BEND OVER BOYFRIEND 2: FEMINIST SEXUAL REPRESENTATION AND SOCIAL CHANGE

A Thesis

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ABSTRACT

Anti-pornography feminists argue that pornography eroticizes violence against women by focusing on male pleasure and dominance, using visual techniques that objectify female bodies. Alternatively, "pro-pornography" feminists argue that not all pornography uphold male dominance and question whether porn's explicit style is necessarily "bad" for women. This thesis examines these debates, as well as the connected feminist discourse around penetration, heterosexuality, and S/M, to analyze *Bend Over Boyfriend 2* (1999). Written, directed, and produced by feminist sex-activists Shar Rednour and Jackie Strano for the mainstream (heterosexual) market, *BOB 2* features male receptive anal sex given by (phallic) women. Although the film's visual style resembles mainstream pornography, I argue that the film's plot critiques dominant heterosexual sex scripts and offers new, less restrictive, sexual possibilities for both men and women.

Since such a reading implies that the film can potentially change people's sexual behaviors and sexual self-images, I deviate from standard textual analysis in order to address this claim. Drawing from social movement theory, I examine the filmmakers' intentions and outline how viewers and the adult industry have received the film. My specific purpose for blending textual analysis and social movement theory—two very different bodies of knowledge—is to avoid conflating the subversive potential of
representations and performances like BOB 2. The "evidence" I present, such as viewer appreciation and industry accolades, suggests that BOB 2 does encourage individuals to change their opinions about "proper" gender roles and sexual scripts. Since the "personal is the political," this individual change could also indicate social change in our culture's sexual values.

Suggesting that BOB 2 causes or encourages social change also indicates a large shift in what is considered feminist activism. The film is a product consumed on the marketplace, thus BOB 2's "subversive" potential occurs within the capitalist patriarchy. Traditionally, feminists have sought methods of activism and change that operate outside of capitalism; therefore, I examine feminism's relationship to capitalism and suggest that working within the system is not inherently negative. I argue that Rednour and Strano are able to successfully market pro-sex feminist politics through the commercial film.
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INTRODUCTION

I studied feminism so I can be a porn star.

-phrase on button

Focusing on a pornographic film for a Master’s Thesis may be unique, perhaps even controversial, but in the context of “third wave” sexual politics, the topic is completely timely. As co-owner of The Chrysalis, a feminist and sex-positive sexuality boutique, I see (and sell) expressions of feminist influenced sexuality everyday—buttons that claim feminism empowered the wearer to become sex workers and vibrators designed by feminist pornographer Candida Royalle are two explicit examples. Further, books about feminist sexuality and young women, like Gynomite: Fearless, Feminist Porn and Jane Sexes It Up: True Confessions of Feminist Desire, are surging into the marketplace. Jennifer Baumgardner and Amy Richards’ third wave book Manifesta outlines the popularity of so-called “do-me” feminism in which women are sexually empowered, instead of victimized, and say “yes” to sex instead of being the stereotypical

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1 Phrase is on a button sold at “eminism.org.”

2 “Sex-Positive” means adopting a non-judgmental view about other adult’s consensual sexual behaviors and (and perhaps non-consensual) desires. The term has become popularized over the last few years by similar “feminist” businesses such as Good Vibrations who recently just started their own pornography production offshoot company called “Sex-Positive Productions.”
feminist prude.³ *Bust* Magazine—“for women with something to get off their chests”—features articles geared towards young feminist women which definitely embody “do me” feminist values. With article titles like “I’m Too Sexy for These Pants: Confessions of a Clothes-Minded Feminist” and “Sex Sells: Pushing Product with the Surprise Lady⁴,” and products in the *Bust* “Boobtique” like rings with breasts and tight “baby” t-shirts, it is not hard to see that most obvious signs point to a shift in feminist sexual “values.” Third wavers are voicing their opinions about sex and sexuality—loudly and often—in the cultural arena, and to a lesser extent, in the academy.

This feminist attention to sexual expression and representation is reminiscent of the “feminist sex wars,” marked by the 1982 Barnard Conference, but continuing throughout the “Second Wave.” During this period there was also public, feminist influenced speech about sex; however, this speech fractured into two “opposing camps”—later to be called “anti-pornography” and “anti-censorship” feminists. What is then different about the contemporary feminist speech is the relative absence of the anti-pornography feminist analysis, yet that does not in any way mean the anti-pornography viewpoint is no longer held by feminists. Although the feminist sex wars are frequently dated as occurring in the 1980s and ending by the 1990s, I believe it is false to assume that we have experienced the “end of the sex wars” and to declare the radical, pro-pornography side “winners.”

³ “Do Me” feminism was originally coined by Tad Friend, who used the term in a 1994 issue of *Esquire* magazine. Although Baumgardner and Richards are critical of such “commodified” feminism, they nevertheless are adamant that the feminist “old-guard” should not be so quick to dismiss these young, sexually explicit feminists. See pages 255-259.

⁴ Articles cited are from the Winter 2000 issue of *Bust* magazine.
While it is true that vehement debates have died down and that it sometimes appears that the anti-censorship side won, my experience as both a member of the sex industry and a feminist has been otherwise. As Lisa Duggan and Nan Hunter note:

[...]he porn wars more or less subsided in the mid-eighties as the antiporn position lost favor among feminists, and lost in the courts and legislatures of the United States as well. But they have had consequences which are with us still. In the United State, the rhetoric of antiporn feminism has provided a modernizing spin for continuing conservative campaigns against sexual expression (6).

The recent legislation passed by the City Council in Columbus, Ohio is a good example of what Duggan believes is the continuing influence of anti-porn ideology—even if the feminist sex wars are supposedly over. The law increased the distance between adult establishments and residences, hospitals, schools, churches, day cares, etc. to half a mile, but it also re-defined “adult establishment” to include any business with a section or display of sexually-oriented materials. The proposal for the legislation that was unanimously passed starts with a list of pressing reasons the law should be adopted, and interestingly, one of the reasons cited is that these businesses “cause violence against women.” In other words, one of the main functions of the legislation was to supposedly protect women. This is just one example of the many ways anti-porn discourse is used by conservative legislators to control sexually explicit materials and sex-related professions. Even if it was not the explicit intent of the anti-porn movement to censure or restrict sexually orientated materials, the lack of any obvious feminist critique or even presence around such contemporary examples implies feminist validation.
Similarly, Patrick Hopkins notes in his discussion of feminism’s strained relationship to sadomasochism that:

The decline of published resistance to lesbian SM and the rise of pro-SM literature, theory, and history might lead one to think that SM is more accepted in the 1990s. I doubt this is true although perhaps some people have become habituated to the presence of SM. I think that among many radical feminists, lesbian or otherwise, it is not the case that SM has become more acceptable. Rather, it just does not seem worthwhile to waste energy on SM when so many other feminist tasks remain. (117)

Hopkins does not believe that the feminists who critiqued sexual expressions and representations that eroticize power differences during the sex wars have reconsidered their analyses. Instead, anti-porn, anti-SM discourse is simply less visible, masked by the pro-porn, pro-SM, pro-dildo discourses popularized in such examples as Bust magazine and Manifesta. I agree that the “pro-“ ideology is present, or more visible, through the opposition’s silence, but due to my experience with The Chrysalis, I have been privy to explicit examples of how the “anti-“ ideology still structures beliefs about sexual representation and desire. When my partner and I decided to start a women-centered sex toy company in 1999 we targeted the lesbian community, falsely assuming—due to the silence Hopkins, Duggan, and Hunter note above—that no feminists or lesbians actually held anti-penetration or anti-pornography beliefs anymore. Much to our surprise, after doing three years of Pleasure Parties⁵, we have only had two which were primarily made up of lesbian women. The demographic that typically hosts Pleasure Parties are heterosexual women. When lesbian customers do reach us, one concern is echoed over and over—“I don’t know how I feel about dildos.” These customers are clearly

⁵ Pleasure Parties are similar to “Tupperware Parties” in their design. The hostess invites guests (usually female friends and family members) and we bring the products and offer them for sale.
interested, but hesitate over the purchase because they are well aware of the old critiques, which argued penetration and dildos replicate heterosexual gender norms that eroticize power differences: penetrated/penetrator. Left un-revised (in any substantially visible sense), such critiques still carry a significant amount of cultural weight. Therefore, anti-pornography/penetration/SM logic continues to operate though its silences, in spite of the sensationalized examples of third wave sexuality.

In light of the proliferation of feminist porn and “do-me” feminism on the one hand, and the continuing “structuring absence” of the anti-pornography rhetoric on the other, this thesis seeks to revisit some of the analyses espoused by both sides of the sex wars in the 1980s and early 1990s by investigating how the arguments pan out in regards to a contemporary example: *Bend Over Boyfriend 2: More Rockin’ Less Talkin’* (1999). The pornographic film was made for the mainstream heterosexual market by S.I.R. (Sex, Indulgence, & Rock ‘n’ Roll) Video—whose explicit intent is to “change the way people fuck” (Taormino 31). Shar Rednour and Jackie Strano, the women behind S.I.R., created the *BOB* series to encourage viewers to break from restrictive sexual scripts; therefore, *BOB 2* features five vignettes in which heterosexual couples (and one threesome) engage in male receptive anal sex given to them by their female partners. Thus, women are often represented as “phallic” in the sense of their active, penetrating sex role and literally as they often employ dildos. In many of the scenes the dildo is worn by the female partner in a dildo harness, positioning the phallic tool precisely where a man’s penis would be. These vignettes are intercut by mock interviews with customers in a sex shop, raving
about how much they all love the *BOB* series.\(^6\) The film ends with out-takes and bloopers from the film, along with advertisements for feminist sex businesses. In Chapter 1, I analyze how these non-traditional roles are represented in *BOB 2*, employing a careful textual analysis situated in the multiple feminist discourses around sexual relations and representation. I argue that anti-pornography views do not hold up when applied to *BOB 2*, although they do serve as important counterpoints to the complicated issues—such as sadomasochism and phallocentrism—that the film highlights.

While a careful analysis of a pornographic film within the contemporary contradictions of feminist sexual politics is important in and of itself, this thesis also addresses what it means to validate pornography. In other words, what does it mean to say that such representations can cause social change—that feminist produced pornographic films are political tools seeking to change gender norms and sexual relations? Indeed, such claims have been made concerning the film. For example, Dayna Ruttenberg in the San Francisco Bay Guardian says that the popularity of the *BOB* series is “testimony to a whole bunch of changing cultural values and practices” (Ruttenberg par. 2). And, in the context of postmodernism’s attention to representation, such emancipatory decrees have become quite commonplace. These prolific accounts of the potential power of performances/representations or individual acts that subvert gender—suggesting more fluid gender boundaries—are important for their textual analysis savvy and their ability to see potential in the proliferation of meanings. Yet, as Rosemary Hennessey (2000), Teresa Ebert (1996), Paula Moya (1997), and others point out, the

\(^6\) The original *Bend Over Boyfriend* was made by Rednour and Strano, but produced by Nan Kinney’s company Fatale Video in 1998.
claims sometimes imply that all representation of gender subversion cause radical social change. Therefore, Chapter 2 examines the film’s social change potentiality. In other words, I attempt to move beyond subversive claims, so popular in contemporary theory, by looking at the intention and reception of *BOB* 2.

Bringing two very different traditions (textual analysis in Chapter 1 and social change analysis in Chapter 2) together in an analysis of one film presents several problems. For example, claiming that *BOB* 2 is a feminist “tool” is problematic within feminist film studies. As Judith Mayne outlines in her book *Cinema and Spectatorship*, film studies scholars in the 1970s emphasized the cinema’s power to *construct* subject positions. Films relayed messages (which usually reinforced dominant ideology) to passive spectators. Because such theories left out the viewer’s agency, contemporary film studies scholars now examine the ways in which viewers can resist and read films oppositionally. This has been particularly important to feminist film theorists because it avoids seeing women spectators only as “victims” to representation. Therefore, claiming *BOB* 2 is a “tool” to change dominant sexual scripts seems to invoke outmoded and problematic theories of spectatorship. Such a tactic appears to pigeonhole a film/representation into a singular reading. Further, considering the filmmakers intent is also a contemporary taboo in film studies. My specific reason for deviating from the established film analysis methods is to try to begin moving beyond the theoretical debate of whether or not representation subverts gender norms. I argue that considering a filmmaker’s intent and examining evidence of change the film has inspired provide support for the claim that *BOB* 2 changes sexual scripts. Significantly, such a claim does
not necessarily preclude other readings of the film besides the one I offer in this paper. Ultimately there are an infinite number of ways that viewers may read the films.

“Tool” is also an important word in this context because it references the title to Audre Lorde’s famous essay: “The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master’s House.” Lorde believes that women must create their own methods of social change in order to truly overthrow the patriarchy. Using the same tactics that the capitalist patriarchy employs only maintains its hegemony. Consciousness-raising groups are generally one example of tools the feminist movement “created” as a tactic for enlightening women about their shared experiences of sexism. These groups are a method developed “outside” of the capitalist patriarchy. Alternatively, BOB 2 is a product for private consumption, competing in the marketplace; therefore, it represents a method of change which involves being complicit in capitalism—in fact, Rednour and Strano’s motivation for making the film was not only to entertain and educate the public about male anal pleasure given to them by their female (phallic) partners, but also because they knew it would be profitable. Capitalism is often believed to be a tool of the patriarchy; therefore, claiming that BOB 2 is a feminist “tool” indicates a wide shift in what is considered “activism” and what is considered effective at attaining feminist goals.

Asking the question about BOB 2’s feminist potential acknowledges that we may never “overthrow” the capitalist patriarchy, but rather learn to work more effectively than our “opponents” within the system. Although overthrowing the capitalist system is no longer often or explicitly referred to as one of the pressing goals of the feminist movement, I believe it continues to act as a structuring absence—much like the anti-pornography ideology functions in sexual discourse today. For example, the T-shirt sold
as a fundraiser for my Women’s Studies graduate class listed “sabotage capitalism” as one of the top ten goals of the feminist agenda. This weariness of activism that has capitalist underpinnings is evident in Rosemary Hennessey’s work that criticizes the ways in which postmodern performances are often complicit in capitalism and are thus unrevolutionary. These issues are more fully addressed in Chapter 2, but the discussion is meant to add to and encourage more feminist debate about what the “goals” and methods of activism of the feminist movement should be. Working within the system is certainly not the only method of effective social change, and as I will make obvious in Chapter 2, such a tactic necessarily involves more negotiation and perhaps sacrifices. However, explicitly acknowledging that working within capitalist at least has the potential for effective change is vitally important.

One of the primary critiques waged against methods of activism that occur in a capitalist framework is that such commodified tactics are ineffective. Capitalism has an amazing ability to adjust to and profit off of cultural change. For example, identity politics, while useful for articulating a shared position from which to fight for equality, is ultimately a marketer’s dream. Target or “niche” marketing to minority groups feeds off identity politics by suggesting one can belong to or support a group by purchasing a certain product. In light of the potential ineffectiveness of commodified forms of social

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7 I raise this example to indicate that the feminist relation to capitalism expressed by the T-shirt has become almost an automatic reaction. Jennifer Baumgardner and Amy Richardson’s third wave Manifesta expresses the same duality as the T-shirts. Manifesta, as do many of my young feminist cohorts, embraces the potential possibility contained in representations/performances; however, whenever the “c” word is mentioned the tone shifts to condemnation. I believe that anti-capitalist ideology has become a knee-jerk feminist reaction, and less of an informed analysis of capitalist structures. This does not mean we should whole-heartedly embrace capitalism, it simply indicates the pressing need for a re-evaluation.
change it is important to carefully analyze the tactic in question. I turn to recent social movement theory to examine the potentiality of alternative methods of activism.

As Verta Taylor, Leila Rupp, and Joshua Gamson point out in their analysis of drag performances at the 801 Cabaret, “a lively debate has arisen among scholars of social movements over whether cultural and emotional expression should be treated as a legitimate form of action” (13). Performances are not often treated as effective activism because of the individualized context of entertainment in which they are consumed. However, Rupp, Taylor and Gamson devise a system of analysis, which will later be used to analyze BOB 2, to measure new social movement tools or methods of activism and change such as performances against the “established” methods like protests, petitions, boycotts, etc. Performances or representations are consumed by an audience, but because of this context of spectacle, entertainment, consumption, are they rendered ineffective? Rupp, Taylor, and Gamson point out that the established methods are likely to be considered effective because, first, they clearly state an agenda or demand. Secondly, the agenda or demand is clearly received as such, and, if effective, the agenda or demand will be adopted by the audience, inspiring collective action. Thus, Rupp, Taylor, and Gamson’s measurement analyzes the performance itself (its statement), how it is understood, and if audiences accept the performance’s statement and changes behaviors/beliefs.

Analyzing BOB 2’s message, reception, and effectiveness at changing sexual relationships will help determine whether the film, and thus other films and commodities, could be tools enlisted to further the feminist message. It is important to note that most of the available “evidence” points more to change that occurs at an individual level.
Individuals watch the film and may change their sexual behavior, but this does not address the question about the film’s effectiveness for inciting widespread social change. I believe that until such evidence is more available it is still possible and fruitful to suggest that such mass change in dominant sexual scripts is happening. For example, using the famous analogy that “the personal is the political,” feminist critiques of penetration and other private behaviors were accepted indicators of society’s larger cultural values. Likewise, I believe that the more readily available evidence that individuals have been (positively) affected by the film and have changed their personal sexual scripts can also serve as indicators, at least, that such shifts may be occurring at the social level as well.

So although claiming a film like **BOB 2** can be a feminist “tool” for social change is problematic on a number of different levels, this thesis asks the question in order to bridge two different forms of analysis (textual and social change). Faced with the possibility that an overthrow of capitalism is neither possible or desirable, such examinations have become more pressing. And although representations and performances inherently have the potential to create multiple subject positions and interpretations, many of which have no potential to incite change, I nevertheless seek to examine **BOB 2**’s political efficacy based on the film’s explicit intention.
CHAPTER 1

BEND OVER BOYFRIEND 2:
FEMINIST SEXUAL EXPRESSION AND REPRESENTATION

Feminist Textual Objectifications

_Bend Over Boyfriend 2’s_ efficacy, as a feminist tool for social change, is textually problematized by three different, yet intersecting strands of feminist criticism: the anti-pornography movement, feminist critiques of heterosexuality, and “neo-Orthodox Marxist” feminists who critique the subversive potential of postmodern “performances” and find it difficult (to say the least) to rally for emancipatory consumption.¹ The film is susceptible to feminist anti-pornography critiques because of its content, aesthetics, and eroticisation of power differences. Critiques of the institution of heterosexuality—specifically how heterosexuality depends on opposite and eroticized “proper” gender roles—thus also apply. In this chapter, I detail these critiques and present a textual analysis, using feminist film studies techniques, in order to address the question at hand: is _BOB 2_ a feminist tool? I argue that postmodern analysis of power and gender subversive representations lend a new perspective to the established rhetoric of individual rights and consent typically employed by pro-pornography feminists.
As a pornographic film, *BOB 2* is most obviously problematized by the infamous anti-pornography rhetoric of the "feminist sex wars." The film does, after all, contain many elements the anti-porn literature critiques: eroticized sexual violence, explicit close-ups of genitals and penetration, "money shots," degrading language, etc. Since the anti-pornography movement spans over two decades and contains several distinct methods of criticism, Carol Smart's analysis of the anti-pornography position(s) provides a useful framework for contextualizing the anti-pornography criticisms that could apply to *BOB 2*. Smart breaks the movement into two camps: "pornography-as-violence" and "pornography-as-representation" (116-117).

The radical feminist "pornography-as-violence" position claims that pornography eroticizes sexual violence against women and therefore contributes to a misogynistic climate. In other words, images that subordinate women on screen legitimize actual violence against women. Due to their mainstream notoriety and arduous attempts to turn their theories into concrete laws that prohibit or censor sexually explicit materials, Catherine MacKinnon and Andrea Dworkin have come to characterize this anti-pornography position.

The second anti-porn feminist critique identified by Smart, "pornography-as-representation," argues that sexually explicit materials objectify and fragment a woman's body much the same way that the "gaze," in the culture at large, objectifies female bodies. This position maintains that the "male gaze," in which the male surveys the

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1 Many of the neo-Orthodox Marxist critiques, because they have more to do with the structures surrounding the text, will be more fully analyzed in chapter 2. I introduce them here because of their skepticism of the power of "performances."
female body, is a pervasive part of the contemporary, patriarchal, capitalist culture. John Berger’s *Ways of Seeing* and Laura Mulvey’s “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema” initiated the feminist analysis of objectification in visual representation. Female bodies are fetishized by the various male gazes within and outside the text, they are objectified and consumed. Today Berger and Mulvey’s theories are so much a part of feminist criticism that Jean Kilbourne’s video documentary on the way women’s bodies are objectified and “consumed” in advertising, *Killing Us Softly*, has become a standard in introduction to Women’s Studies courses across the country.

The “pornography-as-violence” critique is typically contested by pro-pornography activists on the grounds that it is inaccurate to define pornography as characteristically violent or degrading. Fearful of obscenity charges and offending the mainstream market, pornographers are reluctant to show representations of rape or other objectionable scenarios. Analyses on the frequency of violent material in pornography support the rarity of this specific type of pornographic representation (Hardy 63; McNair 1996). Numerous studies also point out that pornographic representations are not-consistently about “male-dominance” (McNair 1996, Williams 1999, Stein 1990).² Yet the visual narration of *BOB 2* is strikingly similar to mainstream pornography that does eroticize power differences. The film’s explicitness and voyeuristic dynamics specifically references the “low brow” frankness of hard-core pornography. There are countless genital close-ups, lots of bodily secretions (the last vignette even features Chloe spitting on the anus of her “boyfriend”), and degrading dirty talk—the majority of which can be
witnessed in the 11,000-plus adult films released every year (Tea 26). This is significant because it is precisely this mode of representing the sexual which has been subject to so much feminist criticism. Feminist critics in the 1970s and 1980s (and to a lesser extend, today)—influenced by the feminist anti-pornography movement—argued that hard-core pornography’s focus on genital close-ups, penetration, and male ejaculation rendered women’s bodies as objects of male pleasure and desire. The duration and types of shots used were thus examples of women’s bodies being violated—literally onscreen and theoretically by the male viewer’s consuming the image. Further, the women in mainstream pornography often conform strictly to the dominant beauty standard: white, zero-body fat, outrageously long fingernails, silicone breasts, and long blonde hair.

Feminist filmmakers attempt to combat the aesthetics of mainstream pornography by representing a variety of female bodies and through alternative visual techniques. For example, the independent, lesbian-made experimental and documentary films of the 1970s and 1980s that Andrea Weiss discusses in her book *Vampires and Violets* included depictions of “real” lesbian sex, but often used narrative devices which obscured the image and/or distanced the spectator in some way. The function of such a move was to make the films incompatible with the male (or female) viewer’s voyeuristic gaze and thus resist the objectification of women’s bodies. Although feminist filmmakers working within the pornography industry, like Nan Kinney and Candida Royalle, did not employ the “artsy” techniques of the filmmakers Weiss outlines, they did offer decisively

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2 McNair, Williams, and Stein all point out that—contrary to popular belief—not all pornography is about male desire and control. Female desire and sexual power have become increasingly common in pornography.
different images. These filmmakers made female friendly sex videos by simply avoiding the genital close-ups and other fragmenting shots and adding detailed plots to their films—something typically missing from mainstream pornography. The idea was that women prefer the romantic storylines over the visual imagery. Both these tactics, which can be collectively referred to as feminist “erotica,” address the problem of objectification by obscuring and/or avoiding sexually explicit images and by emphasizing plot over visuals.

*BOB* 2 radically diverges from the more “oblique” representations offered by feminist erotica, but I argue that the decision to represent sex so explicitly is a direct reaction to feminist erotica (and further, the tactic makes the film accessible to the mainstream market, a point that will be taken up more in Chapter 2). The two “opposing” approaches to sexual representation—pornography versus erotica—in which erotica is always the feminist “sanctioned” expression actually speaks volumes about class differences. As Laura Kipnis’ “(Male) Desire and (Female) Disgust” argues that the ongoing feminist debates about pornography illuminate class differences between women. A class analysis of the pornography versus erotica debates shows how the arguments are really about “proper bodies.” The pornographic body in *Hustler* (and in *BOB* 2) that are classified as extremely explicit are messy bodies (no airbrushing so all pimples, birthmarks, etc. show), with uncontained secretions (breast milk, vaginal secretions, spit, and semen are all “popular” in this type of pornography). Additionally, pornography generally focuses on the body below the waist, which textually is associated quite literally with the “lower” rungs of society.
Conversely, the sexually explicit body presented in “erotica” that most feminists do deem appropriate is an “upper-class” body. The lesbian feminist art group Kiss and Tell’s erotic photographs and Candida Royalle’s erotic films are both good examples of this type of feminist, non-degrading sexual representation. These bodies are neat (airbrushing is generally used—at minimum much more attention to lighting and other techniques to minimize flaws is given) and contained (no bodily fluids in these representations). Additionally, there is no “objectifying” genital focus. While it is true that these types of bodies are “nicer” to looks at (Kipnis and I both agree that Hustler type images are more “unsettling”), a textual analysis shows that these bodies are classed. Saying that erotica is less degrading towards women than hard-core images—when both have images of naked women—is a way to assert bourgeois sensibility.

Since BOB 2 aesthetically resembles mainstream hard-core pornography, I argue that the film speaks directly to the (unconscious) class politics of feminist sexual representation. In fact, considering the feminist critiques of the “perfect” bodies presented in the mass media—like the Victoria Secret body—representing “messy” or “flawed” bodies is perhaps “more” feminist than the neat and contained bodies of erotica. Further, preventing access to explicit and accurate information and images about women’s sexuality has historically been a method to control women’s bodies. Therefore, the more explicit bodies offered by pornography are in a sense “educational.” As one woman relates to Cathy Winks in her survey of pornography:

Until I watched sex videos, I never realized how beautiful women’s genitals were—it gave me the permission I needed to love and enjoy my own, and to really believe that my husband does too. (3)
In other words, genital close-ups can serve as a supplement to the absence of readily available sexual health education for women. The messiness of sex, emphasized in pornography, also servers this function—sex is rarely as neat and contained as erotica imagery seems to imply. *BOB 2*’s focus on genitals, penetration, and sometimes messy sex can be seen as explicit narrative choices that confront the masking of sex and bodies found erotica.

Although helpful for understanding the genre and aesthetics of pornography, the previous defense of explicit and/or violent imagery does not seem to fully “protect” *BOB 2*’s plot emphasis on behaviors that eroticize power differences. In fact, *BOB 2* is interesting precisely because it seems to forefront so many sexual practices that are characteristic of the anti-porn side’s definition of pornography. For example, one of the vignettes features the male actor, dressed in a police uniform, choking and gagging several times as a dildo is thrust deep into his mouth by his female partner. The collusion of violence and sexual gratification is quite obviously emphasized in the “piggy-cop” scene considering the filmmakers could have edited the choking, or, as they do in other parts of the film, they could have shown the choking, but addressed it with partner communication remedies.\(^3\) Leaving the choking in the scene draws attention to the female’s heightened sexual excitement at the sight of the choking; therefore, this scene seems to lend itself particularly well to the pornography-as-violence criticism.

Yet, as the previous scene also demonstrates, one element does deviate—drastically—from the sexual scripts the anti-pornography movement analyzes: the gender

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\(^3\) In other scenes, when one partner experiences discomfort the action stops and the two discuss a remedy (partner communication).
roles in the film are reversed through the use of the “female phallus”: the dildo. Contrary to both lines of anti-porn feminist analysis, women are not “violated” and are not any more objectified than the men. But does this reversal of gender roles suggest a critique of traditional sex roles and thus subvert their hegemony? Postmodern gender performance theories suggest that such representations critique dominant gender/sexuality norms by exposing their constructed, and hence mutable, nature. Judith Butler’s essay “Imitation and Gender Subordination” spearheaded this feminist line of thinking by arguing that “gender is a kind of imitation for which there is no original” (21). In other words, gender is a performance that is replicated over and over in our daily lives, and is not an essence. The dominant gender and sexuality paradigms only appear to be natural and stable, but in reality they run the risk of derailment through sites or performances that expose the lack of original gender/sexuality norms.

The subversion Butler refers to would show that “there are no direct expressive or causal lines between sex, gender, gender presentation, sexual practice, fantasy and sexuality. None of those terms captures or determines the rest” (25). BOB 2’s gender reversals and dildo usage seem to align perfectly with Butler’s subversive strategy because the film deviates, on a plot level, from the dominant sexual script. This prevailing script is both hetero- and penile-centric, and its narrative follows what Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick calls the “Christmas Effect” (5). A biologically sexed female and a biologically sexed male have sexual desires for each other—their complimentary opposites. Of course, their fantasy, desire, and sexual practices will all include missionary style penile/vaginal sex, the reproductive imperative. Here sexual practices and desires “naturally” follow biological sex in a progressive or chronologically expected
manner—much the same way the discourse around Christmas has a linear narrative of expectation of events that will happen chronologically (i.e. for adults it is: I will buy presents for friends/family, prepare, and finally attend Christmas parties where I will exchange presents and spend time with loved ones). However, as Sedgwick's term captures, this narrative is often—in reality—wrought with disruptions and failures (i.e. everyone seems to have a Christmas “crisis” story, and it is always particularly dramatic because of the high expectations, hence the higher depression rate around the holiday season).

If postmodern “performances” point out the “Christmas effect” of dominant ideology’s sex/gender system, BOB 2 appears to be a perfect “postmodern” specimen. The narrative allows women to desire and perform active/phallic, traditionally masculine, sexual practices—both literally through the performance of penetrative sex and aesthetically through the extended close-ups of their strap-on dildos. Men desire and perform passive/receptive, traditionally feminine, sexual practices. Additionally, BOB 2 offers more than mere gender reversal. The sexual orientation/identity of the characters varies across the scenes despite the similar sexual practice. Besides highlighting male receptive anal sex, BOB 2 offers a buffet of other desires and practices that expand the dominant heterosexual sex script. S/M, fantasy or role-playing, polyamory, and bisexuality are some of the other possibilities in the text. It is as if the film cannot simply add one behavior to the normative heterosexual script (that of its title), but has to subvert its primacy by adding a few more identity/behavior possibilities; therefore, the film’s characters do more than mere gender role reversal, they also subvert the entire logic of the sex/gender system by dislodging the expected desires and practices said to follow.
biological sex. This plurality can be read as a refusal to perpetuate any one sexual practice or desire as “ideal,” opening up a seemingly endless field of sexual possibilities. Further, the dildos (emphasized in every scene, except the “pony scene” which highlights a butt plug instead) can be read as subverting the centrality of the penis—even when penetrative sex is the behavior featured. Although using dildos upholds phallocentrism, the devices nonetheless create the possibility for a female phallic identity.

But perhaps this plot analysis also is just another example of what Greil Marcus critiques: “a lot of people in cultural studies these days kind of remind me of the FBI in the fifties: They find subversion everywhere” (1991). After all, many of these alternative sexual possibilities do not include sexual “equality.” Men—not women—are regularly objectified and bear the brunt of the sexualized violence. As Sheila Jeffries’ concept of “heterosexual desire” illuminates, methods of reversal, subversion, or plurality may not adequately address the issue at the heart of anti-pornography debates. Drawing on feminist analyses of heterosexuality, Jeffries states,

Both heterosexuality as a political system and sexual violence as social control depend upon the construction of heterosexual desire. By heterosexual desire I mean the eroticized power difference which originates in heterorelations but can also exist in same sex unions. (20)

The issue then is not which gender is violated or subordinated, but the continuing presence of an eroticised power difference between two people. The dildo, interpreted as a “celebrated” representation or imitation of the penis, only reinforces the inequality because it is used for penetrative sex which is an “inherently” unequal practice because it involves active (penetrator) /passive (penetrated) sexual relations.
Additionally, feminist film theorists have problematized the notion that a reversal of the “gaze” necessarily solves the problem. The men in BOB 2 are objectified repeatedly using the same techniques used to objectify women in film, and, since the film was made by women for heterosexual couples, it is easy to see that the “female gaze” pervades the film. Close-ups and extreme close-ups, which fragment the body, are used on male bodies, the dominant gaze of the female actresses is emphasized by typical shot-reverse-shot patterns, and, in two of the five scenes, the men are “voiceless.” In the “pony scene” the female actress even states at one point how the visual objectification of her partner turns her on. Yet, the gaze and the power associated with it still characterize how we “see.” Showing females objectifying male bodies leaves the process of objectification intact.

Jeffrey’s “heterosexual desire” draws from a rich tradition of feminist critiques of heterosexuality, many of which originated from “second-wave” radical lesbian feminist analysis of heterosexuality. For example, Adrienne Rich’s “compulsory heterosexuality” draws attention to the way culture “enforces” certain ideals of gender relations and desire. Under patriarchy, penile-vaginal, dominant/submissive sex is the only sanctioned heterosexual practice—all other desire and behaviors are “punished” by violence, discrimination, and/or criminal punishment. Laws against homosexual sex, sodomy, and other marginalized sex behaviors/desires are obvious, “real world” evidence of the validity of this feminist reading.

However accurate radical feminist analyses are, they are sometimes expressed, or at least interpreted, in a totalizing manner. For example, Rich’s “compulsory heterosexuality” specifically addresses cultural and social institutions (particularly the
family) that enforce hetero-superiority. However, the theory was extended to a general understanding that heterosexuality itself—especially as it is characterized by desire for penetrative (and thus active/passive) sex—is the epitome of patriarchal rule. In this reading, heterosexuality “inscribes difference; it is a construction of ‘otherness’ in gendered terms” (Richardson 6). Heterosexuality is then the cause and the enforcer of male/masculine dominance.

This analysis of heterosexuality manifests in Andrea Dworkin and Catharine MacKinnon’s writings, but can also be seen in a host of other theorists’ works which are sometimes referred to as “anti-penetration.” These feminists come from a diverse range of theoretical “camps”—Marxist, radical feminist, lesbian feminist, etc.—but all view penetration as exploitative, male-identified sexual behavior in the context of patriarchy. In her book Intercourse, a project entirely dedicated to the analysis of penetration, Dworkin states:

The normal fuck by a normal man is taken to be an act of invasion and ownership undertaken in a mode of predation: colonializing, forceful (manly) or nearly violent; the sexual act that by its nature makes her his. (63)

And further:

Physically, the woman in intercourse is a space inhabited, a literal territory occupied literally: occupied even if there has been no resistance, no force; even if the occupied person said yes please, yes hurry, yes more. (133)

To Dworkin and the other “anti-penetration” theorists, sexual penetration is both literally and theoretically a system of dominating women’s bodies. They believe the penis, as phallus, is a tool used to oppress women because phallic power tacitly permits sexual violence against women and keeps women sexually and economically dependent on men. For example, the legal right to rape one’s wife remains on the books in certain states and
is still enforced, based on the historical treatment of women as “property” of their husbands. The admissible defense used by marital rapists—that they are entitled to their wives’ bodies—underlines the remaining ambiguity in American culture over women’s human rights as separate individuals with physical integrity equal to men’s. When sexual power is culturally located in an organ that only men have—as is the case in all of Western culture—the balance of power between the sexes is clearly tipped in men’s favor.

Socialist feminists draw on the feminist analysis of patriarchal culture to explain structural inequality, affirming that ideologies dependent on a binary of dominant/submissive—such as the concept of penetration—help perpetuate marginalization and oppression in the “real” world. In other words, these theorists, along with feminist critics of heterosexual relations, show how the capitalist patriarchy benefits from discourses of inequality. The personal and “private” expressions in the bedroom parallel or connect to the wider cultural gender norms. The implication embedded in this feminist logic is that the aim of feminism is to create an economic and cultural system of equality and mutuality which would in turn encourage sexual relations built upon such equality; thus BOB 2 would certainly not be a strategic tool for social change because the film’s “subversions” do not necessarily subvert eroticized power difference, they “simply” rearrange the terms. The “power” may have shifted on an individual level in BOB 2, but this says nothing about power between the sexes outside the film’s narrative. Are these reversals and subversions interpreted as model behavior for a more fluid,
gender neutral sexual dynamic, or interpreted as entertaining imitations of “real”—proper—sex? Plus, the simple fact that one person still has “power” while, presumably, the other is powerless, remains despite this shift.

Although Marxist or socialist feminist thought has largely been displaced (especially within the academy) by postmodern/poststructural feminism (which does not see BOB 2’s power difference as a problem), there is a growing group of what might be called “neo-Orthodox Marxist” feminists who are voicing their objections to postmodern feminism’s “exclusive” attention to representation, discourse, texts, and “words.” Their analyses and subsequent ramification for BOB 2 will be more fully dealt with in Chapter 2, but here it is important to point out that their theoretical framework concerning sexual dynamics parallels radical, cultural, and lesbian feminists’ analyses of penetration, heterosexuality, and patriarchy outlined above. Whereas socialist feminists desire an economic system which fosters equality in a “power-free” society, feminists critical of heterosexuality, penetration, and pornographic representation desire individual relations built upon mutuality and “power-free” sexual expressions. Power, specifically power difference on both an individual and systemic level, is always the core problem identified; therefore, before I embark on a close textual analysis of the film, I will unpack the concept of “power” and its relationship to the penis and penetration. The “power” issue is twofold: first, eroticized power differences between individuals mirror power differences between the sexes in the wider society, and secondly, women who have sexual power—in the form of the dildo or active penetrating position—are really pawns of the patriarchy upholding eroticized power differences.
The Female Phallus

For *BOB 2*, the dildo and harness combination is the key “prop.” The women are allowed to take on various male-identified sexual positions by virtue of its physical nature and by its ability to signify, in Lacanian terms, the “transcendent phallus.” In other words, it is an example of when the term “phallus” does not necessarily mean “penis,” and importantly, this symbolic shift occurs in heterosexual space. This section briefly summarizes the discourse (particularly the feminist discourse) around the phallus in order to address the conceptual possibilities of a female phallic identity and its participation in the dominant/submissive relations of heterosexual logic.

Culturally, the penis is synonymous to the phallus, “the imaginary symbol which represents male power—economic, social, political, and cultural as well as the sexual” (Wilton 38). The penis has been the primary phallic symbol in many different cultures throughout time, from Ancient Greece to Early Christianity to modern times. This seemingly ahistorical, cross-cultural quality of the penis/phallus relationship is one of the reasons why, today, most people, including many feminists, assume that the penis is the phallus, that is, the penis is power personified.

Contemporary Western society perpetuates the linguistic conflation through several interconnected discourses, establishing the conceptual hegemony. Freudian influenced psychoanalytic theories are usually the first example to come to mind because of the way the anatomical organ is so centrally situated. The penis (and its lack) is the organ whose presence (or its absence) begins the “normal” progression of the Oedipal complex. The boy, recognizing his mother’s apparent lack of a penis, learns to differentiate himself from her. In other words, he begins to learn his masculinity as
opposite of his mother who now is the representative figure of all women. Other Freudian penile-centered theories include castration anxiety, fetishism, the Electra complex and its associated “penis envy.”

Cultural feminists in the 70s and 80s recognized the way in which the penis, supported by psychoanalytic theory and historical symbolic association, clearly symbolized phallic power. And most importantly, the penis/phallus conflation explained the dominant ideology’s construction of male sexuality and masculinity as intense, penetrating, and rational. “By making the penis the linchpin of human sexuality…Freud created men as ‘normal’ and women as ‘other,’ thereby relegating femininity to an eternal second best in relation to the supremacy of masculinity as symbolized by the phallus” (Ashton 161). The symbolic association read into Freudian theories crystallized the feminist disavowal of the penis/phallus, including its associated receptacle—the vagina—as both symbolic and literal weapons of male violence, the epitome of patriarchy.

In her analysis of the film Safe As Desire, Mary Conway explains that this feminist point of view grew out of cultural and lesbian-feminist analysis, such as Adrienne Rich’s “Compulsory Heterosexuality,” “with remarkably little dissent,” thus developing an anti-penetrative feminist standpoint (143). On one hand, the argument against penetration was designed to increase heterosexual women’s sexual pleasure (Conway 143). This line of attack was fueled by the “discovery” of the clitoris’ superior sensitivity and its efficiency at achieving female orgasm. “Vaginal orgasms” were at best rendered less satisfying than “clitoral orgasms” or, at worst, an impossibility. So on one level the anti-penetration position was a reaction to psychiatry and medicine’s focus on
the penis—it attempted to shift attention away from the penis (and its receptacle—the vagina) and onto women’s sexually “powerful” organ, the clitoris.

Yet as Conway also points out, anti-penetration logic operated on a deeper level than simply giving voice to women’s sexual marginalization.

[The] critique of phallocentrism and patriarchy involved denying wherever possible the exercise of phallic power; denying penetration was equated with a denial of phallic power. This denial relied, of course, upon a conflation of phallus/penis, a maneuver simple in its execution, but complex in its practical discursive effects. (Conway 143)

Conway’s point is that anti-penetration logic assumes that the penis is the phallus and therefore works within patriarchal logic. By denying penetration it attempts to work outside of the power binary, but by “simply reversing the terms of the debate (penetration as unnatural replaces penetration as natural), the argument reinscribed and reified the real target: the role of gender inequality in circumscribing women’s sexual pleasure” (Conway 146). In other words, anti-penetration critiques serve to marginalize and repress women’s sexuality.

Most obviously, the anti-penetration analysis presents a definite problem for heterosexual women considering they would have to avoid penetration and ignore the penis. Carol Smart’s article “Collusion, Collaboration and Confession: On Moving Beyond the Heterosexuality Debates” outlines how the early lesbian and radical feminist analyses of heterosexuality turned to anti-penetration positions (in which Marxist feminist analysis is included because their concept of patriarchal capitalism assumes the same causal line between heterosexual normativity and structural gender oppression) and therefore divided the feminist movement between heterossexuals and lesbians (Smart 170). Smart points out that she, Wendy Hollway, and others have explained that in this
theoretical climate, the “only legitimate voice for heterosexual feminists has been the
voice of suffering,” “the pains and problems of heterosexuality” (170).\(^4\) Hollway has
attempted to move beyond these debates by focusing on the pleasures of heterosexuality,
however, “she was in turn criticized for apparently forgetting the structural inequalities
which frame the heterosexual act (170).

Although Smart frames the ramifications of anti-penetration feminism as a
division between radical feminists (who ignore or repress the positive aspects of
heterosexuality and penetration) and heterosexual feminists (who are “blind” to “systems
of sexual exploitation and abuse”), Tamsin Wilton’s discussion of the “Lesbian Sex
Police” illuminates how anti-penetration logic has divided lesbians as well (Smart 170;
Wilton 9). Wilton complains that lesbians live their sex lives in the shadow of the
“Lesbian Sex Police,” a mostly mythical group that enforces the no-dildo standard
(Wilton 7). She notes that, “[f]or lesbians, faced with a wider society which refuses to
recognize our existence, or which is directly hostile, to lose the support of our local
lesbian community can be devastating” (Wilton 7). So although the Lesbian Sex Police
have no real institutional authority, their opinions are powerful enough within the lesbian
community to control who is and is not accepted. As noted earlier, my experience trying

\(^4\) For example, Linda Lovelace’s tragic story of abuse in the sex industry is more commonly referred to
than Nina Hartley’s polar opposite account.
to sell sex toys to the lesbian community reveals the continuing presence of the “Lesbian Sex Police.” Many lesbians, of all ages, say that “they do not know how they feel about dildos” and thus stay away from them altogether. When I discuss their fears with them, they say that they thought using a dildo would indicate a (repressed) desire for heterosexual sex and thus render them less of a lesbian.

Critiques of male phallic power do not necessarily have to lead to declaring penetration anti-feminist. In fact, doing so actually perpetuates patriarchal ideology as it confirms that the penis is the phallus, and therefore that men are “naturally” superior. Postmodern analysis of gender, already mentioned, illuminates that dildos actually destabilize the linguistic penis/phallus conflation. Tamsin Wilton even suggests that since penises come attached to male people and demonstrate a troublesome tendency to resist both the burden of phallic power (they may become soft and flaccid at the most inconvenient moments) and the imposition of disciplinary power (they are not easily controlled or directed by their ‘owner’), it is not hard to see that dildos may be perceived as superior (200).

The phallus is symbolized by, but not interchangeable with, the penis; therefore, dildos can serve as a representational tool emphasizing that phallic power is not something only men can have (if they ever really had it).

Besides allowing women to experience phallic power, the dildo can release men from the pressure to maintain their phallic authority at all times. Discussing the ways in

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5 I would argue that heterosexuals also have a “heterosexual sex police.” For example, the common concern voiced by straight women is that they fear the dildo will “threaten” their male partner’s feelings about his penis. In either case, penetration is defined as a male domain, thus “policing” occurs to uphold the primacy of the penis’ phallic power—an organ only men have.
which notions of masculine sexual power actually limits and restricts men as well as women, Lynn Segal quotes David Widgery: “women’s liberation allows the possibility of man discovering his own femininity, anality, and the memories of sex before puberty, almost before birth” (Segal 256). In fact, many studies—contrary to the cultural image of masculinity as active, penetrating, aggressive, etc.—show that men actually often desire to be “sexually passive” (Segal 257). Dildos offer men and women a tool through which to experience a variety of different sexual roles, apart from any biological imperative.

Although dildos may disrupt the penis/phallus relationship and offer men and women more sexual freedom, dildos can, in another sense, uphold patriarchal sexual relations. For example, *BOB 2* features many scenes in which men are degraded by phallic women who are able to occupy the penetrating role primarily through the use of a dildo, which symbolically represents the phallus. The explicitly “violent” representations and the dildos emphasize their roles in eroticizing power differences—dominance/submission, penetrating/penetrated. For example, the last vignette features Chloe—the only professional porn actress in the film—spitting on the anus of her “surfer” boyfriend before she penetrates him, digitally and with a dildo. The “degrading” behavior and speech (Chloe is also a pro at “dirty talk”) serve as “foreplay” within the scene’s narrative—it is what makes Chloe “erect” since after analingus, she straps on her dildo and harness.

Considering the critiques of “heterosexual” desire, or eroticized power difference outlined above, it is clear that *BOB 2*’s “feminist” status is problematized—despite the fact dildos could, at least theoretically, loosen sexual gender norms. As already noted,
feminist critics maintain that relationships characterized by non-mutuality and inequality replicate patriarchal relations and the very real power difference between the sexes in the wider society, thus “[f]eminism rejects unequal sexual and love relationships” (Russell 177, quoted in Hopkins 122). Heterosexuality, characterized by penetration, exemplifies the power men hold and exercise over women. Therefore, to determine if their analysis—that “one of the primary goals of feminists [is] to articulate, and then eradicate, the model of dominance and submission upon which so much of human behavior in patriarchal society is based”—is still valid in this contemporary context, it is necessary to re-evaluate the term “power” (Hopkins 116).

Postmodern/Poststructuralist analyses of power present a different picture about how power really operates in society and on the micro-level of individual relationships. Influenced by Foucault, Davina Cooper argues for a relational model of power which emphasizes the “polysemic nature of power” (26). In Cooper’s model, power is more fluid than the binary dominant/submission model of power outlined above. Relational models acknowledge that neither domination nor submission are ever “total,” and that due to an individual’s multiple subject positions, one can both have power and be powerless—sometimes at the same time. Fantasy and role-play engage with such shifting power dynamics. For example, in the BOB 2 "pony" scene the man, rigged in a horse harness (blinders and all), has a butt plug with a “real” horsetail attached. His female partner verbally degrades him as she rides on his back, spanking him periodically with a riding crop. And as if to emphasize the need to stop the fantasy play of dominant/submissive roles in this situation, the scene ends with neither partner in post-orgasmic bliss. Although he clearly occupies the submissive sex role, the second he
expresses pain or discomfort and breaks the scene, the partner removes the dildo. In one sense, the male “pony” partner had no power—neither to talk back to his partner nor to fight back physically as he is restrained; however, in another context he does have the power to stop the scene. In fact, many SM practitioners insist that the bottom “rules” the scene or role-play, despite the fact they are in vulnerable and sometimes expressly dangerous submissive positions in the scene.

Another example of sexual behavior that simply falls outside the “power as repressive model” in which there is always a clear dominant or submissive position, is when a double dildo is used for penetrative sex—whether it is used in a heterosexual pairing (as in the three-way scene in BOB 2) or between two women. In these instances both partners are penetrated, and further, one of the partners simultaneously occupies the penetrated and penetrator position. There is no obvious “dominant” or “submissive” role, despite the use of the characteristic “tool”—the dildo—that carries out such relations. The relational model can incorporate such power abnormalities because it emphasizes “resistance” and the agency individuals do have.6 The repressive model of power often represents the submissive position as “victim,” devoid of any agency by men’s dominance of economic and social resources.

The postmodern relational model of power is helpful to this discussion of BOB 2 because it makes clear that critics who point to dominant/submissive sex roles are employing an outmoded definition of power. Patrick Hopkins raises a similar point in his discussion of lesbian SM. He points out that traditional feminist critiques of the practice
assume clear-cut dominant and submissive positions, emphasizing the powerlessness of the submissive role. Even SM defenders’ counter-claims—that the practice is consensual—are rendered false by this binary logic since “wanting or consenting to domination and humiliation does not make it nonoppressive. It merely demonstrates how deep and profound the oppression is” (Diana Russell, quoted in Hopkins, 119). In other words, consenters have been so indoctrinated in patriarchal gender norms that true “consenting” to an SM scene is simply impossible. Consent implies the freedom to make choices, and in a patriarchal society, women are given only the choice to submit.

Hopkins critiques these claims by arguing that SM does not replicate dominant/submissive power relations, it simulates them and thus disrupts the binary logic.

Simulation implies that SM selectively replays surface patriarchal behaviors onto a different contextual field...SMists do not kidnap, they do capture and bondage scenes. The use of the term “scenes” exposes a critical, central aspect of SM culture. SM is constructed as performance, as a staging, a production, a simulation in which participants are writers, producers, directors, actors, and audience...In real rapes, the victim is not a participant. She is not a subject (Hopkins 123).

Hopkins emphasizes the way in which submissives or “bottoms” do in fact have agency in SM interactions. With the relational model of power we can see how both positions can be occupied at the same time, but Hopkin’s differentiation between violence and “simulated violence” is crucial. Even if we accept that “real” violence may not occur, it still seems as if enjoying play violence means an attraction for the real thing. However,

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6 Cooper does point out, repeatedly, that the exercise of power must be intentional in order for it to count as resistance—otherwise we do run the risk of diffusing the concept of power and erasing the way one’s ability to excursive power is dependent on one’s social position and resources.
Hopkins argues that since “simulated violence” and “real violence” are different, no simple relation exists between the two. Using the interesting example of a roller coaster ride, he points out that people may enjoy the simulation of a life-risking experience, but that does not mean they really do want to risk their lives (125). The simulation itself is the desired behavior—“one can lust after a scene;” therefore, SM scenes like those portrayed in BOB 2 do not replicate heterosexual, patriarchal sexual relations, they simulate them. “In fact, SM scenes gut the behaviors they simulate of their violent, patriarchal, defining features” (Hopkins 124, emphasis mine).

Hopkins’ analysis emphasizes the agency of SM participants, arguing that they can see and experience the difference between “real violence” and “simulated violence.” SMers are active participants, they are subjects, they can re-interpret dominant and submissive power relations. This parallels Danae Clark’s essay “Commodity Lesbian,” which looks at the increased marketing aimed at lesbian consumers. To investigate the relationship between lesbians and the market, Clark theorizes the lesbian consumer as lesbian spectator. Theories in contemporary film theory have shifted from the spectator as passive recipient of the dominant discourse, to the spectator as active interpreter. Clark suggests that lesbians (can) negotiate what they see in advertising and that it is wrong to theorize consumers as passive objects. For example, Clark discusses “gay window advertising,” which are ads that infer gay consumers, but do not explicitly target gay consumers. In other words, these ads could be read as “straight” or “gay,” depending on the audience. Clark asserts that lesbians can and do derive pleasure (and even validation and an increased sense of “community”) out of this type of advertising. In this sense, Clark sees the increased marketing to lesbians as a positive phenomenon. Clark’s
analysis allows us to see audiences as active participants, negotiating what they derive from the representation, much the same way Hopkins theorizes SM practitioners as active interpreters of dominant/submissive relations.

Legitimizing role-play and fantasy, and emphasizing the spectator’s or participant’s agency in such interactions, allows spaces in which power can be renegotiated and “worked through” and offers a diversity of gender/sex positions. Yet, such a space may become particularly problematic when play scenes include racial iconography. All the actors in *BOB 2* are white; however, dildos that may signify African American penises are used in two scenes. The “whore” in the “piggy cop” scene uses a brown, realistic dildo. And although perhaps less representational, the “mistress” in the “pony scene” uses a jet black, realistic dildo. Although neither scene’s plot seems to explicitly employ racialized themes (i.e. the actors’ never talk about the color of the dildos), the iconography does reference the racist myth that African American men have unusually large penises.

*BOB 2*’s lack of racial diversity in its cast can in part be explained—though not rationalized—by the strained racial politics that has not only characterized the feminist movement, but the gay and lesbian movement as well. GLBT organizations are constantly trying, usually unsuccessfully, to include outreach to minority communities. In essence, despite decades of activism, both the GLBT movement and the feminist movement remain racially segregated. Rednour and Strano are long-time GLBT community activists in San Francisco, and the team actually recruits the majority of their
actors from this community; therefore, it is certainly not surprising that the film ends up mirroring the community’s “whiteness.” Nevertheless, it is problematic that two of the white actresses are portrayed using “Black” dildos.

Like African American women’s genitals, African American men’s penises have been the subject of hypersexual conflations. And indeed, the racist superstition that African American men have abnormally large penises maintains its cultural currency even today. For example, almost every mainstream sex toy manufacturer catalog I open has at least a few dildos marketed around the myth—some are even labeled “Big Black Dick!” Therefore, it is easy to quickly label the film’s use of black dildos as symptomatic of this racist myth.

Yet it is important to note that S.I.R. Video exclusively used dildos made by the women-owned and operated company Vixen Creations, who manufactures the most popular line of silicone dildos on the market. Significantly, the company is given several “promos” within the film. Carol Queen talks about their innovative “Nexus” and “Bobbie Sue” dildos in her “educational threesome,” and the company is given an extensive plug at the end of the film. Because of my involvement in the sex toy industry, I know that Vixen and the companies associated with the San Francisco community they are a part of are particularly sensitive to the issues surrounding race and dildos. Vixen has attempted to counteract the prevalence of “big black dick” dildos by explicitly not joining the mainstream sex toy manufacturer ranks—they do not make or market black dildos exclusively in larger sizes. Nevertheless, consumers can buy their larger dildos in

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7 Perhaps recognizing the “whiteness” of their films, Rednour and Strano have included more racial minorities in their subsequent films Hard Love & How To Fuck in High Heels and Sugar High Glitter City.
jet black or chocolate colors, and as witnessed in the film, these colors are popular choices. So although the sex toy industry politics behind the film do not rationalize the film’s use of black dildos, it does separate the film from the mainstream pornography and sex toy industry’s much more explicitly racist usage of the image.

Yet the film’s use of the black dildos does signify, perhaps unconsciously, the fetishization of black penises. And as noted earlier, the play space opened in SM and fantasy seems to legitimize playing with racial signifiers. In this is the case then, I believe it is important to analyze how the film plays with racial iconography. For example, in the porn classic Behind the Green Door (1978) a young white woman is kidnapped and taken to a sex club where various acts are performed on her for the club’s audience. The second scene in the film uses an African American man, dressed in white tights with the groin cut out to emphasize his large penis. His character is over-coded with racist imagery. For example, he wears an animal tooth necklace, grunts instead of talks, and walks hunched over to signify his “animalistic” nature. Further, the music drastically shifts to a “tribal” beat as he emerges from “behind the green door” to ravage the woman. Obviously this representation uses racial signifiers only to uphold and enforce stereotypes. Alternatively, the “piggy cop” in BOB 2 is perhaps signifying the prevalence of police violence and racial profiling because the “whore” tells the “cop” bottom: “you’ve been making whores suck your cock for all these years, now it’s time to turn the tables.” Therefore, the scene can be read as play “revenge” for (white) police violence against African Americans. The remaining section of the scene, and the entire “pony scene,” leaves race unspoken, but significantly there does not seem to be any obvious reference to the use of black dildos. Although the way in which race plays a
structuring absence to these two scenes is problematic, I believe the way in which the
*BOB 2* employs black dildos is significantly less problematic than the mainstream
representations of race and sexuality.

After situating *BOB 2* among the feminist discourses—on both sides of the
pornography (and penetration and SM) debates—it is important to turn to a close reading
of the film. As I have noted, the plot of the film and many of the visual motifs do in fact
seem to imitate and reinforce patriarchal notions of masculinity and femininity, but there
are moments in the film that seem to resist simple replication or that openly critique the
dominant understandings of gender and/or the phallus. The plot or themes of the film—
male anal pleasure and female phallic power—can also be seen as more than mere
reversal when the chasm between the sexual orientation of the actors and the behaviors
portrayed is considered.

**Textual Contestation**

A close look at the structure of the film suggests that the images of eroticized
violence and degradation are mediated. The film is divided into five sex scenes which
are intersected with staged “interviews” with customers in a sex shop raving about the
*BOB* series. The two scenes which feature the most “violent” representations
(chronologically, scenes two and three) are literally sandwiched between softer, less
aggressive scenes. Additionally, the mock interviews and the fourth scene, featuring sex
advice from Carol Queen, emphasize the role of fantasy and safe role-play. For example,
between the “piggy cop” and “pony” scenes, one couple interviewed says they were happy to learn how to have pain-free anal sex by watching the original BOB, and a second couple talk about how BOB is about making fantasy and role play acceptable for heterosexual couples to explore. Significantly, the actors in the five vignetted all show up in the interview scenes. We see them discussing the toys they will buy and use in the film. These appearances in the store setting, coupled with the comments made in the interviews serve as reminders to viewers that the sex scenes before and after these “interviews” are negotiated fantasies being played out between consenting adults in a loving relationship.

This emphasis on legitimizing SM, role-play, and other fantasy sex play is not surprising considering that Shar Rednour and Jackie Strano are long time sex activists. Liberating sexual behaviors that have been marginalized, by both the mainstream and by feminism, has been on the agenda of sex activists for decades. Extending this “sex positive” message to the mainstream—heterosexual couples across the US—is the ultimate prize, yet even this effort has been met with some unusual criticism. In an article called “Rethinking Kink,” Danya Ruttenberg points out that the “popularization of perversity has largely been through its flashiest bits…and the true substance of the stuff has been left in the dust” (par. 3). The article details sex activists’ reservations over the way marginalized sexual activities have been marketed to the mainstream. For example,

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8 Interestingly, this couple is a white gay male couple. I believe their inclusion testifies to the film’s refusal to uphold any one sexual behavior or orientation as “superior” in this film. Further, their inclusion specifically tells heterosexual audiences that contrary to popular stereotypes, gay men are not “experts” on anal sex.
S/M and role-play take a lot of “work” before they can be practiced safely and pleasurably. Partners must communicate with each other about their boundaries, what makes them comfortable, etc. The mantra of the S/M community—“safe, sane, and consensual”—highlights this need to communicate and set boundaries. During these discussions a “stop word” is usually agreed upon, so that the fantasy play can be broken anytime the “bottom” desires. Parties who desire to practice bondage should know how to tie a knot that is easy to release in case of an emergency. These precautions (and more) ensure that the experience will not compromise anyone’s safety—emotionally or physically. Unfortunately, as Ruttenburg makes clear, this play “work” is not what is being fed into the mainstream.

It is important to remember here that *BOB 2* is the sequel and was explicitly made for those who liked the first *BOB*, but wanted more “action” (i.e. sex scenes). The original *BOB* was more like an instructional, “how-to” film than a fictional porno, therefore, *BOB 2*’s tag line reads “more rockin’, less talkin’.” The absence of instructions for anal sex, role-play, and S/M can be attributed then to the fact that this information can be found in *BOB*, and in fact, Rednour’s voice-over at the beginning of the film tells viewers new to male anal sex to view the original *BOB* for more instructions. So although *BOB 2*’s representations of violence seem at first to be susceptible to criticisms waged by both the anti-porn feminists and the sex activists, the fact that it is a sequel to the instructional video, Rednour’s “warning,” and the inserted mock interviews buffer the film.

The individual scenes of the film can be analyzed using Rupp, Taylor and Gamson’s work on the political efficacy of drag performances. In the content analysis
part of their framework, Rupp, Taylor and Gamson categorize each performance according to its level of “contestation,” which they define as “the extent to which the symbols, identities, and discourse of a cultural performance subvert rather than maintain dominant relations of power” (20). When the male performers simply portray femininity without critiquing it, the performance is tagged as “identification” (Rupp, Taylor and Gamson 21). Performances which adopt femininity, but openly critique, mock, or reject the norms associated with it are called “counteridentification” (Rupp, Taylor and Gamson 21-22). Their third category, “disidentification,” includes performances in which “the performers appropriate dominant gender and sexual categories and practices, neither rejecting them nor embracing them but using the fact that femininity and heterosexuality are being performed by gay men to construct a hybrid and more fluid model of gender and sexuality” (22).

The first scene features a white, working-class couple. “Topper Felix,” dressed as a mechanic, comes home carrying a six pack of beer and asks “Daphne” “Where’s Dinner?” Daphne is sitting in a pink beanbag on the floor below Felix, dressed only in a leopard print bra and underwear and an unbuttoned, button-down shirt. The long shot, with Felix facing Daphne, slightly blocks the camera’s view of Daphne as she hangs up the pink, fluffy phone. In this shot Felix is obviously the dominant figure and the performance seems to start as “identification” as Felix and Daphne are constructed in their proper, class inflected gender roles and behaviors. Felix is in the foreground of the frame, higher than Daphne, and his gaze on her is emphasized by his downward glance. After a quick medium side view of the couple kissing, there is another cut to a shot that mirrors the previous long shot. Now we see a close-up of Felix looking up as the camera
pans out to the long shot with Daphne in the foreground, standing above Felix, gazing down at him. The repetition of these opening shots suggests not only the reversal of gender roles, but the apparent ease in which these roles can be switched, even by a couple that seems to typify heterosexuality.

This pattern of emphasizing the proper gender behavior and then reversing it continues throughout this scene. For example, Felix penetrates Daphne first. Yet, the shots used and the dialogue between the couple during both types of penetrative sex are almost identical, which seems to suggest a parallel between penis/vagina and dildo/anus penetration. During both types of penetrative sex, close-ups and medium-shots fragment the genitals. Likewise, the active partner in both configurations asks “do you like getting fucked?” to emphasize the dominant nature of their current behavior. By emphasizing the similarities, the reversals become more than mere imitation, they create changeable positions of desire. By adopting the traditional notions of heterosexual gender norms and behaviors, but reversing them throughout, I suggest this scene highlights the constructed nature of gender and its mutability as the male and female partners pleasurably perform both genders. The trope of the working class couple as the epitome of heterosexuality is employed to imply that all couples—even the most “stereotypical”—can and do enjoy behaviors that fall outside socially sanctioned roles.

Although the first scene seems to be characterized by “counteridentification,” there is also a moment in which disidentification seems be the more appropriate categorization. When Daphne first straps on the dildo, the space of the medium shot is split down the middle. On one side Daphne’s dildo is shown, and on the other is Felix’s erect penis. Felix touches both “phalluses” and Daphne proclaims how good that feels.
It is as if Daphne can literally feel Felix’s hand through the dildo, as if the silicone object is really an extension of her own body or a “real” penis. This representation occurs repeatedly throughout the entire film. For example, Carol Queen has multiple orgasms while penetrating her male partner in her “instructional three way” scene. These orgasms are even foreshadowed in the mock interview with Dr. Queen just before her scene.

Referring to the original *BOB* the interviewer tells Dr. Queen, “it’s your multiple orgasms as you fuck your partner that people remember the most… are we going to see more of that in the sequel?” Again, the dildo is fully incorporated as a female phallus, an extension of her own genitalia. Such a representation neither fully embraces nor rejects dominant sexual scripts; therefore, I argue that these moments characterize disidentification as an entirely new erotic position is created. Dr. Queen and Daphne do not merely act out the active, masculine position; they project their erotic imaginations onto the dildos to truly embody female phallic power. This is at least partially created because of the dildo, which opens up new possibilities once heterosexual pleasure is less focused on the male penis.

The second and third vignettes, the “piggy cop” and “pony” scenes already mentioned, appear to be, staying strictly to Rupp and Taylor’s framework, identification. The performers play out dominant/submissive sexual relations, seemingly embracing non-mutual relationships. However, using Hopkins’ analysis of SM relationships, it is possible to “rescue” these scenes and read them as simulations, not replications, of dominant/submissive gender roles. The actors are playing out and receiving pleasure from active re-negotiations of power differences—they are not victimized or violated.
Further, using Clark, viewers of the film can actively interpret the scenes as re-configurations, promoting the possibility of shifting power in relationships. Considering the film’s overall structure, this reading is further validated since the structure encourages the role-play scenes to be read as negotiated and pleasurable play between consenting adults—play that actually increases the partners’ awareness of each other’s desires and pleasures. If simulation opens up this new interpretative space, these scenes can also be considered examples of “disidentification.”

The fourth scene of the film—the educational three way featuring two women and a submissive male—also has moments that characterize “disidentification” such as Carol Queen’s ability to “feel” through the dildo. The entire set-up of this scene—a three-way—also could be seen as disidentification. Three-ways are not unique to mainstream pornography, particularly those that involve two women and one man; however, these narratives are usually about the guy’s pleasure of having two women at once. In BOB 2 the three-way offers multiple roles for the participants. Although the male is the submissive—to both women—throughout the scene, the women’s roles are constantly shifting. For example, the scene starts with Dr. Queen penetrating the woman. Later Carol and her female partner both penetrate the man. The positions shift not according to gender, but according to everyone’s desires and needs in the scene; therefore, offering an example of a sexual interaction that has a number of possibilities.

Like the first scene with the working class couple, BOB 2 returns to a more traditional rendering of heterosexual relations for the finale. Again the pattern of easily reversible gender roles is emphasized—Chloe penetrates her male lover, but is also penetrated by him later in the scene. This is especially significant for mainstream
viewers who are likely to recognize Chloe (as noted earlier, she is the only professional porn actress in the film), who is “famous” for doing anal penetration scenes. In mainstream porn she is always the recipient; therefore, her role as penetrator in the film has a special resonance. Further, “disidentification” is evident in the dialog of the couple. Now that he knows how pleasurable giving oral sex is, the male actor expresses jealousy when Chloe gives him oral sex. Similarly, Chloe remarks how good it feels for him to perform oral sex on her “phallus.”

The style of filming for all the scenes differs very little from conventional pornography. Close-ups of genitals or other body parts fragment and objectify, and the focus on explicitness—including “money shots”—matches the aesthetics of mainstream porn. Even some of the scenarios seem to reference mainstream porn. For example, in the educational three-way, both women don dildos and penetrate their male partner orally. The shot, taken from above and forming a visual triangle (two dildos and one receptacle), looks like a scene taken straight from mainstream porn. Dr. Queen says at one point, “Sometimes there is just not enough dick in the world” as if to parody the insecure male viewer’s response to such a scene as validating women’s uncontrollable need for penetration. The fact that the male is the receiver and the “dicks” are dildos harnessed to women disrupts this male fantasy. Another example of traditional techniques that are tweaked in the film is shot duration. In mainstream porn the camera lingers on female bodies, but in BOB 2 the duration of shots are much more equally distributed. Female bodies do receive this typical treatment; however, male bodies are also fetishized by lingering shots that objectify their bodies and show their facial responses for viewer consumption.
Considering the film’s target audience—the mainstream couples market—it is not surprising that Strano and Rednour employ many of the visual techniques and motifs of conventional pornography. Yet, as the textual analysis shows, the representations of sexual desires and behaviors actually seem to critique dominant heterosexual sex scripts; therefore, I argue that *BOB 2* is an example of feminist alternative cinema which uses the techniques of Classical Hollywood Cinema in order to problematize or draw attention to normative scripts, or to represent marginalized identities. In other words, they use the tools of CHC, but to a different, more “feminist” end.

Although *BOB 2*’s “feminist status” is problematized by the anti-pornography, anti-penetration ideology that still operates in contemporary society, a textual analysis of the film shows how these critiques do not clearly apply. Postmodern analyses of gender performances and phallic (power) instability offer a more thorough and nuanced account of the film’s plot and narration. I now turn to a very different discussion of the film in chapter two in order to determine whether or not the film is a successful feminist tool for social change.
CHAPTER 2

BOB 2 AS POLITICAL TOOL

Besides complicating an entrenched notion of pornography and offering new perspectives on sexually explicit representations, the previous textual analysis of BOB 2 does little else to advance the feminist movement. BOB 2’s practical use as “tool” for the feminist movement is still questionable on a number of levels. For example, just because BOB 2 challenges the dominant heterosexual script does not mean couples will change their sex lives and/or reconsider the power dynamics of their relationships. Even if couples do adopt—in the private sphere—the polymorphous gender positions portrayed in the film, how does this affect the broader society? Can representations and performances, particularly those consumed privately, cause systemic social change? Further, the sex-industry—of which SIR Video, the film, and the distribution outlets are a part of—is explicitly capitalist, a definite break from the “traditional” methods of feminist activism. This chapter takes up these questions of social change by analyzing the social relations that produce, distribute, and consume the film. Such an analysis is crucial because it allows serious consideration of change within capitalism.
Material Myopia

Tracing the history of the field of film studies, Judith Mayne identifies two separate yet intersecting tendencies in 1970s film theory. “Apparatus” theorists seek to demonstrate how the large structures of the cinema operate”; whereas, “textual analysis” theorists focus on the “micro-structures of the film text” (Mayne 18). In other words, “apparatus” theories look at the structures that produce the film and structure spectatorship. “Textual analysis” concentrates on film codes, conventions, and symbols that relay meaning. Despite their obvious difference, both strands of thought were influenced by Althusser’s reconstruction of the “material.”

Althusser’s insistence that various ideologies function in relatively autonomous ways was read as providing a theoretical basis for the argument that individual systems of representation needed to be understood in their own terms; hence, the notion of “materialism” was redefined, now not only as a constant reference to the organization of the means of production in a given culture (the classic Marxist sense of materialism), but also as “material” in the most literal sense, i.e., in the case of cinema, the organization of sounds and images (20).

Althusser’s loosening of ideology from the “constraints” of economic determinants allowed film studies a space to study the sign systems embedded in films, stressing film’s “emblematic quality” (20).

Although post-Althusserian notions of ideology have been influential in Film Studies and feminist theory, Foucauldian-influenced analysis has begun to dominate contemporary feminist theory. Following Foucault’s emphasis on discourses, postmodern feminist theories analyze texts, statements, performances as examples of discourse. Judith Butler’s (1990) concept of performativity and Ann Stoler’s (1995) attention to the way colonial discourses produce subjects are both examples of what Michelle Barrett (1997) refers to as an increased attention to the realm of “words.”
Barrett has mixed feelings about this conceptual shift in feminist theory because it risks belittling the role of “things,” the power of economic and social institutions and structures. Other theorists are critical of postmodern feminist work that only focuses on the enabling power of counter-discourses. These analyses stress the fractures in hegemonic ideology and focus on social “actors” and individual resisters. Although such analyses are perhaps symptomatic of feminist attempts to move away from narratives of victimization, they also run the risk of overstating the power of resistance.

In Profit and Pleasure Rosemary Hennessey acknowledges the feminist attraction to postmodernism and shares postmodern feminists’ distrust of totalizing theories that erase difference and desires to create narratives of women agents; however, she advocates a return to “materialism,” emphasizing the way in which “capitalism bears down on people’s lives” (187). Her concern is with postmodern feminists’ tendency to overemphasize agency and uphold humanist notions of individualism (177); their failure to see how class interests mediate and constrain resistance and to see that sometimes social “totalities” are necessary (26). Yet because Hennessey is also adopting the second wave Marxist feminist goal of a revolutionary overthrow of the capitalist patriarchy, the few examples of agency she does cite are in effect cancelled out as she reminds the reader how such agency is complicit in capitalism. For example, pro-sex feminists are constructed as having the freedom to speak sex, to think and theorize about sexuality and sexual relations. Unburdened by economic constraints, they are able to focus on the

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1 For example, Davina Cooper states: “While I wish to move away from this assumption of inevitable domination, at the same time it is important not to erase issues of domination and inequality from considerations of power” (8).
“frivolous” topic sex; therefore, their liberal rhetoric masks their (white) Western racial and class interests. In this framework, an analysis of a pornographic film is always “suspect” as it articulates the perspective of theorists that are “privileged” and thus “nonrevolutionary.”

Hennessey is only one author in a wave of, primarily, Marxist influenced feminists critical of feminist work that employs this postmodern/poststructuralist treatment of discourse as “distinct” from economic systems and relations. Critics complain that postmodern feminist work suffers from a kind of “material myopia,” and despite years of feminist analyses that stress the limiting effects of material arrangements, they still fail to “see” clearly. Referring to Donna Haraway’s “cyborg manifesto,” Paula Moya argues that “[t]he key theoretical problem here is Haraway’s understanding of identity as an entirely willful construction, as wholly independent of the limiting effects of social location” (132). Haraway’s attention to the political possibilities of the cyborg myth—its symbolic power to disturb boundaries—is problematic to Moya because “people do not live in an entirely abstract or discursive realm” (135). These critics assert that “idealist” theories perpetuate capitalism by obscuring economic and social relations. Further, many share the assumption that “proper” social change is revolutionary. Although I agree that there is a body of feminist work that expresses material myopia, I wish to problematize resorting to “totalizing” theories and the often implicit goal of revolutionary change in Marxist/materialist feminist theory.

Clearly BOB 2’s status as a commodity (i.e. produced for the market) means that it is complicit in capitalism, yet a textual analysis shows that the film relays messages that radically deviate from traditional heterosexual sex scripts, offering a plurality of
gender power positions and simulations. Key here is that the film’s “revolutionary” narrative refuses to adhere to dominant/submissive, penetrating/penetrated binary logic in which the male is always the active participant. Instead, the film highlights the polysemic nature of power—it does not ignore the presence of eroticized power, it just rejects its stability. As Linda Williams states, the “feminist critique of explicit pornography fails, however, precisely in its attack on the literal organ of the penis” (266). Such a move only confirms that phallic power does indeed belong to men simply because they have penises. Similarly, I argue that an inability to see outside the capitalist/non-capitalist binary prevents serious consideration of performances and representations.

J.K. Gibson-Graham state that representations of capitalism as penetrating, systemic, progressive, etc. only serve to uphold capitalism’s dominance, limiting the possibilities of creating alternative economic systems. They construct what they call a “straw man” or a monstrous conglomeration of all the images of capitalism to show how it is continually situated as the “positive” term within binary logic. For example, capitalism is represented as productive, non-capitalism as inefficient. Similarly, Aiwha Ong notes that:

By using a traditional/modernity framework, these feminists view the destruction of ‘traditional customs’ as either a decline of women’s status in a romanticized ‘natural’ economy, or as their liberation by Western economic rationality (111). Although referring to Western feminist constructions of Third World women, Ong is critical of both the liberal feminist approach of bringing modernity to those Others repressed by their indigenous cultures and the Marxist framework that overstates the
power of the capitalist modernity. Both operate within the either/or approach to the capitalist mode of production, and, according to Gibson-Graham, perpetuate hyperbolic views of capitalism.

Applying postmodern and feminist theory to deconstruct the binary of capitalism/non-capitalism, they argue for an “economics of difference.” Gibson-Graham point out that upon further investigation of economic activity various non-capitalist forms emerge as existing co-currently with the capitalist form. All economic forms appropriate surplus labor and distribute it. Capitalist forms appropriate the surplus labor in value (money) form and do not distribute it back to the workers (but they also warn that not all capitalist organizations do this all the time). With this clearer definition it becomes possible to see other forms of economies co-existing. For example, self-employment or co-ops are non-capitalist structures because the appropriation of surplus labor is distributed back to the workers/owners. In light of this fractured concept of “capitalism” and how materialist analysis often supports the fiction of its coherency, Gibson-Graham is critical of feminists and leftists who dismiss all forms of organization, activism, etc. that have “capitalist appearances.”

These examples question whether capitalism is all “bad” and seek to address what kind of change is possible working through capitalist means. Gibson-Graham is following a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between material relations and ideology that is apparent in the primary texts they build from. In Foucault bodies can resist because they are discursively constructed; in Althusser individuals have agency because they are “interpellated”; Gramsci asserts that hegemony works “best” when subjects consent, yet there is resistance in the ongoing (inevitable?) struggle to achieve
consent. And ironically these theorists that work the middle ground, paying attention to both material relations that enable and constrain ideology and ideology “itself,” are perhaps more materialist than the neo-Orthodox Marxist feminists like Hennessey, Moya, Ebert, and others. According to Marxist theory, the proletariat class is created by capitalism; therefore, even for Marx, struggling within the system can be positive.

Noting the postmodern logic of post-Fordist or Late Capitalism, Stuart Hall states:

Marx was one of the earliest people to grasp the revolutionary connection between capitalism and modernity [and] Marx understood the one-sided and distorted character of the modernity and type of modern individual produced by this development...But he did not refuse it. What he argued was that only socialism could complete the revolution of modernity which capitalism had initiated. He hoped ‘to heal the wounds of modernity through a fuller and deeper modernity’ (60-61).

In other words, Hall doubts that even Marx would have rejected the contemporary proliferation and expansion of global capitalism. Marx would be critical, but also fascinated.

Further, this line of questioning invokes early second wave feminists’ doubts about the socialist revolution. For example, Michèle Barrett states in 1980 that “[I]t would be a foolish and doctrinaire stance to deny the possibility of improvement and reform under capitalism” and goes on to stress that the socialist revolution may not improve women’s position, since there is no clear correspondence between patriarchy and capitalism (128). This weariness of socialist aims is also evident in the film Born in Flames. Neo-Marxist feminist rallies for a return to the material silences this early questioning of the “goal” of overthrowing the capitalist patriarchy and of the possibilities working within capitalism can offer.
Linda Scott explains that the popular assumption that feminism has and should continue to be staunchly anti-market is wrought with inherent contradictions. Scott notes that the first and second wave movements—the organizations, politics, and feminist leaders alike—benefited from the marketplace. For example, Elizabeth Cady Stanton made money, and advanced the feminist movement, from the “speaker’s circuit” and even participated in some of the first “celebrity endorsements.” Today, feminists like Gloria Steinem, Kate Millet, Susan Faludi, etc. are intimately involved in marketplace activity through the sale and promotion of their books. bell hooks even uses direct mail techniques to market her materials.

Although market participation does not necessarily equal capitalism (pre-capitalist and socialist economies had/have markets), these particular examples occur in the context of markets fueled by wage labor and capital accumulation. In the first wave this activity was largely unacknowledged because upper-class sensibility connected marketplace activity with the “lower-class” (and many of the feminist leaders of the time were not “lower-class”). The current disdain for market participation seems to in part stem from “straw-man” Marxist critiques of capitalism and the continued “utopian” desire to create society of mutuality and equality. Scott argues that the feminist movement could benefit women “best” by undergoing a paradigm shift. “Market feminism” would move away seeing all capitalist effects as negative, instead uncovering and encouraging the positive affects marketing and capitalism can have on women and the feminist movement. In other words, giving a fresh look at the feminist/capitalist interaction illuminates ambiguities and thus possibilities, instead of seeing only constraint and commodification.
Meika Loe’s ethnography of a feminist sex toy business (called “Toy Box”) takes this “market feminism” approach. Loe argues that “Toy Box’s success today, as a political and profit-making business, lies in what Stone calls America’s inexhaustible sexual marketplace and in Toy Box’s active preservation of feminist political ideals.” (728). Toy Box, in business 22 years at the time of the study, negotiated the constraints of capitalism to become a $6 million dollar success story that adjusted but did not abandon its original pro-sex feminist politics. Loe offers a detailed account of the intersections between ideology and material relations over time, the “daily struggle between profits and politics.” Although Loe believes Toy Box is an example of the political possibilities of organizing within capitalism, she notes several times that “The story of Toy Box is intended to open up dialogue among feminists, especially about the growing relationship between feminism and capitalism and the future of feminist organizing in this arena” (708). She hopes to complicate the negative connotation of “selling out” and encourage work that examines “how the application of feminist theory works, or does not work, in the context of business,” but Loe stops short of the wholesale embrace of capitalist interests (which Scott’s “market feminism” implies) by noting that the ramifications of the commodification of feminism needs to be analyzed. Loe’s article is similar, then, to Alexandra Chasin’s *Selling Out* which examines how the market has “moved” the gay and lesbian movement.

Chasin neither rejects nor embraces working within capitalist frameworks and is therefore able to offer a complex picture of the positive and negative ramifications the market has on glbt politics. Based on her experiences as a movement organizer, Chasin shows how the market has increased glbt visibility, which has in turn helped some glbt
people gain rights. The limits that Chasin defines are not directed towards the movement/market interaction per se, but the platform of identity politics that the movement employs and the market profits off of in the form of target (niche) marketing, corporate sponsorship, etc. Chasin’s and Loe’s analyses reject both the neo-materialist feminist’s automatic distrust of market feminism and Scott’s embrace of it. Polarized responses, Gibson-Graham note, tend to render feminist theory ineffective as the framework recreates the problem. What is most fruitful are analyses that do not assume the effects of capitalist interests from the outset, and further strive to create a balanced treatment of discursive and materialist analysis. Gibson-Graham’s economics of difference breaks the totalizing images of capitalism to allow alternative visions of economic systems to emerge. And although such discursive visions cannot change the economic landscape alone, it can encourage analyses that are not diametrically opposed to capitalism.

This chapter seeks to continue and add to the body of feminist theory that attempts to analyze both material relations and representation in order to analyze feminist social change and representation. Rupp, Taylor, and Gamson’s framework, invoked in chapter one, practices this balanced approach to cultural studies by not only looking at performances, but analyzing the performances’ intent and reception as well. In order to claim that a performance is political, as so many postmodern performance/textual analyses do, Rupp, Taylor and Gamson argue the piece must be intended to articulate a political interest, and, to be effective, the piece must reach and affect audiences, persuading them to side with the political interests expressed. Although Rupp, Taylor
and Gamson specifically create such a framework to address the belief in social
movement theory that traditional activist methods like protests, boycotts, strikes, etc. are
“better” than performances, it also speaks to the feminist divide between “words” and
“things.” Analyzing BOB 2’s intent means addressing both SIR Video’s profit motive and
the film’s production and distribution in the matrix of the capitalist sex-industry, as well
as their political intent and effects. Further, in order for BOB 2 and other texts,
performances, etc. to claim a feminist mission, viewers must “agree” with, or at least be
influenced by, the film’s political vision.

Production and Intentionality

BOB 2 is the first film released by Jackie Strano and Shar Rednour’s company
SIR (Sex, Indulgence, and Rock ‘n’ Roll) Video. Their first film, BOB (coproduced with
Nan Kinney and distributed by Fatale Video), was nominated for “Best Specialty Tape”
at the 1999 Adult Video News (AVN) awards (the most prestigious awards ceremony for
the pornography industry); therefore, the sequel provided “another money-maker” for the
fledgling company. Addressing the decision to make the BOB series Rednour states:

We wanted to start our own company. We wanted to do some dyke porn and
Bend Over Boyfriend [BOB]. We picked BOB to do first because we knew that it
was desperately needed and would make money for us to do the other videos. We
knew that it would sell a lot, but we didn’t know that it would be completely over
the top (interview).

Since the BOB series, SIR has gone on to produce two lesbian feature films and their
business success has continued. The double feature Hard Love and How to Fuck in High
Heels won AVN’s “Best All-Girl Feature” in 2001, and their most recent release, Sugar
High Glitter City, has been met with much fanfare.

2 Influenced by the work of José Munoz.
Strano and Rednour were confident that the *BOB* series would be such a profitable springboard because of their experience as sex educators and their “pro-feminist, pro-sex politics” (Taormino 26). They knew the market was “out there” because of their involvement as worker/owners at Good Vibrations, the “original” pro-sex feminist sex toy company. Strano notes:

> Working on the floor at Good Vibrations, I met so many women who wanted help and advice about how to do their boyfriend or husband up the ass. I helped people over and over, and thought what better way to disseminate the information than a video? (Taormino 31).

The “intent” behind the *BOB* series was then both sex education and money, a combination that has proved effective for Toy Box, Good Vibrations and similar “political” businesses. Yet *BOB* and *BOB 2* are more than just sex education. As I argue, the films also offer a radical shift in the dominant heterosexual sex script. Male receptive anal sex requires a masculine “vulnerability” that is rarely seen in mainstream pornography. When I asked Rednour if she considers *BOB* and *BOB 2* “political” she stated

> Yes, definitely because we think all guys should get penetrated and experience it at least once, even if it ends up not being their thing... And when you make yourself vulnerable and you let somebody come inside you then it’s a personal statement and it also opens up your mind to a lot of other issues in the world... instead of just bulldozing your way through life. (interview).

Strano and Rednour’s work attempts to re-write heterosexual sex scripts, breaking the typical construction of the female partner as passive, penetrated, vulnerable and the male partner as active, penetrating, and aggressive. This obviously references earlier feminist work, such as Andrea Dworkin’s *Intercourse*, on the nature of heterosexual relationships,
but instead of bemoaning women status as victims in heterosexual romance, SIR revises
the binary and offers more possibilities for within heterosexual sex roles.

During our interview, Rednour was acutely aware of how SIR’s work may or may
not fit the “feminist agenda.” As noted earlier, one critique waged against pro-sex
feminist activism is that it fails to address the larger issues—like material relations—that
affect women. Hennessey even asserts that being a pro-sex feminist implies a certain
privileged status since one has the time and resources to choose to address sex and
sexuality over jobs, homelessness, and domestic violence. Speaking of their “goal” to
“change the way people fuck” (Taormino 31) Shar tells me that she knows their approach
“sounds funny to people who are like ‘Well, sex isn’t everything’” (interview). She
responds by saying

“No sex isn’t everything.” We need to get roofs over people’s heads and make
sure they get food and sleep safe at night…But right next to shitting and eating
and sleeping safe at night comes sex…That is the next one on the list when it
comes to taking care of people’s primary needs and people don’t realize that and
they try to shut themselves down and its not going to work—it’s not going to go
away—it’s a human impulse and it is part of our nature so it is part of our spirit
(interview).

Rednour’s recourse to the psychological dimensions of sexuality, the way in which a
healthy sexual self image and sex life can positively affect one’s entire being, is similar to
the rhetoric of the women’s health movement. Yet Rednour is also careful to note other,
more immediate, issues that must be addressed before expecting them to jump on the pro-
sex bandwagon. This awareness problematizes Hennessey’s claim that pro-sex feminism
is bourgeois feminism on several levels. First, SIR’s history as a struggling business does
not reflect Hennessey assumption. The company is not a multi-million dollar “success.”

Further, as Rednour’s statement makes clear, their pro-sex ideology does not preclude
other feminist activist initiatives. And lastly, Hennessey’s statement makes it appear that only middle-and upper-class couples can enjoy the benefits of pro-sex feminism. Yet earlier in the interview Rednour states that male anal sex “is not a specialty thing like getting tied up and getting whipped…you don’t have to go and buy a big whip, you don’t have to go and spend a lot of money…You just need to have clean fingers and a little bit of lube and you can try this at home” (interview). Rednour sorts out the material conditions that are necessary to practice the behaviors displayed on the film to point out that film is not only for bourgeois couples.

Rednour and Strano are not only adamant about changing and improving viewers sex lives, but those of their performers as well. As a feminist pornography production company, SIR strives to empower their actresses and actors as well. Keith Bowers, who plays “Topper Felix” in the first scene of the film, writes: “More than the flattery of having a porn director tell you you’re sexy (and the exhibitionist euphoria that comes with such a project), Daphne and I had a greater mission. We were part of a revolution, of sorts. As Jackie put it, ‘We’re helping change the way people fuck.’” (Bowers par. 6). Bowers and his real-life girlfriend insist that the experience of making the film was both enlightening and personally rewarding. The non-professional actor states that the “atmosphere of openness—and nakedness” made the couple very comfortable, and further, Rednour and Strano’s encouragement to “‘wear it [his belly] with pride’” made overcoming body image issues a breeze (Bowers par. 9; Bowers par. 20). Therefore, Rednour and Strano’s intent to create a sex-positive message for both audiences and

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3 Although BOB 2 emphasizes the usage of dildos and harnesses, fingers and tongues are also featured as penetrating tools; therefore, Rednour’s claim that anyone can carry out what they see on screen is true.
performers is evident. The goal was not only to offer new possibilities to audiences, but also to help performers see themselves and their sexual practices in a new light.

It is important to remember here that this intentional goal was achieved through SIR’s interactions in the capitalist marketplace. Whereas entry into the capitalist arena is still difficult for women and minority businesses owners there are certain economic shifts that have made it easier for political businesses to succeed. For example, affordable and accessible technology is one way material conditions are making it easier for independent filmmakers, further breaking the neo-Orthodox Marxist assumption that all capitalist interactions are inherently constraining. Rednour notes that being able to shoot on “mini-dv” (handheld digital video cameras) make their company possible. Mini-dv is much cheaper than beta-cam, plus software programs, like Avid (an editing program), can save the company thousands of dollars⁴. Technology has made it easier to control the means of production, allowing activists like Strano and Rednour to compete effectively with little money and lots of feminist goals.

Reception and Collective Identity

Yet the larger question of how SIR’s BOB series is received remains. If the intent behind the film is indeed politically oriented, does the audience view it as such? Or is it consumed as yet another fetish or fad in the booming porn industry; therefore, making the film a capitalist tool instead of a feminist tool. This section seeks to answer these

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However, dildos and harnesses are shown more often than naturally free alternatives. Since the average silicone dildo and harness rig costs $120, this method of penetration is certainly not available for everyone. ⁴ Affordable and accessible technology has also been integral to the success of my own company. For example, Internet retailing allowed my company to start with almost no overhead (“brick and mortar” retail companies have expenses like rent, utilities, etc. making it extremely hard for new, start-up companies to maintain).
questions by looking at two “audiences” — film viewers and the mainstream porn industry. One of the most common threads to the numerous interviews Rednour and Strano have done is how their company functions within the mainstream porn industry. The San Francisco Bay Guardian credits Rednour and Strano for being “the first members of the San Francisco dyke underground to bring real lesbian sex into the porn mainstream” (Tea 26). Playboy even notes that SIR Video corrects “foolish hetero thinking” making “lesbian sex films that celebrate the true face of dykery” (Morgantown par. 1). The pornography industry mirrors Hollywood’s sexual division of labor: men typically make the films; women are the eye-candy for the expected male viewer. Although the “couples” market has prompted the industry to start making films that reflect both the female and male viewers desires, it is still uncommon for a company to reach the levels of success with political porn as SIR Video has. As with all market driven industries, what really has the power to motivate the porn industry is the potential for profits. I argue that Rednour and Strano’s awareness of their industry’s true interests is what allows them to successfully negotiated their political agenda.

In her study of three lesbian academics, Susan Talburt takes a similar perspective when looking at the intersection between political articulations and institutional demands. Talburt is interested in how individuals and groups who would be put in their place by institutions use their place to disrupt the logic of the institutional space. This is similar to Clarke’s assertion that lesbian consumers are active spectators—they negotiate and interpret what advertisements present to them. Strano and Rednour operate in a parallel space between capitalist constraints and demands and their own visions and goals. It is important to keep in mind that SIR’s affect on the industry is not due to some kind of
feminist enlightenment. SIR is able to shift the industry’s focus by negotiating and
exploiting the industry’s profit motives. When asked how SIR effects the mainstream,
Rednour states,

I definitely think that the mainstream industry gets bored even with itself...they
are always looking for fresh ideas, fresh blood. And they are always looking for
more edgy stuff to see if it inspires them (interview).

"Inspiration" of course comes from the potential profitability of niche marketing in a
flooded marketplace. Over 11,000 new adult videos hit the market every year (Tea 26).
"Successes" that are powerful enough to shift the industry’s attention are able to stand out
in an industry saturated with formulaic treatments of sexual representation. Rednour
notes that before BOB there were only a handful of very low budget specialty videos on
hetero male receptive anal sex; however, seeing the profitability, the mainstream industry
is now coming out with many films that feature this hetero sex script reversal.

Rednour is also pleased with the way in which their films affect another
population of the pornography industry: the actresses.

A huge amount of them [actresses] are sex radicals...Nina Hartley is not the only
persona that has those kind of [pro-sex feminist] feelings, even though she is the
most vocal...But a huge majority of those gals in LA think the same way that
Nina does and they worship her...So when we won—this isn’t about BOB—but
when we won best all-girl feature for Hard Love and How to Fuck in High
Heels—people that we were competing against—that were our major competition
that we thought were going to win—jumped out of their seats screaming when we
won. Like all the big stars—Gina Fine, Nina Hartley, Chloe—like all those
people at the top of their game, a lot of women that we did not know by name—and
they were so excited that the little renegades won because that is a step for
them too...Maybe they have been trying to tell a director that, maybe they have
been trying to tell someone they wanted to do that but nobody would listen to
them, saying ‘well its not going to sell.’ [But] they can say, ‘well, Jackie and
Shar did it and it sells for them.’ (interview)
Rednour asserts that many of the actresses in the porn industry have pro-sex feminist leanings and suggests that their AVN win opens up a space for actresses to negotiate scenes in which their own desires are reflected. Strano and Rednour utilize their groundbreaking role in the sex industry to not only expand the options for consumers and educate the mainstream public about sexual health and pleasure, but further to help women in the industry articulate their own desires and gain more leverage film’s that reflect feminist interests succeed. Empowering other women in the sex industry is also evident through Strano and Rednour’s obvious support of other women-owned, sexually orientated businesses. At the end of the film, intermixed with BOB 2 bloopers, are five advertisements for different female centered sex shop across North America. Granted this ad space was most likely purchased, but SIR could have sold it to more traditional venues.

Rupp, Taylor and Gamson’s concept of “collective identity” states that a political performance or text must be able to create populations that share the “author(s)” perspective. Clearly the film has impacted the pornography industry, but it is much more difficult to “measure” BOB 2’s effectiveness on porn viewers. Sheer sales figures alone point to the fact that the BOB series is popular, but is it being consumed in a way that alters viewers’ notions of proper sex roles? As Rednour notes in our interview, the popularity of the phrase “bend over boyfriend” may serve as an indicator that the film is in fact attaining its goals and rewriting heterosexual sex scripts. Rednour notes that the phrase has “gotten into the culture’s subconscious” as the phrase is now even used as a descriptive identity in “women seeking...” or “men seeking...” ads in newspapers (interview).
When addressing this issue in interviews, Rednour and Strano also refer to many thankful fan letters they have received. Rednour tells Playboy that “we get fan mail from women who say that they tried scenes from our movies at home and they thank us.”

(Morgantown par. 18). Further, Strano tells *On Our Backs*,

A sweet story is that a couple who saw BOB went and started experimenting with anal sex in their life. They approached us and said, ‘We heard you are casting for BOB 2. You have to know that BOB changed our lives, and we want to be in your movie!’ He is this big burly guy and his girlfriend is this luscious, voluptuous femme. We had to beg, borrow, and steal to find couples for BOB. For BOB 2, we had to turn people away. It was crazy what had happened in just one year (Taormino 31).

Rednour adds:

All the guys in our movies said that getting fucked in the ass taught them to trust the person who’s on the end of the dick that’s going in this very special place. They told us, ‘I know what she feels like when I’m fucking her. I finally understand that I actually could hurt her and it is important to say ‘go slower’ or ‘tilt up’ or ‘tilt down.’ They finally, whole-heartedly, empathetically get it! (Taormino 31).

Viewers that contacted SIR had in fact been positively affected by the film’s pro-sex feminist discourse.

Sex communist Dan Savage’s Internet column, “Savage Love,” even ran an election to pick a term that will be “the commonly accepted slang for a woman fucking a man in the ass with a strap-on dildo” (par. 1). 12,103 people casted votes for one of the three runners: bob (in reference to the film), punt, and peg. Although “bob” lost (“peg” won out with 43% of the votes), the emailed comments highlight the popular desire to create such a term, further, they can serve of examples of the “collective identity” Rupp,
Taylor and Gramson address. On the whole, many of the comments reflect enthusiasm for a “new” sexual practice, embracing the possibilities that the behavior can potentially open up for heterosexual sexual relationships.
CONCLUSION

PRIVATE PLEASURES, PUBLIC POSSIBILITIES

*BOB 2* is similar to feminist alternative narrative cinema which employs the narrative conventions of dominant Hollywood cinema in order to present a more feminist vision. The film’s visual style mirrors mainstream pornography’s focus on genital close-ups and voyeuristic dynamics, yet the plot of *BOB 2* drastically differs from mainstream pornography. Dildos, male receptive anal sex, and role-play are highlighted to encourage a multiplicity of alternatives to dominant heterosexual sex scripts. Further, the film’s visual “explicitness” and emphasis on partner communication help educate viewers about sexual response, anatomy, desire, and relationships.

Clearly the intent of not only *BOB 2*, but all of SIR Video’s films, is to “change the way people fuck.” Rednour and Strano’s political intent to encourage audiences—and performers—to try new sexual scripts is evident in the numerous interviews they have given on their alternative filmmaking practices. And although it is beyond the scope of this thesis to address whether or not such “private pleasures” cause mass social change, it is clear that the film is being consumed by individuals who are “positively” affected by its message. It seems audiences and performers understand that *BOB 2* presents possibilities that step outside of the dominant/submissive, penetrator/penetrated binary
logic of traditional heterosexual sex scripts; and as fan enthusiasm indicates, this message is a welcome change. Further, by feeding off the market’s continuing drive to find new audiences and new material, BOB 2 is able to enter the mainstream market and spread the word on a grand scale. For now, it is significant enough to note that even if mass social change—i.e., that heterosexual gender norms are changing on a mass level—cannot be proven conclusively by analyzing this one film, the possibility of doing so is demonstrated. In fact, the same analogy used by radical feminists to explain the patriarchal structure of sexual relations—that what happens in the bedroom mirrors wider social relations—can be used in the case of BOB 2. Therefore, the numerous thank-you letters to S.I.R video and increased interest in new sexual behaviors and dynamics that loosen sexual gender norms can serve as evidence of a shift in the larger society’s view of “proper” sex roles.

Automatically shying away from the political possibilities of performances and representations dismisses the many possibilities created by “using the Master’s tools.” Considering that Strano and Rednour are able to articulate their feminist, sex-positive message by negotiating the capitalist system, it seems clear that a continued dialog about what it means for feminism to work within capitalism is necessary. Understanding the markets—the ways in which capitalism feeds off of the proliferation of identities in late capitalism—is key to S.I.R. Video’s success; therefore, I argue that instead of dismissing activist methods that have “capitalist appearances,” feminists should instead enthusiastically embark on our own analyses of the contemporary capitalist context. And as Chasin, Loe and Scott note, working within the system does not necessarily equate with abandoning or even diluting feminist agendas. Strano and Rednour were able
to both succeed in the marketplace and in their goal to impact heterosexual sexual relations. The hope of performing such a rigorous analysis on one film is that it will encourage deeper investigations between feminism and the marketplace. Textual analysis is helpful for understanding the film’s discourse; however, by adding a dash more materialism to the analysis, so that the relationship between “words” and “things” becomes clearer, the analysis becomes much more politically significant.
LIST OF REFERENCES


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