

THE AMERICAN VOICE

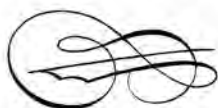
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Feminist Erotica

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INSIDE THE MEN INSIDE
 "INSIDE CHRISTY CANYON"



Richard Newman

In the film Mai Lin vs Serena, I was in a bathtub with Serena and there were about forty guys jerking off and fucking us — it was very hot.

— Mai Lin, interviewed by Vivienne Maricevic

Let the flesh instruct the mind

— Anne Rice,

Interview With The Vampire

1.

A white woman's mouth in the act of swallowing a white man's penis fills the screen of my TV. Almost directly in the center of the picture, the shape of his organ glides back and forth against the inside of her left cheek. The camera pans back and shows her kneeling on all fours in front of him. Her lips engulf and expel his genitals as if she were the only movable part of a well-oiled machine. He keeps his body perfectly still, does not speak except to say, "You suck a mean cock, Cherry." His delivery, dry, almost monotone, marks him as the straight man, the foil for her performance. She looks up at him, asks with a lust-filled and mischievous grin, "Does that feel good?" He doesn't answer, but her smile widens anyway and, in a spasm of lust, she gazes worshipfully at his erection, sucks air hungrily through her teeth, and moans with the pleasure of pleasuring him, with the joy of being able to take him in her mouth.

Except that his presence in the flesh allows me to identify a man as the center of this woman's attention, *he* could probably be replaced with a statue. His erection signifies both his desire and his arousal, but he does not once move

his hips; he makes almost no sound, and his face remains more or less expressionless. The scene changes to a picture of the same woman doing the same thing to a second man who responds in much the same way as the first. Then the scene changes again, and again, and again, and each time the woman is with a different man, and each time the man shows about as much passion as he would if he were lifting heavy boxes.

The movie is called "Inside Christy Canyon," a compilation video of the "hottest" scenes from the various adult films in which the woman who goes by that name has starred. The scenes are organized to represent the three stages of conventional heterosexual love making: foreplay, intercourse and climax. Particularly, male climax.

From the way the camera is aimed at the points of oral genital or genital-genital contact, I know that I am supposed to imagine the penises on the screen and the perspective of the lens as mine. I know that my hand is supposed to acquire the shape of Christy Canyon's lips, that the orgasm to which I bring myself is supposed to become the orgasm to which she has brought me. Yet neither my pleasure nor the pleasure of the men who stand in with Christy Canyon for me seems to be at the center of what this movie is about. Instead, the film focuses on her, minutely transcribing each of her responses to the sex she is having. She moans, she screams, she gyrates her hips; her arms and legs flail with pleasure, and when she is fucking, she grabs at her partner to pull him farther inside herself. Even when the men orgasm, at the moment when their bodies and their pleasure should logically occupy the movie's foreground, Christy Canyon is always part of the picture, grinding, panting, moaning beneath the ejaculating penis almost as if it were her own. As often as not, the camera gives me this penis disembodied, more a toy with which Christy has been playing than the genitals of the man with whom she has been making love. I am reminded of the stereotypical scenes of idol worshippers working themselves into an ecstasy, hoping vainly to elicit some sign of life from the stone or wooden

figure that is their god. In Christy Canyon's case, however, the worship works. God speaks. The phallus ejaculates.

If the "cum-shot" is supposed to represent the pinnacle and proof of male pleasure, though, I find — except for my prior knowledge of the physical fact — little male pleasure in it, and even less pleasure in watching it. A man thrusts into a woman, his rhythm showing all the imagination, spontaneity and tenderness of an engine piston. He exhibits little or no sign of the sexual tension building in him — except, perhaps, for the grimace of self-control and/or physical exertion on his face — and it is only when the "magic moment" arrives, when he pulls out of his partner's body so we can see that his orgasm is real, that he allows himself the further release of a scream or a grunt. It is as if his flesh were a skin-tight suit, functional but with no sensory capability, fitted with an erect penis for the sole purpose of doing to women what men do when we have sex with them.

I cannot imagine making love like that. I cannot fathom taking my penis out of my lover's body, interrupting my pleasure (and, presumably, hers), so that I can hold myself as my semen arcs onto her skin. For me, going to bed with a woman has always been an opportunity to give up self-control, to revel in my own physicality and forget for the moment that I am a sentient being with consciousness and intelligence. In sex, I want to lay in the arms of the world and let my pleasure announce itself; I want the sounds and movements drawn from me by my lover's touch to be the irrefutable assertion of my presence, emotional and physical, in the world. I want to know, through someone else's knowledge of my body's life, that I am alive, and since my body is essentially the same as the body of the man on the screen, I know that he experiences physically the same sensations that I do. What I don't understand is why he insists on remaining so thoroughly in control, why he deliberately shortchanges himself when the sex he is having could so easily be so much more than it is.

Imagine, however, that his erotic responses were as

graphic and as physical as those of Christy Canyon. My experience of her movie would then be mediated through the cinematic representation of a body I already own, and with which I could not help but identify. This identification with the man on the screen would bring me, through him, into an erotic relationship with myself, not a subject-object relationship with the pornographic images of Christy Canyon's body. His relative stoicism, then, serves the purpose of camouflaging the film's homoerotic subtext and forces me to identify not with what he feels, but with what he does, or with what is done to him. When he enters Christy Canyon, I enter her; when she takes him in her mouth, she takes me in her mouth, and to the degree that he remains unmoved, everything I feel exists in relation to the filmed image of her body. When the video ends, however, nothing of her will remain, and my fantasy of having sex with her will vanish as well. Our roles will be reversed. I will become the worshipper and she the goddess. I, the one who with the sympathetic magic of my desire want to breathe life into the inanimate body of the film that is all I have of her flesh. She, the inscrutable object before which I must finally know that I am alone, holding in my hand the proof and the residue of my own mundane humanity.

First glimpses and adolescent consumption of pornography were, for all the heterosexual men I have known, formative experiences. Page after page, frame after frame, of naked female flesh was filled with subtle, and not so subtle, cues as to how our bodies related to the bodies in the pictures. Every detail, right down to whether or not a woman had goose bumps, spoke to us of sex, of the mystery contained in her body. We imagined that we were gleaning the truth of it, that the images spread on the pages or screen before us represented the women we were destined to have. Women with perfectly smooth skin, whose round and firm bodies were just waiting for sex. For whom being on display was in and of itself an act of sexual pleasure. For whom the

gaze and touch of men provided ultimate fulfillment. I can still remember, however, the first time I touched the naked breasts of my first girlfriend and how disappointed I was that they were so soft, that I could move them beneath her skin like water in a balloon. I had anticipated something firmer, much more substantial, something that felt like the breasts of the women in *Penthouse* magazine looked.

In fact, my girlfriend's body was different entirely from what I had been led to expect. I discovered hair where there should not have been any; I found pimples, sweat, layers of flesh that seemed misplaced, and sites of pain and sensitivity the locations of which confused me utterly. Much to my surprise, I also found out that my girlfriend was shy about exposing herself, even to me. The magazines, in other words, had been lying, but knowing this lie for what it was did not erase the lie itself, and it is only because I have made a conscious effort, sustained over a period of years, that I am able to tell the difference between seeing a woman through the lens of what pornography has taught me about her and making the attempt to see her more honestly, as she would like to be seen. Yet the knowledge that boys and men acquire through the consumption of heterosexual pornography is not only (false) knowledge about women; it is also self-knowledge, part of how we know our bodies as both vehicles for and products of the male heterosexual identity that is prize and proof of who we are supposed to be.

Conventional male thinking, however, holds that pornography is just fantasy, harmless, healthy and perfectly normal. Yet fantasy is as much a physical as a purely mental phenomenon. Pornographic daydreams, whether on the page, the screen, or in our heads, teach us what and whom in the world around us it is appropriate to sexualize, what and whom to construe as desirable in sex, and what and whom to reject as undesirable. To assert that pornography has no influence on how male heterosexuality is constructed is to deny that the life of the mind has any influence at all on the

life of the body. I offer you two examples from my own experience.

I am standing at the checkout counter in my local supermarket. The cashier, a Black woman about my age, bends over to sign a slip of paper for her manager. The woman's back is to me, her legs are straight, and what I notice is how this pose accentuates the curve of her buttocks against the fabric of her jeans. In the moment it takes for her to sign her name and turn around to start ringing up my purchases, an image of myself touching her proffered ass flashes spontaneously onto the screen in my brain, for my immediate understanding is that she has taken this pose for my benefit. I must consciously tell myself that she is not inviting my touch. That she is certainly unaware of the availability her pose advertises in my imagination. That, for her, at this moment, her body is simply her body engaged in the process of doing her job.

I am teaching a class in which there is a white woman whom I find physically very attractive. She is wearing a tight-fitting blouse which hugs her breasts and outlines the shape of her nipples. The day's lesson concerns a poem by Robert Frost. Perhaps this woman finds the poem, or the discussion, or both, boring; perhaps she was out late last night and didn't get much sleep; perhaps she didn't sleep well. Perhaps she is tired because her previous class was a gym class; or perhaps her body just needs at this moment to yawn. It is a yawn that travels the length of her body in a stretch that I am watching. I am watching the way the lift of her arms lifts her breasts as if she were offering them to be kissed. Briefly, without even calling the thought consciously to mind, I believe she is offering them to me, but there is no eye contact, and I am reminded that she is probably just yawning.

Clearly, in each of the above cases, I was "just" fantasizing. Yet my fantasies imputed sexual content and sexual intent to behavior that was not only likely to be empty of the sex I projected onto it, but that had absolutely nothing to do with me personally. To claim that such fantasies were harmless would be to assume that those women either shared in

and welcomed my *ad hominem* sexualization of who they were, or that they were, and should have been, indifferent to it. To claim further that such sexualization of women is a healthy component of male heterosexuality, and, therefore, that it should be considered the norm, is to relegate the expression of male heterosexual desire exclusively to the realms of pursuit and possession. These or similar claims are, in fact, the ones by which men have justified for centuries all kinds of inappropriate sexual behavior towards women, and while some aspects of such behavior have been discredited — rape, for example, or sexual harassment — these are also the claims upon which the legitimacy of magazines like *Penthouse*, *Playboy*, or *Out* is based.

Semi-clothed or fully naked, waiting for me, for any man, to come to them and bring them fulfillment, the women put on display in the pages of those publications fix bicycles, look for books in the library, or do any number of mundane things that, in the real world, would most likely have nothing to do with sex. How different, then, really, were my fantasies from the fantasies such magazines represent? For even if I do so only in the confines of my imagination, when I impose on the women I meet in my daily life the heterosexual ideology of the girlie magazine, have I not, at some level of consciousness, also assumed that the social script implied by pornography is a true one? Where, then, is the line between fantasy and reality? How do I separate the desire I feel for a woman attractive to me in the flesh from the desire I feel for Christy Canyon through my consumption of her movies?

It is as if male heterosexuality were a kind of vampirism, a hunger the feeding of which requires the idea if not the flesh of women. In her novel, *The Vampire Lestat*, Anne Rice describes what the dynamic of such a hunger might be like.

But then came the even more dreadful discovery, that to keep their corpses animate, the blood must be fed. And all it could convert to its use was the selfsame thing of which it was made: blood. Give it more blood to enter, give it more blood to push through the limbs of the body in which it flowed, of

blood it could not get enough.

Substitute "sexuality" for "blood" and the analogy becomes clear, for if male heterosexuality is about the pursuit and possession of women, then what does it mean to be a man except to live perpetually in search of the opposite sex we need in order to replenish our belief in our own existence? And if this is what it means to be a man, then how can our feelings for the women who have, who are, what we need, and who can give themselves to us or not, be anything other than fear and hatred?

2.

The video "Lesbian Lark" contains no significant narrative. Rather, it is a compilation of scenes spliced together to suggest the process by which the lesbian of the title is converted from homo to heterosexuality. A white man comes home to find his white lover in bed with another woman, who is also white. In order to determine whether this latter woman is, as his girlfriend claims, a lesbian seductress, he insists that his girlfriend receive oral sex from the lesbian while he watches. When it becomes obvious that his girlfriend enjoys what the lesbian is doing, the man explodes, pulling the two women out of bed and screaming that they need to be punished. He ties his lover up and administers a beating, but her treatment is relatively mild compared to what happens to the lesbian.

First, the lesbian's hands are bound behind her back and she is restrained by the man's lover* so that he can beat her. Then, she is shown secured with rope to a chair and is beaten some more. She responds to this treatment with tears and

*The issue of the lover's participation in the torture I am about to describe is a complex one that I am not even going to try to address here. For my purposes, suffice it to say that, throughout the video, she serves to reinforce the heterosexual ideology being promulgated by blaming the lesbian as a seductress and using that blame to justify the pain the lesbian is made to endure.

anger, cursing at her captors and demanding that she be released. The lesbian's punishment, however, does not truly begin until she appears bound to a step-ladder with her arms pushed at right angles behind her so that they fit within the frame of the ladder's uppermost step. Her wrists are lashed to the back of the ladder's inverted V, and a piece of leather with a pink, phallic protrusion has been strapped over her face so that the protrusion fits between her teeth and she cannot close her mouth completely. The man whips her with a cat-o'-nine-tails, asking while he does so, "Are you going to stay away from my girlfriend? Are you?" The lesbian is then shown tied to the same ladder, but upside down, and the man and his lover take turns raking her back with a steel-bristled brush. Throughout, the lesbian's screams are muffled by the gag, but the horror in her eyes communicates the pain she feels.

During the next component of her punishment, the lesbian is forced — after having her face made up to look like a clown's — to attach clothespins to her nipples and the flesh of her breasts, to her labia and the skin on the insides of her thighs, and to her rear end. The man, whip at the ready, then forces her to jump up and down as if she were skipping rope. Again, there is the question, "Now will you stay away from my girlfriend?" In the very last stage of her punishment, the clothespins have been removed and metal clamps with a weight hanging from a chain between them have been attached to her nipples. The man orders her to bend over. When she screams in pain that she can't do it, he threatens to pull on the weight himself. So, slowly, trying to find a speed and angle that she will be able to endure, the woman starts to bring her torso parallel to the ground. The scene is cut before we know whether or not she is successful.

Throughout these final scenes, as opposed to the obscenities of defiance she screamed at him when she was first being beaten, the lesbian now calls the man "master." Her voice alternates between hoarse resignation and the high-pitched tone of a child trying desperately to please a parent.

She has submitted. To prove that the woman's lesbian self has been completely eradicated, the final scene of the film shows the man standing fully clothed between the two naked women and asking them, "Are you ready to fuck?" The now reformed lesbian, whose body has magically healed to show no sign of the ordeal she has just been through, smiles, says, "Sure!" Fade to black. Roll credits.

Within the paradigm of heterosexuality, lesbians are outlaws, their crime the refusal willingly to accept penetration by men as the defining condition of their existence. To "rehabilitate" a lesbian is to remove from her all pretensions to a self independent of male reality, precisely what the man in "Lesbian Lark" sets out to do. His tool is pain, and he uses it to force a heterosexual relationship between the lesbian and himself. For even if conventional heterosexual sex is entirely absent from the screen, male heterosexuality is present in every inch of footage. The woman is always either naked or in the typical girlie-magazine costume of no panties, high heels, a garter belt and stockings. Her body, constantly exposed to the eyes of the male performer, the (presumably) male crew, and the male viewer, becomes available to all as she is tied down and beaten, or paraded around with an apparatus of pain attached to her. That this treatment is supposed to be a kind of foreplay, a fulfillment of the lesbian's secret desire to be had by men, is indicated by her torturer's assertions that she loves what he is doing to her, that she is getting off on it. The final scene then "proves" the movie's point. The lesbian expresses the desire to be fucked by a man, and the man she wants to be fucked by is the one who has beaten her into submission.

Thus, "Lesbian Lark" could be read as a 'pre-quel' to "Inside Christy Canyon," since Christy Canyon has in her movie precisely the kind of sex that the man in "Lesbian Lark" believes he is teaching the lesbian to want. Male satisfaction in "Lesbian Lark," however, comes not from sex itself, or the movie would have ended with a conventional cumshot. Rather, the fulfilled desire of both the male performer

and the male viewer is located in the knowledge that, finally, the lesbian will allow herself to be fucked, that she has accepted her master's penis and that it is his penis — through the obviously phallic symbol of the whip — which has created her acceptance. Similarly, what seems most important to the men of "Inside Christy Canyon" is not the intimate sharing of their bodies with another human being. Rather, they seem to derive their satisfaction from knowing that they have created in a woman the desire to have them fuck her. The relative stoicism with which these men perform is a kind of intellectualization, the reduction on screen of male heterosexuality to a simple equation. Penis equals female desire. Female desire equals the proof of the penis' power.

"Lesbian Lark" mocks the idea of pleasure, denies the possibility of communication, of justice, of love, built on the basis of human touch. I watched the movie twice, and each time I cried. I cried when the woman was being whipped, and I cried again when she was shown with the weighted clamps attached to her nipples. This was not female sexuality. Filmed by men, for my benefit and ostensible pleasure as a man, this was pain, the brutal and agonizing destruction of a woman's humanity through torture, and I believe that the torture was real. I found no cue, visual or otherwise, that indicated to me the woman's consent to the pain inflicted on her. It is impossible, of course, categorically to draw any conclusions about the nature of her performance from the video itself, but it seems to me that, if the woman who played the lesbian had been a willing participant, there would, at the very least, have been no need to film the scene in which she agrees to be fucked — remember, her body had no marks on it — before the scenes in which she was tortured.

When I finished watching "Lesbian Lark," I felt soiled, covered with a thick layer of filth. The thought of touching or being touched by another human being, of bringing to someone else's love and trust the me who had watched and

done nothing to prevent what **was** happening, who had taken notes for this essay even as the woman was screaming, repulsed me. I did not want to go out or speak to my friends, to prepare the lesson, I would teach the next day or do anything at all that would distract my attention from the self-loathing and disgust that I believed I fully deserved. Yet, even as I raged at myself for my inability to help that woman, even as I wanted to hold her in my arms, even as I wanted to kill the man who had tortured her, I was fascinated, I both feared and desired the knowledge of what could make me so completely surrender myself to the will of another human being. I both feared and desired the knowledge of what it would mean to be a human being with the will to be so dominant.

When I was a teenager, I read in *Penthouse* magazine a letter in which a woman described how she and a friend took revenge on a man who had tried to rape the friend. The writer of the letter arranged to meet the man at a disco, invited him to her apartment, and seduced him into being tied, spread-eagled, to her bed. The woman's friend, who had been waiting in another room, joined them, and the two women proceeded sexually to tease the man till he was begging them for release. Then, they took out a razor and shaving cream and told him that, if he had an orgasm while they rubbed his penis, they would shave all the hair from his body. The letter went on to describe in great detail first the man's pleading with them not to do it, and then his efforts to keep himself from coming while the women took turns masturbating him. Finally, of course, he came, and the women shaved him, threatening to slice off his testicles if he did not lay still while they did it.

In reality, of course, the woman's letter describes a rape. She did not present it as anything else — except to make clear that it was motivated by revenge — and she never implied that the man enjoyed what she and her friend had done to him. Yet my sexual imagination was drawn to this

story like the proverbial moth to flame. For months, for years afterwards, I fantasized about women tying me to a bed and creating in my flesh the all-encompassing eroticism of the world in my body and of my body in the world. No matter how hard I tried, however, I could not separate my fantasies from the revenge by which the women in the letter had been motivated. It was not only the injustice of actual rape as retaliation for an attempted one that disturbed me (which by no means exonerates the man for having attempted to rape the writer's friend to begin with). I identified with the man's experience of having the pleasures of his body turned against him, the shame of having been betrayed by his own flesh. For I knew that I could be shamed in this way as well, that my body was always the potential weapon of my own defeat.

The intimacy of lips and tongue, of cock and cunt, the knowledge of orifice and the intentions we bring to knowing the bodies of our lovers, combine to form a narrative of everything we are and have been on this earth. To the degree that we give ourselves fully to the story this narrative tells, we give up all pretense to any power we might claim over another human being. Thus the physical pleasures and vulnerabilities of sex are dangerous to men, strip us naked in a world that too often conspires to make us afraid of our own nakedness. For what man has not known the fear that his body will not be sufficient, and that, in its insufficiency, he will be exposed as less than the man he claims to be? What man has not been in some way punished, hurt physically and/or humiliated socially, for a failure of the flesh that he and those around him perceived as the absence of his manhood? What man, given such a reality, would not learn to use his body so that it could never be used against him?

3.

"Slavesex 10," a video imported from Germany, opens with

a shot of a man, nude except for a leather harness, being let out of a cage resting in the corner of a woman's bedroom. The woman who lets him out is dressed in the black leather costume stereotypical of the dominatrix, and she has him lick her boots while she reads a book. When a second woman appears, she and the first woman tie the man to a cross affixed to the wall near his cage. Together, they weave needles through his skin to make a square around his nipples. Clothespins are attached to each areole, and metal clamps fastened at either end of a chain are clipped onto the nipples themselves. A leather ring is strapped around the man's scrotum and weights are hung from it till his scrotal sac and testicles appear ready to separate from his body. Finally, the women wrap one end of a thin piece of string tightly around the head of the man's penis, and they make him hold the other end between his teeth while they swing the weights hung from his balls and pull on the chain attached to the clamps on his nipples. Throughout, the man tries desperately to remain in control. His head whips from side to side. His neck muscles tighten into ropes, and you can see the scream of agony locked behind his clenched teeth and jaw. Inevitably, however, his battle against the pain is lost, and the women belittle him for not being able to take it, for letting the tears run from his eyes.

S&M (or S/M) is a way of life with its own rules, its own configurations of desire and eroticism and its own perspective on the heterosexual norms of male dominance. Practitioners of S&M argue that the sex play in which they engage offers them an opportunity to step out of the stereotypical gender roles into which they, and we, are born. The bondage and the pain, the dominance and submission, allow those roles to be turned inside out and upside down, revealing in the process the more fundamental selves that underlie the personae we are told by society to adopt. For the man in "Slavesex 10," in other words, the pain and humiliation of his experience might actually be an opportunity to explore those aspects of himself that would be obscured by an erection and its accompanying,

and conventional, sexual script. The absence of this script from his encounter with these two women forces him to confront and accept the part of himself that is the antithesis of male dominant heterosexuality, the absence of what is conventionally understood as his manhood.

It is, therefore, a gross misrepresentation to say that "Slave-sex 10" represents a female version of "Lesbian Lark," for the women in "Slavesex 10" are not trying to bring their slave's sexuality into the mainstream. Rather, as a slave, at least for the duration of the film, pain and humiliation are the conditions of his identity. Even his suffering is not his own, and he is true to himself only as long as he surrenders completely to the whims of his mistresses. I, on the other hand, am a man. For me, pain and humiliation are tests of manhood; surrendering to them, manhood's antithesis. Thus, in his submission, in his absolute yielding of control, the man in "Slavesex 10" represents the vulnerability in myself that I have had to deny in order to be seen as someone worthy of manhood status. In his suffering, all the cries of humiliation and shame that I have had to stifle are focused; in the pain brought to his body, every punch and kick, every slap and bite, I have had to endure. To see a man submit himself to such agony willingly, without fighting back, as if he deserved it, as if he wanted it, is to feel myself, my manhood, the manhood of all men, cynically betrayed. "Why?!!" I want to scream in his face, to take, just as his mistresses might, his balls in my hand and squeeze, "Why do you let them do this to you?! Why don't you fight back? Kill them!! Kill yourself!! *What kind of a man are you anyway?!!*"

The question itself is a betrayal, denies both my identification with him and any claim he might make to his own identity. For unlike "Lesbian Lark," "Slavesex 10" is replete with cues that the encounter being depicted is a consensual one. There is, for example, the lack of any resistance on his part and the staged nature of the encounter itself. Further, there has been no reordering of the scenes, as there was in "Lesbian Lark," and no attempt, as was also present in

"Lesbian Lark," to call what is happening anything other than what it is. It is as if this threesome decided to film an aspect of their erotic relationship in much the same way that any couple might set up a video camera for the same purpose. Still, even if it is unfair of me to group, without qualification, "Slavesex 10" with "Inside Christy Canyon" and "Lesbian Lark," it is nonetheless true that the image in "Slavesex 10" of a man being tortured does represent precisely what men fear would happen to us if we relaxed even for a second the aura of invulnerability with which male dominance insists that we surround ourselves. For pain and subjugation have always been our only alternatives to power, the absolute consequence of the vulnerability of our bodies.

As a man incapable of pursuing women and getting his penis inside them, as a man unable to separate himself from the sensations of his body, the slave in "Slavesex 10" is, then, the man that no "real" man wants to be, a man whose weaknesses are visible, whose powerlessness can be easily exploited, and thus a man who is getting what he deserves. Embodying the fear, inculcated in us from infancy, that manhood constitutes our only rightful claim to a presence in the world, and that to lose this claim can be a fate worse than death, he is precisely what the man in "Lesbian Lark" most fears in himself, and represents why the men in "Inside Christy Canyon" will not allow themselves to feel fully the sex they are having. For it is not only that to become vulnerable is to lose one's manhood and that we must therefore do whatever is necessary to prove our invulnerability; it is also that the desire for vulnerability lives in each of us, is part of what makes us human, and to acknowledge this desire would be to acknowledge the unthinkable, that the men we *want* to be, in fact, bear very little resemblance to the men we are taught we *have* to be.

The invulnerability men must learn in order to maintain our manhood status kills us, little by little, over and over again. Each time we refuse our pain or deny our joy, when

we reject fear and fail to acknowledge honestly the limits of our strength, we remove ourselves one step further from the reality of who we are. This existential insecurity is the mechanism by which male dominance motivates us to construe the world as an absence we can fill, the filling of which confirms us in our identity as men. For if we cannot feel certain about the self-evident nature of our existence, how can we feel certain about our capacity for meaningful action, our ability and right to make lives for ourselves? Male dominance teaches us that the world is a mirror, and that if every inch of its surface is not saturated with our reflection, then each empty space that can be found is incontrovertible proof that we do not exist.

In heterosexual pornography, women are the world, and men are either strong enough to fill them with our image or we are not. Thus, heterosexuality is both battlefield and battle, and thus the body heterosexual men bring to sex is the same body we bring to creating the body of our war machine. It is a body designed to be invulnerable, perfectly controlled and capable of ejaculating on command. It is a body to be sacrificed when necessary and then reduplicated at will. It is a body that claims for its owners the right to determine with impunity the shape of the world in which it walks. The soldier dies in this body, and when men say the penis dies in sex, it is because sex for us has more to do with penetration, with the soldier's mission of conquest, than with what we actually feel through our genital organs.

Male dominance instructs men that our bodies are tools, mechanisms with which we use and enforce our power. By turning male orgasm into the "cum shot," an expressed relationship of dominance rather than an experienced sensation, heterosexual pornography reflects and perpetuates this image of the male body. As a form of cultural knowledge, however, heterosexual pornography could itself be a tool.* Magazines and films, novels and photo essays could become forums in which heterosexual men fashion symbols and metaphors for sex as an experience of our own most

intimate and vulnerable places, not the appropriation of the intimate places of women. Erection, for example, the gradual hardening of a man's penis — in the hand or mouth or inside or against or at the sight, sound or smell of the body of his lover, or in his own hand, or in the theater, or in math class, or anytime and anywhere it occurs — is the physical corollary of that man's capacity for trust. This trust as a necessary condition for sex, as that without which sex becomes exploitation, by definition, is what is absent from the male performances of movies like "Inside Christy Canyon," and it is this trust that can form the basis for a new erotics of male sexuality, one that connects men to the world rather than holding us outside of it.

I want a heterosexual pornography in which this male trust is eroticized, in which the places we have not been touched, the places it is in the interest of male dominance to keep hidden, are lifted out of our bodies and brought into knowledge. In which men offer themselves to the emotional and physical totality of each sexual experience. I want to see images of *my* body sprawled out, squirming with the pleasure not just of orgasm, but also of being penetrated, of having nipples and fingers and ears and toes sucked, flesh oiled, and massaged. I want a pornography in which the sensations of the penis are not limited by the in and out and up and down of oral sex, masturbation and/or intercourse. In which our availability to the eyes and hands and mouths of

* Implicit in the assertion I am making here is a distinction between pornography as a product of the pornographic industry, with all its alleged ties to organized crime and the exploitation of women inherent to it, and sexual representation independent of that industry. I have avoided making this distinction explicit because my concern in this chapter is with pornography as a text, and because arguments about the definition of pornography too easily get lost in the emotional power of their own polemic. Still, it would be irresponsible of me to advocate in favor of a male heterosexual pornography without acknowledging that any full blown critique of pornography as text, even on the basis I am outlining here, that does not also critique the industry out of which the overwhelming majority of pornography comes will have failed to address the ways in which pornographic ideology takes on social reality through its entrenchment in our culture's economy of sex, sexuality and gender.

our partners teaches us what it means to be known and desired for ourselves, and not for our power. In which such knowledge informs our own love-making when we then switch and become the partner who is active. For when the touch of sex is a touch that holds but does not violate, a space is created in which the life of one human being can co-exist in complete freedom with the life of another. This is what the *sex* in heterosexuality could be. This is the true meaning of *making* love. □