would quickly reveal that it is not the representation of sex *per se* that is seen as problematic, but the degree to which it can be labeled sodomitical. The enormous legal resistance to the production and distribution of gay sexually explicit materials and the excessive attention given by anti-porn feminists to sadomasochistic representations (heterosexual, gay male, and lesbian) serves as evidence of the extent to which sodomitical practices are presumed to be more

¹⁴ Foucault, *Introduction*, 42-43

dangerous to the sociosexual fabric of society than heterosexual or *softer* forms of sexually explicit materials. The state's near-exclusive crackdown on lesbian and gay erotica (sodomitical texts) in the wake of the Canadian Supreme Court's 1992 decision in *Butler v. The Queen* serves as further evidence of this anti-sodomitical mentality.

Consider

Before the ink was dry on *Butler* the Toronto police raided Glad Day Bookshop, a lesbian and gay bookstore, and confiscated *Bad Attitude*, a lesbian erotic magazine. . . It was a shocking raid. Police ignored representations made by men of women in most cities across Canada, including... Toronto... and yet the one thing that they raid is this one magazine that sells about forty copies every two months in Canada when it comes out. It's hardly a threat to women's equality and yet that's the magazine that they chose.¹⁵

Similarly, Nadine Strossen writes of a lower court decision

A second lower court decision enforcing *Butler* also resulted from seizures of homosexual erotica from Glad Day Bookshop and also held homosexual expression to be "degrading." This decision, issued by Judge F. C. Hayes, held all thirteen of the confiscated gay publications to be "degrading and dehumanizing," explaining only that they showed sexual encounters "without any real, meaningful human relationship." As Karen Busby of LEAF acknowledged, "Judge Hayes' decision [is] clearly homophobic. . . He said that sex between men in and of itself was degrading and dehumanizing."¹⁶

The tensions that are generated between sodomitical and anti-sodomitical discourse within the present juridical system become most visible in the comments of Judge Hayes. "Real, meaningful" relationships are, as I suggested earlier, established in contradistinction to sodomitical sexual activities (e.g., the list of sexual activities cited in the *Butler* decision). However radically the "meaning" of sex is challenged by

¹⁵ Karen Busby, "LEAF and Pornography: Litigating on Equality and Sexual Representations" (unpublished) 17, quoted in Nadine Strossen, *Defending Pornography: Free Speech, Sex, and the Fight for Women's Rights* (Toronto: Scribner, 1995), 232.

¹⁶ Nadine Strossen, *Defending Pornography: Free Speech, Sex, and the Fight for Women's Rights* (Toronto: Scribner, 1995), 233.

sodomitical representations, the 'real' meaning of sex (i.e., heterosexual, monogamous, procreative) is effectively deployed and reestablished within and by a backward-looking sociosexual ideology which presumes the preexistence of a sociosexual framework in which 'real' sexual meaning *is* and can only be *understood* in terms of *normal* heterosexual sex, i.e., the institution of heterosexuality. In other words, heterosexuality circuitously confirms its own existence while sodomitical discourse questions its ideological foundations.

It is perhaps more obvious to the reader at this point that I am suggesting that, since sodomitical acts provide a conceptual terrain which lies *outside of* the dominant culture, and since that culture is based on a penile-vaginal imperative, those sexual activities which can be termed sodomitical do not *necessarily* have to be articulated in terms of traditional heterosexual binarisms, e.g., masculine/feminine. They remain, at present, outside of traditional gender frameworks, i.e., chasms in sociosexual discourse.

It is helpful at this point to recall Pendleton's commentary on gay pornography that was discussed in the last chapter. Pendleton challenged earlier binary-based approaches to the gay pornographic text by introducing Barthes's interpretation of the Sadian text (what I would label a form of sodomitical literature). He argued that gay porn is best understood to be 'combinatory' rather than 'hierarchical' via Barthes' reading of Sadian grammar. Pendleton emphasizes the grouping together of various 'units/postures/figures' to form an 'operation' (a sexual act), and the combination of these various 'operations' to form an 'episode' (sexual scene). For the purposes of this thesis I shall call these units/postures/figures 'sodomitical moments.' This change in terminology

is meant to emphasize both the 'figure,' i.e., the physical combination of bodies, the *type* of sexual relation between those bodies, and the sexual activities that have been effectively effaced within a heterosexist sexual imaginary. For example, an image of a male tongue pressed against another male's testicles or an image of a man with cum on his tongue would comprise a 'sodomitical moment.' The combination of these various moments would constitute a 'sodomitical activity.' For example, a man *licking* another man's testicles or a man with cum *dripping* off his tongue.

The joining together of various 'sodomitical moments' produces 'sodomitical activities' which gives the narratological structure of the gay porn video. This process functions to stabilize and stratify the various 'moments' into an integrated whole. But this is not to imply that various sodomitical moments are *necessarily* aligned or linked. For example, a video is composed of various sexual activities, and maybe edited so that a blow job is seen to be immediately followed by anal intercourse. The edit removes any number of activities that the actors 'presumably' performed in between. Thus, the moment of fellatio is followed one frame later by a moment of anal penetration, although there is no necessary connection between these moments. In this sense, the *connection(s)* between various sodomitical moments always remains potential, unstable and vanishing. This explains to some extent, for example, the difference between Dyer and Waugh's reading of the gay porn text. Dyer's approach is teleological. Recall that Dyer describes gay porn as having a "masculine thrusting narrative" and is organized around ejaculation. Waugh, on the other hand, argues that there are "individual sequences," which he

suggests contradicts Dyer's assertion. These two positions, I believe, are not incommensurate

Similarly, the combination of various sodomitical moments within the gay porn text operates to *confuse* traditional sociosexual conceptions of the 'subject' and 'object'. This *confusion* has been previously and adequately demonstrated by several queer theorists. The 'sodomitical body,' constituted and constructed by the linking together of the various sodomitical activities that it performs, functions to generate 'identity' within the gay porn narrative. This identity-generating process cannot accurately be described in traditional gender terminology. There are many variable combinations which locate the sodomitical body coextensively in both traditionally 'masculine' and 'feminine' positions. A good example is a three-way fuck scene. The middle-man is both fucking and being fucked. This sodomitical activity cannot be articulated within present binary notions of masculine/feminine, powerful/powerless, etc. The ability of the viewer to link and align various sodomitical moments, combined with the fact that there are no biological differences between the performers, provides the viewer with multiple entry points into the text. For example, a sodomitical moment which presents an actor in a 'feminine position' in the latter half of a sequence may contradict an earlier sodomitical moment which placed him in a 'masculine position'.

By definition then, sodomitical moments and sodomitical activities are bodily combinations and sexual activities that fail to promote "the aim of married procreative sex" and their meanings are not necessarily established and organized by a heterosexist and phallocentric imaginary. Inarguably, all moments in the gay pornographic text fit this

definition and this fact has been all too often neglected by anti-porn feminists. But this still leaves the troubling question of the penis/phallus. How is it possible to resignify the penis? Although I cannot argue the point fully here, I would suggest that the emergence and influence of Christianity within the Western world enabled the penis to accrue its enormous symbolic power, metamorphosing Greco-Roman ithyphallicism into Western phallogentrism. This historical process effectively effaced various ancient conceptions of the penis that were not necessarily considered 'phallic' and, as such, the recovery of these alternative representations and symbols of the penis will be helpful in providing further theoretical tools to interpret the gay porn text.

THE GRECO-ROMAN TRADITION: THE ANTI-PHALLUS

*...some people consider Jesus to be God but not a man. Well, yes, maybe a Man, but not man. "He could never have had a penis"...*¹⁷

*No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.*¹⁸

While there has been a great deal written on the phallus, the penis has been highly untheorized. Due to the conceptual connection of the penis and the phallus, is it possible to use the penis as a means to destabilize the phallus? Can the materiality of the male body undermine the symbolic? The centrality yet invisibility of the male body, as Peter Brooks suggests, is a 'paradox'

It appears that in patriarchal societies, the male body is ostensibly deproblematized, decathected as an object of curiosity or of representation, and concomitantly more thoroughly hidden. There is an *apparent paradox* here: if the male body in patriarchy becomes the norm, the standard against which one

¹⁷ Malcolm Boyd, "Telling a Lie for Christ," in *Gay Spirit: Myth and Meaning*, ed. Mark Thompson (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987), 87.

¹⁸ John 1:18 King James Version

measures otherness—and thus creates the enigma of woman—one might expect the male body to be more openly displayed and discussed. But a moment's reflection allows us to see that the paradox is merely apparent. Precisely because it is the norm, the male body is veiled from inquiry, taken as the agent and not the object of knowing: the gaze is "phallic," its object is not.¹⁹

Brooks stresses, and is exactly on the mark, that the penis in most of Western history has been removed from inquiry and visibility. I would argue, however, that Brooks is too entrenched in the modern conceptual collapse of the penis and the phallus to note the significance of this historical shift. For in fact, as Brooks himself notes, if "we go back to Greek art, it is clearly the male body that is the object of representation, completely naked."²⁰ Tellingly, Brooks hypothesizes that the reemergence of the male nude in the Renaissance "is supposed to be heroic [phallic] rather than erotic: the male body is not the object of an overtly erotic gaze."²¹ Brooks's desexualization of the male body saves it from the *threat of sexual objectification* by making the *accessible*, i.e., the penis, unattainable. In other words, he renders the erotic appeal of the penis *invisible* at the very same moment its physical materiality is offered to the viewer. In fact, penile invisibility is one of the defining characteristics of our civilization. The emergence of Christianity, with its censure of idols, not only marked the *physical* vanishing of the penis but also signaled the disappearance of the multiplicity of penile representations common to the Greco-Roman world.

It would seem that the centrality of defining, describing, locating, etc., biological sex and social constructions of sexuality, and its social ramifications (continually

¹⁹ Peter Brooks, *Body Work. Objects of Desire in Modern Narrative* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 15.

²⁰ Ibid., 16.

²¹ Ibid., 16–17.

examining them within a male/female discursive axis, e.g. psychoanalysis), has resulted in the damaging bias that all penile representations (and thus the male) have been transhistorically constructed within this heterosexist binarism. It is a mistake to assume that the Greco-Roman world viewed the penis, and its symbolic import, in a singular fashion. The application of the modern conception/invention of the penis-phallus, i.e., the penis being equated with the phallus and often collapsed into a singular and synonymous term, to Greco-Roman religious, social, and political institutions, serves to efface the enormous diversity of ways in which the penis was *viewed and represented*.

In the following, I will show that the *physical materiality*²² of the penis on the male body did not *necessarily* inscribe that body with sexual power or phallic authority. The *contamination*, as it were, of the views of the penis in the ancient world by modern notions of the phallus obscures the fact that the Greeks did not always make this connection. More importantly, there were *occasions* of the penis (biological and symbolic) that appeared to have produced enormous amounts of anxiety. This is not to say, of course, that Greek society was not patriarchal, but rather it is to make clear that the penis was not always *necessarily* the signifier of the phallus. And, in point of fact, the penis *qua* biological organ was often construed as a personal hazard and a social menace.

²² I here borrow Judith Butler's notion of 'materiality' with slight changes.

What I would propose in the place of these conceptions of construction is a return to the notion of matter, not as a site or surface, but as a *process of materialization that stabilizes over time to produce the effect of boundary, fixity, and surface we call matter*. That matter is always materialized has, I think, to be thought in relation to the productive and, indeed, materializing effects of regulatory power in the Foucaultian sense. Thus, the question is no longer, How is [the Phallus] constituted as and through a certain interpretation of sex? (a question that leaves the "matter" of the penis untheorized), but rather, Through what regulatory norms is [the penis] itself manifested? And how is it that treating the [Phallus] as a given presupposes and consolidates the normative conditions of its own emergence?

Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 9-10.

The following discussion attempts to reclaim an image of the penis which is not, or should not be considered to be, *ipso facto* an image of the (heterosexist) phallus

To begin with, and simply stated, the penis was symbolized by the phallus because of its reproductive power as suggested in the last chapter. It might first appear that it was the penis *qua* biological organ that was considered important to the Greeks. It was, however, the penis' semen-producing capacity (the phallus) which provided it with significance.²³ Robbed of this reproductive potential, any Greek male was no longer considered either a *male* or *phallic*. This is made clear in Greek medical texts.

The possible disjunction of the phallus and penis is brought to the fore, for example, in Greek medical explanation of *gonorrhea*. The loss of semen caused by the disease impels a shift in a *potentially* phallic male's personal identity and social position (his phallic power). A male having a semen-less penis suffers from a permanent alteration of his gender identity which transports him out of the realm of the masculine/phallic. He is relocated outside of the *patriarchal transmission of masculinity*.²⁴ In short, in failing to become the *patriarch* of a family, he is emasculated.

²³ Foucault writes

The sexual act extracted from the body a substance that was capable of imparting life, but only because it was itself tied to the existence of the individual and claimed a portion of that existence. By expelling their semen, living creatures did not just evacuate a surplus fluid, they deprived themselves of elements that were valuable for their own existence.

Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, Vol 2, *The Uses of Pleasure*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage, 1990), 130.

²⁴ I would like to emphasize that the individual's position as a phallic male was not guaranteed by his penis. It was only the 'reproductive penis,' a penis that is capable of producing semen and thus progeny, that was deemed valuable. The notion that it is semen and not the penis that is the basis of determining masculinity is evident in other cultures. Gerald Creed argues in his examination of institutionalized homosexuality in Melanesia:

Institutionalized homosexuality is rooted in the belief that the attributes of masculinity are not innate in male biology but acquired through strict adherence to a ritualized regimen. The essence of focus on this maleness is invariably semen. Once this premise is accepted, the logical conclusion is clear, males must acquire semen in order to become real men.

He has fallen short of becoming phallic/generative This gender metamorphosis is evident in Arataeus's discussion of unlimited seminal expenditure written in the first century (leading to impotence)

Young persons, when they suffer from this affection, necessarily become old in constitution, torpid, dull, spiritless, enfeebled, shriveled, inactive, pale whitish, effeminate, loathe their food, and become frigid, they have heaviness of members, torpidity of the legs, are powerless, and incapable of all exertion. In many cases, this disease is the way to paralysis, for how could the nervous power not suffer when nature has become frigid in regard to the generation of life? For it is the semen, when possessed of vitality, which makes us men, hot, well-braced in limbs, hairy, well-voiced, spirited, strong to think and to act, as the characteristics of men prove For when the semen is not possessed of its vitality, persons become shriveled, have a sharp tone of voice, lose their hair and their beard, and become effeminate²⁵

Secondly, the flaccid penis, as in the case of the 'passive' (male) partner, or the semen-less penis, as explained above, were not perceived as indicators of phallic masculinity or as sexualized body parts Camille Paglia states in *Sexual Personae*

[D]espite its political patriarchy, Athens cannot be considered—horrid word—a phallocracy On the contrary, the Greek penis was edited down from an exclamation point to a dash The beautiful boy was desired but not desiring He

Gerald W. Creed, "Sexual Subordination Institutionalized Homosexuality and Social Control in Melanesia," in *Reclaiming Sodom*, ed. Jonathan Goldberg (New York: Routledge, 1994), 68

The connection between the loss of seminal fluid and the loss of masculinity persisted up until the early twentieth century Leslie Hall writes

[T]he belief in the weakening effects of undue seminal losses still persisted, to create misery in large numbers of young men It was often not realized that, as Walker pointed out, 'involuntary nocturnal emissions occur in the normal male from puberty onwards' This anxiety was considered by E. F. Griffith (author of *Modern Marriage*) in an unpublished fragment among his writings after he had undergone Jungian analysis and himself had become an analyst 'it still seems to worry many a man today, his fear of ejaculation' The often-given reason was that 'he has been told by a parent or teacher that the seminal fluid possesses some particular and vital function, that every time he ejaculates he loses strength and vitality' Griffith hypothesized that the real cause for the anxiety lay deeper, that it was because 'at this moment he loses conscious control; he surrenders himself to the woman'

Hall, *Hidden Anxieties*, 128-129

²⁵ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: Vol. 3 The Care of the Self*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1986), 115-116, quoting Aretaeus, "On the Causes and Signs of Acute and Chronic Diseases," in *Corpus Medicorum Graecorum*, trans. T. F. Reynolds (Philadelphia: Haswell, Barrington, & Haswell, 1841)

occupied a presexual or suprasexual dimension, the Greek aesthetic ideal. In convention, his adult admirer could seek orgasm, while he remained unaroused.²⁶

The notion of gender was thus partially isolated from biological sex. Without the mark of a penis as a given signifier of phallic participation, the Greeks developed a highly complex system of valuation of varying physical attributes, e.g., beards, and social attributes, e.g., fatherhood, which signaled to any observer whether or not a particular male could be deemed 'phallic'. These attributes were thought to be the result of seminal 'possession'. The prominence given by the Greeks, for example, to 'hair,' 'voice,' 'body shape,' 'behaviour' and 'general comportment' (although to a certain extent these characteristics are biologically determined), provided them with conceptual tools to encompass and describe multiple forms of gender and sexual variation, without necessarily restricting themselves to genitally-based conceptions of gender. Polemo writes

You may obtain physiognomic indications of masculinity and femininity from your subject's glance, movement, and voice, and then, from among these signs, compare one with another until you determine to your satisfaction which of the two sexes prevails. For in the masculine there is something feminine to be found, and in the feminine something masculine, but the name "masculine" or "feminine" is assigned according to which of the two prevails.²⁷

In a society in which the nude or semi-nude male body was everywhere seen, this disassociation of the penis and masculinity/phallus is not surprising. Given the extent to

²⁶ Camille Paglia, *Sexual Personae: Art and Decadence from Nefertiti to Emily Dickinson* (New York: Random House, 1991), 115.

²⁷ Maud Gleason, "The Semiotics of Gender: Physiognomy and Self-Fashioning in the Second Century," in *Before Sexuality: The Construction of Erotic Experience in the Ancient Greek World*, ed. David Halperin, John Winkler, and Froma Zeitlin (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 390, quoting Polemo, "Physiognomy," in R. Forster, ed. *Scriptores Physiognomici Graeci et Latini*, 2 vol. (Leipzig: 1893), 2, 1192F.

which the Greeks stressed semen, combined with the fact that they believed semen was formed in the brain or produced in the conjoining of bodily fluids,²⁸ the penis could, for them, be quite easily *represented* in other varying contexts and possess other non-phallic meanings (i.e., not delimited on a male/female axis) when it was not operating as a biological conduit for this 'powerful' reproductive substance (with the goal of procreation). Certainly the Greek world was scattered with varying *representations* of the penis which reflected its social visibility. The penis was unremarkably seen in gymnasiums and baths. It could be seen everywhere on Greek statues, pottery, and frescoes. It served as a serious subject in medical texts and as the brunt of humour in plays.

The erect penis was portrayed in at least three distinctly different fashions. First, and to reiterate, the Greeks represented the erect penis in its reproductive capacity (and as a 'reproductive' penis, it *is* the phallus). Plato, accenting the 'enormous' significance of this function, writes

That was exactly my own meaning when I said I knew of a device for establishing this law of restricting procreative intercourse to its natural function by abstention from congress with our own sex, with its deliberate murder of the race and its wasting of the seed of life on a stony and rocky soil, where it will never take root and bear its natural fruit, and equal abstention from any female field whence you would desire no harvest.²⁹

But the erect penis was also presented as a site of sexual pleasure. This pleasure could be gained from the body of a slave, a male or female prostitute, a younger male citizen, or a wife ('play' not 'work'³⁰). These relationships are consistently portrayed as

²⁸ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: Vol 2 The Uses of Pleasure*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage, 1990), 130.

²⁹ Plato *Laws* 838e-839a.

³⁰ See footnote below.

being penile-centric³¹ But this does not suggest that Greek male sexuality was considered unproblematic and that the penis was always viewed in positive terms. Fearing any excessive loss of semen, and hence his vitality, a Greek male would highly regulate his sexual activities. Accordingly, the actions of Diogenes Laertius, who masturbated in the marketplace, exceeded Greek sexual morality which, as Foucault has argued, was based on philosophical concepts of moderation and balance.³² Laertius's *recklessness* also demonstrates the mutinous potential of the *misused* penis. Greek *conceptions* and *representations* of the erect penis did not exclusively focus on its phallic significance or its value as a source of power and pleasure.

The final mode of penile representation, and the most interesting for the purposes of this thesis, are those images which reveal a 'phallic paranoia.' In fact, the erect penis was also considered by the Greeks as a site of apprehension and a threat. Their science and mythology reflected a deep concern with the potentially destructive 'power' of the penis when it no longer operated within, or was constricted by, normative sociosexual and sociopolitical relations. I shall term this image of the penis the *anti-phallus*.

Eschewing the two extremes of sexual activity, i.e., too little or too much, Greek medical discourse explicates the sexual pathology of *satyriasis priapism*. For our

³¹ It is questionable whether the Greeks would have considered the use of the penis in non-procreative sex as a 'phallic activity.' Ann Carson in *Putting Her in Her Place* observes that the Greeks distinguished between sexual 'work' and 'play.' She writes:

Generally throughout Greek literature, the act of sexual intercourse that engenders or aims at engendering offspring is called 'work,' while all other varieties of erotic activity are 'play.' As he must labor with his land to produce food, so the Greek husband labors with his wife to produce children, by means of the labour or the toil of the sexual act. [Erotic play did not necessarily entail coitus for the Greeks.]

Anne Carson, "Putting Her in Her Place: Women, Dirt, and Desire," in *Before Sexuality: The Construction of Erotic Experience in the Ancient World*, ed. David Halperin, John Winkler and Froma Zeitlin (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 149.

³² Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: Vol 2: The Uses of Pleasure*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage, 1990), 35-93.

purposes, it is important to note that *satyriasis* or *priapism* did not involve a loss of semen, i.e., the loss of masculinity, but rather it was characterized by a constant state of unquenchable sexual desire. It was a *representation* or *image* of the erect penis which failed to be phallic. In his discussion of the disease, citing the work of Aretaeus, Foucault writes

[T]here is the disease that is marked by constant excitation, which restrains the act while indefinitely prolonging the mechanism of stimulation. In the male version of this kind of affliction, all the mechanisms that prepare the sexual act and ejaculation (tensions, agitations, heatings) are brought together and maintained in a continuous fashion, whether or not there is an evacuation of sperm. Aretaeus' description can serve as testimony of the way in which people perceived this strange disease where the sexual act is as though left to itself in a timeless and boundless movement, its convulsive, epileptic nature is revealed there in the raw state, as it were. "It is a disease in which the patient has erection of the genital organ.. It is an unrestrainable impulse to connection, but neither are they at all relieved by those embraces, nor is the *tentigo* soothed by many and repeated acts of sexual intercourse. Spasms of all the nerves, and tension of all the tendons, groins, and perineum, inflammation and pain of the genital parts."³³

Although certainly this disease is in and of itself interesting, I would like to draw attention away from its pathology and more closely examine the image of the mythical creature with which it is



Fig. 2.1

associated the satyr. The satyrs were notorious figures for being sexually insatiable. With

³³ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: Vol 3 The Care of the Self*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage, 1986), 113-114, quoting Aretaeus, "On the Causes and Signs of Acute and Chronic Diseases," in *Corpus Medicorum Graecorum*, trans. T. F. Reynolds (Philadelphia: Haswell, Barrington, & Haswell, 1841).

preposterously-sized erections, satyrs were often portrayed in various lewd sexual poses ranging from the *normal* to the *absurd*. In figure 2.1 we see, for example, a group of satyrs engaged in various homosexual sexual activities ranging from fellatio to anal intercourse. What is fascinating about this artistic depiction is the indistinguishability of each satyr. Homosexual sex, for the Greeks, was not considered problematic if it involved an older man and a younger boy. Yet in this vase painting of the satyrs, there are no defining characteristics which would place any particular satyr within an 'acceptable' sexual role. The image is a representation of 'phallic' disorder.

François Lissarrague has noted that penises are literally depicted as weapons only when they are associated with satyrs.³⁴ The representational conjunction of the penis as weapon on the bodies of satyrs is

noteworthy. It would appear that the 'phallus' of the satyr functioned as a threat on an intra-male rather than a male-female sexual axis. Images of war and weaponry transmitted to us through ancient texts and artifacts overwhelmingly support this contention.

Weapons were a male domain. To lend even more credence to this notion, it would appear that satyrs were rarely depicted in Greek art



Fig. 2.2

engaging in 'heterosexual copulation'.³⁵ Although satyrs were often depicted as chasing

³⁴ François Lissarrague, "The Sexual Life of Satyrs," in *Before Sexuality: The Construction of Erotic Experience in the Ancient Greek World*, ed. David Halpern, John Winkler, and Froma Zeitlin (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 58.

maenads, any representations of the consummation of that pursuit are revealingly absent. Vase paintings reveal that the maenads successfully resisted the satyrs' advances. "But the satyrs never attain their desires," writes Lissarrague, describing these assaults, and also "the sexual relationship between satyrs and maenads appears to be impossible."³⁶ In figure 2.2, for example, a maenad brandishing a thyrsus wards off her attacker by thrusting it against his erect penis.

Satyrs were also associated with the cult of Dionysus, a god who served as a conceptual contrast to the order represented by Apollo. Dionysus is most commonly associated with the Bacchic rituals where women would enter into a frenzy or state of delirium.³⁷ In this ritual, sociosexual roles would become reversed, and the *natural order* would fall into a state of *chaos*. In this *imaginary world* the gigantesque genitals/weapons of the satyrs represented neither 'phallic' order, nor the protection of patriarchy. Rather they were a threat to the very fabric of patriarchal society.

In Classical Greece, as in a number of other ancient societies, representations of the penis can be observed to capture both its generative function (phallic order) and its possible disruptive power (phallic disorder). This is perhaps made most clear in the Bacchic ritual, where the social order is *inverted* and an image of the *anti-phallus* is presented—a penis which fails to reproduce and fails to be placed within sociosexual

³⁶ There is some evidence which suggests that the satyrs did copulate with heterae (prostitutes), but this would not disturb the social order, i.e., sex offered by prostitutes is a 'non-generational' form of sexual activity, it is had solely for pleasure by the customer and for economic gain by the prostitute.

³⁷ Lissarrague, "The Sexual Life of Satyrs," 63.

³⁸ For a more detailed discussion of representations of satyrs, see François Lissarrague, "The Sexual Life of Satyrs," in *Before Sexuality: The Construction of Erotic Experience in the Ancient Greek World*, ed. David Halperin et al. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 53-81; Eva Keuls, *The Reign of the Phallus: Sexual Politics in Ancient Athens* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 357, 362, 366, 373, 375.

norms, but is a *duplicate* of the phallus. It is an image in which the phallus is turned against the male, turned against itself (Was this the secret Herodotus referred to?)

Perhaps one of the best descriptions of this social *chaos* is Euripides' *The Bacchae*. A short outline of the play will be helpful. Dionysus, appearing in Thebes, causes the women to go mad, i.e., they began *acting* like men. Pentheus, the king of Thebes, refuses to acknowledge this new deity. Because of this refusal, he is tricked by Dionysus into dressing as a woman in order to witness the female frenzy. His mother and sisters, bearing the 'wands' of the god, mistake Pentheus for a lion in their maddened state and tear him apart. Consider, for example, the following 'frightening' passage:

Then the villages,
furious at what the women did, took to
arms.
And *there*, sire, was something terrible to
see
For the men's spears were pointed and
sharp, and yet
drew no blood, whereas the wands the
women threw
inflicted wounds. And the men *run*,
routed by the women! Some god, I say,
was with them.
The Bacchae then returned where they had
started,
by the springs the god had made, and
washed their hands
while the snakes licked away the drops of blood
that dabbled their cheeks.³⁸



Fig. 2.3

The Greeks left to the modern reader an image of the phallus which becomes its own contrary. The *Bacchae* is a compelling vision of a disordered (re-ordered) universe.

³⁸ Euripides *The Bacchae* 763-768

which is constituted by phallicized women, de-phallicized men and the quasi-monstrous figures of the satyrs (see fig 2 3)

The image of the phallus as a threat and weapon appears again later with the Roman adoption of the god Priapus. With his statue placed in gardens and orchards, and with his oversized genitals (see, for example, fig. 2 4), Priapus not only served the function of a fertility god but was also mythically constructed to be a sexual threat to intruders. The warning is carefully outlined in the *Priapea*:

Thief, I'll bugger you the first time
Try again, and you'll find it in your mouth
And if you come back a third time
I'll try both penalties together
you'll find it up your arse and down your throat
Don't think that what I say
is said by way of jest or playfulness
When I catch a thief three or four times
never doubt it, it goes in his mouth.³⁹



Fig. 2.4

The opposition between anti-sodomitical and sodomitical discourse is strangely paralleled in this ancient division between Apollonian and Dionysian symbolic orders. The satyr, a 'phallic' creature, affords an image of the penis as an *anti-phallus* (images and descriptions of the satyr are strikingly similar to those of porn stars). The Dionysiac cult, connected with the interpenetration of human and animal, cannibalism, 'wild' and 'crazed' women, transgenderism, homosexuality, and other 'unnatural' sexual activities, clearly constitutes the ultimate form of social 'disorder.' The myth of the satyr, like the

³⁹ Eva Cantarella, *Bisexuality in the Ancient World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 146, quoting Cazzaniga, *Carmina Ludicra Romanorum-Pervigilium Veneris Priapea* (Turin, 1959).

concept of the 'sodomitical' that I presented in the last section, offered a symbolic device for the Greeks to separate order from disorder, civilization from savagery, and the 'unnatural' from the 'natural.' It will probably be now clear why this excursion to ancient Greece was necessary. Given that the Greeks made binaries/polarities the basis of representing the world, it is somewhat surprising that only the Apollonian notion of the phallus has been historically transmitted and the 'perversions' of Dionysus have faded into the past.

I recognize that this proposal, that we begin recognizing the existence of the anti-phallus, is controversial. There will certainly be some people who claim that it is not possible to think 'outside' of our phallic symbolic order. The conceptual force of the phallus in our present society is unquestionable but it is imperative that we question what other economies of desire operate 'outside' of the penile-vaginal-phallic imperative. I believe, however, that recognizing that there are distinctions between various representations of the penis and that the penis can be resignified and reencoded with alternative meaning(s), is a richer approach to the question of human sexuality and, as this thesis proceeds, will prove to be a more adequate approach for understanding the gay porn text.

I have developed in this chapter a series of conceptual and theoretical tools. I began the chapter by noting that it is not adequate to apply heterosexist categories to the gay pornographic text. One of the main problems with previous analyses of the pornographic text, and especially gay pornography, is the general tendency to 'code' sexual behaviors immediately as *being* either masculine or feminine. Unfortunately, this

type of assessment has neglected numerous sexual behaviors that have remained 'invisible' in heterosexist discourse. At the same time, there has been a general conflation that has occurred between the sodomitical and 'hypermasculinity'. In other words, *dangerous* sexual activities are immediately aligned with males (thus creating an image of the 'penile terror') and correlatively female sexuality is repositioned in an anti-sodomitical discursive framework (thus creating the image of the 'good girl').

I continued the chapter by a brief history of the pornographic text and suggested that there was a strong correlation between censorship movement(s) and anti-sodomitical discourse. I then proceeded to redefine gay pornography (sodomitical representation) as being a composite of sodomitical moments and sodomitical activities which combine to create the narrative structure of each video.

In the second half of the chapter, I developed a concept of the anti-phallus. The development of the concept of the phallus has in many ways paralleled the development of heterosexist ideology. In order to counter this trend and surmount the incessant conflation of the penis and the phallus, I attempted to reclaim the image of the Dionysian satyr as a symbol of a non-Apollonian, sodomitical, anti-patriarchal, non-heterosexist sexual order. In the next chapter, as promised, I return to the substitute and hyper/masculine theses.

CHAPTER THREE

BETWEEN THE GAPS: GAY SODOMIZERS, SODOMIZERS and SODOMITICAL VOICES

If the project of a deconstructive homographesis can never successfully disentangle itself from the regulatory homographesis against which it would gain some leverage, this only bespeaks the emergence of gay theory from within the symbolic discourse that demands the reification of identities. To write about the cultural discipline of articulating homosexuality with reference to writing is to produce another moment in that same discursive field; but the enterprise of a strategic, oppositional homographesis would hope to make critical difference by attending to the ideological implications of the marking of sexual difference. For to escape both the constrictions of sexuality that is silenced and the dangers of a sexuality inscribed as essential, we must construct retroactively out of various accidents that constitute "our" history a difference from the heterosexual logic of identity propped up as it is by the notion of a disavowed and projected sexual difference in order to deconstruct the repressive ideology of similitude or identity itself.

—Lee Edelman¹

¹ Lee Edelman, *Homographesis* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 22-23

INTRODUCTION

In chapter one I reviewed a variety of feminist and queer arguments and suggested that, given their traditional (heterosexist) binary-based discursive frameworks, both the substitute and hyper/masculine theses are ineffectual approaches to the gay porn text. In chapter two I began to develop an alternative theoretical framework and introduced a variety of terminological distinctions and conceptual devices to bypass the discursive limitations that have restricted analyses of gay pornography. In this chapter I will begin to uncover the discursive "gaps" that have been generated by both substitute and hyper/masculine theorists as a consequence of their approaches. What is implied in both the substitute and hyper/masculine theses is that male sexuality is *always* governed by heterosexist models of gender relations and that various physical positions and sexual activities have the same *meaning* in both a heterosexual and homosexual context. If we accept the notion that sexual relations are constructed by various independent but related sociosexual and sociopolitical practices, then we may well ask if the 'phallic male' within the gay pornographic text is a *duplicate* of the *straight masculine phallic male* that both substitute and hyper/masculine theorists find problematic. I will argue that there are other *devices* within the gay porn text that undermine this association, thus generating an alternative framework of sexual desire and gender relations. In short, I shall demonstrate that gay porn is a representation of both a sodomitical and anti-phallic universe. I shall illustrate that the use of "straight trade" in the gay porn text (an image that substitute and hyper/masculine theorists would both find controversial) subverts the traditional hetero/homo binary and confuses traditional gender binarisms. As a second but

overlapping strategy, I shall then proceed to demonstrate how "dirty talk" functions to give the gay porn text a 'sodomitical voice,' and as such, redefines and redeploys various sexual activities and their *meaning(s)* on a sodomitical discursive axis. One of the most striking features of the debate thus far is its tendency to overlay traditional binarisms on the gay porn text thus focusing exclusive attention on those sexual activities that are articulable within the heterosexist imagination, e.g., anal penetration, while simultaneously neglecting and effacing those activities which are *visible* but 'inarticulable,' i.e. sodomitical moments/activities, e.g., "rimming." In short, it is necessary to ask which *sodomitical moments activities* and sexual identities have been rendered invisible in the debate, and how they function within the gay porn text. This and the following chapter begin to undertake this task.

THE GAY SODOMIZER and HETEROSEXIST DISCOURSE

In the nineteenth-century texts there is a stereotypical portrait of the homosexual or invert: not only his mannerisms, his bearing, the way he gets dolled up, his coquetry, but also his facial expressions, his anatomy, the feminine morphology of his whole body, are regularly included in this disparaging description....Now this image, with the repulsive aura that surrounds it, has come down through the centuries. It was clearly delineated in the Greco-Roman literature of the imperial age....But in its essential traits, the portrait is more ancient still. Socrates' first speech in the Phaedrus alludes to it, when he voices disapproval of the love that is given soft boys, too delicate to be exposed to the sun as they are growing up, and all made up with rouge and decked out in ornaments.²

Is there such a thing as a 'gay sodomizer'? Is there such a thing as an 'active' homosexual or queer? Can queer men *just* have penises or do they all have phalluses? Are queer men just anuses waiting for a 'straight' phallic insertion? The epigraph of this

² Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality* Vol 2 *The Use of Pleasure*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1985), 18-19.

section, although I am using it somewhat anachronistically, suggests that *gay sodomizers* are impossible to locate. They are *bodies* and sexual *identities* that have never existed in history. Gay sexuality/textuality is always found beneath its heterosexual 'top.' Substitute theorists would deny that queer identities can be located in either the 'top' or 'bottom' position and hyper/masculine theorists, such as Simpson, whose argument will be more closely analyzed in the next section, worry that the 'toppers' are too *straight-looking acting* and that these 'topping' images can be interpreted as being both misogynist and homophobic. The 'top' position is conceptually reserved for straight men (the phallus) and the 'bottom' for the female and homosexual (the object). If an individual is found on the 'top,' his position is deemed as a signifier of *straightness, masculinity and dominance*; if found on the 'bottom,' the homosexual's anus is metamorphosed into a vagina.

Traditionally, there is no 'gay top' in the heterosexist sexual universe.

Already we have here begun to make (non)sense of traditional sexual binarisms, even if by simply noting that gay male 'topping' cannot be located within the present heterosexist binary gender matrix. It is not my intention here to suggest that theorists have not recognized that males penetrate other males, but to point out that this desire has not been constructed in terms which do not presuppose that the penetrator is *ipso facto* masculine and the penetratee *ipso facto* feminine. This assumption has mapped the penetrator in relation with the straight male and the penetratee in relation with the straight female, i.e., the heterosexual imperative. The deep-rooted cultural connection between penetration and masculinity in combination with the historical structuring of homosexuality in feminine terms, i.e., all homosexuals are passive, has deeply effected

the ways in which gay desire and gender relations between men can be articulated Dworkin, and others, have failed to recognize what Mario Mieli correctly suggests in *Homosexuality and Liberation: Elements of Gay Critique* "anal intercourse only appears to be a feminization relative to heterosexual sexual dynamics"³ Although Mieli makes no mention of the corollary in his article, it is also the case The masculinization of the penetrator can only be made in terms relative to heterosexual sex But Mieli's observation deserves closer attention. I wish to begin exploring the possibility of *claiming* and *locating* the *gay sodomizer* or, in other words, begin articulating a sexual economy based on the *anti-phallus*. This will be accomplished by identifying various discursive practices which operate to efface the possibility of articulating male-male desire in positive terms The gay sodomizer is locatable within the "gaps" of these various forms of discourse

I am here using the term 'gay sodomizer' to emphasize the double ambiguity of the category. The term picks out both a double deviance and a double reversal The adjective 'gay' in the above phrase emphasizes that 'gayness' has been historically associated with femininity The term 'sodomizer' invokes not only the image of penetration but also a category, as we have seen, of sexual disorder lying somewhere inside/outside⁴ of modern sexual discourse. Moreover, the term 'gay sodomizer,' although I shall on occasion use

³ Mario Mieli, *Homosexuality and Liberation. Elements of a Gay Critique*, trans. David Fernbach (London: Gay Men's Press, 1980), 140

⁴ I here borrow the notion from Diana Fuss's introduction to her anthology *Inside Out*. Fuss writes: "The philosophical operation between 'heterosexual' and 'homosexual,' like so many other conventional binaries, has always been constructed on the foundations of other related oppositions: the couple 'inside' and 'outside.' The metaphysics of identity that has governed discussions of sexual behavior and libidinal object choice has, until now, depended on the structural symmetry of these seemingly fundamental distinctions and the inevitability of a symbolic order based on a logic of limits, margins, borders and boundaries."

Diana Fuss, "Inside/Out," in *Inside Out: Lesbian Theories, Gay Theories*, ed. Diana Fuss (New York: Routledge, 1991), 1

the term 'active homosexual' as a substitute, is far more inclusive. It not only picks out the position of the 'active partner' in anal penetration but also his *desire* (anti-phallic) to perform a multitude of other sexual activities that do not fall within the bounds of present *sexual norms*, i.e., sodomitical activities. As such, the term conceptually includes the heterosexist binary of penetrator/penetrated but is not limited to its construction.

It was only in the late nineteenth century that homosexuals began to be constructed, not only as willing anal/oral recipients, but also as active penetrators. To understand this discursive shift in the history of sexuality, it is essential to recall Foucault's description of the emergence of sexual categories/perversions quoted in the last chapter. What was perhaps obscured in Foucault's analysis of the social construction of the homosexual (homosexuality defined *against* heterosexuality) was the underlying supposition in early theoretical models of homosexuality that gender binaries were equally applicable to homosexuality (and, as we shall see, many homosexuals originally believed this to be *necessarily* true).⁵ Homosexuality was not only defined *against* heterosexuality but was also constructed *within* traditional divisions of gender. The homosexual was aligned with the straight female as it was assumed that homosexuals were passive (the substitute thesis). But having pointed out this *assumed connection* *gender mapping* with the female body, we may well ask to what extent early theoretical models of homosexuality constructed/defined the 'active homosexual' *to be like similar to* the heterosexual male. In order to bring this into focus I would like to quote at length Krafft-Ebing's view on 'active' homosexuality as an example:

⁵ This shall be examined in more detail later in the chapter.

Pederasty is, unfortunately, not infrequent among mankind to-day but still, occurring among the peoples of Europe, it is an unusual, perverse, and even monstrous manner of sexual gratification. It presumes a congenital or acquired perversion of the sexual instinct, and, at the same time, defect of moral sense that is either original or acquired, as a result of pathological influences. Medico-legal science is thoroughly conversant with the physical and psychical conditions from which this aberration of the sexual instinct arises, and in the concrete and doubtful case it seems requisite to ascertain whether these empirical, subjective conditions necessary for pederasty are present. It is essential to distinguish between active and passive pederasty.

Active pederasty occurs -

I. As a non-pathological phenomenon —

1. As a means of self-gratification, in case of great sexual desire, with enforced abstinence from natural sexual intercourse
2. In old debauchees, who have become satiated with normal sexual intercourse, and more or less impotent, and also morally depraved, and who resort to pederasty in order to excite their lust with this new stimulus, and aid their virility that has sunk so low psychically and physically
3. Traditionally, among certain barbarous races that are devoid of morality

II As a pathological phenomenon -

1. Upon the basis of congenital sexual inversion, with repugnance for sexual intercourse with women, or even, absolute incapability of it. But, as even *Casper* knew, pederasty, under such conditions, is very infrequent. The so-called *urning* satisfies himself with a man by passive or mutual onanism, or by means of coitus-like acts (e.g., *coitus inter femora*), and he resorts to pederasty only very exceptionally, as a result of intense sexual desire, or with a low or lowered moral sense, out of a desire to please another.
2. On the basis of acquired pathological sexual inversion
 - (a) As a result of onanism practiced through many years, which finally causes impotence for women with continuance of intense sexual desire
 - (b) As a result of severe mental disease (senile dementia, brain-softening in the insane, etc.) in which, as experience teaches, an inversion of the sexual instinct may take place⁶

To be sure, the label 'active' has very little to do with physical sexual positioning or masculinity in Krafft-Ebing's account. What I wish to stress here is the fact that Krafft-Ebing's description and location of the 'active homosexual' is both '*precise*' (e.g., monstrous, essential, acquired/morally depraved, situational, old debauchees) and

⁶ Richard Von Krafft-Ebing, *Psychopathia Sexualis: A Medico-Forensic Study* (New York: Pioneer Publications, 1953), 603-604, originally published as *Neue Forschungen auf dem Gebiet der Psychopathia sexualis* (Stuttgart: F. Enke, 1891).

'*elusive*' For Krafft-Ebing, the 'active homosexual' could only exist outside of the *natural world*, and if he did *appear* within the ranks of the heterosexual community, it was a 'very exceptional' occurrence. In short, no *healthy* male could be an 'active homosexual'. In other words, the desire to penetrate another man was only a *perversion* of a heterosexual desire for the vagina. There were no links between the straight heterosexual male and the 'active homosexual.' For Krafft-Ebing, the latter of the two *really didn't exist*. In other words, desire could only be understood on a male/female axis and same-sex desire could only be understood as a 'perversion' of heterosexuality. The following crude schematic will help the reader visually locate the *gendered positions* that Krafft-Ebing was willing to acknowledge. But, I would like to immediately add, demonstrating the *force* and *influence* of these early theoretical models, that it also serves to indicate how sexual discourse is presently constructed.

STRAIGHT PHALLIC MALE

FEMALE

"REAL" HOMOSEXUAL
(CONSTRUCTED AS "BOTTOM")

This discursive framework thus fails to capture the following un/dis-covered gendered site

STRAIGHT PHALLIC MALE

FEMALE

**GAY SODOMIZER
(THE "GAY TOP")**

"REAL" HOMOSEXUAL
(CONSTRUCTED AS "BOTTOM")

To reiterate, the purpose of this section is to track the discursive construction of the 'active homosexual'. Although both substitute and hyper/masculine theorists assume a direct mapping between the 'active homosexual' and the straight male, we shall see that this assumed connection is less than clear. The *existence* of the 'active homosexual' cannot be solely understood or described within a singular sexual discursive axis. More specifically, singularly applying the 'hetero versus homo' or 'masculine versus feminine' discursive axis to analyze the construction of the 'active homosexual' obscures the underlying tensions and paradoxes which exist in that very construction. In fact, as I have suggested above, within our present sexual discursive frameworks the 'active homosexual' does not *exist* in positive terms but is only generated within discourse as a *negation* of heterosexuality. But this leads to the question "What do we presently mean by an 'active homosexual'?" I shall begin with a discussion that will demonstrate how influential early thinkers like Krafft-Ebing have been in determining the discursive impossibility of a positively-defined notion of the gay sodomizer, i.e., not in terms of a perversion of heterosexuality. I lead off this discussion with a quote from Professor Opendra Narayan:

[T]he active sexual partner injects infected semen into the anus of the passive partner.. These people have sex twenty to thirty times a night. A man comes along and goes from anus to anus and in a single night will act as a mosquito transferring infected cells on his penis. When this is practiced for a year with a man having three thousand sexual intercoursés, one can readily understand this massive epidemic that is currently upon us.

⁷ Opendra Narayan, quoted in Simon Watney, *Policing Desire: Pornography, AIDS and the Media* (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 111-112.

It is of interest to note that Leo Bersani uses this same quote at the beginning of his article "Is the Rectum a Grave?" Interestingly the first sentence of the quote is absent. Bersani provides a comparison between representations of homosexuals with AIDS and nineteenth century representations of prostitutes and argues that that is the 'threat of sexual passivity' that most disturbs the heterosexual male community. Yet clearly,

The 'activeness' of homosexuality, as Simon Watney has insightfully claimed, is theorized on a model of contagion or seduction.⁸ The *growing recognition* of the active homosexual (there are, of course, many earlier examples of heterosexual 'panic' aimed at the 'gay sodomizer' but none as extensive, I believe, as today) parallels the emergence of the AIDS pandemic. HIV-positiveness has become (via homophobic discourse) ideologically transmissible and transferable to, and from, the active homosexual's body. 'Active homosexuals' are seen as alien bodies invading the safety of heterosexdom and the site of HIV transmission. To further illustrate this point, I shall borrow one of Watney's examples. Citing the work of George Gordon, he quotes

[America is] gripped with fear, loathing and hysteria over the relentless increase of the unexplained killer disease AIDS. What is terrifying its leaders is that the national mood is only a twitch away from focusing that hysteria onto a human target—the millions of gay men who until now have flaunted their 'gayness' before the straight society. When Rock Hudson admitted he had AIDS, the gay community exploited the fact with near joy. At least they had a public figure, a hero who was one of them. The biggest name in AIDS. The reality has been that it has focused attention on AIDS and also on the causes of it. The gay parades are over. So too is public tolerance of a society that paraded its sexual deviance and demanded rights. The public is now demanding to live disease-free with the prime carriers in isolation.⁹

Cindy Patton, in her (in)appropriately¹⁰ entitled article "Tremble, Hetero Swine," provides another example of this mentality

The way they [homosexuals] look at it [HIV/AIDS], "I've got it, so I may as well go for the gusto and sodomize myself and others into oblivion. And women too."

once the first sentence is placed back into Opendra Narayan's comments, it is the 'active homosexual' that is the 'source' of the contagion. One may well ask why Bersani locates the 'heterosexual panic' specifically in homosexual passivity (here assuming that straight men no longer fuck men) and neglects to question the 'threat' that may be posed by the 'active partner'.

⁸ Watney, *Policing Desire*, 46-57.

⁹ George Gordon, "Haunted by the Epidemic of Fear," *Daily Mail* (31 May, 1985), quoted in Simon Watney, *Policing Desire: Pornography, AIDS and the Media* (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 81.

¹⁰ I here bracket off the 'in' as it is not the case that AIDS is a gay man's disease.

There has been a call in some homosexual publications to go and have sex with as many women as possible so that they can inject it into the general population¹¹

A similar attitude that active homosexuals *victimize* individuals predated the AIDS pandemic. Once it appeared, the culture of the active homosexual was socially reconfigured as a constant 'threat' to *innocence*. In other words, the 'active homosexual' was not discursively picked out as an alternative gendered social position or sexual identity in relation to other *willing* homosexuals, but as a source or cause of degeneracy. Watney claims:

We should recall that the very notion of "the homosexual" as a distinct type of person, defined primarily in relation to particular sexual acts, emerged in the last century at the interstices of a host of overlapping discourses concerning sickness, contamination...and was regarded as the most concrete evidence of the results of indecency, depravity and uncleanness. The category of "the homosexual" personified such concerns, revealing an unhealthy sexual appetite in an unhealthy body.¹²

In Dworkinian terms an 'active homosexual' is an oxymoron. It would be, for her, almost like saying a 'gay heterosexual.' For Dworkin, a male homosexual's desire for another male can never be *direct* but must always be *mediated* by the 'female/feminine' body. "Without her as a fetish... the male homosexual would be unable to experience his selfhood."¹³ To *actively* desire a male for Dworkin can thus only mean two things: (a) the act of desiring another *masculine* male is a desire to demean women,¹⁴ (b) the act of

¹¹ Antonio, "AIDS: The Real Dangers of Casual Transmission (interview with David Kupelian), *New Dimension*, 1989, quoted in Cindy Patton, "Tremble, Hetero Swine!" in *Fear of a Queer Planet*, ed. Michael Warner (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993): 158.

¹² Watney, *Policing Desire*, 49.

¹³ Dworkin, *Pornography*, 128.

¹⁴ There has been a long-standing tradition that homosexual behavior *necessarily* affects the position of women and in some sense degrades their social positions. In the eighteenth century, Jeremy Bentham wrote: "A more serious imputation for punishing this practise [sic] that the effect of it is to produce in the male sex an indifference to women, and thereby defraud the latter of their rights. This, as far as it holds good in point of fact, is in truth a serious imputation. The interest of the female part of the species can claim just as much attention, and not a whit more, on the part of the legislator, as those

desiring men is the desire to emasculate another man, thus demeaning the feminine (thus, degrading women). All males can only use their penises to assert power. Penetration permits a male to assert his sexual phallic power. Sexual power, for Dworkin, is always based on a comparison between males and females, the masculine and the feminine. When a male fucks another male he is demonstrating his power over women.¹⁵ Thus, there can be no such thing as an 'active homosexual,' i.e., his desire is never aimed at another male but can only be located as an attack on both females and the feminine. Dworkin unquestioningly affirms the long-standing heterosexist trope that the 'active homosexual' (by not *really* being an 'active homosexual') is a threat. Consider

Those gay men of our time who offer ancient Greece as a utopian model are only confirming that, for them, the continued scapegoating of women and the sexual exploitation of less powerful males would be an insignificant price to pay for a comfortable solution to their own social and sexual dilemma. As adult men, they would have the freedom as they understand it, the freedom of the sexual predator, women, girls, and devalued males would continue to be the prey. This moral bankruptcy is not in any sense unique to the homosexual man, rather, it is a part of what they have in common with all men.¹⁶

of the male. A complaint of this sort, it is true, would not come with a very good grace from a modest woman, but should the woman be estopped from making complaint in such a case it is the business of the men to make it for them. This then as far as it holds good in point of fact is in truth a very serious imputation.

Jeremy Bentham, "An Essay on 'Pederasty'," in *Philosophy and Sex*, ed. Robert Baker and Frederick Elliston (New York: Prometheus Books, 1984), 361.

The assumed necessity of heterosexual copulation continues to surface throughout the following centuries. Krafft-Ebing, for further example, writes

In turnings who feel toward men like women, out of desire and lust. In such female-men there is a *horror femineæ* and absolute incapability for sexual intercourse with women.

Richard Von Krafft-Ebing, *Psychopathia Sexualis* (New York: Pioneer Publications, 1953), 605.

In both of these quotes we once again see the social imperative of the penile-vaginal relation. Both male and female sexuality is defined by its reproductive potential. Those failing to follow this reproductive standard, i.e., homosexual men, are seen as *hating* women rather than choosing to live an alternative lifestyle.

¹⁵ Dworkin, *Pornography*, 23.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 62.

Dworkin's position clearly capitalizes on existing social fears of the 'active homosexual'. The 'active homosexual' is not only presumed to *prey upon weaker* men, but Dworkin's analysis subtly reinscribes and reaffirms a connection between homosexuality and child molestation, i.e., the construction of the masculine homosexual permits/promotes child abuse. The (gay) "sexual predator" in the above passage is grammatically separated only by a semi-colon from Dworkin's assertion that women, girls and devalued males are prey. Her careful and deliberate choice of wording and use of grammar tends to conceptually conflate any difference between gay and straight men. Dworkin in this passage uncharacteristically (usually she specifies 'homosexual') describes gay men as "adult men". The term 'predator' is strategically mirrored in the latter half of the sentence with her assertion that these individuals will continue to be "prey." As such, the reader may easily infer that Dworkin is suggesting that gay men *directly* abuse young girls.

At the same time, Dworkin eliminates (although she does not explicitly make mention of it above) the possibility of anal penetration as a source of pleasure for both the penetrator *and* the penetrated. She does, however, clearly distinguish two types of 'homosexuals,' i.e., the 'predator' and the 'weaker' male. In her final sentence, the possibility of the *independent* existence of the 'active homosexual' (the male who actively desires another male, i.e., an anti-phallic sexual economy) is swept away and collapsed into her monolithic concept of maleness and masculinity, i.e., all males are predators. It is at this point that Dworkin can proceed to claim that the 'homosexual' is a threat to women. It would seem that Dworkin can only construct the *real* homosexual in terms of

the 'devalued male' and, as I have said, this results in a discursive elimination of the homosexual 'top'. For Dworkin, all *active* homosexuals are only oppressors of women and have very little to do with homosexual desire.

In broad terms, then, the 'active homosexual' has never been actually recognized within heterosexist conceptual frameworks. At best, 'active homosexuality' has been understood as an *accident* (being sexually separated from women forces the individual to have homosexual sex), as a sign of moral depravity, as a weakness in old men, as a result of mental disorders, as a result of masturbation, a trait common to other races, as an exceptional occurrence, as a site of contagion, as a threat to the innocent, and as a means to degrade and demean women. Beyond these negative descriptions, an 'active homosexual'/gay sodomizer is *unrepresentable*, i.e., in positive terms. But how have gay theorists dealt with this (un)representability? In the following section I shall take up this question.

THE GAY SODOMIZER and QUEER THEORISTS

Most gay men avoid issues of masculinity like the plague. But we are haunted by them. We have in many ways been emasculated; first by the general society and then by a movement that is so focused on either gender equality or on certain narrow definitions of feminism that any acting out of masculine roles is forbidden. The interdiction doesn't mean the issue goes away. Wearing leather and finding a place where masculine behaviour among men is welcome is often a new and liberating experience. It follows, too, that women who are attracted to sadomasochism find this a place where they can explore parts of their identity they have been prohibited from investigating by the "politically correct."¹⁷

Let us first consider, as promised earlier, Mark Simpson's analysis of gay porn who, like Stoltenberg, upholds the hyper/masculine thesis. Simpson, in *Male*

¹⁷ John Preston, *My Life as a Pornographer and Other Indecent Acts* (New York: Masquerade Books, 1993), 133.

Impersonators: Men Performing Masculinity, assumes that gay porn must sidestep the representation of masculinity in order to present a more positive view of gay identity (an example of the hyper/masculinization thesis). In short, Simpson assumes that the representation of masculinity in gay porn duplicates a straight form of masculinity and, as such, is innately homophobic. Simpson begins his analysis by asking how gay porn portrays masculinity at precisely the same moment as representing gay sex, given the fact that it is a world of penises. Simpson comes to the conclusion that gay porn "has typically responded to this challenge by not trying at all and submitting instead to the logic of straight masculinity and disavowing anything faggoty, i.e., anything 'gay'." ¹⁸

Unfortunately, Simpson fails to give any details as to exactly what he means by 'faggoty' or 'gay.' Yet, the absence of 'faggoty' content (whatever is exactly meant by that term) leads Simpson to make an even stronger claim. He states that gay porn is, in fact, not about gay men having sex but rather straight men having gay sex.

Gay porn narratives for Simpson are based on "situational homosexuality," i.e., *straight men* having sex because of the lack of women. He concludes from this that gay porn is a *negation* of gayness. Because of gay porn's failure to capture 'faggotyness' or what Simpson may feel is a *gay identity*, he concludes that "what gay porn does is to represent a world in which men have sex with men *where there is no such thing as gay*." ¹⁹ Simpson unwillingly concedes that there are signs that gay porn is moving away from these *straight-defined* sexual scenarios and slowly introducing (what he believes to

¹⁸ Simpson, *Male Impersonators*, 132

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 133

be) gay-positive content, e.g., *More of a Man's* politicized content. The general tone of his argument, however, is best captured in the following:

And so we are left with a quandary: what should be the most obviously, unapologetically, *explicitly* gay images—that of men offering their penises to each other—becomes something not very gay at all, something that instead goes out of its way to distinguish its men from 'those damn queers': a position rather similar to straight male porn.²⁰

There are several problems with Simpson's argument. First of all, and certainly to be considered, is Simpson's limited analysis of the ways in which masculinity is performed and subverted within the context of a gay porn narrative. Clearly, Simpson ignores the potentially subversive power of homosexual sex within the heterosexualized narrative of gay porn. In fact, Simpson privileges the assumed stability and existence of 'straightness' at the expense of 'gayness'. He dismissively acknowledges in a set of parentheses that the only thing gay about gay pornography is the sexual acts.²¹ Simpson does, however, offer a positive definition of what he believes comprises a pro-gay video in his discussion of Jerry Douglas's *More of a Man* (1990). According to Simpson, 'good' gay porn is defined by "showing gay politics," "gay visibility/showing yourself," and "specifically the showing of the central character's acceptance/enjoyment of being fucked which leads to his embrace by the gay community, rather than his disposal by the top man and the gay viewers, as with the classical type of gay porn."²² Although I agree with Simpson (and others) that the showing of anal pleasure can subvert straight masculinity (one example of a sodomitical activity), I fail to recognize why this is a *necessary*

²⁰ Ibid., 134

²¹ Simpson states in parenthesis
apart from the sex itself, of course

Ibid., 132

²² Ibid., 137

condition for a pro-gay video. Am I to assume that individuals are *more* gay when being fucked and *less* gay when fucking? Are mutual masturbation or non-genitally based sexual activities less worthy gay/sodomitical sexual practices than anal intercourse? Are they less subversive?

Simpson's distinction between gay and straight masculinity is here less than useful. In fact, as Simpson admits (as did Gough in a somewhat different context), the straight masculinity performed in gay porn is "a kind of 'straightness' that even straight men do not possess."²¹ Although I agree that questioning gay men's masculinity (and hypermasculinity) is intellectually provocative, not only in relation to the construction of internalized homophobia but also with respect to misogyny, it may be more helpful to emphasize and recognize the important differences that do exist between straight and gay forms of masculinity on different discursive axes. As I suggested earlier, any discussion of 'gay masculinity' should not necessarily entail an analysis that initially assumes a male/female sexual axis. Needless to say, just because two things are similar, i.e., a man *penetrating* a woman, a man *penetrating* a man, it does not logically follow that they are the same, nor does it logically follow that they *necessarily* share the same sociosexual and sociopolitical discursive histories and genealogies of thought (as Foucault, as we have seen, has so adeptly argued). This point should be stressed as it is important to note that those who argue that the type of masculinity portrayed in gay porn narratives is a form of *straight* masculinity have, in effect, conceded to gay porn critics a premise which is false.

²¹ Ibid., 135

To provide a framework within which we will be able to re-think Simpson's argument, I would like to turn to a passage from Chris Straayer's "The Seduction of Boundaries " Straayer, discussing the work of Janet E. Haller, writes:

In 'Misreading Sodomy. A Critique of the Classification of "Homosexuals" in Federal Equal Protection Law', Janet E. Haller describes how US sodomy laws, which in almost half of the states determine anal intercourse, fellatio and cunnilingus to be criminal behaviour for heterosexuals and homosexuals alike, are discriminately [sic] applied to homosexuals only. Felony sodomy virtually becomes homosexual sodomy. The act of sodomy is conflated with and comes to define homosexual status. Homosexuals, then, are those identified by this act while all others remain unmarked and presumed heterosexual.

Quoting Haller, she continues

Sexual orientation identities are produced in highly unstable public discourse in which a provisional class of 'heterosexuals' predicates homosexual identity upon acts of sodomy in a constantly eroding effort to police its own coherence and referentiality.

Resuming her own discussion, she proceeds by stating

Inadvertently containing both sexually inactive homosexuals and secretive homosexual sodomites, the default category of nonhomosexuals, or heterosexuals, encourages closeted behaviour and internalised homophobia. Of course this category contains heterosexuals who engage in anal intercourse, fellatio and cunnilingus, but, as Haller states, 'The criminality of sodomitical acts involving persons of different genders is simply assumed out of existence'. Within these terms, the unity of heterosexual identity relies on both the knowing of homosexual sodomy and the unknowing of heterosexual sodomy.²⁴

As Haller has argued, the discursive construction of locating gayness in the anus, as the one who is sodomized, has effaced the *possibility* of heterosexual sodomy (anti-sodomitical discourse). Ironically, it would appear that it has also removed the possibility

²⁴ Chris Straayer, "The Seduction of Boundaries: Feminist Fluidity in Annie Sprinkle's Art/Education/Sex," in *Dirty Looks*, ed. Pamela Church Gibson and Roma Gibson (London: BFI Publishing, 1993), 164, quoting Janet Haller, "Misreading Sodomy: A Critique of the Classification of 'Homosexuals' in Federal Equal Protection Law," in Julia Epstein and Kristina Straub, eds. *Body Guards: The Cultural Politics of Gender Ambiguity* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 352.

of a 'gay sodomizer' ²⁵ Recent scholarly emphasis on the subversive power of the male anus, although aimed at demonstrating one of the ways in which gay porn undermines straight masculinity, unconsciously reiterates heterosexist sexual boundaries. We might take a different line of approach. In fact, we find a tacit assumption in the view that Straayer is dissecting, as well as in Simpson's argument, that the penis is a signifier of 'straightness.' The penis is equated with the phallus, and from this point of view, the anti-phallus is non-existent. The gay sodomizer becomes unthinkable. Simpson's argument leads to the implicit conclusion that there can never be a 'gay top' to a 'straight' or 'gay bottom'. The anus can never be constructed as the *object* of gay desire but can only be seen as a substitute for the more desired vagina. Gay male sexuality is inadvertently and directly aligned with straight female sexuality, both gay males and straight females become 'bottoms' for the mythical straight male 'top'.

The gay male's penis becomes a paradox in this present discursive sexual phallic economy. Insofar as gayness has become synonymous with passivity, the gay sodomizer has become a contradiction in terms. Straayer, for our purposes, unfortunately fails to note a further distinction between the 'knowing' of homosexual sodomy and the 'unknowing' of heterosexual sodomy. Straight phallic masculinity can only 'know' of sodomized homosexuals (policing the borders of "sex"). It must consistently negate the possibility of a gay sodomizer in order to maintain the sanctity of the straight man's anus.

²⁵ Straayer continues her argument by invoking the work of Eve Sedgwick. The quote she employs is also relevant to my own argument. Sedgwick, as Straayer suggests, attributes as much potency to unknowing as to knowing. Sedgwick writes:

Insofar as ignorance is ignorance of a knowledge - a knowledge that may itself, it goes without saying, be seen as either true or false under some other regime of truth - these ignorances, far from being pices of the originary dark, are produced by and correspond to particular knowledges and circulate as part of particular regimes of truth.

Eve Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 8.

(and other parts of the male body) Straight phallic masculinity can never know itself as the object of desire. As a counterpart to this conception of homosexuality, as Straayer did mention, straight phallic masculinity must also make unknowable any form of sodomy within its own ranks. The sodomizer becomes an empty sexual category.

The conceptual inability to imagine a gay sodomizer is evident throughout Simpson's argument. As we have seen, Simpson postulates that gay-positive videos must necessarily contain *moments* in which anal pleasure is somehow glorified, but he neglects to define who would be providing the source of pleasure. Given that the *act* of penetration, as Dworkin has insisted, defines the individual as masculine/straight, we must ask of Simpson (who appears to be unconsciously aligned with Dworkin) what *type of penetrator body identity* he is imagining must exist to be a 'top' for his 'bottom'. In a 'politically correct' understanding of gender, Simpson adopts a monolithic model of masculinity, to which the *real* gay man must be opposed (there is an underlying assumption in Simpson's argument that more effeminate gay men are somehow less misogynist than masculine gay men). For Simpson, "those damn queers" must be effeminized to be 'acceptably gay', he inverts present gender dynamics, simplistically believing that this resolves the issue of *representations of 'straight' masculinity* in gay video porn. By almost flippantly dismissing the homosexual sexual activity in gay porn videos, Simpson concludes that it is "a position rather similar to straight male porn."²⁶

I would like to emphasize Simpson's failure to *recognize* the gay sodomizer. His failure to do so forces him to conclude that the gay porn narrative is based on 'situational

²⁶ Simpson, *Male Impersonators*, 134

homosexuality ' The performance of 'straightness' operates, according to Simpson, as a disavowal of gay sexuality The trouble with Simpson's interpretation is that it recreates the traditional sexual divide between penetrator and penetrated in terms of heterosexual sexual norms. The penetrator is thought to be *ipso facto* masculine and straight

Simpson is not alone Leo Bersani, in his much-quoted article "Is the Rectum a Grave?" argues that "to be penetrated is to abdicate power "²⁷ However, as Kaja Silverman has noted, Bersani's argument "hinges upon a disturbing naturalization of the connection between penis and mastery "²⁸ The characteristic feature of Bersani's argument (unlike Simpson, who wishes to maintain the anus as a site of gay *identity*) is his offering of a decentered subject and the 'elimination' of the object Bersani claims "For it is perhaps primarily *the degeneration of the sexual into a relationship that condemns sexuality to becoming a struggle for power* As soon as persons are posited, the war begins. It is the self that swells with excitement at the idea of being on top, the self that makes of the inevitable play of thrusts and relinquishments in sex an argument for the natural authority of one sex over the other "²⁹ As was the case with Simpson, Bersani assumes that all 'top' positions are indistinguishable and thus can only be constructed in 'straight male' terms

A further example of this incessant 'topless bottom' mentality appears in Brian Pronger's *The Arena of Masculinity* Pronger defines what he terms "assertive fucking" as follows:

²⁷ Leo Bersani, "Is the Rectum a Grave?" in *AIDS: Cultural Analysis, Cultural Activism*, ed Douglas Crimp (Cambridge, MIT Press, 1988), 212

²⁸ Kaja Silverman, *Male Subjectivity at the Margins* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 350

²⁹ Bersani, "Is the Rectum a Grave?" 218

Assertive fucking is the act of fucking someone. This is known as the "active role" in which the traditional perspective is that of entering another human being; it is masculine, it is the position of superiority. Fucking someone is traditionally a sign of mastery over them; the penis becomes the weapon that guarantees submission.³⁰

Having defined 'assertive fucking' as such, Pronger shortly thereafter gives the following explanation of how anal intercourse subverts masculinity. He writes:

There is a video entitled *Take It Like a Man*, in which the featured activity is anal fucking (a not unusual preoccupation of gay pornography). The sexual activity takes place while voice-overs enhance the action. The speaking is short, clipped, and of a masculine, deep-voiced nature. While one fellow is being fucked, the voice says "Give it to him, give it to him good. Fuck him like he's never been fucked before." Presenting the ecstasy of the incarnation of homoerotic desire, the irony here is intense and very serious. In the first place, "it" is the fucker's cock. *The word "cock" refers to the masculine symbolism of the phallus, embodied in the penis.* When the fucker is giving his cock to the fuckee, he is giving his embodied masculinity to his catamite. The man who is getting fucked is entered by the embodied masculinity of the fucker in a clear overwhelming of his own masculinity. *In this act his cock is rendered insignificant, or at most tangential, as he is overwhelmed anally by the masculine force of his partner.* "It," then, is not only the embodied manhood of the cock — "it" is also the *event* wherein the masculinity of the man is paradoxically undermined. [Italics mine]³¹

Perhaps one reason why anal subversion arguments have gained such popularity in the literature is that they shy away from incorporating/including any consideration of the *materiality of the penis* or the ways in which the penis can be resignified in alternative sexual discourses. In other words, the penis is always perceived as the *source* of social oppression (conflated with the phallus) and must be castigated rather than reformed or reformulated. Penis-equals-phallus theoreticians, like Dworkin, have so captured the theoretical and conceptual marketplace that any form of discourse which suggests that the penis may not necessarily be equated to the phallus has almost been

³⁰ Pronger, *The Arena of Masculinity*, 138

³¹ Ibid., 139-140

rendered mute. Something is certainly wrong in anal subversion arguments. As it presently stands, the subversion of masculinity is dependent upon, and necessarily entails the need for, a "phallic penetrator."

Both Bersani and Pronger are well aware of this *drawback*. By way of response, Bersani draws a comparison between blacks and Jews and their oppressors, (i.e., "blacks and Jews don't *become* blacks and Jews as a result of that internalization of an oppressive mentality"³²) and gay men. Unlike 'blacks' and Jews, Bersani continues, gay men constantly run the risk of *becoming* their own oppressors. Bersani partially resolves this dilemma by espousing the "value of powerlessness"³³ which he believes can be recognized at the moment an individual is anally fucked. Pronger similarly concedes that there is a *danger* that masculinity may, in fact, not always be subverted. "Fucking another man can be experienced as merely an egocentric violation of another's masculinity, acting as a confirmation of one's own (orthodox?) masculinity."³⁴ In each of these cases there is an assumed power dynamic in which 'straight masculinity' is thought to be dangerously masculinizing gayness, i.e., the gay masculine man *becomes* the oppressor. Anal subversion theorists do not question whether or not there is a threat posed to 'straight masculinity' itself by a homosexualization of masculinity.³⁵

³² Bersani, "Is the Rectum a Grave?" 209

³³ Ibid., 217

³⁴ Pronger, *The Arena of Masculinity*, 140

³⁵ It is intuitively true that the threat of the 'invisible enemy' in some way generates more fear than the enemy that is seen. In a homosexual context, a 'masculine' man's masculinity cannot be defined against female femininity, but is defined against masculinity itself, and in a 'Butlerian' sense the copy undermines the original. As Butler argues, "The parodic repetition of 'the original' reveals the original to be nothing other than a parody of the *idea* of the natural and the original." Bersani and Pronger, however, are too caught up in defining the 'real' gay man as feminine/oppressed/victim/"powerless" to see the possibilities in threatening the status quo through masculinization.

Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 31

In summary of this brief conceptual and discursive review of the nonrecognition of the gay sodomizer, let me make clear that I am claiming that this conceptual "gap" predisposes theorists to make the erroneous connections between 'gay masculinity,' i.e., the gay sodomizer, and forms of 'straight' male masculinity. The emphasis on the penis/penetration functions to obscure the many other sexual activities in the gay porn text. This discursive "gap" precludes the notion that the fusion of masculinity and homosexuality on the body of the gay sodomizer blurs the distinctions between both traditional conceptions of gender and sexual divisions. It would seem intuitively true then that this blurring of sexual and gender categories would also generate a series of redescriptions and renegotiations. Thus it would seem necessary that we begin looking *beyond* the traditional binaries of 'top'/'bottom, penetrator/penetratee, masculine/feminine, powerful/powerless, etc., and refocus our attention on other sodomitical moments and activities which have remained conspicuously absent in the 'debate.' In the following section I shall examine the use of "trade" (which is effectively the most *heterosexualized phallic male image*) in gay porn to begin making the transition away from heterosexist binarisms to a sodomitical discursive axis (axes) and to demonstrate that the traditional binarisms that have been used to analyze this *straight male phallic image* in the gay porn text are too limited.

STRAIGHT OR GAY? CONFUSING CATEGORIES

Emergent 1: a rising unexpectedly 2: rising out of or as if out of a fluid 3: arising as a natural or logical consequence 4: newly formed or prominent

—Webster Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary

The relationship between a fairy prostitute and his male customers emblemized the central model governing the interpretation of male-male sexual relationships. The term trade originally referred to the customer of a fairy prostitute, a meaning analogous to and derived from its usage in the slang of female prostitutes; by the 1910s, it referred to any "straight" man who responded to a gay man's advances. As one fairy put it in 1919, a man was trade if he "would stand to have 'queer' persons fool around [with] him in any way, shape or manner." Trade was also increasingly used in the middle third of the century to refer to straight-identified men who worked as prostitutes serving gay-identified men, reversing the dynamic of economic exchange and desire implied by the original meaning. Thus the term trade sometimes referred specifically to "straight" male prostitutes, but it also continued to be used to refer to "straight" men who had sex with queers or fairies for pleasure rather than money³⁶

The use of *trade* in gay porn brings many of the questions that I have been raising into focus. In the porn industry the term 'trade' is used to describe 'straight-defined' porn stars who perform in gay videos ("gay-for-pay") The participation in gay sexual activities by some performers does not necessarily guarantee that these performances are a reflection of their personal sexual desires While some critics of gay porn may argue that the use of trade in gay porn is homophobic (especially supporters of the hyper/masculinization thesis), and misogynist (substitute theorists may suggest that this demonstrates how certain actors are 'treated' like women), I wish to resist such interpretations. Certainly attempts have been made to define 'gayness' as a distinct sexual

³⁶ George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940* (New York: BasicBooks, 1994), 69-70

category (thus giving *trade* its significance) While the 'category' is useful for many social, political, and philosophical reasons, it nevertheless must be pointed out that it is still fundamentally artificial. In the following, I shall provide a discussion of turn-of-the-century homosexual identities in order to contextualize the concept of trade, borrowing heavily from the work of George Chauncey I shall then proceed to make a series of terminological shifts to resituate trade within sodomitical discourse and argue that the use of trade, in fact, destabilizes hetero/homo binaries and confuses traditional gender binarisms

The term 'trade,' as seen above in the epigraph of this section, has had varying definitions Interestingly, these changing definitions have reflected social reorganizations and reconstructions of gender and sexuality within the last century George Chauncey, an historian at the University of Chicago, has carefully outlined early definitions of various homosexual identities at the turn of the century. Significantly, Chauncey argues that these identities did not originally operate within a homosexual/heterosexual binary.³⁷ Sexual

³⁷ Although Chauncey does acknowledge the work of Trumbach in his introduction, he dates the emergence of a strict hetero-homo binary almost two centuries later than Trumbach's analysis suggests this transition began to take place But here I would like to emphasize that although the homo/hetero binary evolved much later, for at least two centuries the tension between sodomitical and anti-sodomitical discourses was having its effect on the construction of sexuality (which eventually, as Chauncey notes, would evolve into a hetero/homo binary) Chauncey does acknowledge in parentheses

[T]he precise terms by which men involved in such subcultures [sodomitical] understood themselves and distinguished themselves from others must be analyzed with care, threads of historical continuity may link the "molly houses" Alan Bray and Randolph Trumbach have located in eighteenth-century London and the Bowery resorts in late nineteenth-century New York, but much more work will need to be undertaken before we can establish their existence or analyze their significance

Chauncey, *Gay New York*, 12

Interestingly, Chauncey notes that in the early twentieth century it was the rejection of the ideal of the family that created a 'bachelor subculture' Although I can not go into a careful comparison of both Trumbach's and Chauncey's works here, I would just like to note that the 'traditional' heterosexual dyad and the gender relations that are thought to be constructed by that dyadic relationship, have been enormously unstable even in recent history Most notably the sodomitical/anti-sodomitical, heterosexual/homosexual, masculine/feminine, male/female sociosexual discursive axes are far more intricately inter-related than a great deal of modern sexual discourse has acknowledged As both Trumbach and Chauncey have stated, a great

behavior, Chauncey argues, was based on the individual's gender identity rather than his/her sexual object choice. Within a sociosexual framework that emphasized gender characteristics rather than the biological sex of the individual, it was far easier for men to have sex with other men as long as the object of their desire was 'feminine.' Thus, at the turn of the century, the existence of the *fairy* (an effeminate man) posed no threat to gender norms. Chauncey states

He was so obviously a "third sexer," a different species of human being, that his very effeminacy served to confirm rather than threaten the masculinity of other men, particularly since it often exaggerated the conventions of deference and gender difference between men and women. The fairies reaffirmed the conventions of gender even as they violated them: they behaved as no man should, but as any man might wish a woman would.³⁸

This early social quasi-acceptance of the fairy, the most radical *representation* of homosexuality, would not endure. First of all, not all men with a homosexual orientation sought to construct their identities on a masculine/feminine axis. "Whereas fairies' desire for men was thought to follow inevitably from their gender persona, queers [masculine gay men] maintained that their desire for men revealed only their "sexuality" (their "homosexuality"), a distinct domain of personality independent of gender."³⁹ But while masculine queer identities were emerging, other social changes were taking place that directly affected the social acceptance of any form of homosexuality.

Chauncey, although only analyzing New York City, notes the ways in which urban geography, class, religion, economics, racial tensions, migration, immigration, the

deal more research has to be done in these fields. I would suggest, however, that further work into historical gender constructions would lead to the uncovering of a highly complex, non-binary system. The problem, as I have been arguing in this thesis, is that we are ill-equipped presently to *recognize* these gender positions.

³⁸ Chauncey, *Gay New York*, 57

³⁹ Ibid., 100

Depression, World War I, Prohibition, and social reform movements began to alter and reconstruct gender and sexual relationships. The intersection/overlapping of these enormous social changes, Chauncey argues, had the effect of producing a crisis in middle-class definitions of masculinity. The result of this crisis, Chauncey states, was

The insistence on exclusive heterosexuality [as a] response to the crisis in middle-class masculinity precipitated by the manly comportment of working-class men and the subversion of manly ideals and sexualization of male social relations by the fairy. But heterosexuality became even more important to middle-class men because it provided them with a new, more positive way to demonstrate their manhood. Sexual style had long been a crucial aspect of gender style; both sexual aggressiveness and sexual control—as well as the ability to propagate and support children—had served as markers of manliness among different groups of men. But by the late nineteenth century, sexual personality—or "sexuality"—had emerged as a distinct domain of personhood and an independent basis for the assertion of manliness. Middle-class men increasingly conceived of their sexuality— their heterosexuality, or exclusive desire for women—as one of the hallmarks of a real man.⁴⁰

Notably, the emergence of the 'masculine heterosexual' man was not singularly defined by his heterosexuality. Chauncey also observes that the constant redefining of males/females and masculinity/femininity, and the *need* to maintain these sexual and gender distinctions in light of this masculine crisis, had the consequence of an increased social emphasis on the male body. Muscularity, masculinity, and heterosexuality thus became the defining terms of a "real man."

Although Chauncey continues by demonstrating the enormous visibility of gay identities in the first half of this century (and their eventual veiling), I shall not outline that portion of his argument here. What is significant for our purposes, however, is the fact that early homophobic attitudes were ostensibly aimed at 'feminine homosexual

⁴⁰ Chauncey, *Gay New York*, 116-117.

identities.' As Chauncey repeatedly emphasizes, homosexuality was overwhelmingly understood as, and thought to be represented by, the *fairy*. The *visibility* of this early gay identity thus gave law enforcement agencies in the anti-homosexual crusades of the 1930s easy targets (later to be followed by attacks on less visible gay men, i.e., queers, e.g., in 'gay' bars). The masculine gay man (which, unfortunately, Chauncey pays less attention to in comparison with 'effeminate forms' of homosexuality) remained *hidden*

If in fact, as Chauncey has argued, straight male sexuality in the beginning of this century began to be defined by a male's appearance *as a man masculine* in combination with his *exclusive heterosexuality*, how did phallic patriarchy deal with the construction of a gay man *who looked like a man masculine* but was *homosexual*? Chauncey, in the final pages of his book, only quickly comments on social reactions to the masculinized gay man. One of the significant ways in which the masculinization of homosexuality affected straight forms of masculinity (in contrast with today's politically active gay constituency, these masculinized gay men were still, for the most part, *socially invisible* during this historic period) was to socially legitimize the position of straight men as "protectors" of the family against sex deviants (an example of anti-sodomitical discourse). As Chauncey states

[T]he long-standing public image of the queer as an effeminate fairy whom one might ridicule but had no reason to fear was supplemented by the more ominous image of the queer as a psychopathic child molester capable of committing the most unspeakable crimes against children. The fact that homosexuals no longer seemed so easy to identify made them seem even more dangerous, since it meant that even the next-door neighbor could be one. The spectre of the invisible homosexual, like that of the invisible communist, haunted Cold War America. The new image was invoked to justify a new wave of assaults on gay men in the postwar decade. As police efforts to control homosexual activity intensified, the number of reported "sex crimes" surged dramatically. This provoked yet greater public alarm and thus further escalation of police efforts. The number of men

arrested for homosexual solicitation in Manhattan alone rose from about seven hundred a year in the 1930s to more than three thousand a year in the late 1940s.⁴¹

But we may well ask, within the context of gay porn videos (where the performers are not *portrayed as invisible monsters or child molesters*), how 'straight masculinity' can still be defined and maintained on a male/female sexual axis (an axis based on difference) when *most of the signifiers of modern straight masculinity are represented* (and in many cases taken to an extreme) as no longer defining *straightness*. How are constructions of straight masculinity and phallic patriarchy maintained when the very signifiers used to separate men and women, e.g., body size, musculature, sexual positioning, become *non-signifiers* of sexual subjecthood and sexual activities within a homosexual context? How can the male body be defined solely as a 'sexual subject' when it is so easily redefined as a 'sexual object'? (Are we already in a post-masculine/feminine-gendered age and theory is just scrambling to catch up?) Why are 'trade' actors in gay porn considered 'straight'? Are they something else?

The introduction of gay porn into the video market in the early 1980s provided pornographers with more capital to invest in their creations. One result of this increased wealth was the financially augmented ability of producers and directors to provide incentives to 'straight' men to perform in gay porn videos.⁴² During the early 1980s, the star system was beginning to be firmly established in the gay porn industry and, as John Burger notes, was facilitated by directors (most notably Travis and Sterling) who introduced and starred a series of straight-identified performers (e.g., Rick Donovan,

⁴¹ Chauncey, *Gay New York*, 359-360

⁴² It is not my intention here to suggest that 'straight' men did not appear in earlier forms of gay pornography, but rather that economic incentives radically increased the number of straight-identified men working in the gay porn industry

Brian Maxon, Tony Stefano, Tim Lowe, Matt Ramsey, and Tom Brock) in their videos.⁴³

Burger castigates the performance of these porn stars (and other trade) for failing to have 'mutual' and 'reciprocal' sexual activities with their co-stars, and thus interprets this infusion of 'straightness' to be homophobic

The straight-identified actors of this period mimic the qualities of being unattainable and invincible....Even when they give over to the animal urge of fucking a hole, even if it belongs to another man, they never let on that such an act is typical of their behavior. The other man is never given the satisfaction of attainment, he has been attained unreciprocally. There are few instances in which two straight-identified men meet. When they do, and one is sexually vanquished by the other, it is still understood that their hetero-masculinity has not been violated. The two men each honor the other's unattainability and invincibility, regardless of what has just transpired. The sex comes and goes without ever being intimately approached or romantically embraced. The inherent homophobia has been left intact.⁴⁴

The use of trade in gay porn has surprisingly never been considered a form of gender/sexual transgression. The acts of defiance, unattainability and invincibility that 'trade' perform within gay videos are somehow maintained, in the mind of Burger and most likely others, on a binary axis of gay versus straight (and more indirectly on a binary of masculine versus feminine, male versus female). Yet it cannot be denied that the sexual activities of these performers are *atypical behavior*, i.e., they "fit" traditional definitions of neither homosexuality nor heterosexuality.

Bruce Rodgers, in *Gay Talk: A (Sometimes Outrageous) Dictionary of Gay Slang*, more precisely designates the sexual performance of trade as "passive activists."⁴⁵ The term picks out the nonreciprocal nature of the sexual encounter. While many

⁴³ Burger, *One-Handed Histories*, 25

⁴⁴ Ibid., 26

⁴⁵ Bruce Rodgers, *Gay Talk: A (Sometimes Outrageous) Dictionary of Gay Slang* (New York: Paragon, 1972)

commentators such as Burger appear to be caught up in the rhetoric of mutuality and romance, I see no reason why all sexual encounters need be either mutual or romantic. Moreover, I question their notion of what constitutes reciprocation. For example, if an individual enjoys fellating another individual but does not enjoy being fellated himself, does it necessarily follow that (with Burger's notion of sexual reciprocity) he *must* be fellated for the sex to be considered mutual? Similarly, I do not think it follows that if one individual fucks another, that that person must in turn fuck his fucker for the sex to be considered mutual (recall my disagreement with Stoltenberg's position). In this sense, the representation of trade permits the presentation of an alternative sexual dynamic. Certainly, even in a case where trade is used, it is always an interaction between two bodies; to suggest that this necessarily represents non-mutual sex ignores the fact that individuals often prefer to perform certain acts (and not others). In short, we should not be 'rating' sexual activities by a heterosexist standard.⁴⁶ Burger's notion that the representation of unromantic sex in gay porn is homophobic seems to spring from the traditional homophobic attack of 'promiscuity' and assumes an innate connection between sex and emotions (reminiscent of Steinem and Barry's positions).

In point of fact, it cannot be denied that trade do perform homosexual sexual acts. Even if they do maintain the guise of their heterosexuality, that heterosexuality is compromised by their acts. For example, in his interview with Dave Kinnick, who is a

⁴⁶ This raises an interesting question of how sexual mutuality should or can be defined within heterosexual relationships. Certainly it is not the case that different sexual activities can be exactly duplicated within different-sex couples. The question of what is 'mutual' and 'fulfilling' heterosexual sex has been explored by many different writers, poets, feminists, and academics throughout history. However, the fact that gay men (and lesbians) can have totally mutual sex (that is their sexual acts can be duplicated) perhaps appeals to some deep-rooted but impossible heterosexual fantasy of 'totally reciprocated' sex. As a result, theorists who attempt to determine the factors of what is 'good gay sex', I believe, overly emphasize this possibility.

long-time critic of gay porn and the editor of the *Adam Gay Video Guide*, porn star Bill Marlowe discusses 'trade' in Sterling Videos, which Kinnick suggests are "famous for glorifying straight trade".

I've worked with a few guys who said that they were straight, but it was their first film or two so they *still had those barriers up*—talking about pussy this and pussy that. But now I see them at the sex club right alongside me sucking somebody's dick, and I laugh, "So much for pussy" [*Italics mine*]⁴⁷

Later in the interview, Marlowe continues by discussing the sexual orientation of porn star Chance Caldwell.

Two months ago I did *Male Seduction* for Gino Colbert. Worked with Chance Caldwell. What a sweetheart! Now *he's* genuinely bisexual, but really fun. Unfortunately, I got him at the end of the day after he'd done both a gay scene and a bi scene, so I got, like, drippy thirds...⁴⁸

Speaking of Kris Lord

He's very straight—but I don't consider him trade too much [Dave Kinnick here asks "What's the difference?"] He doesn't have that attitude. He's very sincere and didn't wear his heterosexuality as a badge.⁴⁹

In thinking about trade, and keeping in mind the prevailing view that gayness is somehow located in the anus, one may be tempted to conclude that using straight performers to engage in homosexual activity is homophobic. i.e., gay men are not *good enough*. In the first quote, however, we see that the *strict construction* of sexual identities is less fixed than is often believed. In fact, Marlowe's comments would suggest that the use of the binary opposition gay/straight often crumbles once an individual's *barriers* come down (Do individuals only have to "wear" one sexual identity?) To be consistent with the logic of the argument that I have been offering thus far, it would be

⁴⁷ Kinnick, *Sorry I Asked*, 257

⁴⁸ Ibid., 258

⁴⁹ Ibid., 258

inappropriate to maintain the binary opposition of gay and straight. If, as I suggested earlier, we push our analysis away from gay/straight divisions and widen it to an oppositional discourse of sodomitical versus anti-sodomitical, the category of 'trade' is evacuated of meaning. Even if trade performers only engage in certain sexual activities (e.g., penetrating, being fellated, etc.), all of these sexual activities *are* sodomitical. Consider, for example, the career of Chance Caldwell, mentioned above. He performs in all three 'major' genres of pornography, i.e., straight, gay and bisexual. The question, then, is "Is the use of 'trade' in gay porn subversive or homophobic when viewed on a sodomitical discursive axis?"

From the viewpoint of sodomitical discourse, there is a shift away from *presently constructed sexual identity statements* to *behavior* (bear in mind that the term sodomizer does not pick out a 'precise' sexual identity but emphasizes sexual acts). The use of trade in gay porn denaturalizes and confuses the categories of both heterosexuality and homosexuality. What I am suggesting here is that any evaluation of the use of trade in gay porn must not be made in terms of what sexual activities they do *not* perform. Such an emphasis would only reinscribe heterosexist definitions of sexuality and efface the fact that the use of 'trade' transgresses modern sexual boundaries (i.e., *real men* don't have sex with men).

There is a further reason to dismiss the notion that the use of trade is *ipso facto* homophobic. It is untrue that all people's sexual desires and likes are the same, and to assume that the sex represented in gay porn must always be constructed with a *tit-for-tat* mentality is counterintuitive and limiting. Indeed, on the basis of the kind of conceptual

apparatus I have been suggesting, the term 'trade' becomes a misnomer. What the term 'trade' obscures is the representability and existence of the "heterosexual sodomizer."⁵⁰ It is also connected to a social unwillingness to accept bisexuality as a possible sexual alternative, and moreover, to recognize its subversive potential.⁵¹ Finally, it incorrectly designates certain sexual practices as being *straight male* even if performed on male bodies and, moreover, devalues those gay men that *only* enjoy being 'passive.'

I would like to grant immediately that my terminological shift of defining 'trade' as 'heterosexual sodomizers' does not provide an adequate response to the last question I raised. But it does begin to shift the discussion in the right direction. I have tried to reveal that there is a presumption that individuals who only engage in specific sexual practices, even when performed in a homosexual context, can be directly mapped *into* heterosexual sexual practices. This is, of course, the substitute thesis. The substitute thesis, however, fails to place any emphasis on the sodomitical nature of the acts themselves. Ironically, the very sexual acts performed that define gay pornography as 'gay' are dismissed by substitute theorists (such as Dworkin) as inconsequential. Although I redefined 'trade' as 'heterosexual sodomizers' in the last paragraph, I would like to collapse the category further. In short, my strategy is to re-inject gay sex (a sub-set of the sodomitical universe)

⁵⁰ The term 'heterosexual sodomizer' is an oxymoron. Heterosexuality is defined against sodomitical discourse. What I wish to stress, however, is the 'sexual anxiety' that is generated within the heterosexual institution by picking out such a category. Not only would the 'heterosexual sodomizer' confuse sexual performances/activities within the heterosexual matrix in relation to male/female sexual dynamics, but the 'heterosexual sodomizer' is not restricted by/with the genitalia of their partners. As such, the category confuses both heterosexuality and homosexuality as distinct sexual categories.

⁵¹ For a more detailed discussion of the subversive potential of bisexuality see Clare Hemmings, "Resituating the Bisexual Body: From Identity to Difference," in *Activating Theory: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual Politics*, ed. Joseph Bristow and Angelia R. Wilson (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1993), 118-138; Jo Eadie, "Activating Bisexuality: Towards a Bi/Sexual Politics," in *Activating Theory: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual Politics*, ed. Joseph Bristow and Angelia R. Wilson (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1993), 139-168.

back into the debate. In the introductory chapter of the appropriately named book *Reclaiming Sodom*, Jonathan Goldberg, discussing Foucault's distinction between the sodomite and homosexual, remarks

[S]odomy as a designation for acts does not thereby designate persons: *a sodomite is anyone who performs the acts involved*. The supposed definitional clarity that separates persons according to sexual orientations or identities is not something the term delivers, neither in the codes nor in contemporary imaginings of the act [italics mine]⁵²

We are now in a position to make a further terminological and conceptual shift. By invoking the definition of the sodomite we are able to begin unwrapping 'contemporary imaginings' of what defines trade in gay pornography. The use of trade disarticulates and destabilizes the heterosexual/homosexual binary. In an important sense, trade is not an invasion of 'queer space' but rather, viewed differently, a sodomitical incursion of 'straight masculinity'. It would seem that both substitute and hypermasculinist theorists, despite the sexual acts that trade perform, do not have any difficulty in *locating* the trade's sexual and gender identities, i.e., defining them as straight, simply because there is a 'physical' correlation in (hetero)sexual positioning. But once we break from the assumption that particular sexual acts can only be defined in terms of heterosexual sex, the acts that 'trade' perform clearly redefines them as *sodomizers*.

The conceptual ability of 'trade' to maintain their 'straightness' during homosexual sex is contingent upon society's continued inability to imagine and recognize both the gay sodomizer and the heterosexual sodomizer (recall Straayer and Haller). Considering the

⁵² Jonathan Goldberg, ed. *Reclaiming Sodom* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 4.

importance that the modern construction of male patriarchal heterosexuality has placed on defining *real men* as neither effeminate (not female) nor homosexual (heterosexual imperative) in order to maintain male social privileging, the emergence of the masculinized gay male (now visible) has effectively eliminated the assumed connection between masculinity and heterosexuality. If, then, the masculine male body can no longer automatically *signify* its relation to the heterosexual institution (and the female body), it would seem to follow that the masculinization of gay men presents a threat to heterosexual constructions of gender difference because the *signifiers* of that difference can no longer be defined as significant gender markers. In other words, the individual who constructs himself as the *most phallic sexual subject* can easily be reduced by the gay male gaze (and also the female gaze) to an object. The hyper/masculine body, which is presently assumed to confer sexual subjecthood within a heterosexual gender matrix, loses its authority when represented in an all-male context. It presents an alternative 'universe' of sexual and gender disorder. If, in fact, the defining feature of straight male masculinity rests on the sole act of penetration, by which straight men assert their sexual subjectivity (and this, in my opinion, is flimsy to begin with), then it is possible to suggest that the gay male or heterosexual female counter-demand to be fucked, i.e., to *assert* his or her desires rather than being an object of the desirer, would force a further renegotiation of what masculinity *means* and how it *can be defined* within various discursive axes of gender and sexuality. The binary of masculine and feminine may, in some senses, still be operative, but the conceptual understanding of the way in which this binary functions will not be hierarchical. Trade is an emergent gender category.

Within the larger and more inclusive category of sodomy, we can recover and explore those aspects of gay sex that remain disarticulated by the discursive frameworks of substitute and hyper/masculine theorists. Another method by which we can further reenvision various sexual activities in a non-hierarchical theoretical framework is to push our analysis away from assumed heterosexist binary constructions, which often gain their strength from visible similarities between straight and gay porn, and focus attention on the audible component of gay pornography. In the following section I shall examine sodomitical *links or combinations* via the dialogue of gay porn narratives. I shall argue that the audible component of gay porn resituates and informs the visual component by accentuating and stressing for the viewer the sodomitical nature of the visual narrative. I shall maintain that the dialogue functions to shift the *phallic definition of the penis*, i.e., generative and heterosexual, away from its heterosexist roots and redefines it within a sodomitical universe. I shall also begin to stress the other multitude of penile/body and body/body links and combinations which are produced outside of the penile-vaginal order.

DIRTY TALK: THE SODOMITICAL "VOICE"

[T]here is the disease that is marked by a constant excitation, which restrains the act while indefinitely prolonging the mechanisms of stimulation. In the male version of this kind of affliction—designated as satyriasis or priapism...The patients lose then "all restraint of tongue as regards obscenity" "53



Fig. 3.1

One of the ways in which gay porn links or combines various sodomitical moments/activities is its use of dirty talk.⁵⁴ Linda Williams, in her book *Hard Core: Power, Pleasure and the "Frenzy of the Visible,"* suggests that "It is worth asking...just what difference sound made when it became a necessary ingredient in the genre. To a certain extent, sound functions in hard core the way it functions in mainstream narrative cinema: to situate and give realistic effect to the more important image."⁵⁵ The dialogue and especially the dirty talk in gay porn, in addition to William's suggestion, operate not only to situate the image but also serve to undermine and subvert its heterosexualized iconography. The dialogue, which is often used initially to heterosexualize the characters in gay porn, is subsequently negated by their dirty talk. In other words, the links between the 'voice' and the 'image' are continually being aligned and re-aligned, creating new

⁵³ Michel Foucault, *The Care of the Self: The History of Sexuality Vol. 3*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1986), 113-114.

⁵⁴ I would like quickly to concede that the verbal exchanges between performers, in relation to the total length of the film, are minimal (not including the dirty talk). However, there has been a distinct tradition of scripted dialogue in gay porn since the early 1970s. It would also appear that storylines are again becoming more complex in recent video releases, e.g., *The Abduction* (1991, Falcon), *Abduction II: Conflict* (1993, Falcon), *Abduction III: Redemption* (Falcon, 1993), *Jumper* (1991, HIS Video), *More of a Man* (1990, All Worlds Video), and notably the films of Chi Chi La Rue.

⁵⁵ Williams, *Hard Core*, 172.

connections while others dissolve. It is relevant that gay porn dirty talk *names* the *conjunction* of different anatomical parts of male bodies enacting sexual activities, thus linking and aligning various desires which have remained inarticulable within the heterosexual imagination.⁵⁶

In order to emphasize the importance of 'naming,' and in a somewhat ironic twist, I would like to (mis)appropriate Dworkin's fourth tenet of male-supremacist ideology. Following the work of Mary Daly, Dworkin asserts that the "power of naming enables [individuals] to define experience, to articulate boundaries and values, to designate to each thing its realm and qualities, to determine what can and cannot be expressed, to control perception itself."⁵⁷ The dirty talk in gay porn is a prominent signifier of sodomitical pleasures (as is often the case in heterosexual pornography⁵⁸). The significance of dirty talk becomes clearer if we reconsider that the 'homosexual/sodomite' has been characteristically constructed (outside of the pornographic text) as both invisible and *silent* within our heterosexual society. As Lynn Miller argues, although I am using her assertion out of context, "Silence denies the existence of difference and allows the dominant culture to believe that it is the only

⁵⁶ The dirty talk in the video may also be dubbed rather than spoken by the actors themselves. In most cases the dirty talk directly 'reflects' the sexual activities of the performers. There are other occasions, however, in which the dirty talk is 'naming' an activity that does not correspond to the visual component of the video (badly dubbed videos). I would suggest that these moments offer an interesting example of the 'layers' that exist in the gay porn narrative. Even though the dirty talk is not, in these situations, 'directly' describing the sexual activities in the video, it functions to overlay other sodomitical moments (audio) onto the visual component.

⁵⁷ Dworkin, *Pornography*, 17.

⁵⁸ Linda Williams writes:

It is a common conceit of much early-seventies hard-core pornography that the woman prefers the sight of the ejaculating penis or the external touch of the semen to the thrust of the penis inside her. She will frequently call for the money shot in the familiar "dirty talk" of the newly voiced genre, saying, for example, that she wants the man to "come all over her face," to see it come out of his "big hard cock," or to feel the hot substance spurt on some specific part of her body.

Williams, *Hard Core*, 101.

culture. It also, if chosen by a gay person [a sodomite], effectively denies the self Silence in regard to homosexuality [sodomitical practices] has become a major form of repression, both by the homosexual [sodomite] in choosing it and by the culture at large in denying homosexuality [sodomitical practices] "59

To weave together the above comments and better illustrate the ways in which gay porn gives a 'voice' to sodomitical desires, let us consider the first scene from Catalina's *The Look* (1988, Catalina) The scene opens with a wide angle shot of Jeff Stryker and 'Mr. Holmes' (playing a non-sexual role) in a garage Jeff Stryker, playing a mechanic, is shirtless, wears tight-fitting jeans, and has smears of grease on his face and torso. Shortly thereafter, Kevin Wiles and Ricky Turner enter the yard behind the garage to play baseball The following is a transcription of the scene

PART I

S: Well, Mr. Holmes, these exotic sports cars are kinda expensive to fix, ya know So, it'll probably cost you about four-hundred dollars just to replace this windshield

H: Yeah, I don't care. I want it ready so I don't have to worry about it when I get back from Acapulco I can just drive out of here, O.K.?

S: Well, I'll probably have to order it from San Francisco So, it'll probably take about forty-eight hours.

H: All right, order it Could you wash it for me too? Don't fuck around with it. O.K.?"

PART II

[The scene cuts to an outdoor shot of a steel door The door begins to open and in walks Kevin Wiles ("W") and Ricky Turner ("T") Turner is playing one-handed catch They have come to Brad's (Jeff Stryker) yard to play baseball]

W: Hey, listen, Brad's going to get pissed off if he catches us back here again

T: Oh, fuck Brad. ..Here, catch

W: Thanks.. I always get to pitch Ready?

T: Wait a minute wait a minute

W: Listen, what d'ya think he'll do if he catches us? Do you think he'll get pissed?

T: Oh, fuck Brad

⁵⁹ Lynn C. Miller, "The Politics of Self and Other," in *Queer Words, Queer Images: Communication and the Construction of Homosexuality*, ed. Jeffrey Ringer (New York: New York University Press, 1994), 212

[Cut to a shot of Stryker walking into the frame (he is at the door of his garage). Although both Wiles and Turner are evidently not young (by law they must be eighteen years old or over to appear in the video), they are playing the part of two teenage boys.]
S: Hey! What the fuck are you kids doing back here?¹
T: We're only playing baseball
S: Fuck that baseball. Get the fuck out'a here. I told you. I don't want you fucking around here.
T: All right Brad, we'll go in a minute
S: Get your asses out'a here
T: All right. come on. throw the ball. Fuck him.

PART IIIa

[After Turner hits the baseball it presumably ends up in the garage of Jeff Stryker.]
S: That's it. I told you motherfuckers
T: Oh, shit
S: Get the fuck in here. I'll show you!
W: What'd we do?
S: I fuckin' told you to quit playing fuckin' ball around the yard. I fuckin' told you guys to quit playing ball out there. Now look at what you fuckin' did. [This is, of course, a lie as the windshield was already broken.]
W: Shit
T: We did that?
S: Yeah, you broke the fuckin' windshield.
W: Told you we were going to get into trouble. I told you.
S: I want some fuckin' money. You gotta pay for that window.
T: All right we'll pay for it. How much does something like that cost?
S: About four or five hundred fuckin' dollars
W: Hey, we can get it for you all right
S: I either want the cash now or I'll call your fuckin' dads. Or, better yet, get the fuck over there and I'll just beat your ass. My customer is gonna come in here and his fuckin' windshield is busted. Just get the fuck over there and I'll whip your fuckin' asses.
T: Who goes first?
S: You get in the car and whip the little shit's ass first...Get over his knee
W: Am I getting spanked?
S: Get the fuck over his knee now!
W: No, this is ridiculous. We can pay for the window
S: Get the fuck over his knee. I'll call your dad. You ain't got the money to pay for the window. Get over his knee. Now, beat his ass. I mean really beat his ass. I want to watch. Beat it. Hit it hard. Yes, really slap that ass. Slap that ass.
W: Come on please. it hurts
S: It don't hurt. Spank that ass
T: I don't want to hurt him

PART IIb

S: You won't hurt him. Slap that ass. Take them pants off. He can't feel that.

W: Take my fuckin' pants off?

S: You broke that damn windshield. Take them pants off. I'll spank that ass. Take them pants off. Get those pants off. Get 'em off. Get them pants off. Do you want me to tell your dad? Now, really spank his ass. I'll beat his ass. You can whup that ass harder. I'll bet your dad will whup that ass. Beat that ass. He broke that window. Beat that ass. Yeah, beat that ass. Beat that ass. Slap it. Slap that ass. I wanna see that ass red. Beat that ass. Hit that ass harder.

W: C'mon, please stop.

S: Yeah, beat that ass. Make it red. Spit on that ass. I want it to sting. Slap that ass. Hit that ass.

W: C'mon Brad. It's my turn to spank him. He was playing too.

S: Yeah, you both were at fault. Your turn.. Get your pants off.

T: You don't want to spank me, it's silly.

PART IIc

S: It's both your fault. It's your turn. Get them pants off. It's your turn. He's had enough. Get them pants off. Make that ass rosy red. Yeah, whip that ass. Hit it hard. Hit that ass hard. Whip that ass. Spit on that ass again. Spit on that ass and make it sting. Whip that ass. Whip that ass. You haven't whipped that ass hard enough. Make that ass hurt. Whip that ass. Beat that ass. C'mon, beat that ass. That ain't enough. Let me hold these balls down here so that he can beat it. He's hard. Whip his ass. He likes it.

T: You're getting hard too.

S: I ain't hard. You're full of shit.

T: It is. Your dick is hard. Beat his ass. I ain't hard.

PART IIId

T: I can think of something better to do than whipping my ass.

S: Yeah, what's that?

T: Let me show you, if you stop.

S: How are you going to do that?

T: I know something that could make you feel a lot better than this.

S: All right, let's see what is going to make me feel a lot better than this. This better be good. That window is expensive. Get down on your knees. This better be good.

T: Oh, god, maybe I should get spanked.

S: No, you're suckin' this dick. Suck that dick. Put it in your mouth. Suck it. Go down on that dick. Swallow that dick. Suck that dick. Suck that dick. You broke that window. You'll suck that dick. Put that dick in your mouth. Suck it. Suck that dick hard. Suck it hard. I like that. Take it all. Take it all. You can take it all. You can take all of this dick. Suck that. Suck that cock. Go down on that cock. You're going to be suckin' that dick, so you watch him. Suck that dick. Get down there. Lick that cock. Lick that cock. Put it in your mouth. Fuck that cock. You broke the window. You both suck my cock. Suck that cock. You broke the window together. You suck that dick together. Yeah, fuckin' suck.

that dick good Get into that dick. Suck it Suck that dick. Get the fuck over there Come on. Come on you little shit. Get up here.

W: Why?

S Spread those legs

W What are you going to do?

S Stick this big cock up your ass

W No...that will kill me

S Before I stick it up his asshole, get the fuck over here and lick it

T No

S Lick this asshole Get the fuck over here and lick it

T No.

S I'm not playing fuckin' games Lick his asshole Lick it. Lick that fuckin' asshole. Stick your tongue way up that asshole. Now, you lick my asshole. Lick my asshole. Stick your tongue up my asshole again I want to feel that tongue up my asshole Lick his asshole Tongue it Tongue his asshole Get that asshole ready I'm gonna fuck it. Yeah, tongue that asshole You like that, don't yeah? Fuck my asshole with your tongue. Stick it in and out You ready for my cock in your asshole? I'm really going to give it to you. I'm going to fuck you good. I'm going to fuck you good. You like that Fuck him in his mouth Suck his cock Suck it all Put all of that cock in his mouth You like that big dick up your ass You want me to stick that big fuckin' dick up your ass, don't yeah? Suck his cock for him. Make him feel good (See Fig. 3.2). I never thought it would be so good. You like paying for the window, don't yeah?

W: Fuck me...fuck me harder.

S Tell me how much you like this big cock

W: I like your cock.

S: I told you that I was going to spank your ass. I'm going to beat your ass I'm going to beat your ass You like this big dick up your ass, don't yeah? I knew you'd like this dick. I'm going to put this cock all the way up your ass

W: Yeah .yeah [Cum shot All three cum. The shot is in slow motion and taken from multiple angles.]

T Are we through yet?

S. Shit, that wasn't even a down-payment. Get down here. I'm fuckin' you now You guys got a lot more to do before that window is paid for

T But, I thought that the window was paid for

S Get your ass over here Get it across the car. I'm tired of fuckin' around Get your leg up there Let me see that pretty little asshole Yeah, that is a tight asshole

T. Oh God

S Get down there and lick my ass. You want me to ram this cock up your ass, don't yeah? Yeah, you like that? You're a bad boy Like that tight ass [Cum shot is in slow motion and taken from



Fig. 3.2

multiple angles] Shoot that load. Shoot that load. Shoot that load. I'm going to cum [He cums.]

W: God, I'm so sore.

Part IV: Concluding scene

[Phone rings.]

S: Hello. Yeah, Mr Holmes, I called San Francisco and they said that they got the windshield in for your Jaguar. So by the time you get back from Acapulco I should have it in. It'll be four hundred dollars like I told you it would Yes, it's a pleasure doing business with you Mr. Holmes. Thank you. Good-bye

[The boys look at each other with a literal (almost comical) "we've been had" expression]

In the above transcription, I have divided the dialogue into four sections, the third of which I have further subdivided into 'a,' 'b,' 'c,' and 'd' In Part I, we first encounter, as I have mentioned, Jeff Stryker and Mr. Holmes in a garage This immediate association with mechanics and cars (especially because they are talking about a sports car) is used as a narrative tool to heterosexualize the body of Jeff Stryker Stryker's porn *image* was intended to be very *masculine straight trade* and this further enhances the heterosexualization of the scene. In a sense, this video begins with the premise that no gay men are mechanics, and the viewer is encouraged to suspend his disbelief Indeed, the theme of the mechanic is quite common in gay porn videos, e g , *Hot Male Mechanics* (1985, Hot Video), *Davey and the Cruisers* (1989, Vivid), *Full Service* (1989, Laguna), *Dick's Service Center* (1991, Back Alley Video), *Fast Idle* (1991, Titan Productions), and *Mechanics on Duty* (1991, Hendrix Productions) There may be a sense in which this *image* or temporary mimicking of the heterosexual male (hegemonies), if taken independently and decontextualized from both the visual and audio narratives of the video, could be construed as homophobic and/or misogynist This type of interpretation of the text, however, would be a mistake It is necessary that we note the

transition(s) and alignments (especially those that vanish) that take place within the narrative structure of the sequence

In Part II, we are immediately introduced to Kevin Wiles and Ricky Turner, both of whom are portraying teenagers who are *daring* to play baseball in the yard behind the garage. As with Stryker, both of their bodies are being heterosexualized by their association with an activity that is thought to be traditionally that of the 'straight male.' Entering the yard to play baseball, they know that they are trespassing ('something boys would do'). Wiles states that, "I always get to pitch," emphasizing the traditional role of the male in sexual activity, i.e., pitcher=inserter. Although, as we see in the transcription he does not maintain his role as a "pitcher" (schisms). They are both disobeying an authority figure, which is commonly associated with the socialization of young men. The theme of baseball players is also a common trope in gay porn videos, e.g., *These Bases are Loaded* (1982, Catalina), *These Bases are Loaded II* (1994, Catalina).

Part IIIa, although it contains no explicit sexual activity, can be best described as a *sodomitical transition*, i.e., the verbal and visual transition from an anti-sodomitical to sodomitical universe. Playing on notions of intergenerational sex (almost a complete social taboo in our society), accompanied with the threat of punishment (Stryker becoming a 'Daddy'), subsequent spanking, voyeurism, and hints of SM, the traditionally accepted distancing of male bodies begins to collapse. This section of the scene plays on the idea of an (older) authority figure giving orders with the threat of punishment if not obeyed. As the scene progresses, however, there is a growing 'realization' that the punishment will not be "normal" but sexual. Until this point, the video has mostly

contained long shots of the stars. As the video becomes more *sodomitical*, the camera begins to probe various body parts of the performers, generating various sodomitical moments and activities. Most notably, extreme closeups of the hand slapping the butt of Wiles (at this point he is still clothed) begins to replace the wide-angle shots which characterized the earlier scenes. The camera incessantly frames intense closeups of both Jeff Stryker and Ricky Turner's faces as they look down at Wiles's butt (a sodomitical activity). This section of the film emphasizes the various *linkings* and *combinations* of the hand and butt. The butt is being both slapped, massaged, and rubbed (sodomitical activities). The sexual dynamic(s) of this scene is/are interesting. At this point, in fact, it is not Stryker who is doing any of the slapping. Although Turner has supposedly been coerced into punishing Wiles, the camera's attention to his eyes offers the viewer a hint of his sexual pleasure. And while Turner's pleasure is ostensibly mediated by the commands of Stryker (as perhaps is the viewer's), those commands also operate as a form of *authoritative consent* and *means of access* to an activity which would otherwise essentially be denied. Spanking or slapping is a feature common to many gay videos as a sexual activity in its own right, e.g., *Backstage Pass* (1994, Hothouse), *Dormitory Initiation* (1994, Control T Studios).

Part IIIb and Part IIIc are marked with reversals. The *real* world is replaced by *fantasy* or, in other words, the 'phallicized' atmosphere of the scene is transformed into an anti-phallic universe. The wide-angle shots which characterized the first half of the scene are now almost exclusively replaced with medium or extreme closeup shots of varying body parts. The visual dramas of the undressing/baring of Wiles, Turner and Stryker

begin to unfold before the viewer's eyes. Both Wiles and Turner reverse their roles, Wiles becomes the spanker and Turner the spanked (they are 'subject-objects'⁽⁴⁾). In response to being spanked, Turner becomes erect and *accuses* Stryker of being sexually aroused. Music begins to play. While the first half of the video could be characterized by the heterosexualization of their bodies, the second half of the video functions to subvert their initial imitations and performances of heterosexuality. This is but one example of the ways in which previously aligned moments in the text 'vanish' as new connections are being made.

Part III d infuses homosexual/sodomitical desire into the scene. Turner's appetite (although he does not explicitly state that he has had previous homosexual encounters it is inferred) to do more than *just be spanked* and make Stryker "feel a lot better" is made explicit. As Turner begins to suck on Stryker's cock, the accompanying music grows louder. The scene breaks out into an explosion of sexual activity or, in other words, a 'frenzy' of sodomitical activities. That Stryker is constantly commanding, ordering, describing, asking, telling, and listing a multitude of body *combinations* resituates the scene within a sodomitical universe (there are also numerous sodomitical activities and combinations which he fails to 'name'). From this point on, and until section IV of the

⁽⁴⁾ Without the mark of sexual difference, it is possible to envision the 'subject-object'. Rather than collapsing the two terms into conceptual oblivion, the hyphen serves to reinforce the conjunction/fusion of these two binary opposites. The fusion of the two terms permits the conceptual conjunction of two originally unassociated symbols or activities. As a result, any assertion of sexual subjecthood/masculinity by virtue of having a penis would have the correlative effect of asserting one's sexual 'objecthood/masculinity'. But the assertion of both positions 'simultaneously' generates a third term, i.e., a new symbol or sexual site. Malehood and masculinity are relocated as the object or fetish of desire *as well as* their traditional positions as the subject or source of desire. The collapse of the subject and object, I would suggest, is one of the defining features of an anti-phallic sexual economy. This suggestion is not counter-intuitive. Examples of this form of 'fusion' range from metamathematics, science studying itself as an object of inquiry, humans studying themselves as human, etc. Queer studies itself is dependent on the notion of fusion. A simple example of the way in which a 'subject,' by being a subject, becomes an object, is the profession of stripping.

scene, there are no further non-sexual references. The dialogue is exclusively aimed at describing the sexual activities of the performers and listing the *combinations* of various body parts (chasms)

Gay porn videos with dialogue rarely deviate from the structure of the above scene. The opening of a scene usually operates to masculinize/heterosexualize the performers and then proceeds to confuse and subvert the 'heterosexual' identities of those very characters. Consider, as a second example, the first scene of Falcon Studios' *Deep in Hot Water* (1989, Falcon). Early one morning, Cal Jensen, playing a hot tub repairman clad in tight jeans and a black t-shirt, wakes a sleepy-eyed Rex Chandler. Chandler, within minutes, will have invited the unsuspecting Jensen into his home. The following is a transcription of this scene and is accompanied by two stills (Figs. 3.3 and 3.4)

C: Hello.

J: How are you doing? My name is Cal. I'm here to fix your hot tub.

C: Right. Follow me. I'll show you where it is.. It's right down there under these steps. Glad you're here early. Got some buddies of mine coming over later.

J: Oh, really...I don't see anything wrong with your hot tub. Somebody forgot to turn the heater on.

C: O.K. I can't believe that I called you all the way out here just to flip on a switch. Well, if you've got time, there is something I'd like to show you inside.

J: I'll make the time.

C: Put your tool box down over there. Why don't you take a look at this?



Fig. 3.3

Music begins

[They begin the sexual action]

C: Okay. Yeah. Suck that cock. That's it.. That's it...[phone rings] Fuck the phone...Eat my ass. Yeah, lick it good. That's it.. I'm really glad that you came by early. That feels good. You like that ass, eh?

J Yeah .Nice ass

C Oh yeah, I love that tongue...Work that ass...Would you like me to fuck you with this dick? ..I'll make you wait for it. I bet you didn't know what you were getting into coming over here . Fuck you hard

J I want you to fuck me. Fuck my ass

C Beg for the cock Gonna beg for the cock? [Chandler at this point is fingering Jensen]

J Come on. Stick that big dick up my ass
Oh shit Come on fuck me. Fuck me
Come on Stick that dick in my ass. .That dick is so big shit it's so big...damn that dick feels good.. fuck my ass ..shit shit...fuck my ass with that big dick.

C. Can you take my cock?

J Fuck. yeah. fuck me. yeah .shit...
Come on Your dick feels so good in my ass...shit shit... Fuck me

C Oh, it feels so good

J. Yeah.. It feels good It feels good.. That dick is so big .Fuck me . Shit your dick is so big. That dick is so fuckin' big... That feels so good in my ass... That's it. Come on, fuck me .Come on, fuck me... I want your big dick in my ass ...Come on fuck me.



Fig. 3.4

[They ejaculate simultaneously]

The opening dialogue of this scene attempts to heterosexualize both Chandler and Jensen (although perhaps to a lesser degree or less successfully than the previous example) The traditionally straight-defined role of the repairman is used to make this connection, and this, again, is a common trope in gay porn, e.g., *Powerline* (1989, Catalina), *One In A Billion* (1984, Le Salon), *Man Rammer* (1990, Falcon) Most fundamentally a division exists, as was the case with *The Look* and again highlighted by the accompanying music, between the initial heterosexualized dialogue and the dirty talk

that follows. Yet even the heterosexualized dialogue functions to negate the illusion of heterosexuality (it is not often that a 'straight man' simply 'forgets' to turn on a switch). The more important visual element of the video operates to subvert, transform, and reassign meaning to their verbal exchange as, simultaneously, the verbal exchange gives meaning to the visual element. As the camera probes and explores their clothed and partly clothed bodies, zooming in and out (most notably on Chandler's chest and Jensen's butt), panning up and down, it forces a departure from what is 'actually said' to what is constantly 'implied.' The homo- visual context of the video undermines its heterosexualized linguistic elements by constructing a homoerotic sub-vocabulary (or should it be considered a parallel vocabulary—an alternative *language-game*—the 'voice' of the sodomitical body?). Only a slight reworking of the dialogue is required to reveal the ways in which the gay erotic imagination has infused hetero-talk with homo-appeal. A possible *mis*understanding of the text could look/sound something like

C:Hello

J:How are you doing? My name is Cal. I'm here to fix [fuck] you

C:Right. Follow me. I'll show you where [my cock] is. It's right down there. Got some [fuck] buddies c[umming] over [me] later etc

The hetero-talk of gay porn films, as such, is not heterosexualized inasmuch as the viewers/listeners (here I assume that they are 'gay') are attending to the verbal gaps and misrenderings of speech which ultimately are understood as the language of homosexual/sodomitical desire.

Homosexual desire is *spoken over* the heterosexualized bodies of the performers, altering the language and image of straight male masculinity. It is significant that within gay porn narratives, even if the actors conjure up the image of a straight man and act as if

they *believe* that they themselves or their co-stars are 'straight,' they as well as the viewer are sure that there is nobody in the video that actually *meets* or *fits* the requirements, i.e., being '*really* straight,' of that description.⁶¹ The constant use of misdescriptions, in a sense, forces the viewer to believe that the individual can be described as *something other* than what the text is suggesting. And, in fact, this proves to be true. Even in the case of *trade*, who are overtly/covertly described as 'straight,' these performers are often perceived as being misdescribed as their sexual activities signify that they are not (they are having homosexual sex).⁶² Indeed, there is no reason to believe that the ways in which gay porn employs a *misuse* of heterosexualized speech accompanied by the *homo-* use of body language cannot be considered to be a separate discourse (the 'sodomitical voice') in verbally and visually representing an event, i.e., the performance of traditionally straight male activities in gay-positive terms without requiring direct references to a gay identity.

The dirty talk in gay porn not only operates to negate the 'phallic' relationship with the female body/vagina but introduces and institutes a multiplicity of sodomitical desires. The command 'suck that cock' unabashedly names the *conjunction* of the penis and male mouth in what Kaja Silverman has termed the most "quintessentially 'gay'"⁶³ sexual activity. 'Eat my ass,' calls for the *union* of tongue and asshole (which I would suggest has become the quintessentially gay male sexual activity replacing fellatio, i.e.,

⁶¹ I am only referring to those individuals who participate in sexual activities. There are often non-sexual roles in gay porn videos, as we saw with the case of Mr. Holmes in *The Look*.

⁶² During discussions with various friends and associates about 'straight' performers in gay porn, I have encountered a general denial that *anyone* who stars in a gay porn is 'straight.' This perhaps reflects the way in which gay identities are understood by many to be 'essential' rather than socially constructed (folk-essentialism) but as viewers of gay pornography their general disbelief that these actors are 'straight' offers support to this assertion.

⁶³ Kaja Silverman, *Male Subjectivity at the Margins* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 359.

fellatio is now also commonly associated with women) Notably, there is a conspicuous silence in the academic literature on 'rimming'. I emphasize this point as it is one form of sexual activity that clearly demonstrates a *desire* for the anus Yet the dirty talk in gay porn overwhelmingly draws attention to the *combination* of the anus and tongue, not only licking around the asshole but also plunging the tongue inside (two distinct sodomitical activities). For example, in this production still from Kink Video's *Butt Munch* (1994), a film which features rimming and other forms of butt-play, the sodomitical moment of the tongue-anus combination is highlighted (Fig. 3.5). Performing cunnilingus would be a substantively different experience.



Fig. 3.5

Similarly, 'fingering,' like rimming, is an activity that is spoken about and affirmed as a pleasurable experience (and this also would be a distinctly different experience than fingering a vagina) Significantly, many of these activities emphasize the pleasure of the anus without any associations being made to the penis Yet, as I have been arguing, the penis should not be dismissed so quickly Expressions such as 'Fuck me,' 'Fuck my ass,' and 'Your dick feels so good in my ass' constitute a displacement and denaturalization of the heterosexist trope that the penis and the vagina can *only* be sexually *imagined* in relation to each other The naming of male penile-anal-pleasure,

collapsed here into a single term to emphasize its location *within* sodomitical discourse, is a distinct reformulation of sexual desire and sexual dynamics

The dirty talk of gay porn operates to classify and distinguish alternative relationships and meanings for the penis. It verbally enforces what is visually apparent for the viewer. It describes a host of *unrealized hidden* sexual activities which are not articulated within heterosexist constructions of the phallus. Dirty talk undermines the conventional notion that the penis is inevitably confined by, and restricted to, a relationship with the vagina. It restructures language by departing from its ordinary usage. Fucking becomes an activity which is no longer defined on a male/female axis but rather an activity that can be deployed between men. This activity is but *one* sodomitical activity that is couched within a multitude of other male-to-male body configurations, and although I grant that the ordering of many videos ends with anal penetration, this 'fact' does not erase or lessen the importance of various other activities within the gay porn text. As Dworkin herself would have to admit, language gives gay porn the ability to redefine experience, redesignate meaning to sexual activities, rearticulate boundaries and values, and redefine how sexual activities are perceived. Dirty talk provides a voice for the sodomitical body with which he (and certainly this would also apply to the female sodomitical body) can speak and articulate his desires.

It is possible that another strategy, based solely on the visual representation of sex in gay porn, would have brought us to this point. It is, however, precisely at the level of the verbal text of gay porn (paralleling the social demand that an individual verbalize his 'gayness' before he can be recognized as 'gay', i.e., individuals are assumed to be

heterosexual until they state otherwise), that it becomes possible to begin to *articulate* the sodomitical body

I here come to the conclusion of my discussion of dirty talk and the end of this chapter. I began by attempting to locate the image of an 'active' homosexual within various sociosexual discursive constructions and demonstrated that available conceptions of the 'active' homosexual have precluded (or tended to preclude) the possibility of articulating a positive representation of a gay sodomizer. I argued that the continued inability to articulate the 'positive' existence of a gay sodomizer vitiates interpretational and critical analyses of the gay porn text. This 'failure' has produced some problematic responses. Although several theorists have emphasized the act of being anally penetrated as a conceptual site in which masculinity is subverted, I suggested that this position ultimately entails the continued existence of a 'phallic male,' and thus, to some degree, fails as an adequate defence of the gay porn text.

I then proceeded to analyze the use of *trade* in gay porn and maintained that the sexual activities that these actors execute should not be analyzed in terms of what they *do not* perform, since this approach presupposes and reaffirms the notion that heterosexual sexual positions (e.g., vaginal penetration) and heterosexist gender identities (e.g., *fucking* is a 'straight' masculine activity) necessarily determine the only *meaning* of sexual acts and gendered positions in the gay porn text. I proceeded to move away from the hetero/homo binary with which 'trade' has been frequently analyzed by invoking a series of terminological shifts and suggested that the sexual acts that *trade* perform can be better understood on a sodomitical discursive axis. The *image* of *trade* in gay porn

appears to capture extremely well some of the characteristic features that both substitute and hyper/masculine theorists find problematic. I, however, argued that the use of trade operates to confuse the boundaries between heterosexual and homosexual categories rather than reifying them, and that this form of sociosexual transgression undermines, following Chauncey's argument, one of the fundamental principles of the modern phallic masculine male, i.e., phallic straight masculine men do not engage in homosexual activities of any sort. This approach more readily revealed that the sexual activities of trade cannot be defined as either 'homosexual' or 'heterosexual,' but rather an alternative sexual site, i.e., an emergent gender/sexual identity.

Finally, I argued that dirty talk functions as a subversive component in the gay porn text. I maintained that dirty talk reinscribes and resignifies various sexual combinations (even those that are traditionally seen as 'heterosexual') in terms of anti-phallic *desire*. It *names* sexual activities that have been inarticulable within heterosexist binarisms. *Desire* is no longer constituted and distributed on a male/female discursive axis but is redeployed within an anti-phallic sexual economy. Inarguably, there are various sexual activities that can *only* be performed between two males, e.g., inserting one penis under the foreskin of another, and these activities, unfortunately, have been ignored and effaced by many theorists who have overwhelmingly emphasized the assumed *similarity* between various heterosexual and homosexual sexual configurations. Dirty talk emphasizes various bodily combinations and this *articulation* of sodomitical desires undermines and resituates the visual component, i.e., its heterosexualized and

hyper/masculinized imagery and iconography, from its initial representation of an 'anti-sodomitical universe' into a world of sodomitical frenzy

CHAPTER FOUR

TANGLED GENDER HIERARCHIES: PERFORMING SODOMY and SODOMITICAL BODIES

Homosexual penetration, namely ass fucking, appears to be a two-way practice allowing the overstepping of roles, even if that isn't always the case in reality. The fact that submissive homosexuality involves a temptation to imitate the heterosexual penetrative relationship (a relationship of domination) changes nothing in the simple fact that it is, all the same, one man whom another man is fucking. Shit will never be like menstrual blood, and a proof of the existence of a true anal orgasm will not change the male homosexual into a woman. The theoretical impossibility of making a male homosexual into a woman without the threat of a renunciation of the inherent discriminatory value of the penis forces the bourgeois citizen to adopt the old reactionary theory of the third sex, which allows him to distinguish himself completely from homosexuals. For most people, homosexuals belong to a different race from "masculine" men. As for the rest, those who tend more toward the left, homosexuals are divided into men and women, into pitchers and catchers. In that way they return to the traditional and fundamental division, and from then on they can charge homosexuals with a criminal love of the phallus.

--Guy Hocquenghem¹

¹ Guy Hocquenghem, "Towards an Irrecoverable Pederasty," in *Reclaiming Sodom*, ed. Jonathan Goldberg (New York: Routledge, 1994), 237

INTRODUCTION

In this, the final chapter of the thesis, I will investigate the visual component of the text. I have suggested throughout this thesis that traditional binary approaches to the gender positionings of actors within the text are inadequate. I developed both the notion of sodomitical theory and the notion of the anti-phallus as alternative theoretical and conceptual tools. I argued that it would be more productive to analyze the gay porn text in terms of sodomitical moments and sodomitical activities rather than assuming that the text presents a narrative 'whole' in which gender dynamics are simply understood as being distributed along traditional gender binarisms. It is my contention that the modern viewer is more aware of himself as a gendered and socially situated body, and is thus able to 'decode' the text by recognizing various sociosexual discursive schisms and chasms within the hegemonies of its gender framework. In this chapter I shall demonstrate that the visual component of the text itself similarly subverts gender by creating/representing 'tangled gender hierarchies' and multiple gender paradoxes. Before concluding the thesis, I shall discuss three further points: how 'space' is homosexualized within the gay porn text, thematic variations, and finally, the disassociation of the penis and phallus.

Throughout this thesis I have insisted that traditional sexual binarisms have severely constrained the ways in which we envision sexual relationships and gender dynamics. They have so globally generated a conceptual superstructure in which binarisms have become the building blocks for much of our thinking, that it seemed to me *a propos* that the following discussion begins with a porn video which is based on

neither dyadic/procreative sex nor opposite sex activity. In short, let us look at a sodomitical text—an orgy scene

**PERFORMING SODOMY:
TANGLED GENDER HIERARCHIES
PART I: ORGIES**

Tangle: 1: to involve so as to hamper, obstruct or embarrass 2: to seize and hold in as if in a snare: ENTRAP 3: to unite or knit together in intricate confusion 4: to interact in a contentious or conflicting way 5: a tangled twisted mass 6: a complicated or confused state or condition 7: a state of perplexity or complete bewilderment 8: a serious altercation

Tangled: existing in or giving the appearance of utter disorder

Gender: 1: SEX

(Sex: 1: either of two divisions of organisms distinguished respectively as male and female)

Hierarchy: 1: a body of persons in authority 2: the classification of a group of people according to ability or to economic, social, or professional standing 3: a graded or ranked series.

—Websters Ninth Collegiate Dictionary

The final sequence of Josh Eliot and Taylor Hudson's video *Powertool II*:

Breaking Out (1991, Catalina Video) opens with Marc Saber, Tom Steele, and Hank Sterling in the prison shower (which looks like any public shower facility) discussing the escape plan. The three have agreed to help Lex Baldwin and Jeff Converse, co-prisoners, flee from the prison while they distract the guards and steal their uniforms. The scene cuts to Lex Baldwin leaving the shower anteroom, whereupon he encounters two guards (played by Jack Dillon and Chance Caldwell), and ominously suggests that something is about to happen. The video cuts back to the shower, where Tom Steele and Hank Sterling are telling Marc Saber not to drop the soap. We see a quick closeup of his smiling face,

and in a reversal of the traditionally homophobic cliché, Saber squeezes down on the soap and it pops out of his hand onto the shower floor. He bends over to pick up the soap, at which point the sexual action begins (the cliché becomes a reality—another example of how the text is *intended* to be misnegotiated)

Divided between shots of the threesome, shots of the prison guards, and shots from the guards' point of view, the scene continues. The guards are enticed by the threesome and begin masturbating, occasionally glancing at each other and each other's cock. They begin to strip and finally enter the shower. The fivesome begins.

Back outside the shower, we see five faceless bodies wrapped in towels furtively passing the uniforms to an out-of-frame Lex Baldwin awaiting his chance of escape. The scene cuts to a shot of Chi Chi La Rue as the prison warden. After a short rough and tumble scene with the warden, which reveals that Chi Chi La Rue is wearing a garter, stockings and high heels, Lex Baldwin must continue alone. His co-escapee, Jeff Converse, erotically aroused by La Rue, decides to stay (an example of the queering of gay pornography). Cut back to the five prisoners who are dropping their towels on the ground before they enter the shower. The rest of the sequence intersperses shots of Baldwin escaping while a ten-man orgy scene takes place in the shower.

Although I have given a fairly lengthy description of this sequence, attaching names to bodies and emphasizing the number of bodies, such clear designations *falsely* describe the *visual experience* of the video. Alternating camera positions, camera techniques, and edits create numerous visual ambiguities, i.e., moments in which the connection between sodomitical moments can 'vanish' and are realigned by the viewer. In

other words, it is not always clear to the viewer *who* is doing *what* or having *what* done to *whom* ('who' being used in both its singular and plural sense, and 'what' indicating both singular and multiple activities)

In contrast to heterosexual pornography, where there are more (but not necessarily) visible markers of an individual's identity and 'gender' (some have penises and some don't, some wear men's clothing, some wear women's), gay pornography, as Tom Waugh suggested, is far more fluid and in constant flux.²

In the following paragraphs I wish to shift attention away from top/bottom, masculine/feminine, powerful/powerless binary divisions, and towards the multitude of sodomitical moments and activities that are represented in gay pornography. Take, for example, this single frame from *Powertool II* (See Fig 4.1).

While some may see this sodomitical moment as a gang bang, with each individual presumably taking his turn at *being a man* (thus thinking of it in terms of masculine/feminine, i.e., the substitute thesis), it is, in fact, the only occasion of anal penetration in



Fig. 4.1

this over-twenty-minute sequence. Other viewers may read the image with something completely different in mind. I would like quickly to state, to avoid any

² Waugh, "Men's Pornography: Gay vs. Straight," 149

misunderstandings, that the sodomitical moment can be further subdivided, i.e., moments within moments. This is possible as the viewer can consciously fragment the image by further focusing his attention onto one particular aspect. This, of course, adds another level of complexity to the ways in which these moments can be and are interpreted. Certainly, as we look at this sodomitical moment (capturing multiple sodomitical activities) frozen on the page, our eyes wander across the image. I would like to make clear that this is but one of a million images, or what I have termed sodomitical moments, within the porn film (which, of course, is a moving image - thus creating sodomitical activities). But even if we freeze this frame, we may well ask how the viewer enters the image (VCR technology certainly provides this possibility to the viewer and we may well wonder how often viewers use the freeze frame, tape speed (frame-by-frame), fast forward, and reverse when watching a video. How does this change the dynamics of spectatorship?). Is the viewer looking at the penis that is being masturbated? Is he *becoming* a person in the film or is he *positioning* himself inside the film? Is he thinking about the actors making the sequence? Is he thinking about someone's chest or tits? Is he just passively looking? Is he thinking about licking someone's toes, foot, forearm, back, buttocks, anus (all of which are sodomitical)? Is he thinking about giving or getting a blow job? Is he thinking about how it feels to be fucked while he gets a blow job while giving a blow job? Is he thinking about having someone stand behind him watching while he gets a blow job? Is he thinking about just touching someone? Is he thinking about one person looking into his eyes or several people? Perhaps he is thinking the opposite of any of these scenarios.

How is gender understood? Is the viewer consistently *locating* himself in 'masculine' or 'feminine' positions? Is he oscillating between 'masculine' and 'feminine' positions or imagining being both simultaneously? But who in this moment is 'masculine'? Who is 'feminine'? Do these questions make any sense?

What sociosexual discursive conceptions and genealogies of thought does the viewer bring to the text in order to *understand* each of these numerous body-to-body relationships? How much do class, religion, race, culture, ethnicity, education, and other sociopolitical and sociosexual positions affect the viewer's conceptions of what he sees? Is it possible to generate a coherent understanding of the gender dynamics in this representation of an orgy given that various sociosexual discursive histories, i.e., the construction of sexual discourse, have attached diversified meanings to various bodily combinations (gender historically associated with various sexual positionings, e.g., being anally penetrated is 'feminine')? How does the viewer 'resolve' the gender contradictions in the text? What features of this moment have remained inarticulated within the gay porn debate or have been effaced within wider sociosexual discussions of gender (chasm(s))? What is the gender relationship that exists between the fucker and the two men getting blow jobs? Is giving a blow job 'degrading'? Should this image be judged too 'phallic' (hyper/masculine thesis) or should it be considered a moment in which gay men are 'treated like women' because an individual is being fucked (substitute thesis)? Is he really being 'feminized' and 'demeaned' or is this an image of 'anal celebration'? Should we read the image and its gender dynamics in terms of top/bottom, powerful/powerless and ignore the other body-to-body combinations? How do we describe other gender

relations? How do we describe the schisms and chasms of gender constructions presented by the text? How are they related? How do they overlap? Intersect? Criss-cross? Is it possible to come to a final conclusion? How much 'value' and attention do we place on various combinations? Perhaps for some viewers the erotic entry point is Marc Saber's foot while for others it is the combination of the hand and ankle. What are the gender dynamics of feet and ankles?

Perhaps the viewer is not thinking about this moment but has moved on, the next sodomitical moment replacing the last with a new series of body-to-body configurations, but then again, this next moment is also replaced, revealing a new series. In what ways does the viewer connect the previous moment to the one that follows, or for that matter the one that occurred before, it? In what ways does he align gender with the various bodies? If we understood a particular actor as *being* masculine in the image above, would the next moment resituate his body in another sociosexual discursive frame work, thus making us think of him as *being* feminine? Do we then think of him as being both masculine *and* feminine? Do we even think about the moments/activities in these terms? What gender dynamics are visible but inarticulable?

Perhaps the viewer is not a 'he' but a 'she' and is fantasizing about having queer straight sex. Perhaps the viewer is transgendered or transsexual or lesbian. (In what ways is gender renegotiated when a gay man and lesbian or straight female have sex? Is this bisexuality or something else?) Even this single sodomitical moment, taken out of context from the visual flow of the video, provides and presents a multitude of entry points far more numerous than the possibilities I have hinted at here. It is not possible to

define all the possible body-to-body configurations, their discursive histories, and their relations with gender. Nor is it feasible to describe *all* the ways in which the viewer can interpret and misinterpret the text, or how various individuals from other sexual communities may have differing interpretative techniques. But this is my point!

While certainly the viewer may imagine himself to be penetrated or the penetrator, supposedly capturing the 'feminine' or the 'masculine,' (phallic sexuality always has a ghostly presence within the text, i.e., hegemonies), the images resist such a simplistic binary division. Constructed beyond the binaries of penetrator/penetrated, subject/object, masculine/feminine, each individual in this sodomitical moment/activity(activities) has become the *subject-object*.¹ In the current debate, the orgiastic scene generates *impossible* gender sites. Desire functions within an anti-phallic sexual economy. The orgy scene is a *disordered* sexual universe. There are no 'rules' which dictate what the next body-to-body configuration will be, and how gender will be deployed and redeployed. Where can desire be located? Can any individual be recognized as the 'subject,' the one who has power? Does it make sense to ask?

While Stoltenberg, Dworkin and others would like to divide the performers so easily into distinct categories, the orgiastic scene presents body *combinations* which operate to map both feminine and masculine characteristics on one body simultaneously, creating multiple paradoxes within the text. The sodomitical body never *contains* or *maintains* a gendered site. It is constantly being transformed. The notion that there are particular sexual activities that are inherently masculine or feminine is dissolved.

¹ See footnote 59, chapter 3

Performers cannot be described in such a strict formulation of gender positioning and power dynamics. The body has become a site of sodomitical pleasure

Gay porn presents a tangled gender hierarchy, an utter confusion of gender positions, in which traditional binarisms both (re)gain and lose their significance and meaning(s) (How can you explain the dynamics of the three-way kiss in figure 4.2?). Gender



Fig. 4.2

positions are transitional and liminal. The orgasmic scene, asymmetrical in construction, represents the multiple use of body parts; in varying degrees, these various sodomitical combinations have their own discursive histories which, in many ways, have remained 'free' of modern gender categorizations, i.e., the chasms in the text. Other body-to-body combinations, e.g. anal penetration, as we have seen, have entered into various discourses from various sociosexual communities and have been constructed to *mean* or *symbolize* various relations of power (hegemonies). The assumed connection between gender and sexual positions (which underlies a great many sociosexual discourses) generates the possibility of subversive strategies (as seen in the anal subversion arguments). This assumed connection also induces a myriad of discursive gender paradoxes and contradictions which, in turn, produce varying explanations e.g. real men do not get fucked (homophobia), or fucking a man is like fucking a woman (substitute thesis), or fucking a man further masculinizes the fucker (hyper/masculine thesis), or fucking a man subverts masculinity (anal-subversion theorists). Whether the viewer

subscribes to one or more of these beliefs (usually people do not have coherent belief systems) produces schisms in the text (I am implicitly assuming that the text does not construct the individual but the individual constructs the text, i.e., interpretative strategies) Does the viewer always use the same strategies for interpreting the text? How does he interpret the hegemonies, understand the schisms, and become aware (consciously or unconsciously) of the chasms in the text's gender framework? Fingers, tongues, lips, chest, feet, and buttocks all become highly sexualized in this frenzy of sodomitical activity. The body is no longer an assumed static site in which gender can be strictly inscribed. The sodomitical body refuses traditional gender categorization.

Let us now turn to a second sodomitical moment/activity which, for our purposes, is much easier to understand than the orgy scene above (sexual language is still too limiting to express non-binary based sexual relations and gender dynamics that are not articulated by way of a dimorphic model).

One of the more obvious examples of the possibility of coextensively and synchronously mapping both the masculine and the feminine onto one body, thus undermining strict gender dichotomies, is the



Fig. 4.3

three-way blow job (Is giving a blow job an active or passive activity? Both?) A similar moment, as I remarked earlier, would be a three-way-fuck episode. How, considering the

enormous attention placed on the positions of the penetrator and penetratee, does one explain the gender identity of the middle man who is both fucking and being fucked? How would Stoltenberg explain this combination? Seen in a three-way blow job taken from HIS video's 1993 production *Total Corruption*, Zak Spears is positioned between co-stars Greg Ross and Phil Bradley (Fig 4.3). The body of Zak Spears becomes a site of gender ambiguity. For although he is being fellated, placing him in a 'masculine' role (note that this role is not *really* traditionally 'masculine' but rather a sodomitical practice, it is incorrect to assume that fellatio has been a commonly accepted heterosexual sexual practice), he is also preparing to become a fellator (note that this role is not *really* a traditionally feminine role but, as above, is sodomitical).⁴ However, heterosexist constructions and a great deal of feminist theory have increasingly defined the role of the fellator in terms of the female body and femininity, e.g. Barry, Dworkin).

The point at which gender becomes disturbed occurs in the next *moment*. The 'masculine' and the 'feminine' are synchronously mapped onto the same body. Spears becomes the *subject-object*, *fellator-fellated*, *penetrator-penetrated*.



Fig. 4.4

This dynamic is duplicated in figure 4.4 from the 1994 Forum Studios production *Made*

⁴ George Chauncey writes

Most commonly, gay men simply offered to perform certain sexual acts, especially fellation, which many straight men enjoyed but many women (even many prostitutes) were loathe to perform. Chauncey, *Gay New York*, 85.

to Get Laid Rod Garetto is couched between porn co-stars Mitch Taylor and Sean Hunter, as was Zak Spears in the above example. The three-way blow job is a common feature in many triads in gay porn videos (This also reflects the extent to which the modern gay porn video has become standardized). How would we understand the gender dynamics of a threesome in which everyone is both giving and getting a blow job (blow-job-triangle)? Is everyone feminized and masculinized simultaneously? What are the power relations in these sodomitical activities? The viewer's ability to insert 'difference' onto the same-sex bodies in gay videos is a feature that distinguishes it from its heterosexual counterpart ('difference' is *generated* not assumed).

In this final example, figure 4.5, the penis has no significant role. This publicity still emphasizes the combination of the anus and tongue(s). This is a sodomitical moment/activity which is prevalent in a large proportion of gay porn videos,⁵ but to my knowledge has never been discussed as a transgressive feature of the text. It focuses neither on the penis of the 'rimmer,' nor on the penis of the 'rimmed.'



Fig. 4.5

Within the heterosexist sexual imagination, this conjunction has remained invisible. Do we understand 'rimming' as a 'feminine' or 'masculine' activity? Defining this sodomitical act in traditional binary terms is difficult if not impossible. For, in fact, the person who is

⁵ If the reader rented five videos at random, it is more than likely that this activity would appear in one or more episodes in each.

being 'rimmed' is penetrated, i.e., with the tongue, yet the male tongue in relation to the male anus has not been constructed as a masculine behavior. For example, while some men may feel that they retain their masculinity while penetrating another male with the penis, the same cannot be said about the tongue. This is an example of a penetrative act which is not 'masculine,' and is another example of a conceptual 'gap' in modern gender discursive practices. Can this combination be offered as a site in which we can recognize the gay sodomizer and anal pleasure? A male who has a desire for the anus—not as a substitute for the vagina (performing cunnilingus would be radically different) but because it *is* the anus. Can the tongue be considered an anti-phallic signifier?

PERFORMING SODOMY: PART II: DYADS

The category of sodomitical acts recognizes neither sexual difference, gender distinctions, nor the somatic limits of the body. The impossibility of one-to-one gender mapping

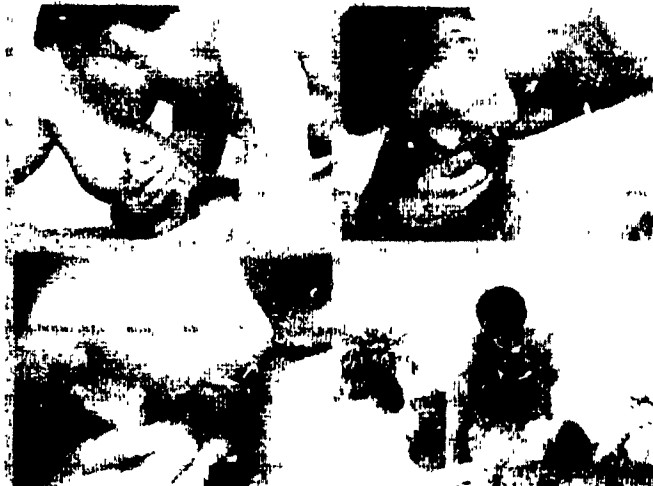


Fig. 4.6

between various individuals and their biological sex, (i.e., that the masculine is necessarily and exclusively mapped onto the male body and the feminine is mapped onto the female body), similarly becomes apparent in dyadic sex scenes. Consider, for example, these frames from Falcon's 1994 production *Senna Paradiso* (Fig. 4.6). In the first frame (top left), the hand job and leg-licking clearly confuses the categories of

active passive, dominator dominated, etc. As these sexual activities have not been rigidly engendered, they can be incorporated easily into the sexual activities of both men and women (a sexually liberating quality of gay porn) In frames two (top right) and three (bottom left), the tongue, fingers, and cock are plunged into a willing ass, a triple threat to the sacred heterosexual male tenet that *male bodies* are not penetrated; gender roles are undermined

In this second series of images from the same video (Fig 4 7), as with the first, it is notable that the penis has taken a back-stage position (as was the case with figs 4 5 and 4 6) In the first frame, emphasis is placed on the male chest and tits (top left). The second sodomitical moment (top right), located

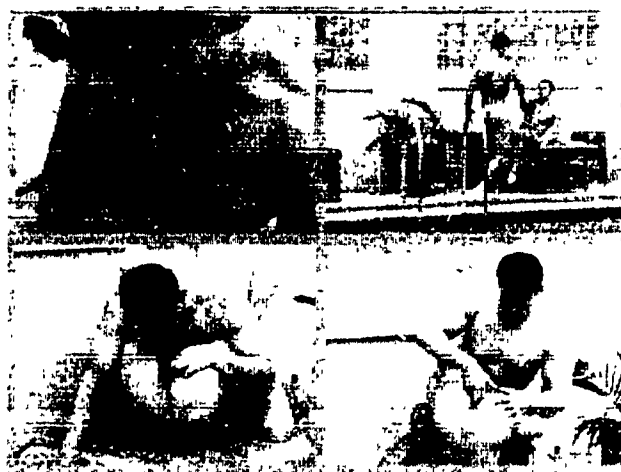


Fig. 4.7

outdoors beside a pool, disturbs the traditional binary of private/public (similar to a Bacchic festival) Unlike the patriarchal veiling of the penis to 'protect' patriarchy, in the pornographic universe the male body becomes openly exposed. In the final two frames, the anus is highly eroticized. In the third frame (bottom left), not only has the anus become the 'object' of a male gaze (not only for the actor but also for the viewer) but it gains a privileged position in the centre of the image In the final frame, the anus-finger combination (a sexual combination which has also been generally ignored in the literature due to the enormous emphasis placed on 'phallic activity') eroticizes the male

anus while simultaneously de-emphasizing the penis. Gay porn narrative *moments* are not exclusively aimed at 'phallic activity.' There are 'phallic' moments, but these are couched and buffered by various schisms and chasms within the text which effectively alter and transform their original meaning(s).

Although the dis/connections between various sodomitical moments and gender constructions that I have been presenting here appear somewhat elusive, I believe that the inability to gain a firm 'hold' on how they can be articulated is a strength rather than a weakness. It demonstrates that substitute and hyper/masculine theorists have ignored a dimension of gay pornography that cannot be elucidated or delimited by traditional sexual binarisms. There are numerous sodomitical moments that are incompatible with traditional gender conceptions, and these anomalies give rise to definitional conflicts of what delineates and demarcates sexual activities as being 'male/masculine' and 'female/feminine.' These moments of gender divergence create multitudes of conceptual 'gender gaps' which can lead to new understandings of gender and gendered identities. Gendered bodies are constructed and reconstructed, altered, transformed, and converted into emergent gender identities in various sodomitical moments which undermine traditional 'phallic' readings of the gay porn text. Before concluding this section I wish to draw attention to the figure of Jeff Stryker, who has captured the attention of many gay porn spectators and many academics alike. Jeff Stryker is perhaps the most famous of all gay porn stars and is often considered trade and one of the industry's most 'phallic' performers. But should his performances be considered 'phallic' or sodomitical? Does Stryker then become anti-phallic?

Stryker's career and body (and the reactions to his career and body), I believe, offer an interesting 'sodomitical documentary' rather than an image of a 'phallic' male. Stryker was originally discovered and transformed/redesigned by Matt Sterling and John Travis. "[W]e decided to create an image," Sterling remarks. "My idea of creating an image was kind of a rebel –because when I look at him I see a little bit of a young Elvis Presley and a young Marlon Brando. So we went for the motorcycle image."⁶

In Matt Sterling's remarks we are able to detect a caesura that marks the divide between Stryker's *real* gender identification and the gendered image that he would become in the gay porn text. Stryker's porn identity is a compilation, a construction, a shrewdly manufactured image or fabrication of masculinity. He became and perhaps is still considered gay porn's *most* 'phallic' performer. Mark Simpson describes Stryker's career:

But the most interesting feature of Jeff's career in the sex 'industry' is where it began: very much on the queer side of the tracks. He was groomed for his current 'star of porn stars' status by two of his gay lovers who also happened to be veteran gay porn producers, John Travis and Matt Sterling. Whereas the history of porn cinema is full of 'straight' male models who also featured in gay films, this is probably the first example of an already established star in the gay industry crossing over into straight porn on this scale. A fag playing a straight stud? How can he manage to carry off both roles successfully? In fact Stryker only plays *one* role in both gay and straight films, that of the 'total stud', a rutting machine that 'fucks anything'. But nothing and no one fucks *him*. Stryker's success in both industries points up how much gay and straight porn have in common: in both, the pricks take centre stage, the bigger it is the bigger the stage.⁷

A closer look at Stryker's career, however, will support the conclusion that his work is best viewed not in terms of a 'phallic' male as Simpson has suggested, but as a

⁶ John Travis and Matt Sterling, interviewed by Kevin Koffler, *The Advocate* (12 September, 1989), 29, quoted in John Burger, *One Handed Histories* (New York: Haworth Press, 1995), 74.

⁷ Simpson, *Male Impersonators*, 131-132.

representation of a sodomitical body. Recalling my discussion of trade as an emergent gender position and the subversive qualities of dirty talk (for which Stryker is notorious), it is of course debatable whether Stryker could ever be described as a 'phallic' male, but if we grant for a moment that he was one initially, do his performances support this label? Simpson's strict categorization of Stryker as a 'phallic/top' ignores other components in Stryker's performances and career which effectively undermine this *most* phallic male's phallic identity. Instead of focusing solely on the penile-penetration as the measuring stick (no pun intended) to define Stryker's sexual persona, it is possible to read Stryker's body and volume of work as a single but unending sodomitical text. In other words, there is never any closure (the next film may show the sodomitical practice of. ...) ⁸

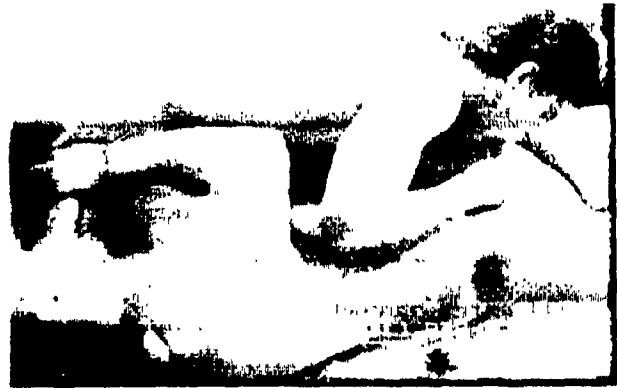


Fig. 4.8

In figure 4.8, a computer scan from *Powerfull II* (1989, Stryker Productions), we see Stryker's first "major" move away from traditionally masculine sexual activities. Burger notes that "everyone dubbed [*Powerfull II*] 'the movie in which Jeff Stryker sucks cock.'"⁹ The scan is in itself evidence that the porn viewer focuses on particular moments and, as Burger states, this has become the defining moment of the video. But this video

⁸ It is not my intention to suggest that it is only possible to read Stryker's body as sodomitical through an examination of his entire career. Each of his videos contains hundreds of sodomitical moments, any of which could undermine his 'phallic' identity. I am discussing his entire career to point out the most *overt* sodomitical moments in several videos, and to show how they can be cumulative, as any viewer who has followed his successful career would know.

⁹ Burger, *One-Handed Histories*, 50.

also marks another transition. It should not be ignored that within our society males are also taught 'acceptable' ways they can touch other male bodies, e.g. the hand-shake. In Stryker's previous films the amount of hand contact with other male bodies is strikingly absent compared to his later work. In his early videos, the number of hand-to-body and body-to-body contacts is kept to a strict minimum and is "merely functional" and distant in manner, i.e., holding onto a co-star's waist to fuck him, e.g., *Stryker Force* (1987, Huge). In the figure above, Stryker is not *only* giving a blow job but the positioning of his body also occasions other body-to-body combinations. Moreover, within the particular sequence from which this scan is taken there are numerous hand-to-body contacts, e.g., rubbing of chest, which present other disavowed male-to-male physical combinations.

One year later, in *On the Rocks* (1990, Stryker Productions), Stryker yields his mouth to a juicy kiss from his co-star Joey Stefano. While it has been argued that a male can still maintain his 'masculinity' while fucking another man, the 'kiss,' in a sense, is far more intimate¹⁰ (mutual penetration). Compared to his first video kiss in *Stryker Force* which was quick and somewhat cold, the kiss in this scene is fairly long and passionate. This provides yet another slippage from traditionally phallic male-to-male relations that Stryker's body performs (recall that I tentatively suggested that the tongue may be considered an anti-phallic signifier). Stryker is becoming *more* sodomitical.

In 1994, the same year that Simpson published his book in which he asserted the inviolability of Stryker's anus, *The Fease* (1994, Stryker Productions) was released. "Jeff

¹⁰ Conversations with various friends has lead me to this conclusion. Many of them will have a one-night-stand and fuck or be fucked by someone but they will only kiss someone if they have 'feelings for them' or are 'truly in love with them'. It further undermines the accusation that Stryker is *just* a phallic machine that "fucks anything."

finally gives up his butt."¹¹ I grant that *The Tease* (1994, Stryker Productions) is a solo video in which Stryker uses a dildo, but nonetheless, the assumed impenetrability of Stryker's body has now been debunked on video. Even Burger in his 1995 publication, *One-Handed Histories*, does not allude to this production and suggests that "Most gay men know of Stryker's topman status—his sexual exploits on screen most likely reflect his everyday preferences as well"¹² Burger's slippage between fantasy and reality is disturbing, but what I find interesting is that Stryker is always characterized in terms of his unwillingness to be fucked on video. Here again we may note the underlying assumptions that gayness is located in the anus and that if you refuse to be fucked this means that you must be homophobic.¹³ Stryker's career has not been seen as a series of transitions and transformations, both within each video and his career as a whole. The use of a dildo is, in itself, a sodomitical practice, i.e., not many 'phallic' straight men plunge dildos into their asses. This video adds another sodomitical activity into Stryker's sexual repertoire. From the beginning of Stryker's career to his latest release, there has been an *accumulation* of sodomitical moments and sodomitical activities. His phallic male image is constantly chipped away. Stryker is no longer phallic but sodomitical. The focus is not phallic but penile-centric.¹⁴ His body has continually been opened up to new combinations and variations. It is true that he is not 'gay,' but it is also true that he is not 'straight,' and we may well doubt that the term 'bisexual' can adequately depict his

¹¹ Dave Kinnick, comp. *Adam Gay Video 1995 Directory*, vol. 2, no. 10 (1995) 118

¹² Burger, *One-handed Histories*, 50

¹³ It is, I think, counterintuitive to suggest that gay men who enjoy anal sex are less homophobic than gay men who don't. To situate gayness in the anus, as I have suggested, is a result of adopting heterosexist conceptions of sexuality and I am sure that there are many gay men who would find this assumption insulting. I see no reason that Stryker *must* be fucked.

¹⁴ In *Busted* (1991, Stryker Productions) Stryker plays a porn star who is arrested for his penile activities, i.e., his penis is outside of the Law (phallic order).

identity Perhaps in his next video Stryker will be fucked, perhaps not. It is not important What is important is that the viewer has seen the *most phallic* male transforming and becoming what the 'phallic' male cannot be: a male who fellates another male, a male who kisses another male, a male who touches another male, a male who is an object of desire and desires other males and a male who is penetrated. Stryker is anti-phallic, his 'phallic' identity has been *increasingly* undermined by the growing number of sodomitical activities that he performs

In light of this discussion, it would seem that there are sodomitical moments that are relevant to any analysis of gay pornography other than just the act of anal penetration As we have seen, even one of the most phallic figures in gay porn, even if he does not accept to be anally fucked on video cannot be considered to be *strictly* a 'phallic' masculine male Theorists who deny (or ignore) the importance of various tangled gender hierarchies in the gay porn text and cannot embrace moments of gender contradiction in their theoretical models only serve to reassert a concept of gender difference that effaces the enormous middle ground that exists *in-between* heterosexist gender polarities These strategies ignore the ways in which, in varying degrees, gendered positions can be confused and transformed It is, I think, also important to begin questioning the meaning of 'penetration' How and why is this act always described in terms of masculinity? Are there other various forms of non-phallic/anti-phallic penetration? How, and in which ways, have various forms of feminist discourse effaced the possibility of constructing females as penetrators, or even as active sexual participants? How has queer discourse positioned gay men who do not enjoy anal penetration in a category beneath those who

do? How do the meanings of various acts of penetration differ, e.g., dildo, penises,

finger(s), fist, vegetables, tongues, etc.?

THE GAY SODOMIZER: SPACE, BODIES, PENIS/PHALLUS

*Just as in writing we learn a particular basic form of letters and then vary it later, so we learn first the stability of things as the norm, which is then subject to alterations.*¹⁵

Greg Young's *Hurd at Work* (1992, Image Video/ Club M) has not won any awards for being a remarkable porn film, but it is a typical example of the current, standardized gay porn video, i.e., suck-fuck-cum. The 1995 *Adam Gay Video Directory* makes no mention of this Club M production and like most gay porn videos the title will have vanished from most rental stores in a few years (if even that long). The title, like so many titles of gay porn videos, is supposed to titillate and, of course, is a double entendre. It not only exposes and sets up the context of the video, i.e., men working, but also constitutes an *obscene* subversion of the meaning of the phrase. The title is meant to be misread: it invokes the image of an erect penis while *at work*, i.e., this is another form of 'dirty talk.'

The first scene of the video opens in a garden, where a bare-chested Wes Daniels accompanies Danny Sommers on a walk. The camera captures their activities in a wide angle shot as they gather measurements, and within a few brief moments, we become aware that Daniels is portraying a building contractor discussing Sommers's desire to have a wall built around his garden. The scene occasionally cuts away to the sky and

¹⁵ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, trans. Denis Paul and G. E. Anscombe (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1969), 620.

foliage. The sky, a soft blue, hints at the warmth of the sun. The palm trees and flowering bushes, with their leaves and blossoms gently swaying in the breeze, enclose the yard and transform it into a secluded paradise. After each of these intercuts the gaze is redirected back to varying shots of Daniels and Sommers. Most often the camera returns to the chests, tits, torsos, or crotches of the two porn stars but it also shows their legs, thighs, buttocks, forearms, biceps, etc. After a quick exchange in which Daniels asks "Is there anything else that you want me to take a look at?" and Sommers responds "Nothing you need your clip board for," the sexual action begins (the dialogue, as I argued earlier, is meant to be misinterpreted--- porn producers are aware that the viewers 'decode' the text). Closeup shots of Sommers biting Daniels's crotch are carefully framed to include a tape measure hitched on the top of his pants. After a few moments of cocksucking the action is taken into the house.

In the next scene, Sommers must again begin undressing Daniels (this 'mistake' in editing serves to visually emphasize the misalignment between one moment and the next). Both of them are still wearing their tight-fitting pants. The eventual exposure of their cocks is stalled. Both are wearing briefs and a few more moments pass before they are completely naked. With a visible condom on his cock, Daniels proceeds to fuck Sommers, who is bent over the couch. After a quick edit we find Daniels on his back and Sommers sitting on top of his cock bouncing up and down. The camera captures the cock going in and out of Sommers's butt from various angles until he cums. The camera then cuts to Sommers lying beside Daniels and playing with his nipples. Daniels is jerking

himself off. Daniels cums. The scene cuts to the verandah where we see them kiss good-bye.

In the following paragraphs I will, using *Hard at Work*, the video described above, as my primary example, briefly discuss a few more components of the gay porn text that demand attention before I bring this thesis to its conclusion. Throughout, I have focused on the bodies of the porn stars and their body-to-body combinations and gender relationships. I have, in a sense, ignored the context in which these activities occur and have, to a certain extent, omitted discussing the various themes that are common to the gay porn text.

First, I will note the ways in which gay porn deconstructs heterosexist tropes of "space" and reinvests them with homocentric meanings. Although it was only briefly mentioned in the discussion on 'dirty talk,' it is quite clear that the 'garage' in *The Look* also serves as an example of a heterosexualized space being transformed into a sodomitical haven as the film progresses. Secondly, I will emphasize how gay porn, using the example of male tits, encourages a new way of *looking* at the male body (sodomitical gaze?). Finally, I will examine how the *uncovering* of the penis results in its further disassociation from the 'phallus.' The materiality of the penis presented in gay porn reveals that it cannot always achieve its full erectile potential and even when this is accomplished it is 'short-lived.' The phallic signifier always fails to be phallic.

First, gay porn offers different representations of *space*. The relationship between the savage/nature/public and the civilized/city/private is immediately engaged in the opening scene of *Hard at Work*. Homosexual sex is brought out



Fig. 4.9

from 'behind closed doors' and relocated within the public domain (as a further example, see fig. 4.9). Public space is a domain that is ostensibly heterosexualized. One need only look at the structure of houses and many apartments, all of which are built to accommodate families, to see the influence of heterosexuality on urban culture. Not only is gay porn making gay sex visible in the sense that it is *representing* gay sex, but it makes it *doubly* visible by situating it within the realm of public space.¹⁶ Public sex is not only a feature common to homosexual sexual activities (e.g., parks, toilets, backyards), but is also a pervasive theme in gay porn, e.g., *Island Fever* (1989, Kristen Bjorn), *Caribbean Beat* (1990, Sarava Productions), *Desert Oasis* (1993, Falcon),

¹⁶ John Burger writes

On a more metaphoric level, gay porn videos break down the public/private dichotomy through their representations of sex in public spaces or typically "heterosexual" spaces. The images of men fucking each other at the rodeo, in high school locker rooms, on the subway, or at the offices, blur private/public boundaries. The fact that gay men actually do participate in sex in public places (parks, rest stops, dark alleys) only helps further this effect of spacial deconstruction. These videos demonstrate the violation (both wishful and actual) of public (heterosexist) spaces by privatizing them, in a way. Porn puts gay men having gay sex in front of everyone's face, making it impossible to ignore and confuting the myths of the old regime. With this breakdown of time and space, gay porn helps to erode the "truth" of our abjection.

Burger, *One Handed Histories*, 100

Breakaway (1994, Falcon), *Seeds of Love* (1994, Catalina), and *Jungle Heat* (1993, Sarava Productions). Pool-side locations are also very popular, e.g., Falcon's 1994 *Summer Fever* (Fig. 4.10). The gay sodomizer becomes a visually locatable entity and, moreover, claims the space that he inhabits/temporarily occupies as a sodomitical environment. Heterosexuality is displaced.

This is, as Bronski and others have already stated, a distinction between heterosexual and homosexual pornography. It has been argued by many anti-porn feminists that straight pornography can be seen as an extension or mirroring of present gender and sexual norms. On the other hand, the claiming of space and its subsequent homosexualization which occurs in gay pornography is not a duplication of the sociosexual dynamics in society but rather an act of transgression, i.e., it is not very often that you *even* see two gay men kissing in many public spaces. Homosexuality, for the most part, is still an invisible and hidden sexual identity.



Fig 4.10

Gay porn also can be understood as metaphorically altering conceptions of space. The location of a garden in *Hard at Work* is a familiar image in gay porn (as are other natural settings, e.g., forest, jungle, etc.). In a coarse theoretical formulation of this scene, I would suggest that the image of the garden may be thought to capture an E. M. Forsterian conception of homosexuality located somewhere "outside class, without

relations or money "¹⁷ a return to nature. There are no overt connections between class/power and the sex that is performed between Sommers and Daniels, i.e., who does what sexually to whom is not dictated on the binary power basis of employer/employee. This class and economic leveling perhaps can best be seen in contrast to films such as *Lunch Hour* (1990, Catalina), where a group of workers overthrows its bosses in a mad rape scene. In *Lunch Hour* the issues of money and class play a major role in the narrative, but again, as the film progresses the 'traditional' power dynamics of boss/worker become increasingly confused (tangled gender hierarchies). It should not be forgotten that many gay men, like many women, have not had equal access to the workforce and in many cases have lost their jobs due to their sexual orientation, e.g., teachers. Moreover, homophobia often keeps many gay men in the closet at their workplace, e.g. police officers. (How is it possible to compare the effects of overt cases of misogyny and covert cases of homophobia?) Grading oppressions seems counterintuitive. Fantasies of subverting heterosexual space are legitimate.



Fig. 4.11

The linking of the *natural setting* with homosexual sex in *Hard at Work* (and other gay porn videos) may be seen as a rewriting of the Christian myth of Adam and Eve. Similarly, the *natural setting* may be interpreted as 'naturalizing' (i.e., Nature) gay sex, undermining the heterosexist natural/unnatural dichotomy. In this sense, gay porn

¹⁷ E. M. Forster, *Maurice* (Markham, Ontario: Penguin, 1972), 203.

can undermine both Biblical and Darwinian conceptions of the 'natural order.' For example, in figure 4 11, a production still from *House Rules* (1994, Falcon), the nakedness of the two stars captures this paradisiacal trope. Full of lush Edenic greenery flecked with multicoloured blossoms, the scene can easily transport the viewer's imagination to a 'gay Paradise'

I am not here suggesting that there are gay porn films that deliberately set out (i.e., the director has this objective consciously in mind) to construct these metaphoric readings. I am not aware of, for example, a gay porn film entitled "Adam and Steve" (although this is a common phrase within the gay community). Nor am I suggesting that there are any *particular* films which *exclusively* deal with these metaphoric images (although the image of the 'savage' is a common trope, e.g., *Stryker Force* (1987, Hugu), *Their Wild Ways* (1991, Conquest International)). What I am suggesting, however, is that gay porn *utilizes* these *symbolic images* in many criss-crossing and overlapping contexts, and presents the viewer with various settings and phallic symbols/iconography that he can reinterpret and redefine (if gay men did not reinterpret the world they live in, how could the gay subculture have emerged?)¹⁸

¹⁸ One notable exception is the work of Chi Chi La Rue. In both *More of a Man* and *Jumper*, Chi Chi La Rue consciously addresses the connection between homosexuality and religion. Both of these films are highly politicized in content. The absence of 'religious' themes in pornography is a result of present laws and Chi Chi La Rue's attempts to explore the connection are notable.

Kristen Bjorn in an interview comments:

Porn is far less likely to be wild now. There was a scene in one of my films where four guys meet in a marketplace and go off and piss together. They don't piss *on* each other, they piss together—that was cut out by the distributor. There was another scene where one guy fucks another with a banana. Well they didn't want to show that. Whenever I think that something might be controversial, I phone up the distributor and ask. I found this beautiful old church in the countryside and I thought it would be great—very French Canadian. They said 'no.' They said, 'you can go ahead and shoot it, but we'll just edit it out.'

Matthew Hays, "Kristen Bjorn makes porn in Montreal," *Xtra* (January 1993).

According to the regulations of the Régie du Cinéma du Québec, videos can not

From these various metaphoric readings of this particular scene in *Hard at Work*, we can see the ways in which sodomitical discourse functions to resituate and reconstitute heterosexist tropes by under/overwriting the heterosexualized body and repositioning it within the realm of the sodomitical imagination. Locations ranging from grass huts, e.g., *Their Wild Ways* (1991, HIS), to the most *phallic institution*, the army, e.g., *Hand to Hand* (1994, Vivid), from nature scenes to locker rooms, e.g., *Jock-a-Holics* (1993, Sierra Pacific), from public washrooms, e.g., *Brats* (1992, AVG), to subway cars, e.g., *Inch by Inch* (1985, Hugu), are reconfigured as *sodomitical spaces* – worlds in which there are no sexual outlaws. It is a world in which the gay sodomizer exists.

Secondly, gay porn places enormous prominence on the *entire* male body. In *Hard at Work*, the half-naked body of Daniels, cast as a building contractor, immediately makes available to the viewer the image of the gay sodomizer draped in phallic symbols, e.g., construction boots, tape measure, etc. (although the initial mise-en-scène also opens itself up to the possibility that it would be Sommers who would fuck or both of them each other). The 'construction-worker image' is but one of many different phallic images/iconography that the gay porn text invokes and later subverts within its sodomitical framework. In fact, gay porn has an enormous amount of thematic variation, for example

Dans la mesure où ils sont vraisemblables, les comportements décrits ci-dessous ne peuvent faire l'objet d'un contentement même en l'absence de violence, les films montrant de tels comportements sont refusés parce que dégradants ou déhumanisants
-Irreverence religieuse (utilisation d'objets sacrés à des fins sexuelles)

Office of the Régie du Cinéma du Québec, "Motif de Refus de Classement des Films de Sexploitation à la Régie du Cinéma du Québec," (February 3, 1995) 9-10

¹⁸ For an extended discussion of the connection between homophobia and the AIDS pandemic, see Simon Watney, *Policing Desire: Pornography, AIDS and the Media* (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1987)

Abduction, all-black cast, amateur, army, athletes, Asian men, auto-fellatio, backyard sex, bathhouse sex, bodybuilders, casual, celebrities, chauffeurs, clubs, coming out (i e , first experience), construction, cops, cowboys, cross-dressing, dancers/strippers, dildos, erotic confessions, erotic dreams, erotic fantasies, exercise, fetishes, foreskin, glory holes, hairy men, hitchhikers, house buying, hustlers, incest, initiation rituals, inter-racial, intrigue, "kinky", Latinos, leather, lockerroom, masturbation, mechanics, medical, military, modeling, moviemaking, mystery, oral, outdoor, phone, poolside, prison, public, rape, repairmen, resorts, revenge, romance, roommates, schools, science fiction, sex ads, shaving, solos, spanking, sports, truckers, uniforms, unusual places, virtual reality, voyeurism, workshops, wrestling, and youth

This diversity of themes and sexual situations not only shows the extent to which various sexual practices have been disavowed (the enormity of the sodomitical universe), but opens up the possibility of multiple sites of subversion. The prevailing sexual myth that only the female body is *visible* and *desirable* as an object for the sexual gaze is discredited and deflated. In *Hard at Work* the penis is reduced to only one of many body parts that provides a site for sodomitical desire (there are many gay videos that even fetishize various *parts* of the penis, e g , foreskins—can part of a penis be considered the phallus?) This, of course, increases the number of sexual body-to-body *combinations* emphasized within the sodomitical framework of videos and provides the viewer with an almost limitless number of sodomitical entry points into a potentially limitless number of narratives. In *Hard at Work*, for example, the camera's attention to Daniels's chest/tits highly eroticizes a part of the male anatomy that has traditionally (in contrast to female breasts) remained outside of the male/female economy of sexual desire. One of the primary cultural definitions of the male chest is that its massiveness signifies strength and force. However, the camera's incessant probing of the chest and tits simultaneously

maintains and overrides this cultural construction. The erotic potential of male chest/tits, which is often precluded in heterosexual sex,¹⁹ is firmly located in the gay porn narrative. This is precisely one of the moments in which the gay pornographic text represents, enables, and encourages gender fluidity. It not only turns the penis into an object of desire but also sexualizes other parts of the male body that have ostensibly remained non-sexual (not to mention numerous other possibilities that arise when sex toys and other inanimate objects are used, e.g., hoses in *Deep in Hot Water*). Consider, for example, the accompanying image (Fig. 4.12). With the left-hand man's eyes cast in the direction of the camera, this production still from *Interior Motives* (1994, Pleasure Productions) serves as a fine example of the cinematic technique by which the viewer is often engaged in identifying with the pleasures of tit-play.

Finally, *Hard at Work* also emphasizes the unveiling of the penis. The camera carefully frames a shot of a tape measure and the penis thus juxtaposing a phallic icon and the biological organ. The image, while certainly attempting to maintain the equation phallus=penis, only serves to show that the phallus cannot be located on the penis. The inability of the penis to reveal itself as the



Fig. 4.12

¹⁹ Richard Mohr writes

Tit-play is a regular part of gay sex and gay porn, but for straight men it is hedged around with all the machinery of taboo, denial and self-sacrifice for the sake of social values and socially drawn distinctions by which one invests one's life with significance. For these guys, to have one's tits played with would be to be a woman, and so these men are willing to forego the intense pleasure of tit-play and its syncretistic interaction with genital-play to solidify their general identity as non-feminine.

Richard Mohr, *Gay Ideas: Outing and Other Controversies* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992), 162.

However, due to the homosexual and female gazes' influence, this is destabilized and changing, e.g., the 'famous' bare-chested Diet Coke construction worker.

phallus, recalling Lacan's suggestion (which I cited in chapter two) that the phallus must always remain invisible to maintain its authority, *forces* Greg Young, the director, into a double sequence of penile *unwrapping* to stave off the moment of 'phallic failure'²⁰ Once exposed, the penis can never explicitly show its power, and, in fact, is biologically destined to shrink. Most directors evade *capturing* the final *detumescence* of the penis after orgasm but the masturbating viewer is bound to this ultimate fate. (This is not the case in *Hard at Work*. We see the flaccid penises of both Daniels and Sommers.) But there are also a multitude of points between the erection of the penis and the cum shot, and in too many videos to list here, the penis remains in varying degrees of erection. Certainly, on occasion, it never becomes fully erect during the entire sex scene.²¹ The porn star *appears* to be unable to achieve an erection (which *is* the case)—his penis is unable to become the 'phallus'. It is only the magic that goes on in the cutting room that redeems the penis through editing out shots of the overtly flaccid penis or inserting shots of a 'stunt dick'.²² The director *adds on* the cum shot. This provides the viewer with the

²⁰ I would like to suggest, although presently I have no statistics to support the claim (the need for further research!) that the contents of popular gay porn films contain anywhere between twenty to forty percent of 'penile invisibility.' I am here assuming that Greg Young is aware of the erotic power of veiling/unveiling the penis. As Georges Bataille suggested:

Besides nudity there is a strangeness of half-clothed bodies, what garments there are serve to emphasize the disorder of the body and show it to be all the more naked, all the more disordered. I would also add to Bataille's comments, that the body becomes all the more appealing and sexually titillating.

Georges Bataille, *Eroticism: Death and Sensuality* (San Francisco: City Light Books, 1986), 170.

²¹ Porn star Danny Bliss states, for example:

I've never been fully erect in a film. Even in still shoots, rarely will you see me with a hard-on. And it's a nice sight to see! But it just doesn't happen on camera.

Kinnick, *Sorry I Asked*, 29.

²² Burger writes:

Many tricks and gimmicks are employed to combat the problems of failed erections, orgasms not caught on film, and disinterest among costars. (74)

and,

The double is a guy with a similar-looking dick to that of the star, who stands in for the star when the star loses his erection.

Burger, *One-Handed Histories*, 76.

only shot where the penis is seen fully erect and also provides a glimpse of the precise moment in which it *spends* its phallic power (recall that historically it is the reproductive potential of the penis that really *is* the phallus)

The penis is only an organ Denying that the penis can *be* a site of multiple pleasures for both men and women which are not necessarily phallic, e.g., as a urinary tract (water sports), flaccid/vulnerable (SM, i.e., penile torturing), an object to be played with or pierced, licked or bitten, sucked or spat on, stroked or squeezed, etc., facilitates the continued domination of straight men over both queers and women. Recognizing



4.13

that the penis can be resignified in various anti-phallic sexual economies is essential The gay sodomizer represented in gay porn is not a patriarchal phallic image of power but a male who is fated by his own biology Moreover, the gay sodomizer is a male who performs a multitude of sodomitical activities in which the penis is resignified in various anti-phallic sexual economies (e.g., How do we understand, for example, the meaning/power of the penis in figure 4.13 from *Pleasure Torture* (1994, Shotgun Video)?) Ironically then, considering that so much effort is going into suppressing pornographic images, pornography is one site which clearly presents a representation of the penis; more specifically, a representation that is not phallic. The phallus cannot hide behind the biology of the penis.

RECLAIMING THE MONSTROUS: A FINAL WORD

The giant Goliath, in the Biblical tradition, exemplifies a fear of invasion/penetration by the grotesque 'other' along both sexual and racial discursive axes. In an unusual reversal of sociosexual dynamics, it is the effeminate David who brings down the phallic giant. Interestingly, the effeminate appearance of David, the possibility that he *was will be* sodomized, is immediately erased in the homoerotic story of him and Jonathan which follows.²³ The masculinity of the narratively more important figure of David is assured. The threat that David, the future King (the image of patriarchy), would have been sodomized is erased. The text is underscored throughout by this sodomitical anxiety.

It is interesting that the artist Donatello, inspired by this biblical story, sculpted David as a young effeminate-looking man standing on the head of Goliath. Goliath's head is intriguingly represented as the head of a satyr. The style of the head fascinatingly duplicates those found adorning the bases of Greek Dionysiac statues.²⁴

From demons to Frankenstein, from Mr. Hyde to Vampires, from HIV-positive persons to modern horror, the terror of the existence of the 'gay sodomizer' is continually constructed as a threat to straight male masculinity and sexuality. Certainly images such as the sexually ambiguous demon the succubus (appearing *like* a female), can be reread as a sodomitical threat. It is perhaps not coincidental that the image of the Devil is a

²³ For a more in depth discussion of the homoerotic nature of the story of David and Jonathan see David Greenberg, *The Construction of Homosexuality* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1988), 113-114.

²⁴ Kenneth Clark, *The Nude* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1956), 54.

transfiguration of the Greek god Pan, a god which most resembles the monstrosity of the satyrs²⁵

It is perhaps only coincidence that Frankenstein's monster is reminiscent of, but also a reversal of, the myth of Osiris. He is a monster who cannot reproduce and haunts his creator. He is a creature whose penis has no *relation* to a vagina²⁶. The *imaginary* gay sodomizer is a terror always lurking in the shadows. If made visible, it takes on the shape of a monster, easily recognized and, thus, easily destroyed. Perhaps the image of Mr. Hyde captures this sodomitical fear more clearly. Robert Louis Stevenson writes of Hyde

The powers of Hyde seemed to have grown with the sickness of Jekyll. And certainly the hate that now divided them was equal on each side. With Jekyll, it was a thing of vital instinct. He had now seen the full deformity of that creature that shared with him some of the phenomena of consciousness, and was co-heir with him to death, and beyond these links of the community, which in themselves made the most poignant part of his distress, he thought of Hyde, for all his energy of life, as something not only hellish but inorganic. This was the shocking thing, that the slime of the pit seemed to utter cries and voices, that the amorphous dust gesticulated and sinned; that what was dead, and had no shape, should usurp the offices of life. And this again, that that insurgent horror was *known* to him closer than a wife, closer than an eye, lay caged in his flesh, where he heard it mutter

²⁵ It would appear that over the centuries the image of the satyr was transformed into various other creatures. There certainly appears to be a resemblance between Christian constructions of the Devil and satyrs. Satyrs also were transformed into 'wild men' in the Middle Ages who were believed to inhabit forests. They (unsurprisingly) lost their enormous penises and were covered in hair. Artistic representations that I have come across also show that they were 'heterosexualized,' as they were presented as having families. One may well speculate whether the image of the Beast in tales such as *Beauty and the Beast* is in fact a representational descendant of this once-terrifying Greek creature.

²⁶ Mary Shelley writes of Frankenstein's monster

I am alone, and miserable, man will not associate with me, but as deformed and horrible as myself would not deny herself to me. My companion must be of the same species, and have the same defects. This being you must create. (139)

and elsewhere

He had vowed to be with me on my wedding-night, yet he did not consider the threat as binding him in peace in the mean time, for as if to show me that he was not yet satiated with blood, he had murdered Clerval immediately after the enunciation of his threats.

Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein or The Modern Prometheus* (Toronto: Penguin, 1985), 183.

and felt it struggle to be born, and at every hour of weakness, and in the confidences of slumber, prevailed against him, and deposed him out of life²⁷

The relationship between homosexuality and the unnatural/monstrous has been elegantly outlined in Sue-Ellen Case's "Tracking the Vampire." Although Case is discussing lesbian sexuality in her article, her analysis of queer sexual practices is appropriate. She writes

Queer sexual practice, then, impels one out of generational productions of what has been called "life" and history, and ultimately out of the category of the living. The equation of hetero=sex=life and homo=sex=unlife generated a queer discourse that reveled in proscribed desiring by imagining sexual objects and sexual practices within the realm of the other-than-natural, and the consequent other-than-living. In this discourse, new forms of being, or beings, are imagined through desire. And desire is that which wounds—a desire that breaks through the sheath of being as it has been imagined within a heterosexual society. Striking at the very core, queer desire punctures the life/death and generative/destructive bipolarities that enclose the heterosexual notion of being.²⁸

In light of Case's comments, we are able to see one of the ways in which the 'gay sodomizer' becomes a social horror. He is a *creature*, like Onan of the Old Testament, that defies the *reproductive life generative* imperative. He is party to the *unnatural*, for the sexual acts that he performs are not patriarchal phallic actions. He does not reproduce. He is not constructed within, and in terms of, a penile-vaginal relation/combination. He is degenerative.

The image of the vampire has also been registered by several commentators as being homoerotic.²⁹ As Judith Halberstam has noted, Dracula, like Frankenstein, "is read

²⁷ Robert Louis Stevenson, *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde and Other Stories* (Markham, Ontario: Penguin, 1979), 95-96.

²⁸ Sue-Ellen Case, "Tracking the Vampire," *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 3.2 (1991): 4.

²⁹ See also, Christopher Craft, "'Kiss Me With Those Red Lips': Gender and Inversion in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*," in *Speaking of Gender*, ed. Elaine Showalter (New York: Routledge, 1989); Judith Halberstam, *Skin Shows: Gothic Horror and the Technology of Monsters* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995).

by his enemies as the desire to father a new race "³⁰ By implication, this would suggest that the image of Dracula is understood as representing the destruction of the older order. Is it conceivable to understand the blood-draining fangs of vampires as a symbol for the penis of the gay sodomizer. Vampires have teeth that puncture/penetrate their victims to drain away their generative blood; they also have the power to transform/relocate the victims into a universe of the 'living dead,' a universe that is other-than-natural. Certainly, Taylor Hudson's Catalina release *The Bite* (1993), a porn film filled with vampires, replaces the puncturing fangs of the vampire with the penis of the gay sodomizer (Fig. 4.14).



Fig. 4.14

The image of the satyr that I introduced earlier in this thesis served to provide our first glimpse at the *horror* and (un)representability of the gay

sodomizer—an image of the *anti-phallus*. The satyr is a half-human and half-equine (or goat) hybrid (Figs 3.1 and 4.14), and its sexual activities are, indeed, sodomitical, likewise are the activities of the gay sodomizer, who 'appears' to be half gay and half straight. Invoking images of bestiality and homosexuality, the sodomizing satyrs are *representations* and personifications of sexual desires which lay in-between the *natural* and *unnatural*. The gay sodomizer discursively holds the same position in-between the natural (heterosexual) and the unnatural (homosexual). He is monstrous.

³⁰ Halberstam, *Skin Shows*, 103

Gay porn captures and represents what has traditionally been *unrepresentable* --a positive view of the gay sodomizer. Like many modern horror films in which the *monster* is hidden *beneath* the skin, invisible and indistinguishable from its future victims, the gay sodomizer, constructed as masculine and hypermasculine, has become an *invisible* threat to straight male masculinity. Gay porn affirms what has been traditionally denied. It makes *visible* the *invisible*.



Fig 4.14

It is a text that locates, recognizes, asserts, and demonstrates the actuality, presence, and existence of the gay sodomizer. Even though gay hyper/masculinity may appear to some as a duplication of straight masculinity, it is a strategy (either conscious or not) which undermines phallic patriarchy by undermining the phallic *power* of the penis. It takes the signifier of the phallus and the iconography that is associated with it, and turns them against itself (comparable to the satyrs, or Priapus, or Pan chasing the shepherd boy, or the thyrsus-wielding maenads of the ancient world).

The gay sodomizer, initially a feminine body (recall that homosexuality has for the most part been defined as feminine), a body from which the penis was metaphorically castrated, has reclaimed his penis and transferred the 'phallus' from a male/female sexual axis, repositioning it squarely in terms of sodomitical desire. Here the gay sodomizer's subject position is more closely aligned with a dildo-wielding lesbian or a straight female anally fucking her lover than with a straight male. Straight male masculinity can no

longer be defined strictly in terms of penetration. There is a gay 'top' for the straight male's 'bottom'. Importantly, there is also the possibility of a gay 'top' for a gay 'bottom'.

It is precisely because the phallus has been traditionally denied gay men (and women), due to the conceptual construction and (gendered) assumption that their bodies are 'feminine,' that the *appropriation* of the phallus/phallic iconography by gay men becomes subversive. If there is no gay 'top' to a straight man's 'bottom,' homosexuality is rendered (partially) ineffective as a means to destabilize the present sociosexual order (traditional gender binarisms will inevitably be reinscribed).³¹ The discursive/imaginary connection or substitution between active anal penetration and vaginal penetrative sex can be construed as a double denial for a straight male. If a *patriarchal straight male* believes that *all* gay men only enjoy being fucked he can still maintain (although with a great deal of difficulty due to modern constructions of sexual categories) his position as a heterosexual (whether he fucks a 'gay' male or woman) while simultaneously holding the view that he is masculine, i.e., 'superior'. As such, a *straight male* can still sustain his belief that there are only two gender positions in the sexual universe. In short, without the discursive construction of the 'gay sodomizer,' straight men can solely occupy (or they wish to solely occupy) the site of masculinity while homosexuals and women continue to be homophobically and misogynistically *relegated to* the feminine, i.e., 'inferior'. The masculinization of gay men, seen as desiring subjects and having all the characteristics of *real men*, forces the straight male to question (within a homophobic society) what *truly* constitutes masculinity. If we follow Trumbach and Chauncey's arguments, it would

³¹ I do not want to suggest that this is the only means to subvert patriarchy. A combination of other political, social, and philosophical strategies on this and other discursive levels may equally function to bring about this desired effect.

appear that the fundamental characteristics which originally defined modern *masculinity* (although this definition is constantly shifting) are being torn away from the straight male body. One of the last remaining *moments* in which the straight male can be (or is) *exclusively* defined as masculine (and unfortunately there is a great deal of sexual rhetoric supporting and maintaining this view) is the act of penetration. As such, it is to the advantage of phallic patriarchy that the gay sodomizer remains unimaginable. The threat that the gay sodomizer poses to patriarchal order has, in a sense, been long recognized.

Attempts to distinguish between feminine and masculine sexual behaviors and identities, and to determine what is male sexuality and what is female sexuality, are inexact and will likely not contribute to the solving of present sociosexual problems. Sexual activities cannot be simply reduced to, described as, and articulated in, terms which presuppose that the sexual universe is divided into two separate worlds based on biological sex and gendered polarities. If we insist on continually classifying sexuality in such terms we run the risk of effacing both the richness of what human sexuality can be, and the erotic potential of our bodies.

We must begin to understand both gender and sexual identities not in terms of strict heterosexist categories, not in terms of traditional binarisms, but on a variety of sexual planes and discourses which can parallel, intersect, cross-over, or operate independently. Gay pornography provides a conceptual site in which sexual representations, given a sodomitical voice, can be understood as transcending the restrictions of heterosexist representation/language. Gay pornography need not present an

ordered and coherent 'image' of homosexuality and a 'gay identity' to be understood as non-homophobic. The 'perversion' of gayness itself, with a deeper and more complicated analysis, serves to open up a conceptual gateway to more complex and varied representations of sexual desire. These new visions of sexuality may at times inform definitions of female sexuality by similarly 'perverting' it as a fixed sexual category. Gay porn can provide hints, patterns, or indications as to how heterosexual sexual dynamics can be altered or changed. On other occasions, gay porn serves as a tool to highlight gender *misconceptions*. By *uncovering* the penis, gay porn provides a visual apparatus to confuse, and collapse one of our society's most sacred equations. As this happens, our understanding of the phallus, its location and importance, begins to change. If the penis can no longer claim phallic authority, then there is an important sense that biology will no longer delineate power. Gay porn is one representation of sex that needs to be endorsed and celebrated. We must support its evolution, for as time passes it is constantly recreating and redefining the boundaries of gender and sexual identities. Clearly, gay porn's internal ambiguities and instabilities, its internal tensions between biological sex and gender, its confusion between what is straight and what is gay, what is feminine and what is masculine, and finally, what is sex, are its strengths rather than its weaknesses.

Gay pornography is just one facet of the sodomitical universe. A great deal of exploration still needs to be undertaken of those sexual fantasies, fetishes, and activities that lie on the edges of our anti-sodomitical sexual order. Unlike the traditional binarisms that have been criticized in this thesis, the sodomitical is not divided and delineated by biological sex and gender. It is my hope that I have shown that traditional sexual

binarisms are not adequate in explaining the sexual dynamics of the gay porn text. It is also my hope that I have provided a more adequate theoretical approach for understanding these videos. Finally, if the theoretical and conceptual tools I have offered have the flexibility that I hope they do, they may serve as a starting point to investigate the various connections, junctions, and points of intersection between various sociosexual communities that are presently oppressed, i.e., other sodomitical communities. Although on some levels traditional sexual and gender categories serve as important conceptual tools, it would seem that on other levels these same tools prevent us from moving beyond those categories we so intensely criticize. It is time that we started avoiding the mappings of our own discourse.

VIDEOS

A Matter of Size (1994, Matt Sterling)
The Abduction* (1991, Falcon)
Abduction 2: Conflict* (1993, Falcon)
Abduction 3: Redemption* (1993, Falcon)
Accidental Lovers (1993, Falcon)
Against the Rules (1980, Falcon)
Air Male (1989, Vivid)
Alley Action (1992, AVG)
Baby It's You (1992, Bijou)
Backstage Pass (1994, Hothouse)
Beach Buddies (1988, HIS)
Best of Colt 2 (1984, Colt)
Between The Sheets (1991, Barbar)
Big Splash (n.d., AMD Productions)
Bigger the Better (1984, Video)
The Bigger They Come (1986, Catalina)
Born to Raise Hell* (1972, Marathon)
Boys in the Sand (1971, THX Video)
Brats (1992, All Worlds Video)
Breakaway (1994, Falcon)
Brother Load (1988, Laguna)
Busted (1991, Stryker Productions)
Buttbusters (1991, Falcon)
Butt Much (1994, Kink)
By Invitation Only (1994, Falcon)
Cadets (1988, Catalina)
Caribbean Beat (1990, Sarava Productions)
Carnival Tails (1990, HIS)
Chi Chi La Rue's Hard Body Magazine (n.d., Odyssey Men)
Class Reunion (1983, Catalina)
Cocktales (1989, AVG)
Compulsion (1991, Falcon)
Craze! (1992, Video Resource Group)
Crazed (1988, Adam and Co.)
Crotch Rockets (1990, FOX)
Cruisin' Men on the Make (1988, Falcon)
Cummin' of Age (1994, Surfside Studios)
Daddy (1993, Video Resource Group)
Daddy Bare (1991, Barbar)
Danny's Anal Ordeal (1990, Image Video)
Davey and the Cruisers (1989, Vivid)
Deep in Hot Water (1989, Falcon)
Desert Heat (1993, Falcon)

Desert Oasis (1993, Falcon)
 Dick's Service Center (1991, Back Alley Video)
 Dirty Pictures (1992, Vivid)
 Dormitory Initiation (1994, Control T. Studios)
 Easy Entry (1983, Buckshot)
 EightBall (Behind the Eight Ball) (1991, Vivid)
 The Erector Set (1993, Vizuns)
 Fast Idle (1991, Titan productions)
 Faultline (1994, Zeus Productions)
 First Tome Broken III* (1994, Apollo Productions)
 Flex (1988, In Hand)
 Foxhole (1990, Catalina)
 Frat House I (1980, Laguna)
 French Lieutenant's Boys (1984, Laguna)
 Full Load (1987, Catalina)
 Full Service (1989, Catalina)
 Gang Bang Alley (1992, Rosebud)
 Going Down In Style (1994, All Worlds Video)
 Hand to Hand (1994, Vivid)
 Hard at Work (1992, Club M)
 Hard Knocks (1989, In Hand)
 Hard Men 2 (1988, Catalina)
 Head Hunters (1991, Barbar)
 Head of the Class (1988, Catalina)
 Heat in the Night (1989, Huge)
 Highway Patrol (1989, In Hand)
 Hole Patrol (1993, Mack Studios)
 Hologram (1993, HIS)
 Homewrecker (1991, Vidtex Video and Transvideo)
 Honourable Discharge (1993, All Worlds Video)
 Hot Male Mechanics (1985, LA Video)
 Hotel Hombre (1993, Video Resource Group)
 How Big Is Danny? (1991, Video Resource Group)
 Hustlemania (1992, Vizuns)
 Idol Eyes (1990, Video 10)
 Idol Thoughts (1993, Video Resource Group)
 Idol Worship (1991, Associated Video Group)
 The Idol (1979, Hand in Hand)
 Immoral Thoughts (1992, Paul Norman)
 Impacted (1992, Vizuns)
 In Hot Pursuit (1987, Catalina)
 In the Stretch (1990, Vivid)
 Inch by Inch (1985, Huge)
 Interior Motives (1994, Pleasure Productions)
 Interviews Vol 1 (1989, Filmco)

Interviews Vol. 4 (1992, Filmco)
 Island Fever (1989, Kristen Bjorn)
 It's the Size that Counts (1987, Redondo Video)
 Jet Set Sex (1992, Video Resource Group)
 Jock-a-Holics (1993, Sierra Pacific)
 Jumper (1991, HIS)
 Jungle Heat (1993, Sarava Productions)
 Kinky Stuff (1992, Surge)
 Knockout (1984, PanPacific Productions)
 L.A. Broadway Studs (1992, Video Resource Group)
 L.A. Plays Itself * (1972, HIS)
 The Legend of Mine 69 (1992, Vizuns)
 Leo and Lance (1983, Catalina)
 Life Guard (1985, HIS)
 The Look (1989, Catalina)
 Love Gods (1990, Conquest)
 Lunch Hour (1990, Catalina)
 Maid to Get Laid (1994, Forum Studios)
 The Main Attraction (1990, Scott Masters)
 Malibu Pool Boys (1992, Catalina)
 Man Handler (1991, Stallion)
 Manly Beach (1991, Kristen Bjorn)
 Manrammer (1990, Falcon)
 A Matter of Size (1983, Various Distributors)
 Mechanics On Duty (1991, Hendrix)
 Men In Love (1992, Video Resource Group)
 Men of Steel (1992, Vizuns)
 Men TV (1989, Vivid)
 Minute Man #2 (1987, Buckshot)
 Montreal Men (1993, Kristen Bjorn)
 More of a Man (1990, All Worlds Video)
 Moving In (1992, All Worlds Video)
 Muscle Talk (1992, Acktion)
 Muscle Up (1989, Fox)
 My Best Buddy (1988, Inches)
 Nasty Rays (1992, Vizuns)
 Night Force (1992, Catalina)
 Nights in Black Leather (1978, HIS)
 Northern Exposures (1993, A Vision)
 Northwest Passage (1987, Adam and Co.)
 On the Rocks (1990, Stryker Productions)
 One In A Billion (1984, Le Salon)
 Other Side of Aspen I (1980, Falcon)
 Other Side of Aspen II (1985, Falcon)
 Out of Bounds (1987, Falcon)

Paradise Beach (1990, Vivid)
 Party Animals (1992, Vizuns)
 Pleasure Torture* (1994, Shotgun)
 Plunge (1990, Falcon)
 Powerdrive 500 (1990, Images of the World)
 Powerfull II: The Return (1989, Video 10)
 Powerline (1989, Catalina)
 Powertool I (1986, Catalina)
 Powertool 2: Breaking Out (1992, Catalina)
 Private Dick (1989, Catalina)
 Private Workout (1990, Falcon)
 The Producer (1992, HIS)
 Pump (1987, LA Video)
 Ram and Jam (1991, Street Times Video)
 Ranch Hand (1988, In Hand)
 The Rites of Manhood (1989, Vivid)
 Road Side Slaves* (1993, Live)
 Romeo and Julian—A Love Story (1993, Video 10)
 Roughed Up in Rotterdam* (1994, Close Up)
 Ryan Idol: A Very Personal View (1990, DreamMaker Productions)
 Sailing to Paradise (1991, AVG/New Generation)
 Sailor in the Wild (1983, Catalina)
 Sauna Paradiso (1994, Falcon)
 Score 10 (1991, Matt Sterling)
 Secret Dreams (1992, Video Resource Group)
 Secret Meeting (1991, Video Resource Group)
 Seeds of Love (1994, Catalina)
 Sex Garage* (1972, HIS)
 Sexposure (1993, Dynamic Productions)
 Sextool* (1972, Cosco)
 Single Black Men (1992, Video Resource Group)
 Sizing Up Before Your Eyes (1984, Huge)
 Skin Flicks Vol. 6 (n.d., n.p.)
 Slave Auction (1994, Squire)
 Snowbumz (1993, Acktion Bros.)
 Soldiers (1988, In Hand)
 Splash Shots (1986, Falcon)
 Spokes (1983, Falcon)
 Spring Semester (1986, Catalina)
 Sgt. Swan's Private Files (1985, Seabag)
 Steam Room (1992, Video Resource Group)
 Sterling Ranch (1992, Catalina)
 Straight Dudes (1991, International Studios)
 Stryker Force (1987, Huge)
 Studz (1992, Video resource Group)

Summer Fever (1994, Falcon)
 Surge Men at Their Best (1990, Surge)
 Taken By Storm (1990, Steel Creek Video)
 Telephone Man (1993, Vizuns)
 The Tease (1994, Jeff's Provisions)
 Their Wild Ways (1991, HIS)
 These Bases are Loaded (1982, Catalina)
 These Bases are Loaded II (1994, Catalina)
 They Grow 'Em Big (1988, Catalina)
 Through The Looking Glass (1992, Vizuns)
 Total Corruption (1993, HIS)
 Tool Kit (1992, Mack)
 Top Man (1988, Catalina)
 Touch Competition (1985, HOT)
 Tough (1990, Steel Creek Videos)
 Tough Guys Do Dance (1990, Bijou)
 Turbo Charge (1988, Al Parker Prod.)
 Trade Off (1991, All Worlds Video)
 True Stories: Letter from the Hot House Files, Vol 1 (1994, Hot House)
 Two Handfulls (1986, John Summers Ltd)
 Upwardly Mobile (1991, Barbar)
 A View to a Thrill (1989, Planet Group Video)
 Voyeur (1985, Studio 2000)
 Where The Hunks Are (1990, HIS)
 Winner Takes All (1985, Falcon)
 Who's Going To Get It? (1991, Mastertape Productions)
 Woody's (n.d, A Vision)
 Working Stiffs (1990, Adam & Co.)
 Young Warriors (1988, Avalon)

Films with a star indicate that they are either not legally available in Quebec or have been *heavily* edited for their Canadian release.

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