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Watching the Match Burn After You've Set the House on Fire

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WATCHING THE MATCH BURN AFTER YOU'VE SET THE HOUSE ON FIRE



Mike Opal



A thesis written in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Bachelor of Arts
from the Pomona College Department of English

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Second Reader: Claudia Rankine



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Colleen
whose influence on my thought is
undisentanglably thorough

All my friends
wonderful for listening

(and Joseph
wonderful for reading)

Mom, Dad, Matt
for everything



Take your beat-off hand and fly into a rage.
 Take your beat-off hand and seal it in a cage.

Ass Ponys

Anti-Pleasure Dissertation
 Rah Rah Replica
 I Hate Danger
 I Like Fucking

Track Listing from Bikini Kill's "The Singles"

Help us, ye gods, to keep money clean.

Peter Michelson, "The Pleasures of Commodity"

"...in a room with eight ultrahorny meatsticks, and so on."

"Gee whiz." Lila reached for a calculator. "So far your dream involves slightly more than four thousand people," she said.

"If it does, it does," Pendle replied. "Actually my dream involves every woman in the world."

Nicholson Baker, *House of Holes*

My face is red from reading your red lips

[...]

Your face is drawn from drawing words right from my lips

St. Vincent, "Your Lips Are Red"

Remember kids: smiling is the new touching.

Mr. Frond, *Bob's Burgers*

"In dignity, and for the liberal arts

Without a parallel—those being all my study..."

[orgasm]

Amanda, *Hysterical Literature*



YOU'RE SO
PARANOID
YOU
PROBABLY
THINK THIS
ESSAY ISN'T
ABOUT YOU

A PENIS
IS BEING
BEATEN

PORNOTOPIA, PARANOIA
&
SYNECDOCHE

§1

For the Greater Goo(d)

This thesis will discuss the most major of major and most minor of minor (para)literatures—that is, pornography. This chapter will discuss the epistemological, theoretical, and aesthetic development and deployment of certain pornographies—in their legible forms. Running through this analysis are two figures, paranoia and synecdoche, which I will use to discuss the affective conditions of pornography—which might give the lie to porn's existence in the first place.

I take Robert Christgau's ("Somehow the assertion that porn is 'not just friction and naked bodies' always rubs me the wrong way" [1996]) and Darieck Scott's ("I will assume, with admitted tendentiousness, that no such defense [of porn, against its dismissal as a 'low' cultural form] is required post-Foucault, and I take it as a given that even a work that everyone could agree was 'only' about sex or solely intended to arouse sexually would not fail to warrant serious attention" [2010:205]) claims to the internal critical interest of porn-as-the-pornographic as an uncritical foundation, and, because porn is not itself much of a thing (as we shall see), a non-heuristic foundation. The question of genre I will pursue in this chapter is less for the

§1

Why Is Everybody So Paranoid?

The first thing to say about *Hogg* is that Samuel R. Delany wrote it concurrently with *Dhalgren*, a massive sf novel full of sex, violence, and all the mundane material of a lived, finite existence. The comparatively narrow-gauge *Hogg* does not represent the mundane as many of us receive it: in 268 pages, adolescent fellatio with incestuous implications in which the recipient is racialized before he is named violates the fewest social taboos of expression of just about any of the book's diegetic acts. (Critics too often apologize for the book as an outburst of a gay black man's pre-Stonewall, repressed sexual fantasies; while Delany finished the first draft a few days before the riots, the historical fact mostly just situates the verbal place of gayness in the text—who discloses it, when, and how, before the emergence of a morality of the closet.) I mark the books as shadows of each other because the place of overlap between the texts solicits at least a reference to sexual intertextuality: Delany describes genitals with symmetrical language. In the commercially erased porno and the visible sf novel, operative metaphors for characters' penises are flashlights and beer cans, with particular emphasis on these descriptors as applied to half- and quarter-hard cocks; clitorises are "nuts";

sake of a contribution to a theory of pornography than as an explication of anxieties agglutinating to the genre (“is it true?”) that reveal the role of *certain* figures (synecdoche, paranoia, sadomasochism) that *certain* pornographic texts (*Story of the Eye*, *Hogg*) position themselves as investigating. Reading Barthes and Bataille together builds the field of pornographic literature’s prerequisite, the “pornotopia,” which will in turn allow a closer analysis of the “dissolved” pornotopia in Samuel R. Delany’s horror- or torture-porn novel *Hogg*. Out of the affectively ambiguous, object-oriented “pornotopia,” this thesis examines the epistemological trouble of pornography, specifically as the question of knowledge congeals around affect, and what we can say about its ambivalent status as a genre, a method, a reception, and a rhetorical mode. The possibility, or what we might call a threat to the point, that pornography is a discursive rather than an aesthetic creation is both insufficient for a total analytic, because aesthetics and discourse overlap *totally* (this overlap is “rhetoric”), and necessary for an inquiry into the first- and second-level questions of poetics or art in their broadest conceptions (in so many words: “Is it *true*?” followed by, “What does it *do*?”), which must be addressed before we reach the third-level question of art (“What *can* it do?”). So: not only the field of pornography but the field of pornographic criticism must be laid out and provisionally delimited as its own discourse, embedded within but not coterminous with the discourse of sexuality—a permeable limit, a chain-link fence protecting more noble investigations from the language of sucking and fucking. We know from forty years of iterated races to find the outside-discourse, the discourse to contain all discourses & the search for that which is beyond discourse, that, starting with any word, we end up with the looping moiré fabric of possible thought, hissing vibrantly, or the complete catalog of constellations printed above us in a folding, warped third dimension you can’t see when you’re lying in a field. If it pleases you, as it pleases me: *apopornography*, the history of defining pornography and an operation of this thesis.

A distressed, blue-tinted daguerreotype of a naked female body, demurely self-censored, covers the Penguin edition of Georges Bataille’s canonical pornographic novel, *Story of the Eye*. Bound in the back of the codex, behind the novel, Roland Barthes’s essay “The Metaphor of the Eye” challenges the design: Barthes reads generic transcendence as the *Story*’s narrative and formal accomplishment—on its face an impressive feat for a novel, but call a rescue project a rescue project. “The imaginary world unfolded here does not have as its ‘secret’ a sexual fantasy. If it did, the first thing requiring explanation would be why the erotic theme is never directly phallic (what we have here is a ‘round phallicism’)” (122); later: “And the thing

and the digital capacities of various orifices are tested. (*Dhalgren*’s the Kid, in some ways as nameless as *Hogg*’s narrator referred to overwhelmingly as “cocksucker,” tries to insert his fingers into his lover’s vagina while she and their male lover have penetrative intercourse; the cocksucker’s lovers often have additive sex with him, inserting one finger after another into his mouth and/or rectum until, inevitably, he comes.)

I mean that *Hogg* still exists mostly in preliminary assertions that, yes, Delany wrote it and, yes, it’s everything the censors ever feared. Not that no work, nor no good work, has been written about it, but it is an unspeakable text without the proper rhetorical buttress (like this). It’s tantalizing, and for that, its work recedes as the critic reaches for it—recedes because the critic rhetorically perpetuates its recession. But critical disavowal is kind of the point. The pornographic novel takes the sf novel’s explicit sexuality and reframes the language in erotic brutality, representing in a new aesthetic form violence against women, the sex life and sexual exploitation of children, racism, classism, abjection, disgust, and the filters through which social organization sends bodies (and their excretions, which may be coterminous). The unexpurgated depiction of these acts aligns the book with, if it cannot define the book as, pornography, and the encouragement to personal purification asks if erections are interpretive acts. To say another way, *Dhalgren*’s characters have consensual polyamorous sex and examine hypersexualized photos of a black man with a flashlight-sized flaccid penis; *Hogg*’s reader examines a world of monstrous, uncut erections doing things on a spectrum of morally dubious to out-and-out evil, without registering such distinctions in the prose. The reader is responsible for interpreting their own arousal patterns. And while many critics admit to the erotic function, few read the text with an eye toward that arousal’s construction. One’s analysis needn’t transcend the interpenetrating excretory mechanics in the text, but the machinery’s aesthetic functions, I believe, remain critically inactivated.

Instead of offering a totalizing interpretation of *Hogg*, in this chapter I will work through the epistemological work and possibilities of pornographic writing. Porn is highly iterative, nearly geometric, and I work to destabilize the structuralist arithmetic that, classically, obscures the language of sucking and fucking where the work of porn takes place. Pornographic combinatorics might get the reader off, but the language turns them on. That seems noncontroversial, that porn is about sex, but it’s still a rare essay that works within the “plunging juncture” (15) of interacting genitals. Embedded as we are in the shadow of the moment of sex acts’ pathological categorization, critical attention to what goes on “behind closed doors” smacks of the psychoanalytic, religious, (socially/medically) hygienic,

that the play of metaphor and metonymy in *Story of the Eye* makes it possible ultimately to transgress is sex—which is not, of course, the same as sublimating it, rather the contrary” (126).

For Barthes, pornography must trade in the installation of desire in the reading subject, desire preoccupied with the hidden or “secret.” Therefore, to make sex acts concrete (or legible), to show them, is *automatically* to know beyond the sex itself. Whatever is presented in its totality is necessarily insufficient, or not what is truly meant, for only a signifier can be present. Pornography requires a lack or rupture in the sign for the “whole” to have sex as the signified. Writing a structuralist interpretation of *Story of the Eye*, Barthes embeds a poststructural critique of the possibility of pornography that has (un?)surprising historical precedence. In absolving *Story of the Eye* of prurience, Barthes rehashes the apology for pornography that Walter Kendrick argued not only follows upon but itself defined the concept of “pornography”: a pornographic text is always that which the text under discussion is *of course not* by virtue of its being discussed in the first place (subtext can’t be quoted, but N.B. my emphasis). While the original pornographies were catalogs of artifacts uncovered in Pompeii and proto-sociological studies of prostitution, Kendrick notes a double resolution early in the twentieth century in which both science and art rejected the possibility of being pornographic, so long as those categories remained stable. The rise of psychoanalysis and sexology created a space of “detachment” for sexual discussions, rigidly maintained against censorship. Kendrick says, “the English-speaking world gradually accustomed itself to free talk about penises and vaginas, so long as the tone remained clinical and the lexicon polysyllabic... [W]ithin the context of the obscenity debate, [Freud’s] most significant effect may have had less to do with psychology than with vocabulary” (189-190). The pseudo-scientific origin of the repressive hypothesis found its post-Enlightenment mate in obscenity trials’ discursive resolution in *United States v. One Book Called Ulysses* to dissociate literary/aesthetic value and the category of the “pornographic.” In his decision, Judge Woolsey writes, “If the conclusion is that the book is pornographic, that is the end of the inquiry and forfeiture must follow. / But in “Ulysses,” in spite of its unusual frankness, I do not detect anywhere the leer of the sensualist. I hold, therefore, that it is not pornographic” (quoted in Mackey 154). Woolsey immediately follows this with two paragraphs of literary criticism that are poetic and trenchant and not at all a first-order argument against the book’s use as an aphrodisiac. For example, “Joyce... show[s] how the screen of consciousness with its ever-shifting kaleidoscopic impressions carries, as it were on a plastic palimpsest, not only what is in the fo-

and condescending bipartisan discourse(s) that regulate, positively or negatively, the actual sexual practices of people. However, “respecting the privacy of the home” is not a piety I follow insofar as it suggests an area that exceeds discursive investigation. (This is made somewhat easier by the text under scrutiny: in *Hogg*, there is no private home, no private sector: every space is always already infused by social forces that are often oppressive, even usually so. The invasion of Hogg and his marauders into the house merely mark that privacy was *always* a fiction, in the exact way that disavowal is a fiction.) So, the incitement to discourse noted, and accepted, non-analysis of a representation out of fear of complicity in the discourse of “sexuality” resembles, to my mind, a corollary to artistic censorship: clean speech, always read as an index of the clean mind no one possesses, enabling whatever practice led to the representation in the first place.

My speech practice, however, is in somewhat direct opposition to my reading practice. I intend not to evaluate the sex under critical examination according to criteria of abjection and taste. Insofar as I make claims about the moral objectionability of certain acts, I take a non-paranoid position: I believe the text presented, and do my best to allow it to construct a theory of itself, which, being noticed, can undergo a critique relevant to its actual claims. I allow this methodological *aporia* because the paranoid method to which *Hogg*, I contend, gives the lie, does not itself, in its adoption, unveil an otherwise foreclosed set of facts. Instead, the paranoid method embraces a skeptical relationship to a subject that I will provisionally deny myself in favor of local, surface truths—and my hope for this methodology is no less than to redirect the way art thinks about representations of sexual pleasure, away from an obsession with the clinical psychoanalytics of a desire that “cannot let itself be known” toward an absolutist view that a subject should be interpreted as they present themselves. I do not attempt to expose, reveal, or unveil the deep, dark truths of a body. That is to say, I attempt to step outside a capitalistic economy of information in which truths are speculated upon (e.g. “future investments” in a sexual action in which an orgasm is seen as retroactively validating the initial, possibly exploitative advance) to a local barter economy of information, in which the release and withholding of information is evaluated and reevaluated within atomistic relations. (This method also, I believe, enables persons to encounter, deploy, examine, and negotiate strategically the socio-political forces that even the atomized barter system cannot escape.)

Concomitantly, there will be lots of block quotes. Like this:

“It’s a good profession, boy,” Hogg said. “Like the man says, ain’t nothin’ you can do in this world

cus of each man's observation of the actual things about him, but also in a penumbral zone residua of past impressions..." (Mackey 155). According to Woolsey's language, it is not the existence of these literary-critical paragraphs that determines *Ulysses* as not-porn; the decision that it was not porn opened up the possibility *for* that criticism, once the "leer of the sensualist" was found absent. But if the criticism had not followed, if Woolsey had not offered an interpretation of the text, the inquiry would stop as though the book *were* porn. Speaking about the text retroactively asserts that the book is not porn, but which comes first: the realization as pornography or the realization as not-porn? In some contexts, literary criticism operates as a performative proof of a text's not-being-porn. Kendrick summarizes the temporal paradox as, "Whatever 'pornography' might be, it was not 'art': whatever 'art' might be, it was not 'pornography.' It is appropriate that two indefinable abstractions should ultimately cancel each other out" (188).

As one result of that late-eighteenth-century science-metaphysics schism we've inherited under innumerable headings and which Foucault thoroughly trawled for its assumptions' heritage, "pornography" as we receive the term today mediates scientific materialism and interpretation insofar as both forcefully rejected it out of the cultural-academic paranoia that it is the subject of both. The articulated assumptions of knowledge production always shunted analyses to groups and places where and among whom they would be applicable, but during this particular schism, two fields previously unified in Western thought diverged along the presence or absence of certain conditional methodologies. Science advanced according to replicable experiment and observational fact (in which reality produces itself materially), metaphysics according to interpretive technique (in which reality produces itself rhetorically or metaphorically). Porn as an object of inquiry fell into the crevice between the sciences' strident positivism and the humanities' lavish subjectivism. This crevice I will call the "clinic," at least provisionally: bedside *tekhne*, the art and study of subjects, may we say, between the covers, and in a way that reveals themselves to themselves. The clinic imagined itself safely on the plateau of science, but, as Foucault noted, the "birth of the clinic" was founded on a metaphysics of self-erasure (of the clinician) and -exposure (of the subject) that pornography *in particular* used to reveal itself and its subjects and to turn upon the clinic to undermine, in the anxiety of the genre's knowledge-production, the possibility of a "pure gaze."

Science rejects porn's falsity, metaphysics rejects porn's empirical truth. In the oscillation, porn indexes the impossibility of either category of knowledge production remaining, or ever having been, pure. Barthes writes in the shadow of this schism, *clinically*, in a form whose paranoiac

today—go to the pictures, buy some food, or even throw away the package it come in—that don't bring somebody closer to hurt. At least this way you know that you ain't makin' your money by makin' them pictures or packages. And when you're hurtin' someone, you're hurtin' 'em. You look 'em right in the eye and do it. You can't very well fuck somebody without lookin' 'em in the eye, unless—"Hogg chuckled—"you do it doggy-style. Even so, you ain't droppin' no bombs on five hundred people you ain't never seen. You ain't signin' no papers that's gonna put a thousand people who ain't never heard your name out of a house and a job. You ain't enjoyin' no benefits that come down the pike three years after you finished with hurtin' folks you didn't even know existed, much less you was hurtin' them. And you can look at any TV newscast or listen to any radio report, even if it's about somethin' you just done—and I had that happen to me three times now—and know you got more sense of duty than they do!"

"Goddamn, Hogg," the nigger said, "whyn't you quit makin' speeches to that boy? He got other things on his mind."

The wop laughed. "Or in his hand."

Which I guess was true. Denny was still beating. Actually, though, you didn't have no way to tell whether he was listening or not. (62)

The profession to which Hogg refers is something like "freelance rapist," though he never calls it such. The only time he in any sense claims a professional title is triangulated through a community of the similarly employed: a customer asks if Hogg could, for a series of jobs, use "some help" (45), to which Hogg replies, "I can think of a couple of other guys. I know a whole bunch of rape artists, Mr. Jonas" (46, and I'll note here a popular etymology for "Jonas" that has it mean, Biblically, both "dove" and "destroyer, he who oppresses." There's little linguistic justification for this, but Delany is a contemporary so if we receive it, even falsely, I accept it as a meaningful slippage). The book revolves around rape, in particular its middle half, which chronicles five gang rapes by six men at three residences. Here, when Hogg defines his job to his bourgeois, white, male customer, is the only usage of "rape" in the text. (Also, not incidentally, "artist.") Hogg's preferred nomenclature for his practices, in the quote above but also suffusing the book, are less euphemistic than the historico-legal term "rape." Hogg says simply and directly, "hurt," which here exchanges with "fuck" when he says, "You look 'em right in the eye and do it." The "it" done is both hurting and fucking. Hogg the rape artist knows his Empsonian ambiguity.

tendencies have been well noted, so in order to legitimate his critique he pulls the text from the clinic along a chain of metonyms (a line of flight from the possibility of clinical truth) and reproduces the assumption that one could not perform “literary” criticism on pornography because anything pornographic is not literature. But the preconditions of the clinic are the preconditions of pornography. Foucault accounts for the clinic in *The History of Sexuality* when he lists the assumptions of *scientia sexualis*, the forced secret of sex he opposes to *ars erotica*, art with a focus on pleasure as both knowledge and an epistemological limit point that he dubiously claims Western culture does not have. *Scientia sexualis* was partially created “[t]hrough a clinical codification of the inducement to speak” (HS 65). I want to look at Foucault’s earlier study *The Birth of the Clinic* for a more thorough idea of the clinic’s relationship to pornography, a form Foucault discusses close to not at all. He summarizes the “birth of the clinic” as

the period in which illness, counter-nature, death, in short, the whole dark underside of disease came to light, at the same time illuminating and eliminating itself like night, in the deep, visible, solid, enclosed, but accessible space of the human body. What was fundamentally invisible is suddenly offered to the brightness of the gaze, in a movement of appearance so simple, so immediate that it seems to be the natural consequence of a more highly developed experience. It is as if for the first time for thousands of years, doctors, free at last of theories and chimeras, agreed to approach the object of their experience with the purity of an unprejudiced gaze. But the analysis must be turned around: it is the forms of visibility that have changed. . . it is nothing more than a syntactical reorganization of disease in which the limits of the visible and the invisible follow a new pattern; the abyss beneath illness, which was the illness itself, has emerged into the light of language—the same light, no doubt, that illuminates *120 Journées de Sodome*, *Juliette*, and the *Désastres de Soya*. . . ¹

It was also necessary to open up language to a whole new domain: that of a perpetual and objectively based correlation of the visible and the expressible. . . showing by saying what one sees. It was necessary, then, to place medical language at this apparently superficial but in fact very deeply embedded level at which the descriptive formula is also a revealing gesture. And this revelation in turn involved as its field of origin and of manifestation of truth the discursive space of the corpse: the interior revealed. (BC 195-196)

A different sort of ambiguity accrues around Hogg’s citation of “the man,” a simultaneously diffuse and singular power or authority, appropriated from counterculture and black power (and its aesthetic parody, blaxploitation) jargon. Hogg’s usage is weirdly sympathetic to while radically divergent from the 1960’s revolutionary usage: he believes in the intricate world system of pain infliction and oppression, believes that what we now call neoliberalism carries with it invisible destructions, and believes in the violence that inheres in dissemination: of signal, of information, of goods, and of power. But he uses these structures to erase the importance of instance or local actions, or, more specifically, individuals. The singular subject (“somebody”) in his speech is the person he directly causes hurt. Other subjects of the system are categorized into groups (“five hundred people,” “a thousand people,” “folks you didn’t even know existed”) according to their experience of a unifying violence. Hogg’s theory of the world is spatial because the world is organized around “bring[ing] somebody closer to hurt.” Within this structure, the local pains in which Hogg trades more accurately index the system because the hurt is brought *directly* and *immediately* to their body; the long-distance pains, displaced spatially and temporally, obscured the system, which is Hogg’s objection to their execution. To obscure the system is to show a lack of “a sense of duty.” Newscasts and radio reports only emphasize the distance of an event: an audience knows, from hearing the report, that they are not *there*. The world according to Hogg is predicated on a damaged feedback process that he refuses to indulge—without undermining.

“You look ‘em right in the eye and do it”: the relationship of two bodies in space and time, connected at the eyeballs, runs parallel to the system Hogg notes, but remains attached to it. “At least this way” is the furthest one can wrangle themselves from total complicity in the differentiating fields of contemporary event and experience. This speech can be read, though, as a sort of report, a dispatch from the mouth of “the man” Hogg quotes, or somewhat quotes (“*like* the man says”). He explains his

¹ (As the translator’s footnote misinforms us, the three references are “All works by the Marquis de Sade” [Foucault 201]. “Désastres” refers actually to *Désastres de la guerre*, a series of horrific, violent prints by Goya. I mark the translator’s mistake because it hints at the bleed between pornographic and violent visibility at this moment, so much so that the Marquis de Sade could have written a book called *Disasters* of a piece with *120 Days of Sodom* and *Juliette*. That is to say, sex and violence both are disastrous—this on top of the mere conjunction of pornography and extreme visual violence in the first place)

view of the total world system as a certified statement from a floating signifier that attaches to both the authoritative system itself (“the Man”) and any instantiation of “man,” such as Hogg. That means that his citation is redundant in the way that synecdoche is always redundant: Hogg, as a man, needn’t state that he’s quoting a specified,

Though it built itself on a fantasy of objective truth, the clinic instead provided the pornographic vocabulary, which is also the vocabulary of violence. This is the episteme, the vocabulary and syntax, of the corpse. The metaphysical body emerges as an accessible reality in death, when the dissected, disassembled, fragmented body can, under the “absolute eye that cadaverizes life” (166), imaginarily reassemble in patients’ living corpses—with damage, or a lack. Each body, in death, stands in for the whole field of “the body,” the veil of life lifting to reveal the true operations of the human assemblage. Pornography and representations of violence, sodomy and disaster (and Juliette...), according to Foucault, derive from the episteme of the corpse. The logic of pathological anatomy works under the logic of pornography: “It is the *analogy* of [symptoms’] relations that makes it possible to *identify* a disease in a series of diseases” (100, original emphasis). Porn as we receive the generic marker works with and contributes to the analogy of nervous pleasures located in the genitals that then identify the pleasure-response, and the pleasure-response in relation to the physically similar pain-response. In this way, porn is also instruction for the reader-clinician.

Despite Foucault reference, though, one most often sees “clinical” as a descriptor applied to audiovisual pornography, the “porn” of the contemporary imagination. Linda Williams cites as a definitional marker of pornography’s first subgenre, the stag film, their “clinical, objectifying scrutiny of the female body” (73), a generic condition reaching a sort of purification in a particular subgenre called, with great interest to post-Irigaray, post-Foucault academics, “speculum porn,” in which one inserts a “medical” (or medicalized) speculum inside a woman’s vagina with the camera as a contingent technology of speculation. Williams calls this the “principle of *maximum visibility*” (48, original emphasis), simple enough for the male “pleasure,” with its biological objective correlative, but which “proves elusive in the parallel confession of female sexual pleasure” (49). For the “will to knowledge” that Williams, citing Ger-

non-specific “*the man*” unless he desires the further move of making himself replaceable or interchangeable with the whole system of man. Creating a total theory of his gender and at the same moment gendering theory, he authorizes the a discursive erasure of other paranoias (a total world system accepts no other total system) and uses his own paranoia, his own oscillation between embodiment of the essential human activity of “bring[ing] somebody closer to hurt” and his partial constitution of the global, systemic, web-like connections of painful inflictions.

Nigg² (called here “the nigger,” which is not specific to him, but is applied to nearly all of the black characters; “Nigg” is specific to this character) interrupts Hogg’s s/Sadistic monologue (though Hogg makes a number of such speeches throughout the book, unlike those in Sade, Hogg’s audience mostly just ignores him) to make a phenomenological judgment about Hogg’s audience: Denny, a seventeen-year-old who masturbates compulsively, which does not much distinguish him from the rest of the gang—just a little. Because during Hogg’s speech, Denny masturbates, Nigg says, “He got other things on his mind.” Dago’s (called here “the wop,” a slur *not* attributed to another character, but nonetheless Dago has a similar specificity to Nigg—but the very fact that the two sets of epithets diffuse through the text to quite different de-

²Four characters in the novel are not named, but instead nominally racialized: two of Hogg’s accomplices, Nigg and Dago, also called “the nigger” and “the wop,” respectively; Big Sambo; and a police officer called (or named) “Whitey,” though he’s of ambiguous racialization. Every other character, though relentlessly described with racialized language and according to racialized features, has a predominant name that a racial slur only sometimes replaces. This causes some referential trouble outside of quotation, a referential trouble the text requires its readers to encounter. To speak about the text with any of what we think of as accuracy, the audience is verbally complicit in the contemporary systems of racial oppression, (de)valorization, and abjection that *Hogg* aestheticizes—not to mention the history of slavery and its constitutive tortures that the slurs incessantly recall. In *Extravagant Abjection*, Darieck Scott analyses the verbal trouble of the n-word in one of Delany’s other pornographic novels, *The Mad Man*, a book in which the protagonist derives sexual pleasure from being called a “nigger.” Scott ends his essay observing that

it is precisely as *object* of interpellation that insults such as “nigger” taken on as sexual incitement function; that these are sexually exciting suggests the way they have been internalized, but that they constantly underline the receiver of the insult as object, as receiver, brings attention to the process of interpellation, of power-making-its-object, a recognition it helps fix on some layer of consciousness by repetition—especially, it seems to me, for readers. The naming of interpellation, calling it out, that this repetition effects, makes it, like “nigger” itself, amenable to various uses and transformations. (255, original emphasis)

I don’t completely share Scott’s optimism, but as long as the n-word remains a racial taboo *within* a racist society derived, in some sense, from that word (insofar as the United States built itself on chattel slavery), the word’s

trude Koch invoking Foucault emerging from Nietzsche and Freud, establishes as pornography's operational drive, for that "will to knowledge" to fulfill its own terms of truth, the confession is more specifically "the *involuntary* confession of bodily pleasure" (50, emphasis added). Concomitant with the microscopic making-visible of pleasure is the fracture between a body able to be interpreted as such, and thus transfer its experience to the body of an audience. The paradoxical meatotomy of pornographic pleasure, Maggie Nelson argues, is necessary to the biopolitical work of hardcore porn:

[W]e miss something crucial about the meat-making of porn if we focus only on its most addictive, alienating, and misogynistic aspects. For ecstasy—as we are constantly being reminded—literally means being beside oneself, which means standing slightly apart from one's body and slightly apart from one's mind. From which vantage point, one might experience one's body—and perhaps even one's consciousness—as things...

Using camera work that can have more in common with laparoscopic surgery than with cinema, hard-core porn knocks itself out to get supranaturally close to the body's capacities for contact and penetration. The closer you go—that is, the more hard core it gets—the more abstract it becomes. And the more abstract it becomes, the deeper the mystery of why it works—why watching close-ups of throbbing pink body parts moving in and around each other instantly turns most of us on...

Of course, not all "thingness" is created equal, and one has to live enough of one's life not as a thing to know the difference. (This may explain, in part, why the meat-making of gay male porn doesn't produce the same species of anxiety as that of straight porn: since men—or white men, at any rate—don't have the same historical relation to objectification as do women, their meat-making doesn't immediately threaten to come off as a cruel redundancy.) (182-183)

The clinical, and we might add *surgical*, examination of the pornographic body reveals to the audience its own objecthood, its subjection to the corporal "nervure of life" (BC 166), which carries with it the subjection to the system of thought and language and legibility that creates the clinical subject, which is always already dead. But the anxiety Nelson attributes to the thingifying gaze is not a violence unto itself, as Foucault might have it. The clinic erases the clinician and objectifies the patient via the cadaverizing gaze, but Nelson abjures the premise of the argument. Instead of violence either making object-object relations *or* object-subject relations, Nelson responds, "The larger,

provisional, delimited, and auto-critiquing deployment *can* be strategic. In quoting Scott, I don't refute the problematics or anxiety of using the slurs given, with no textually justified, non-euphemistic replacement. I hope, rather, to direct you to a brilliant diagnosis of the state of and possibilities for using the n-word, which has influenced my decision not to search out substitutive terms that would, in certain real ways, be there for *my* sake. To euphemize the language of the text undermines Delany's political project to which I, as a (sympathetic, voluntary) reader, see myself as responsible: the project of having all of us register to ourselves as inheritors of a white supremacist value system that, in its economy of invisibilities and euphemisms, reinforces itself in any expression of its existence, though, as Delany and Scott assert, this does not make it immune to critique. The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house, but they might encourage its collapse.

Denny is not/cannot be paying attention, their text differs. What are the "other things" occupying Denny's attention: his penis in his hand, or what he thinks while his penis is in his hand? Between the two, we arrive at the question of structural epistemology: does this action, this geometrical structure *itself* produce a psycho-interpretive relationship to the world? Is the mind revealed by what the body does? Or is the body determined by what the mind does?

So we arrive at the question of pornography, a pre-determined destination. What is the psychical relationship of the observed body and the investigated mind? The narrator provides a provisional answer: "Actually, though, you didn't have no way to tell whether he was listening or not." The narrator separates himself from the determining observations of his accomplices, allowing himself a more ambivalent, or even anti-investigative, position toward bodily interpretation. The narrator marks the potential positive truth-value of Nigg's and Dago's analysis of Denny, but

grees indexes the violently disproportionate, synecdochic rejoinder: "Or in his hand." A sort of economy of sexual attention, masturbation determines possible thought, mostly by constraining it to the personal body. Denny, in the throes of self-satisfaction, does not absorb information from the world, or much beyond the limits of his flesh. Nigg says that sexual thought (including, possibly, sexual sensory information) precludes the cogitation of verbal information. Dago pulls the precluding object from the mind into the body: Denny's penis, in his hand, functions as a bung against Hogg's speech. Masturbation or sexual *activity*, in opposition or as a corollary to Nigg's claim for sexual *thought*, closes down interpretation. The stakes of this interpretive crux are not negligible: how far into someone's mind will their body show? Even if the two analysts agree that

crueler problem, it seems to me, comes from the conviction that violence is the privileged means by which we come into ourselves or lose ourselves as human subjects. It is quite banally human both to perpetrate violence and to find oneself a victim of it" (164). Nelson recuperates the surgical, meatotemized, abstracted body, the fragmented body, precisely for the anti-clinical aesthetics under which it is revealed. The "throbbing pink body parts" produce no anatomical knowledge, but instead a recognition of the phenomenologically complete body, which indexes a consciousness that reveals itself publically and socially through bodily actions. One can see the reification of consciousness in the abstracted slurry of flesh, porn's illegible genital interactions. The more closely aligned with a sort of "pure" pornography a text is, the more abstract the physiological operations of the body register, which renders the consciousness, as it becomes more textural and material, "thinged," detaches from a *system* of consciousness. As Kathleen Stewart says of modern mediated experience, "The glossy images offer not so much a blueprint of how to look and live as the much more profound experience of watching images touch matter. The jump of things becoming sensate is what meaning has become" (42).

Nelson further valorizes the ambiguity of mind-body dualism for the valence of objectification within which it confronts a white, male audience with an emblem of gendered or racialized objectification. This valence is important only because of the historically asymmetrical (*totally* asymmetrical) distribution of objectifying gazes. For women, pornography can be "a cruel redundancy," that we might call *transcription*, or the putting into language of a social structure. Sianne Ngai notes, in her analysis of paranoia, a fact about transcription: "The transcriber writes down not only language that is not his or her own, but language which has already been put forth... Transcription thus involves a relationship to language that is *inherently* one of belatedness or redundancy" (UF 324-325, original emphasis). The language of clinical or pornographic objectification, Foucault's "syntactical reorganization of disease," only reinscribes the synecdochization of erogenous zones, and this within the entrenched social process of reducing (female) bodily worth to aestheticized "private parts." Nelson suggests that porn redeploys the paranoid, synecdochic objectification of bodies against the very audience who, presumably, reproduce the process outside of the aesthetic object, that is, in society.

As a corollary to this redundancy, though, and by the fact that porn can be turned on its presumptive audience, the form occupies the administrative valence of the word "form," a document sometimes self-completed, sometimes solicited. As a written or visual text participating in economies of the visible, Nelson and Ngai gesture at the

preempts the mark with "I guess," a recurrent verbal tag in a novel full of statements of one's epistemological relationship to certain pieces of information (characters constantly say, "I guess," "I think," "I suppose," and assure themselves with "You know"s). The narrator silently corrects the two, for the sake of an audience he's aware of, interpellating the reader with the ambiguous, colloquial "you": "*you* didn't have no way to tell." Not only is knowledge of the mind sent through the body, any remaining signal is sent further through the narrator. We are doubly displaced from Denny's mind, though the narrator gives himself little more privilege for interpreting. He "guess[es]" the truth of the offered analyses, but in the relative pronoun "which," collapses any distinction between the two that would alter his guess. The real claim Nigg and Dago make concerns, ultimately, Denny's relationship to the information in his world. The two, even as they mark out a difference of thought, derive their analyses from the same assumption: they have access to Denny's phenomenology. They rehearse Hogg's ambivalent relationship to "the man": Denny, as an instance of "the man," is not a differing or damaged man from the metaphysical whole of "the man" to which Hogg, in his specific non-specificity, refers. Neither is Nigg, nor Dago, nor Hogg a differing man. This synecdochic creation of gender authorizes claims to epistemological and phenomenological knowledge of another person.

We see here a preliminary expression of the synecdochic paranoia of (genital) experience. The paranoid subject oscillates between an embodiment and an instance of a systematic world hierarchy of hurting, sometimes participating in a diffuse, invisible way, sometimes in the local, direct way, and one is always complicit in the reproduction of the hurting system *at the same time* that the system states itself through the identity of the embodied subject ("the man"). The part/whole, instance/embodiment structure of paranoia is the foundation of a system of experience as indexing a person's mind, and when the genitals become a synecdoche for a whole person, we see, or profile, the effects of this affect.

incorporation of pornographic writing into the clinical administration. The transcription of the “live” body into marking language authorized by the double revelation of the medico-visual apparatus (thinking of Foucault as a media theorist, finding the various apparatuses of visibility a prerequisite for twentieth century telecommunications fantasies) communicating the body “live” and “the decidedly nonlive technology of writing—an activity that, in late twentieth century theoretical writing, is repeatedly associated with death” (UF 324). After Foucault, we might reread “repeatedly associated with” as “a medical reification of.” Because the body will eventually disappear, the only information allowed is that which survives transcription’s procedure of “widening the gap” (UF 324, original emphasis) between a bodily occurrence and its incorporation into a system of clinical visibility. The limits of porn’s maximum visibility condition the limits of the clinic’s “principle of compulsory visibility” (DP 187). The lack of a readily marked convulsion signifying pleasure evades the compulsion of a confession and, thus, knowledge. “The examination,” Foucault tells us,

introduces individuality into the field of documentation... The examination that places individuals in a field of surveillance also situates them in a network of writing; it engages them in a whole mass of documents that capture and fix them. The procedures of examination were accompanied at the same time by a system of intense registration and of documentary accumulation. A ‘power of writing’ was constituted as an essential part in the mechanisms of discipline. (DP 189)

The writing produced within the physical examination within any observational disciplinary structure, but here specifically the teaching hospitals, is a necessary component of the clinical gaze. The documentation is the diffused gaze that is invisible but known as gaze: “The perfect disciplinary apparatus would make it possible for a single gaze to see everything constantly. A central point would be both the source of light illuminating everything, and a locus of convergence for everything that must be known: a perfect eye that nothing would escape and a centre towards which all gazes would be turned” (ibid. 173). The correlative of the gaze in visual pornography is clear: in Marcie Frank’s phrase, the “camera-speculum parallel” (460) that legitimates “the filmmaker as gynecologist” (468) and “overlight[s] easily obscured genitals” (Williams 49).

We can imagine literary pornography as a set of fantasy-documents, but whose truth-value is more indeterminate than the label “fiction.” Because pornography as a category of writing, we have seen, operates under the assumptions of documentation *already*, the emergence of the

I want to turn now to the narrative. A gloss of *Hogg*, a somewhat standard procedure: an unnamed eleven-year-old boy, after some weeks servicing white (male) bikers and various groups of black and white men, leaves a brothel his neighbor runs out of his basement (the narrator lives there, having been unofficially evicted from his unofficial home across the street). Wandering the streets, the narrator encounters Hogg raping a woman. Hogg takes the narrator into his truck and together they get a bigger job from one of Hogg’s repeat customers. Hogg enlists the help of three men with whom he sometimes works—one of them, Nigg, recognizes the narrator from the brothel. They spend one night carrying out the job, raping one woman in her cabin, a woman and her daughter in their storefront/home, and a woman, her husband, and their child in their home. At the second stop, a man participates and then Hogg murders him for claiming he had “reasons” for his participation. At the third stop, Denny pierces his penis. His penis gets infected. The gang gets paid and goes to a bar. As Denny begins a murder spree, Hawk and Nigg kidnap the narrator and sell him into sexual slavery to the owner of a tugboat, who has kept his pubescent daughter as a sex slave since she was three. The narrator is taught to eat shit. He leaves the tugboat and has a sexual encounter with the interracial gay owners of a different boat. Denny murders a family on the docks. Hogg rescues the narrator and shelters Denny in his truck. Hogg releases Denny far from the city. Hogg and the narrator drive back to the city while the narrator fantasizes about returning to live with the gay couple. Hogg farts, the narrator likes it. The narrator disassembles.

The rest of this essay will be concerned with the latter two stops in Hogg’s assignment, but I provide this abstract map for narrative reference, so one knows where I’m pointing when I examine *Hogg*’s self-referential and thus polytemporal language. Plus what seems to me an important point, neatly summarized by Ray Davis: “The second half of the book contains a kidnapping, a car crash, incest, slavery, coprophagy, the surprising appearance of two straightforwardly affectionate bi-racial couples, cop-fucking, a not-especially-premeditated-or-violent rape of a child, a brutal fight, and mass murder. Which is to say the mood is more relaxed and expansive” (175). I will concern myself with the anxious and claustrophobic first half, the compact relationships of hired rape. The “expansive mood” Davis notes could be considered the post-capitalist section of the novel, as the economic relationships don’t rely on the outsourced and alienated labor that motivates the first half, but instead encounters between people occur some-

clinic merely carried with it the movement of documentary pornography into the fictional mode. The system of the gaze, the procedures, produces a limited set of subjects. To capture something requires a chain or fence. So long as pornography fulfills the structure of the documents, it becomes legible and admissible with the documentation as an individual. That is to say, even under the affective banner of “fiction,” which encourages a sympathetic reaction to validate a lack of internal truth (the reader must “fill out” the text by imagining it), as pornography enters the administrative procedures of the clinic, it becomes a possibility or contingency of documentation to be accounted for. Pornography-as-documentation attempts to fix and make legible female pleasure thought, by the male administration, to be illegible. One can mark an involuntary convulsion that is an involuntary confession.

Foucault already invoked de Sade, but I will nonetheless mark the similarity of Williams’ language to the language of torture, which she attempts to qualify, 150 pages after the first use of “involuntary confession”:

In a genre that has often staked its all on visible evidence of the involuntary convulsive experience of pleasure, the ultimate perversion could be the displacement of a hard-to-see pleasure onto an easier-to-see, and apparently similarly involuntary, response to pain. But although the sight of bodily pain, especially that inflicted by torture, is a “frenzy of the visible” that dramatizes and objectifies power, this power cannot rely on pain itself to manifest the truth it solicits. As Elaine Scarry (1985, 36) has shown with regard to noncontractual scenes of political torture in real life, power relies on theatrical strategies of the display of instruments, elaborate questioning, and confessional answers achieved through torture. In the end, though, pain is known to the torturer only as proof of power. (Williams 203)

Pornography has a difficult relationship, because of its structural and epistemological similarities, to sexuality, which has a difficult relationship to medical torture. These are all bound together by the experimental examination. In the opening pages of Marco Vassi’s pornographic novel *Mind Blower*, the narrator condenses the relationship: “A moan is usually solicited...under pressure” (9, ellipsis in original). However, in torture, the confession of pain is secondary to its purpose: the establishment of power over a subject, *leading* to the confession of information. In pornography, the making-visible of pleasure is itself the information solicited, retroactively and experimentally stabilizing the relationship of sexual procedure to the (female) body and its pleasures. But as Darieck Scott (2009) shows,

what randomly and recursively. The economized, market-based sex of the first half develops within an anxious, delayed, and propulsive affect as the narrator puts together a sexual knowledge that resolves in the second half with the “free” play of sexual experience. Though he ends up a sex slave, the narrator has some capacity to visit Rufus and Red, the “straightforwardly affectionate” couple down the dock. That is to say, though his life possibilities are delimited, sexually he has minimal but non-negligible options for experience, none of which will be economically mediated. (Neither, for that matter, would they be mediated with his master.) The lack of a determining economic system, we’ll see, opens a space for the narrator to relate himself to other bodies as he finds, we might say, responsible.

But, still in the half when bodies are monetized, when women are trafficked without leaving their homes by virtue of a virtual, diffuse economy, when the power of the phallus gets shored up between men through the purchase of violent, gendered & gendering subduction:

The novel prepares for the second rape by conjoining genitals and weapons:

“I got ‘em—” the nigger called back to us, rummaging in the glove compartment; he dragged out the chains.

He turned in the cab doorway—they chattered down, to swing from his fist’s black knot—hefted them once, and jumped.

“Good,” Hogg said; he squeezed my shoulder. “I knew they was in there, Nigg.”

Denny’s fist slowed at his groin—for a moment it was going at the same rate as the swinging chain.

By the light up on the telephone pole, I could see the wop moving his hand in his pocket, playing with himself in his pants so that first I could see his knife’s shape and then I could see his cock’s shape. (85)

The gang then walks up to the hardware store owned and inhabited by Alberta Ellis and her daughter, Judy. (The gang leaves the store on page 111; the text does not record the two names until page 252, via a radio report. Throughout the brutality, the women are unsettlingly unnamable.) The preliminary scene is structured on the violent accouterments of the gang, their tools of hurting: some of them are genitals, some of them are, not more traditional, but less abject weapons. But they are not merely carried together. In some sense, they are interchangeable, or references to each other. Nigg “hefted” the chains, a word used for the process of male genital readjustment, for comfort (e.g. “he dropped one hand from the carpeted wheel between his legs, hefted his meat around some...” [36]). Though the

torture only, but often, escapes the moral attack against pain-as-instrument if the information it draws out is considered useful enough: “the mystique and secrecy [surrounding the torture of detainees in Guantánamo prison] have to do with what torture does for the torturer, not what it does to the tortured or the simple, brutal fact of its being conducted” (“FD” 249). After setting up information as a thing that can be “done” to a torturer, as if information can be inflicted, Scott directs his inquiry away from the value of actionable information to how depictions of pain and pleasure draw attention to the procedure of reflex. Pornography asks how to solicit visible and involuntary pleasure from a (female) body, while torture supposedly activates pain teleologically. But torture without the involuntary confession of bodily pain is only as effective for its ends as pornography without the involuntary confession of bodily pleasure, because both register as power for the inflicting party. If one accepts that no set of information gleaned from a tortured body justifies the practice, the irreducibility of pain to the value of a deferred confession returns. And might we accept an absolutist position on torture—that once something occurs that we agree is torture, the “simple, brutal fact of its being conducted” is an ethical breach of which a society preemptively absolves itself by means of the epistemological preclusion censorship enables? But in a pleasure-pain economy, the symmetrical opposite only confirms the term against which it works; where does that leave the category of the pornographic—?

The occasion of Scott’s essay is Samuel Delany’s pornographic novel *Hogg*, the account of an eleven-year-old boy’s sexual bondage to a “rape-artist” over three days of sexual assault and near-fatal battery, incest, pederasty, homicide, suffused with the merely abject kinks of rapto-, uro-, copro-, myso-, and mucophilia, all orbiting a most memorable act of autalgolagnia: a DIY, *objet trouvé* interpretation of the Prince Albert. The novel was publication-ready in 1974, but for twenty years publishers rejected the manuscript, even a publishing house that told Delany, according to the author, “we can’t *conceive* of a book by you, even if it’s about the strangest sex in the world, that we wouldn’t want to do. Send *Hogg* to us: We guarantee you, sight unseen, we’ll publish it” (“MH” 304, original emphasis). The house recanted, of course—its conceptual abilities were unblebbed by Delany’s predilections until it encountered them. Scott calls this process “an elongated act of commercial (and cultural) censorship” (“FD” 250). His essay hinges on the historically authorized alignment of pornography and torture, though unlike the argument Williams tries to shut down, which follows the terms of utility the censors employ, Scott refuses from the start the implication that the operational difference between the two subjects is telos—that’s what the censors want you to think:

chains are not, we might say, made of meat, they exist in an economy of and are a substitute for meat—and a tool for changing the body of another person into meat, or flesh, a pornographic/pornotropic move. Denny confirms the link of the chain and cock, or the structurally identical deployment of both, when his fist, beating off, mimics the motion of the swinging chain. The narrator doesn’t report whether Denny sees or even is looking in Nigg’s direction, but the narrator makes the visual and symbolic connection, motivated by a change in Denny’s rhythm, given no reason or purpose except that it then aligns Denny’s masturbatory activity with Nigg’s preparation. Denny might not be looking at the weapon and neurologically duplicate it, but the narrator is looking at both Denny’s beat-off hand and the pendular chain. The structure of the situation solicits the connection.

These alignments become nearly overdetermined by the time we get to Dago, who plays with himself in his pocket. The narrator first sees his knife, then sees his cock, or rather, the shape of both, a sort of simulacrum or shadow of each. The light on the telephone pole and Dago’s masturbatory actions are both necessary for the narrator to register this visual/symbolic conjunction. That is to say, the qualifications make the alignment non-transcendental or “true,” but rather conditional and environmental. The use of objects determines the signifying system in which they occur. This is hardly a remarkable observation, except that here the human body is secondary to the technology around it: the chains, the light, the knife (which precedes the cock). These objects allow the narrator to make sense of how the gang uses their bodies. Neither are the alignments purely *objective*: the narrator makes the connections around the motions of his accomplices, their decisive actions with the objects on their bodies. The transfer of meaning, the metaphor of violent use, does not go from the outside in, from the world to the body, nor from the inside out, from the body to the world. The body is embedded within the world, and subject to its forces—including the narrator’s writing.

Hogg, as we saw, muddled any distinction between “hurting” and “fucking” in his layout of the total world system. Here, however, when the gang breaks into the hardware store, he revises his position. He says to Alberta, “Lady, first we’re gonna hurt you. Then we’re gonna fuck you. Then we’re gonna hurt you some more.” Nigg adds, “And maybe... we’ll fuck you some more, too” (86). Against his previous statement, Hogg and his accomplice divide the procedure of hurting from the procedure of fucking. Hogg seeded this division in his earlier monologue when he allowed that, “You can’t very well fuck somebody without lookin’ ‘em in the eye, unless... you do it doggy-style.” The earliest, or most intimate moment of

Hogg reveals that in a culture's rules about the representation of the fantasies and activities that make up the real of sexuality—which operate with and through the universal facts of our bodies' and psyches' reactions to basic sensations of pleasure and pain—we can possibly see “who we are”: the novel's content suggests that who we are can *both* be described as an ego fleeing with such aversion from pain that one of its signal pleasures is to deal pain to some Other in order to be assured it is not itself in pain, *and* who we are can be described as a non-egotistical, receptive entelechy sufficiently defined by nonjudgemental (and suggestively empathetic) orientation that it embraces the pains and pleasures of all Others. *Hogg* insists on the presence of both (or all) positions on the continuum. (254, original emphasis)

The publishing house, Scott implies, is subject and perpetrator of the censorship it performs, absorbing into itself the instance of pornographic reception and dubiously extrapolating the possible effects of its dissemination to a public of similar, even identical, bodies, but who, as a group, are less able to, ah, “manage” the text. This, so the idea goes, protects the populace (potentially composed of Walter Kendrick's historically protean “Young Person”) from the knowledge, *and thus the reality*, of such horrors... or pleasures. Citing Hortense Spillers, Scott writes, “What is perhaps centuries in the making in this context is ‘a *se-miosis* of procedure’ (emphasis in original), a development of discursive regulations, in which not-saying=not-seeing=not-knowing, and these equations enable, and sometimes (most times?) demand, violent, torturous *doing*” (259, original emphasis).

This is all to summarize Scott's position, after Samuel R. Delany's, that pornography, by manufacturing and aestheticizing visibility, asks after the experimental truth of a confession. The real use of torture and the real use of genital speculation establish society by finding the discursive limits of representation, outside of which power can operate unexamined. By bringing into discursive boundaries depictions of sex and pleasure (just as with torture, pain, and power), the unspeakable and unspoken operations of power must be spoken—and investigated. Like a speculum, like a doctor at the bedside, the clinical making-visible of pleasure bears with it the visibility of pleasure's creation, solicitation, manufacture, frame, context... its *conditions*. Porn's project seems to move increasingly from the “great sexual sermon” (HS 7) of Foucault's repressive hypothesis to a Foucauldian project unto itself, except for the fact of the fine details, which, when it comes to sex (but not torture), Foucault abjures. In a sense, he needn't bother go into the pornographic minutiae of “sexuality,”

disavowing complicity still occurs in the local instance of sexual violence, with the body turned away. We might take this as the origin of the pornotrope, theorized by Hortense Spillers and elucidated by Alexander G. Weheliye in his essay “Pornotropes.” Originally used to describe the racialized, sexualized, pornographic torture of female slaves, the neologism proves useful here, in a book suffused with, and nearly constituted by, racialization and sexual torture. Weheliye writes

[i]n pornotroping, the double rotation [Hayden] White identifies at the heart of the trope [both *to* and *from* certain objects] figures the remainder of law and violence linguistically, staging the simultaneous sexualization and brutalization of the (female) slave; yet, and this marks its complexity, it remains unclear whether the turn or deviation is towards violence or sexuality. Pornotroping, then, names the becoming-flesh of the (black) body and forms a primary component in the process by which human beings are converted into bare life. (72)

The “remainder of law and violence” is in some sense the occupation *Hogg* takes up, offering what Ray Davis called “surreptitious assistance” from “‘outside’ the system” (174). The legal assertion of power over certain subjects is, as the power sees it, insufficient for its purposes—it needs total biopolitical domination. The historical valence of pornotroping returns and recurs throughout *Hogg*, especially in the constant use of racial slurs (as Darieck Scott analysed in his essay “Porn and the N-Word” in *Extravagant Abjection*) and the (economic) valuation of the narrator according to his racialized features. In this scene, the sexualization of a black man with chains hanging from his hands that he uses to flog a white woman actualizes the historical fear of black male sexuality *especially* as it concerned white women, and a fear used to authorize the captivity of slaves. I want to expand Spillers' and Weheliye's use of “pornotroping” to include both male slaves, who, as we understand from a different Scott essay in *Extravagant Abjection*, were subject to a similar, but *totally* unspeakable sexual violence that created, in Scott's citation of Fanon, “a self-before-ego,” or what Agamben and Weheliye might call “bare life.” I also want to include, in the necessarily derivative pornotroping we get in *Hogg*, derivative because outside the historical moment of the pornotrope, the possibility of post-chattel-slavery black men and white women under the force of the system's “surreptitious assistance.” That is to say, that *Hogg* may embody the pornotrope itself, performing its bodily rhetoric on both his victims and his accomplices who he implicates into a *system* of sexual violence by paying them. Without their services folded into or taken up by the broader structure of pornotropic violence, the local assaults could be seen as “merely” assault, the sorts of lo-

because he goes into the minutiae of torture and the body under clinical examination. Sex is an excluded term, and for that, hovers. *The History of Sexuality* attempts to escape its complicity in the “incitement to discourse” by, we might say, censoring the “fine details” of sexual activity. He surveys the clinical records of sex but he produces a bowdlerized text. This is not hypocrisy even as it is censorship. He studies the discourse of sexuality and uses its euphemistic language to allow a potential escape from discourse to these activities. Darieck Scott marks this move in Attorney General John Ashcroft, regarding the classification of detainees’ tortures: “[The] briefings were apparently very precise as to the proposed, and subsequently approved, methods...—‘so *clinical and specific*,’ in fact, ‘that at one briefing Mr. Ashcroft objected, saying that Cabinet officials should approve broad outlines of important policies, not the fine details, according to someone present’” (“FD” 257-58, quoting Shane & Mazzetti [22 April 2009], emphasis added). Ashcroft also famously censored the female Spirit of Justice and male Majesty of Law statues in the Great Hall of the Department of Justice, and Scott notes his symmetrical duplicity controlling the public discourses of torture and sex:

There is a link between the effort to conceal nakedness... and the effort to “not know,” i.e., to be able to deny, that captive “enemy combatants” are tortured in defiance of the Geneva Conventions... it is not likely that Ashcroft sought to close his mind to the contemplation of the injuries the interrogation techniques would inflict on the detainees; that is, moral revulsion to the methods being proposed was likely not what prompted his desire to retreat from specific knowledge of them. Rather, such arranged ignorance would enable those injuries to occur: Ashcroft’s objection was preparing him for the eventuality of lying about the infliction of injury for the greater good—just as he would be prepared, one imagines even eager, to lie about the ubiquity and diversity of human sexual practices (which the mere appearance of even a fake breast and bare chest summons to the sin-hungry mind) by concealing the evidence of them and denying having done so, in the service of a greater good like “public morality” or “preservation of the family.” Ashcroft’s parallel impulses are toward the regulation of public discourse and public knowledge, in one case to better permit practices that produce bodily and psychic pain, and in the other to better proscribe (by refusing to acknowledge and limiting the opportunity to imagine) practices that *might* produce bodily and psychic pleasures. (258, original emphasis)

cal instances Hogg erases by subsuming them to the system and privileges for their intimacy and legibility. In the perpetuation of a system, Hogg suggested, better that one knows what one does, for a more thorough or pure contribution, a non-euphemistic contribution. But ultimately Hogg is *there* to support the system, or takes its support as perfectly acceptable collateral damage. After he takes the narrator into his truck, he explains his vocation: “[T]here’s this whole bunch of racketeers and bulldozers and bankers and big men in this county who’ll give me a hundred bucks, a hundred-and-fifty sometimes, to bust up a cunt... I’d do it every now and again anyway, so I might as well get paid” (37). He regulates for an increasingly powerful set of customers, a list that culminates in the abstract “big men,” which might as well be swapped for “patriarchy” itself. The pornotropic is a necessary component of his work as a form of regulation, but in the systemic web, subjects his accomplices to the very functions that they enact on the bodies of their victims: a becoming-flesh.

But I want to put the possibility or epistemological assurance of a body-become-flesh under critique through a reading of Judy’s and Alberta’s rapes. What does it mean for a body to be become-flesh, to be “bare life,” purely reactive?

The very alignment of genitals and weapons that I argued recalls the historical violence against black men disallows a pure form of bare life. There is always an outside-the-body, always an *hors-corps*, because the body has always already been metaphorized. What the final conversion into bare life does is synecdochize the metaphorized body by opening the horizon of a metaphysical body from which or on top of which a discursive body has been built. But reducing, or transforming, or rendering, the body into the reflex reactions to pleasure and pain, unless this process is carried out onto *all* bodies (and thus actualizing the metaphysical fantasy at the heart of “bare life”), still cannot understand the body as producing any form of universal human information. The synecdochic referral of the bare-life/flesh-body to the “human body” of which each character can then regard themselves as an embodiment (for, as they see it, they each are a total human, with universally legible pleasure and pain reflexes), duplicates Hogg’s paranoid oscillation between systemic subject and systemic object: in the creation of a bare-life/flesh-body, is the creator interchangeable with such a body that is Flesh, or is the body more purely Other? How does the pornotrope, which I will here call synecdoche, align or distance the bodies involved? What is the relationship of fucking and hurting, if both change the body to flesh—and by this, as is assumed, validate the knowledge of pain- and pleasure-giving power has?

In the hardware store, the narrator and Denny split

I admit I have some trouble with this passage. Taken with Scott's equations of "not-saying=not-seeing=not-knowing," which "enable, and sometimes (most times?) demand, a violent, torturous *doing*," Ashcroft's censorship of the "fine details" of human sexuality would enable or demand the performance of these acts—a method Foucault himself seems to take up in *The History of Sexuality*. Ashcroft can deny the existence of torture as well as non-normative sex, but the former he secretly encourages, while the latter he wants to remove from the structure of society. But where do these functions of censorship diverge?

What makes Scott Delany's best reader, and one of literary studies' bravest writers, is his fundamental optimism of possibility that stops short of Delany's utopianism without rejecting the utility of utopian visions in a world that needs better political horizons than the parade of atavistic fantasies that constitute more political discourse than any society should brook. When ever has social equality overshot the mark? This isn't a digression: Scott and Delany share a belief in epistemology as the great equalizer. If torture's fine details became public, America would have to wrestle with or cease the practice, at least under censure from the UN. As a nation, we could not ignore it. If the diverse sexual practices were revealed in their fine details, society would accept and fold into the national fabric the consensual sex acts of sexuality's egalitarian constituency. I reiterate the optimism of this position because censure from the UN would not stop American torture—only America itself could, whatever constitutes that abstraction ("who we are"). The moral objection to torture, according to the progressive position, *should* lead to its cessation, and the revelation of sexual diversity *should* lead to their acceptance if not *necessarily* their adoption. Both censorships are willful lies. But as it is, the question remains: when censored, why is torture enabled and sex precluded?

Delany, in an interview with TK Enright, says,

I think most people will agree: Social censure itself *is* a pretty good policing process—certainly not the *only* one or necessarily the *most* effective one. Still, it's a good one. By suddenly declaring a whole category of relationships illegal, however, you set up a situation where such relationships do not cease but rather become clandestine. And because they are never seen by others, talked about by others, and the people involved in them never get to relate to others about their relationships, they are far more likely to become spaces of abuse, through secrecy alone. (Delany 2009:136-137, original emphasis)

We ought not ignore the valence of the historical, legitimated abjection of diverse categories of citizen to which Delany refers with the phrase "through secrecy alone": the

off from the rest of the gang. Hogg, Nigg, and Dago take Alberta into the back and assault her. Denny and the narrator stay with Judy, her fifteen-year-old daughter, in the lobby. Judy uses a wheelchair and is quite proficient with it, getting in a few knocks against the gang before the narrator yanks her wheelchair off-balance and she collapses on the floor. She also wears "funny shoes, laced high, almost like Hogg's workshoe; and the foot that dragged was leaning in the wrong direction" (89), and has "a scar, high as an appendectomy operation, but much thicker and without the cross cuts, slanting down under her skirt" (93)... "in fact it looked like part of the hip bone on that side was missing... That thigh was a lot thinner than the other one, too" (94). The narrator continues to mark her physical disabilities throughout the rape, in a continual process of interpreting her body's difference, as he sees it. To begin the assault, Denny instructs the narrator to go down on Judy, forcing her to take off her panties:

They were blue. The panties.

I kneeled over her, wedged my face against the soft brown hair—it was pressed very flat. Once she tried to push me away with one hand. Then I felt her shake and heard Denny grunt. I don't know where he hit her. But she stopped pushing. I got in with my tongue.

Her cunt was like a small hole full of cold snot. I grabbed her buttocks with one hand. The other I kept rubbing over the scar, and tried to keep going in, nipping and tonguing in the slippery seam, tasting pee. I nosed the nut of flesh, and every time I did, her thicker leg jerked. (96)

This is a repetition of an earlier scene of cunnilingus, a (mostly?) consensual encounter between the narrator, his neighbor Pedro, and Pedro's sister, Maria, the only prostitute in his underground brothel. (The narrator was there as a contingency for any supernumerary customers.) When Pedro told the narrator to "fuck on" his sister, the narrator first went down on her. At the time, the only "fucking" he had seen (immediately before, between the siblings) began with cunnilingus, so he repeats the succession from cunnilingus to penetrative vaginal intercourse. Pedro corrects him: "Fuck on her! Don't you know how to fuck?" (15), at which point the narrator obeys. He follows the pattern with Judy under direct instruction from Denny, who perversely begins their rape of Judy with an act usually reserved for, or at least associated with, female pleasure, because it does not involve the male genitals. Denny has, it seems, no reason to tell the narrator to do this, except for a sort of naïveté towards what they are doing. After all, before Hogg et al. drag Alberta into the back, he says, "It's Denny's first job—and the cocksucker ain't seen to much of this sort of

removal of classified groups of persons from a hygienic, normative society not only creates the outside-discourse in which power operates unobstructed, but all relationships with a disavowed embeddedness within society tend toward abuse. Delany's radical proposition is that pleasure, sexual pleasure even, is only a variant of torture so long as society refuses its recognition, refuses to bring it into discourse. And as Scott shows, legal and commercial (may we call that a form of law?) discourse determines recognition out of a determination of language, that is, the chestnut of poststructuralism, discourse determines knowledge.

Pornography: as we've been looking at it, examining it, has threatened its own non-emergence, threatened not to reveal itself before we answer the question pornography has always solicited, as one more instance in the history of our inquiry. Is it true? And is it knowledge? Scott and Delany encourage the envelopment in discourse of sexual pleasure's fine details as a predicate for sexual pleasure, for the sensory abyss outside of discourse Foucault, we might say, fetishizes, Delany and Scott fear from the sensible belief that power relations formed in secret are secret also to the participants. Foucault in some sense believes that there is no such thing as bad sex because sex, as conceived within both *scientia sexualis* and *ars erotica*, relentlessly marks the confession of pleasure and delegitimizes those sex acts that do not result in the revelation of administratively assimilable information. Eve Sedgwick ties this to the first imperative of paranoia: "*There must be no bad surprises*" (130). Insofar as anything becomes visible, clinical information, it is "good (orgasmic) sex," or else torture. For Foucault, like the pornographer, the orgasm is a necessary condition for administratively or discursively assimilable sex, and retroactively justifies the act as *totally* pleasurable. While the *ars erotica*, as Foucault allows, is structured around a linguistic or representation lacuna, this lacuna is filled with the personal experience of sensual pleasure. Let's let Delany explain the *ars erotica* in *Dhalgren* (published, incidentally, two years before the first edition of *The History of Sexuality*):

Is it *only* an hour, he wondered, that encompassed three people's four orgasms? Now I know why, though foreplay can be delineated in all its fascinating and psychotropic detail, a poet must use asterisks or blank paper for orgasmic mechanics that satisfying: they open to something so wide you can now understand why, when sex is *that* good, you may say, "The sex is not the most important part," and feel these words analog some shadow of truth.

Then he remembered, amidst his auto-pon-tifications, there were *two* other people who would

shit, either. We really gonna have to get rough here, so I don't want 'em seein' anything that's gonna turn 'em off the profession before they got their tastes fixed to it" (94, sounding like John Ashcroft, keeping the "fine details" away from the public, visual sphere—which includes us). It would be something like unconscionable to suggest that Denny is neither responsible nor aware of what he and the narrator are doing. But Hogg registers his inadequacy as a member of the gang—his nascent methodology, still reminiscent of sex.

The narrator, however, notes the differences between his experience of Maria and his experience of Judy, a comparison unavailable to Denny, acting the scopophilic disciplinarian—first her body responds to being hit, an action the narrator confidently reports, despite not *seeing* it. Her body, that is to say, acts like a body that was hit, and the narrator did not need the visual confirmation to *know* what happened. He feels her shake, and the contiguity of their bodies allows him to know the strike.

The observational demotic with which the narrator reports the whole novel dissociates itself from the possibility of reporting pleasure or pain with anything like sympathy, which maybe is a good thing, because reporting one assumes the ability to report the other—both are predicated on an access to the inside, the nervous system of someone's body under pressure, soliciting. The narrator remains firmly rooted outside of the body, but as a result, his cold, distant narration traces a pathological affect. While he performs cunnilingus on Maria, he notes first her body's non-reception of the psycho-structural arrangement of pleasure-giving to which it has been subjected. Her vagina is colder than body temperature, which by this time the narrator knows is a physical anomaly in consensual sex. Cold mucus he found, once, personally displeasurable: On the hand of his lover: "His fingers were strung with mucus [the narrator's semen]... I held his wrist and licked his thumb and the back of his hand. / But it was already cold" (20-21). Cold mucus is itself or signifies something undesirable, like a displacement of the body from itself. The narrator (and many other characters) prefer to eat or drink their lovers' excretions directly from their body, forming a sort of continuity of digestive/excretory tubing. This is not unrelated to cannibalism. The narrator eats the shit that comes out of Big Sambo, Red, and Hogg, eating it off of their bodies. This all after Hogg confides in/tells/admits/hyperbolizes/metaphorizes/synecdochizes to the narrator,

"You know what I am?..."

"I'm shit, cocksucker. Hogg is all shit, won't ever be nothin' but shit; I'm shit all through and proud to be shit. You like that, don't you, boy? You like this Hogg shit? Sure you do; you lick shit, you suck

have to agree with him before he could even suspect such meanderings correct. (418-419, original emphasis)

The possibility or representational necessity of an *ars erotica* lacuna is predicated on the representation of a sensual foreplay shut down *at the moment* of something outside representation, which exists before a translation into language. It is a return of Woolsey's temporally paradoxical definition of pornography: it precludes language—but not signifiers. The representation, such as it is (but still *is*) uses the material of the foreplay (signifiers, paper) to mark the epistemological limit point. Except the Kid shares this limit point with his two sexual partners, suggesting that at some fundamental point, an evaluation of sex is not only described but constituted by language. The *ars erotica* becomes a measurement of pleasure not distinct from the *scientia sexualis*, except for the possibility of both *bad* and *not mutually pleasurable sex*, even if everyone comes. Linguistic description retroactively asserts a negative to “fine” quality judgment about an orgasm, and the *mark*, the asterisk or the space, judges the orgasm to have exceeded a certain discourse (...in the sense of “bounded area”) but not all language or linguistic structures. Sexual partners, briefly, compose a linguistic community. The sensory value of an orgasm creates a provisional, inaccessible link through a sexual activity that is “not the most important part,” but only loses its importance in a doubly-displaced derivative of truth. At so many removes from the ordinary truth, the pursuit of good sex becomes an epistemological mission to find the truth.

Because *Dhalgren's* social relations are not totally constituted by this microscopic, molecular relationships, I suggest that it is not a work of pornography. However, the Kid lays out the possibility of the “pornotopia” that exists within an economy of paranoia, if we take Eve Sedgwick's double claim that “the way paranoia has of understanding anything is by imitating and embodying it” (131), and that “paranoia is drawn toward and tends to construct symmetrical relations, in particular, symmetrical epistemologies” (126). She later calls the latter claim paranoia's “contagious tropism... toward symmetrical epistemologies” (131), and in a very literal way, I undertake to name this trope. Moving to a close reading of a pornographic text, *Story of the Eye*, (and the text under paratactic discussion, *Hogg*), I would now like to pursue the question of the pornotopia and its affective requisite, paranoia.

shit, you eat shit, Hogg shit...yeah... You're gonna suck shit out of my mouth, my ass, take my shit and shove it up your own... Yeah...!” (141, second, fourth, and fifth ellipses in original)

Before this monologue, the narrator has eaten no shit. This fantasy used to get the narrator off only later gets realized, at the behest of Big Sambo, as a prerequisite for his buying the narrator from his kidnappers/slave traders. Until then, sharing shit between two mouths and two anuses is only a rhetorical aphrodisiac. But even the rhetorical alignment of the body with shit, a diffuse, oceanic, non-differentiated category of matter, at least until a body extrudes it. Hogg takes a stronger stance than the shit-extrusion device: he *is* shit, he embodies shit, the most abject substance in the Western world, that which should never connect with the mouth. This being embodied, the narrator orgasms across Hogg's belly, and then Hogg comes. The radical claim that a body is made of its excretions appeals to the sexual life of both characters, in a sense is shared like shit, between their mouths. Speech functions like a physical excretion, air carved by the throat and mashed by the tongue and teeth, hot on the cheeks of an intimate interlocutor.

When the narrator gets “in” to Judy's body with his tongue, he finds “cold snot.” He does not seem displeased as when his own semen was strung across his lover's fingers. With Judy, he observes the fact of the cold mucus and continues, “nipping and tonguing.” That might be all that it means to him, a discrete piece of information within a sexual assault—or, because his mouth creates a contiguity with the vagina, a sharing of excretion. When the narrator was going down on Maria, he noted her biological fluid only to remark, “She dribbled down one side of my chin” (15). Like Hogg, Maria becomes her excretions, which, by consuming them from her body, the narrator uses to biologically suture himself to her, a conti(g/n)uity of flesh canals. Because of the narrator's almost total affective indeterminacy, to such a degree that not even a minor affect is legible, with Judy he only structurally, that is to say physically, replicates this configuration. Something here prevents the narrator from fully embracing the continuity and the synecdoche of a body and its (sexual) excretions: within the cold snot, the narrator notices something he finds positively sexually compelling: the taste of pee. At this point in the novel, he has imbibed more urine than any other character, which is quite a bit, and pursues situations and combinations of people in which he can swallow their urine. Judy, however, does not pee for him like his other lovers. Incidental to his actions on her body, the narrator discovers a personal fetish and pursues it deeper into the body of the subject. The pleasure the narrator gets from conjoining his and Judy's bodies derives from a fluid, an

§2

The Blue Pencil

The pornographic writer can always get his books published. If it is desirable he will employ the blue pencil.

Sisley Huddleston

“James Joyce and ‘Ulysses’”

Having seeded the preceding historical-theoretical analysis of pornography’s emergence with reference to Sianne Ngai’s and Eve Sedgwick’s essays about paranoia and paranoid interpretations of information, this section will explain paranoia’s specific operations as they relate to the concept of the “pornotopia,” a concept I filter through two theorists: Richard Dyer and Linda Williams concept of the “dissolved utopia,” in which “pornotopia is already achieved” (Williams 174). I will work toward an understanding of paranoia as synecdochic thinking necessarily applied to pornography if one wants to read the genre as such. Further, I take paranoia as a fundamental operation of mundane pleasure, the non-transcendental pleasures pornography purports or is purported to offer.

In *Ugly Feelings*, Sianne Ngai analyses pornography as a minor affect, the category of affect which “read[s] the predicaments posed by a general state of obstructed agency with respect to other human actors or to the social as such.” One might broadly categorize minor affects as “dysphoric” and “marked by [social/political] ambivalence” (3). I will use Ngai’s theorization of paranoia (in fact, I already have), but I want to mark my usage as distinct from hers. The paranoia that creates pornography in this study is most often the paranoia of white, often heterosexual men, and while minor affects are not precluded them, it seems more accurate to redirect paranoia through the lens of “ordinary affect” as theorized by Kathleen Stewart. Even though Ngai never cites it, I have been unable to separate the minor affect from Deleuze and Guattari’s theory of the minor literature, a form or mode of writing of which it is true that, “everything in them is political... [and] everything in it takes on a collective value” (17). This, we’ve seen, seems sensibly true for porn, but the paranoia under discussion is not that of pornography itself, but rather the organizing principle of anyone who claims to be able to make a *successful* pornotopia, and this thesis combats that very possibility, in certain areas of epistemology (such as minds). The collective of the ordinary and the collective of the minor are far from continuous and allow characters like Hogg to express hegemonic paranoia.

While minor and ordinary affect are precluded from overlapping only for Erving Goffman’s “one unblushing male” (128) against whom all questions of agency are mea-

excretion, not present. While not a denial, the tantalizing absence of urine encourages the narrator’s pursuit into her vagina, but this requirement for his sexual pleasure is a form of discontinuity, a rupture between their bodies.

At the time, the narrator takes the muscle spasm in Judy’s leg as a sign of sexual pleasure, overwriting the visible displeasure in other parts of her body (such as her face, contorted into “a roar without a voice” [95]). The face’s most uncontrollable appendage the narrator uses to draw out an involuntary reaction to his physical engagement with her most sensitive tissue, and if his desire is to get her merely to react, he succeeds; if he desires her to orgasm, the question remains open. After the rape, he reconsiders the significance of her spasm. Maria’s legs had convulsed, too, when he had gone down on her: “My tongue went up against a fold in the roof where a nut, hooded in wet flesh, made her thighs clap my ears” (15). Judy’s similar reaction, a twitch in her operational leg, causes more interpretive difficulty: “I wondered if she had come too, but I don’t think so. Because I remember the last hiss was more like a cry, and her nails dug my shoulder, while a muscle in her leg quivered under mine. It probably just hurt” (97).

Induction fails him. Though the narrator repeats the actions he performed on/with Maria, and though in some ways Judy’s body reacts similarly, in structurally parallel jerks and noises, but the narrator begins to disbelieve his original interpretation of them. The temporal cues of the syntax indicate that the narrator is some time out from the even, thinking back to Judy’s body’s reflexes. At the time, he “wondered if she had come too,” but now doesn’t think so. He remembers, in the present tense, that her “last hiss was more like a cry, and her nails dug my shoulder.” Rethinking her body, he concludes that her reaction was not the sexual confession he had read it as, when Maria was one of his only sexual experiences. He now sees crying, quivering, and clenching as bodily evidence of suffering. But in pornography, these actions signify pleasure as often as they signify suffering if, say, *Fifty Shades of Grey* is any index of literary-pornographic language. That is to say, in a pornotopia, the rhetorical universe of a pornographic work, the transfer of structural, visible bodily actions transfer from body to body under the force of certain pressures, but the nervous system interpreting the sensation remains an epistemological limit point. The unitary, theoretical interpretation of the body authorizes the narrator’s wondering if she orgasmed, but his constant encounter with the irreconcilability of bodies differing from each other undermines the clean, synecdochic metaphysics of paranoid genital interaction. While an observer will see the actions according to a pleasure-pain binary, the subject with the pressured nervous system can interpret not along a binary but in system in which the opposition is collapsed onto itself, or bent into a ring.

sured,³ still the paranoia of the censors, clinicians, critics, and artists that defined pornography as an operational entity if not a coherent genre constitutes the agency a minor affect indexes as obstructed. Theirs is not the only operational paranoia in the world or in art, as Ngai shows, and insofar as their agency is *actually* obstructed, this comes more from a confrontation or recognition of the possibility that the howling void of the Real will give the ultimate lie to a hierarchical morality that has so far been the Western world's engine. I move this paranoia to the realm of the "ordinary" because in the world almost totally abstracted from anything within it, paranoia is a sympathetic method for looking after oneself—but like any strong theory, and because paranoia *is* strong theory, the *local* becomes the *instantiated*. My project has been and will continue to be a recuperation of the local, of provisional and potential truths or ways of experiencing, and taking seriously an epistemology of information *shared*. We may think of this, after Sedgwick, as an epistemology of the closet door.

So far, my method has been paranoiac and fractal-like, a chaos spiral repeating itself in every place. The first section asked the question, "Why is everyone so paranoid?" Here, I hope to work toward an analysis of paranoia that will open to other ways of conceiving of systems or truths, using the paranoid analysis as a Kleinian position from which we can apprehend pornography and its work, as it moves parallaxically to our present examination.

Ngai defines paranoia as "a species of fear based on the dysphoric apprehension of a holistic and all-encompassing system" (299), which she relates to critical and conspiracy theory alike. Because of the "synecdoche" (299) of conspiracy theory for "theory," "the enterprise of critique threatens to become a paranoid economy with the question of complicity at its very center" (317). As well see with the character Hogg, just because one has a sensible, sympathetic view of the forces structuring the world, even an attunement to oppressive forces, explaining this view can have the effect of retrenchment, using the language that discursive power takes up or has handed down to its subjects, and thus reinforcing power's choreographed control of its description. This emerges again in the absolute dissolution of concrete language in any postmodern attempt to view the world system: the concrete must refer to the emblem, or the synecdoche, for it to register as a determined object of critique, but in doing so applies or finds in objects the total embodiment of a system.

In *Ordinary Affects*, Kathleen Stewart somewhat rewrites the paranoid subject from the subject trying to evade complicity in a comprehension of the system: "The wild ones say they're wide open and they spend their lives

³ Thanks to Joseph Ocón for the elegant condensation of this

Put A Ring On It

"Now we gotta make it into a ring. Like Dago's. I think that the ring he got in his dick is so fuckin' cool..."

The wop's ring was just a piece of brass wire; Denny had put in a whole damn nail.

"Come on, gimme a hand with the fucker..." He tried to twist the nail with the pliers, holding one side. But I guess it was a little hard for him. "Here, you take 'em. Come on, you do it." I did the best I could; it still didn't come out very round—more squarish. He made me twist the ends together.... I cut off the nail head and the nail point with the part of the pliers back in the jaw. When each piece flipped off, he grunted.

The twist hanging off the end was pretty vicious, and shone.

He had his back against the sink counter, holding the edge with both hands. "Okay...now you gotta turn it through. So the twisted part is inside my cock, see?...So it'll look all one piece, see? Like Dago's."

...I started to turn the clumsy ring.

"Oh, yeah...! Oh, Jesus Christ, yeah...! That's...that's fuckin'...! Yeah..."

I had to squeeze the head of his dick to open the slit so I could get the twist inside. It tore the hole up some, going in, but he didn't do anything particular when I finally worked it inside. But after I'd worked it around another quarter of an inch, it got a lot tougher, and he began to bleed more...

The blood down his pants leg was like the piss, like the spit. I sucked my fingers. The blood was saltier than piss. I liked it.

Denny still panted; but he had this funny grin. The nail looked pretty odd, stained and angled through the head of his cock on one side; you couldn't help wondering about how it was held together, even if you knew. (131-133, some ellipses in original)

Denny and the narrator, alone in the kitchen of the third house as Hogg and company brutalize the occupants in the living room, give Denny a cock ring, a modified Prince Albert or halfway between a Prince Albert and an ampallang. They use a finishing nail.

"I'll be all right, yeah... Oh *fuck!*" which made me think he was going to cry," the narrator continues. "But he was grinning" (133). They clipped off the head and point and twined the ends, then hid the roped metal in Denny's

suffering the consequences. It's like they never learn; it's like they use themselves as testing grounds for the forces at play in the world" (117). The paranoid subjects themselves, wild ones outside of the normative system of thought, they embody in total the vectors of power and try, in that embodiment, to find new ways of relating to those forces. One presumes in order to undermine them, but once one is "outside," they aren't exactly beholden to the forces at play.

And paranoia as a "strong theory," as Eve Sedgwick shows in *Touching Feeling*, means that paranoia has "infinitely doable and teachable protocols of unveiling" (143), which means that in a pornotopia, the relations between objects immediately fall into an even more total theory because that theory is transferred between minds. The epistemological limit of a system is resolved in the very structure of paranoia itself. In Heather Love's response to Sedgwick, "Truth and Consequences," Love says she reads in Sedgwick, "the call to acknowledge the negativity and the aggression at the heart of psychic life and to recognize that thinking is impossible without this kind of aggression" (238). The aggression to which she refers is a paranoid aggression against local information that might be considered a "bad surprise," aggressing against its possible violence. Knowledge gets preempted by the paranoiac. Even as Sedgwick fights the paranoid mode of reading, its totalizing appeal works unobstructed in a purified pornotopia, but the pornotopia tries to erase the "negativity and aggression" of pornotopic thinking by confirming at every new body and every new object the fundamental certainty of the constructing theory.



It's no coincidence that most so-called "literary" pornography involves the conjunction of pleasure and pain; the languages of both are structured around unspeakabilities literature was designed to speak. Such speaking is a privilege not given to the more literal interpretive arena of criticism, which must sort the epistemological validity of the fictional clinic. The anxiety of knowledge pornography produces in its documentary fantasy expands into the real question of bodily-psychic pleasure in the readers' erectile tissue. The making-visible of pleasure and pain drive Bataille's eroticism as if he weren't writing fiction, and while Barthes makes explicit, renders visible, etc., his comfort with *Story of the Eye* as "erotic" writing worthy of criticism, he defers pornographic uptake, equating it with an insufficient critical inquiry that would leave undiscussed the realm beyond the merely structural genital activity *into* which the novel transgresses; for Barthes, if *Story of the Eye* is pornographic, it isn't *right now*. Never mind that an interpretive remainder is the compromise of all criticism (not to mention a prereq-

urethra. "So it'll look all one piece, see? Like Dago's" (132), Denny explains. The design process obscures, as it were, the means of production. The moment, the place, at which the two ends meet Denny tucks inside of his genitals, inside of his body, hidden from view. Denny attempts to replicate on his own body the wop's metaphysical visual representation of the ring's manufacture and significance: like a magic trick, a closed metal ring simply exists in the wop's cock, a pre-active sign of sexual determination, a circumaddition instead of the circumcision no one in the book has undergone. There is no original moment of pain to which his perfect ring hints. Denny's self-conscious replication of the wop's genital structure finds that moment.

As the narrator pushes the twisted metal into Denny's urethra, he says Denny "didn't do anything particular," having already established the rigid position of his body to brace himself: back against the kitchen counter of the gang's third victim, he clenches the edge while the narrator pinches the cock ring, working it around. The next sentence sets Denny's actions in opposition to not doing anything in particular: he bleeds more. Denny and his body totally align until an irrepressible physiological reaction is also an action with agency, something that Denny *does*. To bleed is to act.

The narrator makes the same connection: the blood running down his pants looks like urine, which over the course of the book various characters have let stream unselfconsciously into their clothing, bellies, and general environment. Having diegetically digested more urine than any other gang member, the narrator marks the difference between the fluids, "The blood was saltier than the piss," but he enjoys them without competition. He does not prefer one fluid to the other: one is saltier and he likes them both. It's a pleasure with which Simone and her lover would empathize. Because one must expel, or one could say ejaculate, urine as a biological necessity, is blood a less or more sexually desirable fluid? In erotic transference, does biological essentialism (which I use with all of its meanings) determine sexual desirability?

Denny's dissonant reaction to his mutilated cock answers strongly in the negative to the latter question, and finds the first one basically null. Blood is a fluid, as is semen, urine, spit, and, as we are reminded a few hours out from the perforation, pus, all of which the narrator consumes vigorously if not with unqualified pleasure. All of the fluids the narrator links to the ring—a sort of permanent installation of ejaculation and self-penetration—and emblemizes *Hogg's* sense of pornographic pleasure in the last line quoted above: "you couldn't help wondering about how it was held together, even if you knew." The contraption of cock and ring, pleasure unto erection and suffering unto flaccidity (for Denny, an apparently valid

uisite of language); Bataille *in particular* begs of his readers a pornographic response, which alone has the distinction to fulfill his vision of the erotic:

[T]he true nature of the erotic stimulant can only be revealed by literary means, by bringing into play characters and scenes from the realm of the *impossible*. Otherwise it would still be unknown, the pure erotic reaction could not have been recognized under the veil of tenderness, for love is usually *communicated*, its very name has tied it to the existence of others; consequently, it is ordinarily diluted...

In the most general way, eroticism is contrary to customary behavior as expenditure is contrary to acquisition. If we behave according to reason we strive to increase our resources, our knowledge or, generally, our power. We are inclined, using various means, to possess more... But in the fever of sexual passion we behave in a contrary fashion: we expend our forces without counting, and we lose substantial amounts of energy without restraint and without gain. (AS II&III 177, original emphasis)

We can ignore or forget the fact that the ground we live on is little other than a field of multiple destructions. Our ignorance only has this incontestable effect: It causes us to *undergo* what we could *bring about* in our own way, if we understood. It deprives us of the choice of an exudation that might suit us. Above all, it consigns men and their works to catastrophic destructions. For if we do not have the force to destroy the surplus energy ourselves, it cannot be used, and, like an unbroken animal that cannot be trained, it is this energy that destroys us; it is we who pay the price of the inevitable explosion. (AS I 23-24, original emphasis)

Bataille's eroticism requires an enthusiastic embrace of the sexual, that is to say pornographic, response to literature. Nothing less than the fate of humanity rests on his readers' erections. But for Bataille, this is not a claim about erotic writing as an aesthetic mode among others; these are cited from, as the title of the study has it, "an essay on general economy." Literature evoking the sexual passion of its readers is a categorical imperative of global capitalism insofar as pure expenditure leads to more capital by *not* leading to species extinction. The corollary of Bataille's argument confirms the censor's fear that a type of text that encourages dissipation exists. Small price if Bataille is correct, which he isn't,⁴ but Barthes reaches for the theory of *Story of the Eye*, the total concept of it, which, as he thinks, must supersede the pornographic. Unfortunately for him, there is no *Story* without pornography, or a pornographic

metric of sensory interpretation), prompts the narrator to explain that we, too, would question the composition. What is the organizing principle of such elaborate injury, one might ask, overdetermining the answer with "injury"? Denny seems to receive something like pleasure from the violence, even if that pleasure is not physiological so much as psychoanalytically iconographic: Denny's and the wop's penises match, which Denny hopes to parlay into respect or desire from Hogg, as Hogg has for Dago.

The two penises' alignment is imperfect, though. Denny hid the seam, the conjunction of pain and pleasure with the sensory loci themselves (the "point" and the "head") amputated, in his genitals so that only he can feel the actual imprecisions in his attempt to combine them. The rest of the ring, though continuous, gnarls around his glans, hooked imperfectly. Hogg expresses something close to displeasure at the sight: "[Denny] panted like a puppy. / Hogg put his hand inside Denny's fly and lifted out his swollen, bloody genitals. 'Jesus fucking Christ...' Suddenly Hogg closed his fist on them, so tight his own lips thinned. 'You like that?'" (134). The nail poses an interpretive problem. Hogg never expresses pleasure at his own pain, so for all his paraphilia, that Denny might enjoy violating his own genitals puzzles Hogg, just a bit. The wop's transcendent ring, seamless and nearly an extension of the body, or at least naturalized into it, does not seem to bother Hogg.

The wop's cock's alignment with his knife returns to disturb Hogg's sense of impenetrability, at least insofar as penetration is displeasing. When Denny and the narrator walk into the living room after the puncture, the rest of the gang is continuing their assault on the household members. Hogg lifts himself from the woman and grabs Dago's switchblade, which he'd continually forced him to put away at each job site. Taunting Dago, he stabs straight into the woman's thigh, twists the knife, and rips it out "with stuff

⁴I want to mark here the thorough force of Bataille's system of eroticism in order to erase it, for not only is the interest of this chapter not in the erotic as philosophy, but Bataille explicitly supports rape as social regulation, with pornographic literature rape's *supplément*, and thereby horrifically superseding the pornographic as aesthetic. I want to put his erotic *sous rature*, because to ignore it completely is a form of censoring or bowdlerizing Bataille, which, we've seen

on it" (133). Hogg tells him, "Get your dick in that, motherfucker! You been talkin' about it all night. Go on, stick your dick in that hole I cut; go on and fuck it" (134). The wop complies, eagerly. This is nearly Elizabethan metaphorical structuralism: penetration of the thigh, and concomitant bleeding, as often as it was written signified sexual penetration. Hogg makes explicit or intentional this connection, moving meta-

response—it would be only a sugar pill that you know is a sugar pill and not an emetic.

When Barthes writes that *Story* transgresses sex by making its activities concrete, desublimating sex, he assumes the literary mechanics of pornography and rejects their operations in the story: the desublimation of sex, as he sees it, is *total* desublimation, an exhaustive desublimation, and therefore an exhaustive transgression. Had there remained a sublimated sexual fantasy, a thing wanting that inspired desire for representation in a reader-subject, the text would reproduce the structures of desire and repression in everyday life and society and therefore remain non-transgressive and therefore non-erotic. The inherent concretion of total sexual activity in *Story of the Eye* leads to an epistemology beyond the sexual because sexuality has been totally subsumed to a system of thought. Barthes marks the success of the transgression in the lack of “direct phallicism,” that is, the phallus has, concomitant with the story’s lack of desire, diffused along both of the metaphorical chains he traces. The total concretion of sex is the dissipation but not the *dissolution* of the phallus, which directly constitutes itself in fantasy or the imaginary. I wish the problematic here could go unremarked for its obviousness, but “round phallicism” as opposed to “direct phallicism” subtends my examination of genital relations almost entirely because of the phrase’s structural opacity: is “round phallicism” operational in economies of desire, satisfaction, and pleasure?

Bataille very fundamentally ignores pleasure in his eroticism. Passion and activity are imperatives rather than a first-order desire. In fact, sexual activity is, for Bataille, somewhat counterintuitive in a general economy predicated on accumulation. Literature is the privileged site of sexual inspiration that otherwise is mediated through the body of another person, and “diluted” in its communication, which is to say its impurity. Here Bataille reveals himself to be a rape-apologist not in the true observation that sexual activity between two people is linguistically mediated, but in the sneer that accompanies his statement. His philosophical surrogates in *Story of the Eye* lucked out to live in a world where literature needn’t substitute for dominating another for one’s own cathartic purgation, but the rest of us have fantasies of sexual domination to tide us over.

After reading “The Metaphor of the Eye,” one might conclude that Barthes underestimated the prevalence and

with Ashcroft, allows his system to reproduce itself. Bataille fulfills the punching bag aphorism of anti-pornographic criticism, “pornography is the theory, rape is the practice.” As an emblem of the anti-pornography position, the aphorism is a punching bag because it is, beyond being historically untrue, politically objectionable. As applied to Bataille, though, it is true, so I will mark it and give him no critical distance.

The diffusion of rape-as-regulation throughout the representations and realities of gendered violence privileges pornography as only the most explicit depiction, not necessarily the most insidious or the most destructively performative. But Bataille’s erotic is conservative, even in its belief in expenditure, because it works to shore up the culture as is. His erotic is nothing like, say, Audre Lorde’s radically epistemological, sentimental/experiential, and fundamentally *possible* erotic, which almost needn’t be stated but because both use the word,

I want to show my argument’s subtending alignment that won’t come out in the text because the erotic, in certain important respects, is *specifically* not what I’m talking about. I’m not putting under inspection bodily perception or sensual phenomenology in the broad sense of Lorde’s erotics, but instead the body in the extremes of pressures: painful, pleasurable, social, political, economic...

inside the ring. This one could call Barthes “round phallicism”: iconic teleology of an erect cock, like a directional arrow, the metal loop violates, bending together pleasure and pain, circle and line, seam and seamlessness. Denny does this to himself: he gives himself the sole ability to feel the seam between pleasure and suffering, or whether there is one: the answer is in his cock. The ring emblemizes sexual subjectivity, while demonstrating the objective action of sexualized violence. Hogg sees the sloppy objective correlative of Denny’s sexual impulses and rejects them.

phor into reality. In a sense, this is a test of language, of whether a historical trope can operate in physical reality, of whether a sexual metaphor is accurate or acceptable. Hogg reveals the operation of bodily metaphors by revoking their status *as metaphor*. But the phallic alignment with the knife suggests a sort of coercive interpellation not in sexual action alone, but sexual definition. The knife (like the wop’s cock) makes an object it can have sex with not by discovering that something fulfills certain criteria, but by forcing those criteria on an object by the penetrative, sexual act by itself.

But before the penis gets naturalized in this system as the interpellating object or the determiner, Denny revokes the penis’s status as a penetration-only object, showing that it is subject to the same forces of violent imposition as female genitalia. The obvious difference between the agent’s subjectivity – Denny mutilates himself – almost cannot answer to the structural blur of the action itself. He uses the phallic object to destroy his own penis, and in bending the ends together and putting them inside his genitals, makes a sort of structural indeterminacy of penetration. The ring and the penis are linked, but at the point of intersection, one is not inside the other more or less. Part of the ring is in Denny’s urethra, but part of Denny’s glans is

diversity of fetishes among Western society's sexually active constituents. *Story of the Eye* signifies nothing without the concept of the fetish, or at least nothing pornographically. The novel moves linearly through time, but the organizational principle that determines the narrative as such is a matrix of metonymy: certain objects duplicate or lend other objects properties and characteristics, until the narrative is a plenum of qualities. Even metaphysical properties transfer with physical characteristics, these between testicles, eggs, the sun, a saucer of milk, and a few actual eyes. The *Story* traces this continual process of becoming and what inhabits, constitutes, and borders the system and its operations of transference. Though Barthes undermines the novel's claims to pornographic pleasure, Bataille codifies the template for object relations in aphrodisiacal literature: utilitarian repetition.

The *Story* begins with adolescent wordplay: "Now in the corner of a hallway there was a saucer of milk for the cat. 'Milk is for the pussy, isn't it?' said Simone. 'Do you dare me to sit in the saucer?'" (10). The pun both activates the narrator's sexual desires that until that moment frightened him, and determines the future use-value of objects in the book's world. While Simone sits in the milk, the narrator glimpses her genitals, which he calls her "'pink and dark' flesh" (10), in quotes as though he received the description rather than developed it. (This description recurs when Simone puts a white bull testicle into her vagina, concurrent with the image of a man's eye "spurting" from his head [54].) She stands, and the milk runs down her legs. From that moment until the two begin having intercourse, about halfway through the novel, their sexual activity focuses on the excretory function of genitals rather than the sexually interactive functions. That is to say, their relationship is primarily urinary.

The narrator's metaphorical ability allows that fundamental to extend to a totalizing descriptive bank: he associates urine with tears (67), salt peter (28), lightning (28), sunlight (54, 67), and at his most ponderous, the Milky Way (42), which in turn allows little in his interpreted universe (ah, galaxy) to operate as an object that couldn't get him off. Whether the fetish-matrix began with a sexualized point and carried the quality along or sex attached itself to the metaphor along the chain is immaterial. To insist on an originary sexuality insists also on the fantasy of metaphorical continuity, but here's the thing: as Barthes points out, there are two metaphorical matrices operating throughout the story, one testicular/ocular/albumic & the other fluid more generally, including burst items from the first matrix. That he can form two interwoven nets from qualities of a saucer of milk proves the narrator's taxonomical ability, but sexual utility is not a quality that determines classification. He deploys *both* of the matrices in his sex life, the activation

Ultimately, Hogg will tell Denny, after the latter goes on a murderous rampage throughout Crawhole, "You all covered with piss and shit; which is fine. But the blood is gonna get you in trouble" (250). One of Hogg's last comments on Denny's penis, after a quickie threesome in the truck cab, is, "Hey, now. Don't look quite so swole up no more... Looks like the pus done mostly all run out... I guess workin' on him did him some good, cocksucker" (249). The alignment of blood, pus, and semen reinforced by Denny ejaculating all three into the narrator's mouth here forces on Hogg a hope for Denny's desexualization. Hogg wants his penis to detumescence, while closely following that with a desire to get blood away from Denny.

Leo Bersani explains sadism in *A Future for Astyanax* in a chapter about French mid-century pornography, which was almost universally sadomasochistic (because self-conscious intellectuals will write about the most self-consciously intellectual form of sexuality):

Now the sadist responds as if his body were being stimulated erotically, but what stimulates him (or her) are someone else's sensations. Sadistic sexuality is by nature an abstract sexuality, an almost purely imaginative eroticism. Nonetheless, the sadist experiences intense pleasure as a result of someone else's pain. I think that this can be understood only if we come back to the Freudian suggestion that sadism is projected masochism. We can be excited by the pain of others because we have ourselves already experienced pain as sexually exciting. (303)

We've come, as it were, full circle. From whiteness, liquidity, and sphericity to the capacities for pain and pleasure, sadomasochistic pornography works along a circle of metaphor roped together by subjective pain. Another's pain is a metaphor for one's own; same with pleasure. In Hogg, Hogg's realization of this connection in Denny's cock ring, that the metaphor is actually metonymy, that the pains actually have a direct relationship (or *real* instead of *retorical*), inspires doubt about the place of violence in a sexual life. He begins for the first time to desire less erection, less arousal, even as he still has sex with Denny and the narrator.

After the violence, the narrator too desires escape. But for him, he changes after Nigg and Hawk sell him into sexual slavery to Big Sambo, who owns a tug and keeps his pubescent daughter, Honey-Pie, as a sexual thing. As soon as Hogg finds the narrator, he beats Big Sambo and takes the kid (retroactively, we discover, it might not be rescue so much as reiterated abduction). Before they leave, though, the narrator looks at Honey-Pie: "She was staring at me... I felt my face trying to mimic hers, as though that would let

of sexual desire requires qualities unrelated to physiological sexual pleasure – sexual utility for the narrator is purely fetishistic. A sexuality divorced from the matrices never appeals to the narrator.

As he imagines what he and Simone will do when they rescue their friend Marcelle from a mental institution, he gestures toward normative genital procedure after a litany of fetishistic acts:

I would arouse [Simone's] breasts from a distance by lifting the tips on the heated barrel of a long service revolver that had been loaded and just fired... At the same time, she would pour a jar of dazzling white *crème fraîche* on Marcelle's grey anus, and she would also urinate freely in her robe... Furthermore, Marcelle herself could fully inundate me if she liked, for while I held her up, her thighs would be gripping my neck. And she could also stick my cock in her mouth and what not. (33)

The narrator already stated his association of urine and saltpeper, but we find out only later that Simone too thinks of urination as “a gunshot seen as a light” (34). Marcelle shares their fetishes but the guilt attached to her pursuit of pleasure (by both internal and external forces) leads her to suicide. The adolescent figures (and, later, self-consciously “undeveloped” adults) share nearly identical sexualities predicated on reified linguistic play. The transfer of erotic utility is rhetorical and imagistic: can the new object sustain a metaphor it is subject to? Curiously, since the book has historically been classified as pornography, the narrator's penis cannot sustain the metaphor, nor can mouths (for all the urolagnia, there is very little urophagia). Only when the milk dripping from Simone's genitals is visually replicated with semen is the vagina activated as a source of erotic interest (*retroactive* to intercourse). The protocol for erotic transition allows the book to remain mostly non-phallic. The narrator's penis is an excretory and masturbatory tool, deployed to *create* erotic material out of genital matter. The entire world is potentially erotic for everyone, if only one's rhetorical powers are able. Pornography, then, can be thought of as the application of erotic potential onto objects for which desire is not immanent or physiological.

Wherein lies pornography's primary political coup: desire is not naturalized in any object because desire itself is not a natural quality. All desire is externally grafted onto objects, and porn investigates how desire, applied mentally or physically, deforms objects that may or may not have agency. Steven Marcus refers to the universe of pornographic literature as a “pornotopia,” and until explained, this smacks of Potter Stewart's monolithic non-definition, “I know it when I see it.” Bataille offers an operation for creating a pornotopia via metaphor and wordplay, which is to say a literary pornotopia. By recasting genitals in the

procedure as creators of erotic material rather than symbols of it, *Story of the Eye* visualizes the development of a pornographic world divorced from the subjective sensation of sex. In other novels, the metaphorical movement links various genitalia rather than external, dead objects. That pornography requires such a move complicates the understanding of sensory pleasure as subjective and of genitals as mechanically identical. Pornography does not require erotic immanence, as Marcus suggests. Rather, characters are the agents of eroticizing the objects around them. Usually, they pick genitals; call it interpellation. Pornographic erotics seem infinite because the characters' rhetoric exploits the biological-deterministic fallacy that all genitals desire the same thing, and rarely does one character challenge another's application of desire, but the fundament of porn is not pleasure's availability but the argument for its possibility. The question remains how to shut down such a rhetorical thrust, because, while a human body is an object insofar as it operates socially, its capacity for suffering is concomitant with its capacity for pleasure. Only induction and bodily signifiers can differentiate the two.

Here we can see how the pornotopia is fundamentally a synecdochic, paranoid process. The rhetorical attachment of desire to objects via recourse to a certain metaphysical object which the object completely embodies, able to be substituted by any other object that constitute the field of the metaphysically desired, is both a synecdoche in the basic Burkeian definition (“part for the whole, whole for the part” [426], these and so on) and paranoiac as a way of approaching ordinary life, a life involved in the erotic. The movement or oscillation between the embodied object and the whole theory, the whole order that makes that object visible as such, allows the movement of pleasure among bodies, so long as one *is* paranoid.

me know what was going on inside her” (232). For the first time, the narrator dissociates subjectivity from involuntary reactions and tries to connect with another body over the positive act of facial management, as if the public, visible self was actually the place of one's existence, where the valuable knowledge of another is located. The private, hidden discourses of the body get mowed over by the public discourse, and only by duplicating itself between humans, socially, can the private seam between pleasure and pain, the knot of metal in the genitals, activate in the body of another a sensation of personal existence that universalized sadomasochism – projecting pain into others – *justifies* by one's own past.

But... when the narrator mimics Honey Pie's face, or finds his face trying to mimic hers, we don't get a report on its efficacy. We don't know whether it works.

Neither does she.

Neither does he.

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