

**Girls Will Be Boys:
Approaching the Sexualized Transgressive Female Body**

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Critics and scholars who study pornography, whatever their political, aesthetic or psychological bent, have overwhelmingly tended to essentialize “straight” porn – that is, pornography largely produced by and for heterosexual men. From the earliest days of erotic cinema, many (if not most) conventions of the genre have indeed revolved around creating pleasure and/or arousal in the straight male audience. Activist scholars of the 1980s and 1990s theorized how pornography often represented the straight male fantasy of dominating a woman, controlling and subjecting her through the apparatus of the phallogentric camera and the male gaze, and, ultimately, humiliating or “marking” her through the act of visible ejaculation (MacKinnon 1993; Mulvey 1975).

Critics more sympathetic to the possibilities of pornography have problematized this assumption, perhaps best exemplified by Anne McClintock:

There is ample evidence that male porn stages male submission, female dominance, intricate identity and gender crossings, the validity of female desire, and myriad forms of inversion and contradiction. Far greater attention to the paradoxes and nuances of such identification is called for (1992, 115).¹

¹ See also Williams 1999, Kaplan 1983, and Willis 1983.

It is that calling that this article is responding to, looking for ways in which, as McClintock states, “Identification in porn can be multiple and shifting, bisexual and transsexual, alternately or simultaneously – although context can limit or prohibit the degree of transgression” (1992, 125).

In the digital age, the ongoing questions of identification, desire and representations of sexual power in pornography need to be re-examined in light of several genres of pornography that have become more visible and commonplace in mainstream porn. While fetish videos have been something of a staple in the industry since the advent of video, the genres under examination here are particularly interesting in that these “specialty” categories, while constructed and otherwise coded for ostensibly “straight male” pleasure, radically reposition the possibilities of sexual expression by challenging the conventional notions of what a “female” body is supposed to look like, and how it is supposed to behave and perform sexually.

In these genres – known informally as tranny, femdom, and squirting – the bodies of performers identified as “female” act or in some way become “male,” as they assume performative sexual characteristics that audiences might normally consider masculine, controlling, dominant, and defining. They challenge the idea that straight male porn is somehow “essentially” constructed out of predictable sexual binaries that equate men, dominance, and heterosexuality on one end, opposed by women, submission, and homosexual desire on the other. Constructed around transgressive bodies, female domination of male subjects, and/or the representation of female sexual pleasure, these genres encourage the straight male viewer (and others) to identify across traditional lines of preference in a manner that seems to erase the standard porn definitions of sexuality and gender entirely, revealing a world of desire and fantasy that is anything but essential, conventional, or ubiquitously safe.

“Does This Make Me Gay?”

Scholars have long pointed out homoerotic elements in otherwise “straight” porn – after all, the definition of a film as pornographic or hardcore is critically dependent upon the visibility of the tumescent male sexual organ. Indeed, there is a sub-genre of straight porn (“big dick” or “monster cock”) that markets itself based on the size of the male performers’ genitalia. While the scenes in these videos often focus on the female performers’ reaction to the male performers’ size, it does seem curious that the product packaging is usually designed to at least partially play upon the straight, male viewers’ curiosity in seeing a large male penis in action. This “gay, but not really” subtext has been noted as both a historical and generic construction: in his examination of pornographic films before 1940, Joseph Waugh speculates that the very limited representation of homosexual behavior (including transsexual disguises, bisexuality and the occasional homosexual act) was a “simultaneous address and disavowal of the gay spectator,” creating a form of potentially homoerotic cinema, “which ultimately expressed cultural and social restraints that were just as determining as legal ones” (1992, 16).

It may seem like an absurdly obvious point, but scholars have usually assumed that the penis is an exclusively male appendage. Used *by* men and *on* (or, generously, *for*) women, the visible, erect, and (eventually) ejaculating penis in mainstream porn is seen as something that only a man can use and possess. Taking this assumption for granted, it is easy to understand why scholars have theorized about the male viewer primarily identifying with the text through the perspective of the penis-bearing figure on-screen. Linda Williams’ discussion of the anti-porn feminist conflation of the image of the male penis and the power of the phallus is a sophisticated articulation of this assumed identification:

Hardcore pornography is not phallic because it shows penises; it is phallic because in its exhibition of penises it presumes to know, to possess an

adequate expression of the truth of 'sex' – as if sex were as unitary as the phallus presumes itself to be (1999, 267).

However, this assumption must be rethought when one considers videos that feature transsexual performers – colloquially referred to as “she-males,” “chicks with dicks,” or simply “trannies.” While a viewer would guess that these performers were born biologically male and are currently undergoing full or partial gender reassignment, these problematic colloquialisms crucially frame the performers as female. Why, one might ask, are they not referred to as “boys with boobs” or “he-gals”?

The website videobox.com offers downloadable pornographic scenes to its subscribers. According to site co-founder Josh Seims, these videos, produced by a variety of different companies, are all designed for heterosexual men. “Whatever content we view on the site, we have to watch a lot of it,” explains Seims. “We have avoided including explicitly gay content for no other reason except that the site founders don’t want to look at it” (2005). Thus, the site offers no videos featuring male homosexuality or bisexuality.

However, the site does feature several tranny videos. Excerpted from titles such as *One Hung Bitch* and *My Girlfriend’s Cock*, these scenes are mostly centered around performers who have a biological penis to go along with what might otherwise be considered female bodies – an hourglass figure, hairless skin, women’s facial makeup, etc. In a putatively straight milieu, Seims says that videobox.com considers tranny videos as a category with appeal for some straight men. “We wanted to cover as wide of a variety as possible for straight men, and emphasize some diversity in case someone comes along who likes those things” (2005).

The box covers for these titles highlight different aspects of tranny performance that seem designed to prompt arousal in the straight, male viewer.² On the cover for *My Girlfriend's Cock*, produced by Elegant Angel, performer Milena Vendramine is clearly coded as female, turned away from the camera to emphasize her shapely rear, with the upper half of her body in provocative profile. Besides the title of the video, the only indication that Milena is not a traditionally female performer is the tag-line: “Yes, my cock’s bigger than yours!” The suggestion here is one of mystery and curiosity for the male viewer: the performer is presented as “naturally” attractive, with traditional female sexual characteristics. Under the guise of his heterosexual impulses, a male viewer might be enticed to view the video just to see how exactly such a “girlfriend” might use a penis which the image of her body suggests she does not actually possess.

The covers for the series *One Hung Bitch*, featuring performer Suzanna Holmes and produced by the company Acid Rain, are a stark contrast. Here, Holmes’ black-skinned body is presented full-front, her breasts hanging awkwardly from poorly performed enhancement surgery and her long penis dangling down towards her knee. *One Hung Bitch* offers no mystery, and perhaps involves a bit more of the “freak show” element that is traditionally a frame of reference for fetish porn. Looking much more like a “she-male” – tall, muscular, and obviously altered by surgery – the body here is being exploited for the comparisons it invites to both traditional male and female bodies. *One Hung Bitch #2* seems to go even further, pairing Holmes with a performer named Daniel who is not even presented as biologically transsexual, but merely as a cross-dressing transvestite.

Examining the content of these videos, the categories of male/female, straight/gay seem to break down even further. While the transsexual performers

² There may be female or gay male viewers who enjoy tranny videos, but industry experts consider the category one that primarily appeals to straight men: Seims believes that most of his viewers are male because according to his research, “Women don’t pay for porn on the internet” (2005).

have female names and are costumed as women, they do not necessarily take a submissive, “female” part in the action. One scene in *My Girlfriend’s Cock* featuring performer Shayene Lima demonstrates this, as she is seen masturbating, participating in both oral and anal sex in both the “top” and “bottom” positions, before exchanging come shots with her male partner. In other scenes from both videos, transsexual performers are paired with female performers, and perform the ostensibly “male” function in the scene, penetrating and ejaculating on their female co-star. Some scenes feature a combination of male, female, and transsexual performers, where the possibilities of sexual desire and contact seem almost limitless.

Issues of straight or gay desire are constantly being questioned and undermined in these scenes. In a sexual performance where at least one of the partner’s bodies simultaneously appears as female and functions as male, the viewer is allowed to fantasize about the possibilities of a transgressive sexual pleasure without necessarily questioning his own sexual orientation. If unable to admit to himself that there is a homoerotic element to watching a man perform fellatio, the male viewer can take solace in the notion that the body being fellated on-screen is female. Tranny videos problematize the tendency by critics, scholars, scientists and society to label desire as essentially gay, straight or bisexual, as they represent a desire that confounds and transcends each of those constructed categories.

Seims admits that of all of the content that is offered by videobox.com, the tranny videos tend to get the most response from patrons. Every time the website features a new tranny video, “We usually get about a dozen letters from people saying they want more, and a dozen saying ‘That’s totally gay, if you put on any more I’m going to cancel my subscription,’” says Seims (2005). The success of the genre in the current marketplace and its visibility in a putatively straight milieu reflects the complexity and multiplicity of straight, male desire.

Women on Top: Femdom

The content of femdom videos is not much different from that of tranny videos: the significant difference in this case is that the penis in question is not a “real” one, but a strap-on prosthesis or dildo that is used by a female performer. Seims says there are comparatively fewer letters of complaint about the inclusion of femdom on the videobox.com menu, and that femdom videos were first featured at the requests of subscribers who expressed interest.

The ways in which femdom videos negotiate and/or problematize conventional sexual binaries is again revealed through box covers and scene content. The cover for a title called *Women in Control #2* shows two female performers wielding strap-ons while using their hands to occlude the genitals of the male star, a compelling, complex image that suggests both the denial/invisibility of the “natural” male organ as well as questions the necessity of the “real” penis as a requirement for visual sexual pleasure. Certainly, the tag line “Hard Toys in Men Butt-Holes” (sic) seems to indicate that the source of pleasure for the male viewer might be located in a portion of the male anatomy located a few inches away from his genitals. The covers of the *Boss Bitches* series, produced by American company Gentleman’s Video, are interesting in comparison, as volume two features female performers in poses that would not look out-of-place in any other genre of straight porn – bright, revealing clothing, a hint of girl-girl action, and headliner Terri Starr squatting with her legs apart to expose her bikinied crotch. Volume three, however, features the female performers wearing and fondling strap-ons, and clothes them mostly in black and/or leather wear, emphasizing dominance, with smaller “action” shots in the background, one of which features a male performer fellating a strap-on.

The descriptions on the covers are also illuminating in underscoring the “dom” in “femdom,” although the tone ranges from comically playful, as if the

featured subject matter were something of a joke, to the putatively sincere, where the goings-on reflect a deliberate subversion of male dominance. From the lighter-leaning *Boss Bitches #2*:

Girls in Charge with Big Dildos. They strap 'em on and go for glory because they don't give a damn about penis envy. They got strap-on and hand-held penises that never give up. They fuck themselves. They fuck each other. They fuck guys in the ass! These girls have never been happier!

In this video, the strap-on – the prosthetic that appears most like a “real” penis, as it is artificially attached to the pubic area of the female performer – is only present in a girl-girl scene. The scenes between men and women feature the women using a dildo, wielded by the woman’s hand, and allowing her oral and manual access to the men’s genitals so as to remain at least partially focused on his genital pleasure. The result is more a bit of kink than a real subversion of roles. While the men may act surprised by the appearance of the dildo, they willingly participate in the act of insertion, although the manner in which they do so is slightly different from one scene to the next. In the first scene, the female performer gently inserts the dildo into the male performer before bringing him to a more aggressive climax, while the other scene features the female performer playfully strangling the male performer, tweaking on his nipples, and engaging in other mildly dominant sex-play.

Dominance is clearly more of a selling point in *Boss Bitches #3*, according to the description on the box cover:

When these boss babes put on their strap-ons they become BOSS BITCHES! Their philosophy toward any guy with a swinging dick is no mercy! They'll stuff it up someone's ass as quickly as they'll stuff it down someone's gagging throat! After they suck you and screw you, they'll make you eat their pussy till it's raw! Boss Bitches will stop at nothing to show you who's on top!

The scenes in this video vary slightly in terms of how they represent this more powerful and assertive form of dominant femininity, but in each case, the shift in power is clearly pronounced. The first scene features a male character arriving late to an appointment with his dominatrix, and she forces him to do a number of submissive acts such as licking her boots and fellating her strap-on, though there is also more standard fare such as mutual oral sex. There is no male-to-female penetration, however, as the bulk of the scene is devoted to the woman using the strap-on anally on the man, in a variety of positions, some of which allow for the woman to maintain manual contact with his genitals, and some of which do not.

Again, the location of the man's physical pleasure is significant: unlike the scenes in the previous video, where male genitalia at least partially remained the center of pleasure for the male performer (and, vicariously, for the male viewer), this video seems at times determined to re-locate physical pleasure to the man's rectum. In this first scene, in particular, the potentially homosexual elements are not avoided: if the dildo is convincingly enough made, it can appear in certain shots as if the man were fellating a real penis. Additionally, conventions of heterosexual sex that are usually indicative of dominance – for example, the so-called “piledriver” position – are subverted so that the man is in the receiving/submissive position. Furthermore, all three scenes end with the male character masturbating himself to ejaculation, but the act of ejaculation is somewhat compromised as a “power play” in all three. In the first scene, the man is forced by his mistress to swallow his own ejaculate; in the second, the man ejaculates on the woman's chest and is likewise forced to lick it off; while in the third, the man ejaculates on the woman's toes, reinforcing his own foot fetish and relative powerlessness.

In the tranny videos, the transgression represented by the body of the transgendered performer, simultaneously male and female, potentially

problematizes the presumed heterosexual orientation of the male performer and viewer. But in femdom, without such extreme biological transgression, the relocation of pleasure to the man's anus is not necessarily an indicator of a shifting or fluid sexual preference. Instead, while the binaries of female/male and gay/straight are relatively preserved, it is the continuum of dominance and submission that is reversed, as the woman assumes the dominant position. The pleasure for the male viewer, at least partially transferred away from the penis, is also enhanced by the potential pleasure of submission to a more powerful, controlling sexual force.

We're in the Money (Shot) or You('ve) Come a Long Way, Baby

Of course, femdom is not alone in representing this transgression – films featuring S&M content clearly subvert conventional notions of sexual power. Even the conventions of mainstream straight porn might imply this in a number of ways: by featuring male characters who are easily misled and seduced by more wily female characters; the ubiquitous “cowgirl” (woman on top) positions that potentially allow the female performer more control over the sexual performance; or scenes featuring female performers as sexual conquerors, which transform the visual aesthetic of P.O.V. gonzo from an aggressive (and potentially misogynist) pursuit of women's sexualized bodies to a female performer's quest for uninhibited sexual adventure.

Consideration of the representation of female sexual pleasure in mainstream pornography prompts recollection of two very different scenes. In *Deep Throat*, the main character (played by Linda Lovelace) learns that her clitoris is located deep inside of her throat. Unable to achieve the “fireworks” of orgasm through genital intercourse, she is encouraged by a doctor (Harry Reems) to fellate men so that her clitoris could be stimulated. In the documentary *Inside Deep Throat*, director Gerard Damiano (aka Jerry Gerard) enthusiastically describes the first

scene where Linda engages in the act of inserting the entirety of Reems' penis into her mouth. "I was *really* going to show it," he recalls with a broad smile, referring to the female characters' orgasm.

Of course, what Damiano chose to "show" was in fact stock footage of a rocket launch, intercut with Reems' ejaculation. While the effect viscerally may remind a viewer of the symbolic possibilities of orgasm (more specifically, with the phallus-shaped rocket erupting with energy, a male orgasm), it is far removed from a real female orgasm. Damiano's gleeful recollection of representing real female sexual pleasure notwithstanding, *Deep Throat* reflects the issue that has vexed pornographic filmmakers and viewers before and since. Linda Williams argues that while male pleasure offers "maximum visibility," female pleasure takes place in "an invisible place" and that porn attempts to "overcome this problem of invisibility within a regime that is, as Beverly Brown has noted, an 'erotic organization of visibility'" (1999, 49).

Now consider a second scene, the concluding scene from *Squirtwoman #2*, a 2004 release from Elegant Angel Productions. In the final scene, stars Cytherea and Tianna Lynn have an aggressive threesome with a male partner. During the course of the scene, which runs over fifteen minutes, the two women achieve (between them) at least sixteen orgasms – measurable, and visible, because both Cytherea and Lynn are "squirters," able to ejaculate visibly. In the final moments, the cameraman stands on a table where both women lie prone masturbating themselves vigorously while their male partner stands by and does likewise. All three reach visible climax simultaneously – the man's ejaculate, however, is hardly visible from the high, wide angle of the camera, while both women push a much more powerful and visible stream of ejaculate out of their bodies. Immediately afterwards, male voices from the camera crew gasp in astonishment. Cytherea stands up on the table, asking the crew "Did you see that?" demonstrating how her ejaculate flew so high that it hit the ceiling light and

bounced back down on her body. She and Lynn began bragging about the distance and intensity of their ejaculate like two young boys discussing their ability to urinate over a great distance; the camera pans the room to reveal that the entire tiled floor of the room is wet and slick with female ejaculate (*Cytherea iz Squirtwoman #2*). One reviewer of the scene commented, “Both girls must have 20 orgasms together and the entire room is DRENCHED including the chandelier over the table. It is AWESOME. It was a total blast of horny fun! As for me, I was a cummy mess” (Emphasis added; Lordish 2004).

Squirting, the colloquial term for female ejaculation, is nothing new to porn – Annie Sprinkle got her name from her (occasional) ability to ejaculate, and every once in a while a woman who can ejaculate became something of a star (Sarah Jane Hamilton in the 1980s, Brianna Banks in the 1990s). But the videos of Cytherea and Tianna Lynn, in particular, represent the act of female ejaculation not just as a novelty, or as a rarity, but as something that is expected and indeed worthy of pursuit in the sexual act. Moreover, the prevalence of squirting as a genre unto itself carries the powerful message that contradicts not only what anti-pornography critics have said about porn – that it only images rape and domination under the “illusion” of sexual pleasure for the woman – but also what more progressive scholars like Linda Williams and Anne McClintock have mistakenly likewise assumed, that the female orgasm is essentially “invisible.”

Videos featuring female ejaculation, though they vary in tone, intent and the way in which they manifest the female orgasm in visual and narrative terms, are a key component of the long, historical discourse about female sexual pleasure – a discourse that has for generations denied science and biology by questioning whether women can “really” ejaculate, and thereby precluding women both on- and off-screen from achieving some forms of sexual pleasure. Throughout history, there has been consistent and ongoing debate about not only how women achieve sexual ecstasy, but if they can at all, and for what purpose. As recently as 2005,

the *New York Times* featured an article about one such researcher with the headline “A Critic Takes on the Logic of Female Orgasm,” reinforcing the idea that female orgasm, without a “known” biological, reproductive, or evolutionary function is potentially “illogical” (Smith 2005).³

One of the central debates concerning female ejaculation, both in lived experience and its representation on video, has to do with whether or not the woman is in fact urinating. Dr. F. Cabello Santamaria, delivering a lecture at the 13th World Congress of Sexology in Valencia, Spain in 1997, noted that many sexologists, including Kinsey and Masters and Johnson, dismissed female ejaculation as excited urination during orgasm. Others, however, have proven that what comes out is not urine, even though it is expelled from the urethra: scientific tests have determined that the ejaculate is a complex mixture of alkaline fluids produced mostly in the paraurethral glands located roughly along the upper wall of the vagina (the area of the G-spot) and roughly analogous to the kinds of semen-producing glands found in the male prostate. Santamaria writes that his study was undertaken to

. . .calm those women that fear that they have urinated while experiencing orgasm and, finally, break the growing myth of the ‘ejaculating superfemale’ because we state that all, or at least most, women ejaculate (2005).⁴

It is, of course, ultimately impossible for a viewer to know whether or not a nonejaculatory female orgasm is “faked” or not, particularly since the “performative” aspects of an orgasm (how the pleasure is signified in the body and voice of the subject) are multiple and contradictory from woman to woman and orgasm to orgasm (Hite 1976, 75-78). Setting aside what is “really” going on in a woman’s body for a moment, the urination vs. ejaculation discourse represents a continuation of a trend in cultural discourse about the status of

³ See also Fisher 1973, Hite 1976.

⁴ Santamaria’s work concludes that many women may ejaculate in a retrograde fashion – that is, their ejaculation may move “inward” so it cannot easily be seen.

“lower” bodily fluids and functions, and the supposed mystery and putative invisibility of female pleasure (Kipnis 1996). Labeling the female ejaculate as “urine” performs two functions for a social order that wants to deny women pleasure in sexuality. Not only is what is coming out of the woman’s body not “real” ejaculate (such as that which comes from the male), but it is urine, an embarrassing and “taboo” bodily fluid of which one should be ashamed.

The video *Cytherea iz Squirtwoman* (Elegant Angel, 2004) and its sequel referenced above address this immediately in a title crawl (excerpted below) at the beginning of the video, before any images have appeared. Part of the project of this video and others seems to be to correct the scientifically inaccurate assumptions that only “freak” women ejaculate; ejaculation is really urination; and women don’t have “real” (i.e., visible, “knowable”) orgasms.

What *Iz* (sic) a G-Spot Orgasm?

The myths that female ejaculation is the result of poor bladder control have been proven wrong. Physicians, in their ignorance, tried to cure it. For decades, many women felt it dreadfully abnormal and tried to hide and avoid it.

Researchers have established that about one in five women ejaculate through their urethra (rather than their vagina) some of the time, but not always. The stimulation of the G-spot produces both her ejaculation and her deep uterine contractions.

Finally, we now know the difference between women who squirt and those who don’t is the number and size of their periurethral (sic) glands.

Women’s responses to direct stimulation of the G-spot is identical to the response of males when their prostate is stimulated. The first few seconds of stimulation produces a strong feeling to urinate. This feeling last from two to ten seconds, maybe longer, before changing to a distinctly sexual enjoyment.

Most women when faced with this sensation hold back their sexual responses in fear of wetting their partners. This might explain why up to 25% of American females never have orgasms, they’ve learned early that to avoid the embarrassment, they have to hold back.

Have fun! (*Cytherea iz Squirtwoman #1*, 0:00 – 1:15)

In this video, Cytherea is seen in a number of scenes describing to female scene partners how it feels to squirt, and how the woman must get past the sensation of thinking she is about to urinate and recognize it as a sign of imminent ejaculation. In one scene, Cytherea's scene partner, eager to experience ejaculation, reclines while Cytherea orally and manually attends to her genitals. Twice, the woman seems to come close to orgasm before backing away and laughing, ashamedly revealing to Cytherea that she can't do it because it feels like she is about to pee. "I know, just get past it and when you feel it coming, just *push*," says a slightly worked-up Cytherea. The woman does finally orgasm, although it produces a mere puddle beneath her genitalia, and not the forceful stream of ejaculate produced by more experienced ejaculators like Cytherea. Additionally, in one of her first videos, *Barely Legal #40* (Hustler, 2003), Cytherea and director Clive McLean are featured in a "behind the scenes" interview where McLean asks Cytherea how she first discovered her talent for powerful ejaculation. They both concur how it feels like the woman is about to pee, but continued stimulation of the vaginal g-spot, the clitoris, and/or the pubis could prompt the woman to let go of her potential shame and achieve an ejaculation.

A safe conclusion, then, seems to be that these videos do feature "real" female ejaculation, therefore signifying a "real" orgasm. "Faking it" by urinating (which is biologically difficult to do intentionally while sexually stimulated) or some other means seems like a long way to go to satisfy an action that is impossible to achieve in real life; and it seems equally unlikely that video producers or performers would go to such extremes to defend the ejaculation as real (while in fact faking it) when the best scientific evidence suggests that it is indeed possible.

Too, Cytherea's videos and Axel Braun's *Squirting 101* at least partially offer an instructional component, detailing how a woman and/or her partner might produce ejaculation through very aggressive g-spot stimulation. *Squirting 101*, ostensibly geared towards male viewers, features host Braun, a European who has marketed himself as a kind of "Johnny Appleseed" of squirting, instructing male performers how to manipulate the g-spot using a finger-bending motion before resorting to more aggressive arm movement at the point of orgasm. He or his pupils succeed in producing ejaculations in ten women. In *Squirtwoman #1*, Cytherea in fact fails to get two of her partners to visibly ejaculate despite repeated efforts: still, the women seem to display other performative signs of orgasm (flushed skin, shouting "I'm coming," etc.). The presence of these scenes suggests that the act of female ejaculation differs from the act of male ejaculation in that in the female, an orgasm does not always equal an ejaculation. The signifying element of the orgasm – the ejaculate – might be elusive, but these scenes seem to reinforce that the absence of that sign does not in turn signify the absence of real sexual pleasure.

There seems to be no doubt about what Cytherea is experiencing, however; even without ejaculation, her body in orgasm gives new meaning to Linda Williams' term "the frenzy of the visible." She simultaneously stiffens and quivers uncontrollably, as her teeth shatter, her eyes roll up, her legs give way, and she collapses into a fetal ball for several seconds before leaping back into action. As the reviewer for *Adult Video News* stated in his review of Cytherea's early performance in Hustler Video's *Barely Legal #40*:

The girl seriously must have the most ultra-sensitive vagina in the history of time, because not only does she squirt like nothing you've ever seen before, but also each time she does, she quivers and trembles and gasps and twitches as if the holy spirit had just passed through her body. And when we say "each time she does" - you've got it - that means she performs the feat multiple times. (Warren 2003)

Indeed, one of the ways in which squirting films redefine human sexual pleasure is through featuring the female performer's ability to ejaculate/orgasm not just once, but several times during the course of a scene. The female orgasm, presumed to be mysterious and invisible, potentially becomes a component of sexual pleasure that is not only obviously visible and possibly multiple, but (for the most part) exclusively reserved for women. "We're going to make you squirt like a man," Cytherea tells one of her subjects in her video – but she's wrong, because, as these videos represent, no man could possibly produce the amount of ejaculate with the frequency of orgasm that a woman can.

Within the films, the female orgasm seems to have a variety of narrative and stylistic functions. Braun's *Squirting 101*, as mentioned, is "approached with the intelligence of a clinician and executed with the enthusiasm of a teen sex party" (Star 2004), according to the *Adult Video News* review. The video offers no genital penetration, although all scenes with male performers end with their own ejaculation via oral and manual stimulation by female performers. However, in this context, the act of ejaculating on a woman's face or body seems to have a different relationship to power than the conventional come shot: at this point, most men's hands (and perhaps their faces, hair, chest, etc.) are glistening with female ejaculate, so the "marking" of the (momentarily) submissive subject does not represent the same kind of overall sexual domination.

Tianna Lynn's first star feature is entitled *Cum Rain Cum Shine* (Elegant Angel, 2004). Unlike Braun and Cytherea's videos, Lynn's feature does not contain an explicitly educational component: it is her own ability to ejaculate and generate sexual pleasure that is at the fore, not her attempt to make others squirt. Each scene is more typical of a mainstream porn scenario. The rhythm of each scene, however, is significantly different than one would expect in a typical mainstream effort. Because Lynn can seemingly ejaculate/orgasm at will, at any point during the scene she could reach a performative crescendo that signifies a

physical climax without signifying the end of the scene, a kind of narrative control that places her in a different relationship to the action than her male co-stars (who must end their part of the scene after orgasm, at least usually).

Squirtwoman is also worth further examination, as its final scene defiantly complicates the assumption that pornography must be structured around the representation of male pleasure and the invisibility/impossibility of female pleasure. In this scene, Cytherea is seen taking money from the cameraperson as if she is a prostitute, then opening up a closet to reveal another performer, Roxanne (why she is in the closet is unclear). Roxanne masturbates Cytherea to a squirting climax, and then Cytherea returns the favor to Roxanne. Although Roxanne does not ejaculate visibly, her body spasms violently to the point where her swinging legs knock Cytherea's head off-screen. Then, two men enter, and while the women continue to taunt the camera/viewer, they also begin to address the sexual actions of their male performers. Cytherea is typically vocal in urging her partner to touch her in certain places, move faster, etc. At one point, her male partner, stunned by a series of her ejaculations, seems to back away from Cytherea while she is writhing in orgasm, as if confused by her spasmodic pleasure. He returns to her only when she looks at him hungrily and orders him in no uncertain terms to continue ("What are you doing? Put that cock in my pussy *now!*"). The fact of the imminent ejaculation – now eagerly anticipated by the viewer – reframes Cytherea's "direction" of her partner as not merely signifying control and dominance, but also for a purpose other than for simply playing into a male fantasy about the sexually skilled and promiscuous woman. Her performance represents a woman articulating the terms of her own sexual pleasure, and then achieving that pleasure in a visibly dynamic physical act that signifies its legitimacy.

The scene concludes with a remarkable series of climaxes that seem to undermine the traditional function of the come shot. In turn, each man mounts

Cytherea and ejaculates internally, at which point Roxanne licks the ejaculate out of/off of Cytherea's vagina. What happens next is most significant: with Cytherea writhing at the ministrations of Roxanne's mouth, the scene could end, except that one of the male co-stars says "Let's make her come again!" After a few seconds of manual stimulation (with one actor's fingers), Cytherea ejaculates again, the eighth time in this scene, and the image fades out. Ending the video with a female orgasm and ejaculation, *Cytherea iz Squirtwoman* challenges the ubiquitous and presumed essential nature of the male orgasm as the ultimate concluding action in pornography and sexual performance. Compared to the feeble attempt to represent female sexual pleasure in films such as *Deep Throat*, squirting videos indicate that pornography can represent a much more dynamic and radical expression of human sexual potential.

Come Together, Right Now, Over Me: Conclusions

In these three genres, the female body is configured as a space of transgressive possibilities and potentials. The question remains, then, why these videos remain appealing to heterosexual men, as they in many ways represent liberation from socially constructed binaries, while rejecting or at least problematizing sexual privilege built upon hegemonic, heteronormative masculinity. It might make more intuitive sense to some viewers that a woman or a homosexual would find some redeeming elements in these genres because they contradict the dominant model of sexual pleasure: Carole S. Vance writes that images and representations of sexual activity "can be seen as a liberating expansion beyond the bounds of procreative heterosexuality, enabling women to learn about a type of pleasure not connected to reproduction or even to the penis" (1984, 12), which certainly would seem to be the case for the squirting videos. But the appeal for straight male consumers of pornography is more difficult to theorize.

I propose two thoughts, one concerning what might be called the pleasure-seeking function of pornography, another in reference to the gendered politics of pleasure in general. It is well-known (but not often directly discussed in critical literature or good company) that pornography, particularly as it exists today in the private/digital sphere, is a visual aid used to stimulate sexual response and facilitate masturbation (usually to orgasm). As such, the male viewer creates a pleasurable, biological relationship between the content of the image, personal sexual fantasies, and the immediate sensory response of the body, each of which are connected in the same moment in complex and (sometimes contradictory) ways. While a viewer might have preferences or proclivities, his own experience with imagination and fantasy has suggested that imagination and fantasy have no discernible limits, and some of the elements in pornography that defy easy categorization as straight, gay, male, female, etc., might be elements that prompt an unexpected pleasurable physiological response.

Could there not be, then, some pleasure merely in the process of seeking out and finding pleasure? In other words, could the discovery of a new “fetish” – such as the subject matter in one of these genres – itself be a pleasurable act, as if uncovering a personal “buried treasure” that will result in a richer and more varied fantasy life? Conversely, some of these “surprises” may prove to be a turn-off, but the ability to see sexual exploration represented on film, exploration that blurs boundaries, disrupts binaries, and grants agency to new sexual and psychological possibilities, should not be overlooked as a motivating force. Perhaps the viewer is not a gay man but enjoys anal stimulation, or the possibility of submitting to female dominance without necessarily involving pain or leather. These genres allow the male viewer to identify and recognize that pleasure as legitimate without forcing him to problematize his relationship to masculinity or heteronormativity.

Furthermore, in the case of the squirting videos, a male consumer has a much wider variety of choices when it comes to timing his own orgasm: if indeed

his goal might be to climax at the same time as the female performer on screen, he now has a clear visible goal – one that can be repeated numerous times in one scene – to shoot for. If one can forgive the crude pun, the point is that watching a video when you know a woman is going to have multiple, visible orgasms is, for the viewer a different masturbatory experience than one where you have to guess when or assume that the woman is having “real” pleasure just as you are (of course, not every male viewer masturbates in this fashion).

In a broader sense, the politics of pleasure have, to be sure, robbed women of their sexual agency and compromised their ability to recognize the potential for pleasure in the sexual act. While the practice and discourse of this and its effect on women has been abhorrent (to say the least), so too has such discourse had an impact on women’s partners, mostly heterosexual men. Women are “socialized by mothers to keep their dresses down, their pants up, and their bodies away from strangers,” as Vance puts it (1984, 4). “Sexual abandon and impulsiveness acquire a high price, since women must think not only about the consequences of the sexual actions for themselves, but also about the consequences for men.” Framed as mysterious and/or forbidden, women’s sexuality has been constructed as such so that men are under the impression that it cannot exist in any provable form, that women who orgasm easily or ejaculate are psychologically or physically damaged, or that the only way to generate sexual pleasure is through lust and aggression.

The “invisible” orgasm; the submissive woman who only talks dirty to fulfill a man’s fantasy; the primacy of genital over anal (or other) pleasures; and the traditional come shot are all conventions (and assumptions) about pornography and sexuality that potentially deny the male viewer full access to both his own sexual possibilities and the possibilities of a female partner. It should not be surprising to claim that the straight, male consumer of pornography likely does not have any questions about male sexual performance and behavior: he

knows what an erection is, he knows what ejaculation feels like, and he understands and appreciates the ability to seek out and achieve pleasure on his own terms. What might be unfamiliar to him is how the similar process works in women – and how vexing it is that the mechanics of pleasure work differently from woman to woman, encounter to encounter. Perhaps a male viewer does not watch pornography because he wants to reify or reinforce his own knowledge of masculine pleasure. Perhaps he watches because he wants to find a frame of reference where women have power, control, and the ability to produce their own pleasure.

The restriction of pleasure to certain types of women, certain areas of the male body, and certain idealized psychological types is potentially devastating for human sexuality. As Vance writes:

Hiding pleasure and its sources in feminist discussion does not make the world safe for women. When pleasure occupies a smaller and smaller public space and a more guilty private space, individuals do not become empowered; they are merely cut off from the source of their own strength and energy. (1984: 7)

We need to remind ourselves that not all bodies – certainly not all women's bodies, as indicated by these genres – are alike, and in fact each body is beyond essentialization and control, and each body bears an infinite potential for pleasure, transgression, and liberation.

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