

‘Gonzo’ are the Days of the Male Gaze and the Orgasm Gap

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INTRODUCTION: THE ORGASM GAP

Movies and pornography portray sex in an unrealistic way. The patriarchy also conveniently teaches women to put men's needs before their own in all aspects of life, including the sexual realm (Sloan 25). In a world where many people have viewed pornography, and many watch it regularly, it is important to analyze pornography's effects on sexual risk behavior, such as unprotected sex, violence and gender, and sexual well-being (Lim et al.). The nuanced sexual inequality portrayed in pornography contributes to a multi-dimensional gendered disconnect, perpetuating the modern day 'orgasm-gap:' the cultural-sexual phenomenon where straight women are orgasming less often during sex than bisexual or lesbian women, or their male partners. A 2015 Cosmopolitan survey found that 57 percent of women said they usually or always have orgasms during sex, compared to 95 percent of men (Sloan 25). The 'orgasm gap' is often attributed to queer women's better understanding of the clitoris, and men's tendency to equate sex with intercourse (Sloan 25).

Through pornography viewing, specifically by straight males, misconceptions about female pleasure become real-world practice. Some people still advocate for the benefits of pornography, saying porn encourages sexual expression, combats sexual anxiety, provides sexual satisfaction, and cultivates a culture with more open views about sex and sexuality (Lim et al. 4). The oppressive influence of the porn industry are only somewhat assuaged by the advent of ethical porn. Porn not only creates gendered realities, but also responds to and perpetuates ones

from our world — especially given the pervasive and complex intertwining of patriarchy, media, sexuality, and the perversion and commodification of desire in late stage capitalism.

When the world of pornography has been formed for the heterosexual male gaze, the benefits are not shared by all: despite the unprecedented accessibility of pornography, the orgasm gap is still prevalent. Here, pornography will be described as gonzo pornography. Today known as the common POV perspective film style, alongside other stylistic influences, gonzo is the backbone of many normalized and widespread elements of contemporary porn. The viewership of this pornography by heterosexual males contributes to the orgasm gap in a wide variety of ways. **The unprecedented accessibility of gonzo porn leaves adolescents and adults swamped in a world which is catered to the sexual response of the heterosexual man. Differing from historical times, the convenience and intensity of ownership through amateur point-of-view (POV) style de-realizes the female’s sexual pleasure, and feeds the narcissistic male psyche: she is the pleasure-giver, and he the pleasure-receiver.**

Subsequently, gonzo shots pointedly display the female -- her willing subservience and objectification denoted in her eye contact -- bringing patriarchal comfort to the male. Hidden behind the camera, men grip the privilege of their mediocrity in sexual performance to maintain masculinity amidst inadequacy. “Macho bias” denies straight women of pleasure, as her identity exists and is *done to her* in the straight man’s mind (Bordo 186). The inequalities in heteronormative sexual roles transcend to all spheres. These inequalities, and nonconsent, are standardized in pop-culture images worldwide. Women are expected to tolerate the invisibility, misrepresentation, and stigma of their pleasure, alongside depersonalization, lack of agency, discomfort, and unequal sexual fulfillment as the object of the male gaze.

Taking into consideration the evident, negative implications of consuming gonzo porn, and the detrimental rate of consumption, one is left to wonder why people, specifically straight men, still watch it. Through the writings of Susan Bordo and John Berger, who focus on gender in the visual world in their respective books, *Beauty (Re)discovers the Male Body* and *Ways of Seeing*, it will be revealed that the factors that perpetuate the orgasm gap are the same factors that keep people watching gonzo pornography.

More specifically, we discuss statistics on porn's affect on youth to gain perspective on heterosexual dynamics and pornographic influence. Then, we do a deep reading of the Pornhub front page, revealing the unique and ubiquitous linguistic and visual elements of gonzo pornography, such as amateur-POV styles, that allow men to supplant their identity onto the male porn actor and gain patriarchal comfort by consuming majoritively dehumanizing and violent media against women.

Next, we dissect how misogyny is both upheld and continually shaped by men's media depictions of women. Toward this goal, we discuss Renaissance nude paintings as historical examples of the male gaze on the female body, from the 'idealized' to the 'imperfect' woman. We contextualizing how the historic patriarchal system fulfilled the same misogynistic comfort through by both building and depicting hegemonic femininity in the male gaze through these nude portraits. Both Renaissance nudes and gonzo pornography normalize pure, youthful, and insubordinate women as ideal, designed to remind men of their power, domination, and control.

However, misogynistic 'stereotyping' of female pleasure in gonzo pornography has remarkably little to do with what women actually enjoy, but rather upholds cultural norms that women should give unreciprocated oral sex, and orgasm from penetrative sex, be subservient to

abuse, and much more. Next, we analyze male mediocrity and complacency as inextricable from the orgasm gap. Finally, we conclude that men continue to watch gonzo pornography for the very same reasons that the orgasm gap persists: deep-seated male identity superposition with the cameraman/director/male porn actor, patriarchal comfort passed between men through the male gaze's misogynistic depictions of women, practical comfort at the expense of women, and the fragility and mediocrity of the male sexual ego, and the patriarchal entitlement to female pleasure to be defined by a visually-objectified woman who pleases men. Thus, not only does the orgasm gap and gonzo pornography exist within the patriarchal structures, they also uphold each and perpetuate each other: gonzo pornography contributes to the orgasm gap.

GONZO PORN: PORNHUB AND THE MALE GAZE

Most men would argue that sexual pleasure has never been easier than it is in the modern era. Nearly 9 out of 10 men and 1 out of 3 women aged 18–26 in the USA report accessing pornography online (Lim et al. 3). There is scientific evidence that pornography viewing by straight men contributes to the orgasm gap, as men's pornography use is associated with decreased sexual satisfaction for both partners in heterosexual relationships (Lim et al. 4). On the other hand, women's pornography use is associated with increased sexual satisfaction for both partners in heterosexual relationships (Lim et al. 4).

In spite of this, visual pornography is stereotypically associated with men -- Susan Bordo writes that "Some psychologists say that the circuit from the eyes to brain to genitals is a quicker

trip for men than for women... But who is the electrician here? God? Mother Nature? Or Hugh Hefner? Practice makes perfect. And women have had little practice.” Adolescence catapults this practice, feigning natural adeptness to sexual images from the nurture of pop-culture images made for the straight male gaze (Bordo 168). Gender inequality in everyday life enters the sexual realm through puberty, influencing an individual’s lifelong sexual behaviors. Pornography is widely accessible, with millions of free sexual videos available on the internet. Many sites take arbitrarily preventive steps to ensure those under 18 can’t view their sites, letting adolescents partake as well. Adolescents are learning sex and sexuality through pornography: the average age to begin watching pornography is only 11 years old, and pornography addiction is more severe in adolescents than adults (Lim et al. 4). Long before real-life sexual encounters begin for most, adolescents are absorbing fantastical content in pornography, which has influences far beyond puberty. Furthermore, the misogynistic context in which pornography is presented creates an uneven ground for each gender’s enjoyment of sex from the get-go.

For example, adolescent girls report more involuntary exposure to pornography as opposed to seeking it out (Sabina et al. 691). Girls also reported more feelings of embarrassment and disgust when watching pornography (Sabina et al. 693). Most frighteningly, adolescent girls who view porn are more likely to tolerate emotional, physical, and sexual abuse throughout their lives (Dimitri et al.). While porn use by heterosexual women may increase sexual satisfaction for both partners, there is a layer of trauma that accompanies this habit. This trauma is exacerbated by every visual-sexual gender inequality in mainstream pornography.

On the other hand, boys reported more sexual excitement when viewing pornography, as opposed to embarrassment and disgust (Sabina et al. 693). Boys are more likely to be exposed to

pornography at an earlier age, see more pornography, and more extreme pornography (most notably rape and child pornography) (Sabina et al. 691). These statistics point to the influence of patriarchal society on young boys. Alongside other social experiences of hegemonic masculinity in everyday life, from schools, home, religious spaces, mainstream media, and more, the sexual hierarchies of gonzo porn shape how men view women from early on. Adolescent boys who view pornography are more prone to violence and aggression, and the age at which males view porn determines how this aggression will manifest (Dimitri et al.). The younger a man was at first exposure to pornography, the more likely he is to want power over women. The older he was, the more likely he is to behave in a sexually promiscuous way (“Age of First Exposure to Pornography”). **All of these behaviors counter female pleasure by restricting female safety, sexual agency, and ability to connect with male partners.** The sexual hierarchies of gonzo porn shape how men view women, correlating views of women as objects to abuse and take power over. Male youth exposure to pornography contributes not just to subconscious sexism against women, but also to a conscious desire to create harm:

Modern mainstream pornographic content, or gonzo pornography, has a clear effect on how women and men function as sexual beings. While the straightforward answer to the orgasm gap seems to be that women should simply watch more porn, there are cinematic factors of pornography that make viewing it less enjoyable for women. Alarmingly, porn makes men more aggressive, and women more likely to tolerate abuse. Yet, many are willing to overlook these problems in exchange for the benefits watching porn, such as sexual enjoyment, albeit unequal between genders. To understand the gonzo porn style, one must see through the eyes of a modern pornography watcher:

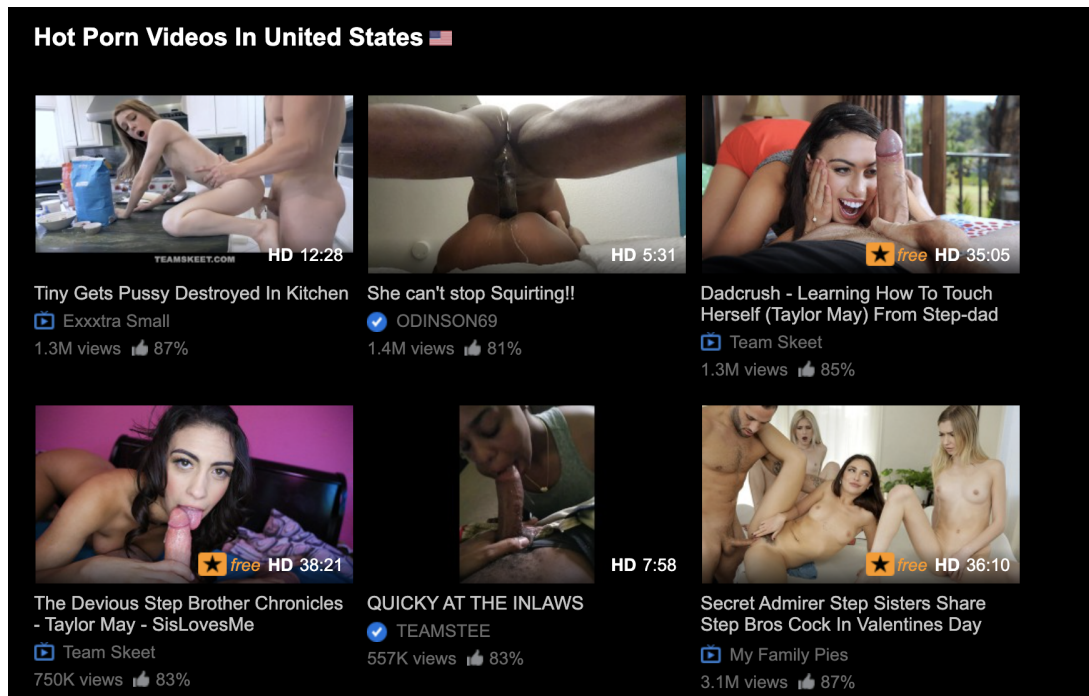


Fig. 1. Home page of <https://www.pornhub.com/>

It's 2:30 am. After a long day of work, school, or socializing, it's time to let loose with your nightly routine. You sleepily open the Safari browser on your phone, computer, or tablet, and switch over to an incognito tab. Eyes half open, you dim your screen's brightness and slip on a pair of headphones. You need not type further than the letter "p" before you are kicked to pornhub.com. The front page is filled with erotic images of women's asses, or smiling faces with eyes on the camera and penises in hand. You mindlessly scroll until you find something that catches your eye: perhaps you prefer homemade videos scandalously filmed in hotel rooms, or more professional videos, *casting couch* and all. What began as simple curiosity has transformed into a morbid addiction: sounds and moving images provide you with a more diverse and accommodating pleasure than a real-life partner ever could (Lim et al. 4). You may realize how

significantly this pornography inhibits your ability to please your sexual partners, or how unethical and ignorant pornography's practices are, but you do not stop watching it.

When opening the automatically generated, ever-changing front page of pornhub.com, some variation of the image above will appear. A myriad of graphic thumbnails with objectifying descriptors, such as "Tiny Gets Pussy Destroyed In Kitchen" cloud your vision, and through repeated pornography viewing by masses of people, this vocabulary and imagery becomes increasingly normalized. More specifically, 'gonzo' porn has distinct language and stylistic elements, and it dominates modern porn style. The 'gonzo' style's specific descriptors are evident in various ways throughout these six images.

Two out of six of the videos above appear to be amateur (low film quality, not seeming as 'professional' or 'studio' pornography), yet have hundreds of thousands of views under verified accounts -- gonzo porn is notoriously 'amateur' in that it appears low-budget or self-produced. Three out of six thumbnails appear to have a point-of-view (POV) shot of a woman performing oral sex on a penis. Gonzo porn is typically filled with POV shots -- where the cameraman, director, and male actor, all are (or appear to be) the same person. Rarely is his face seen: only one thumbnail above includes a male's face, although the frame is mostly filled by three fully nude women (Brodesco 364). Only one human name is mentioned in any of these porn titles: Taylor May. Another girl is referred to as "Tiny."

One thumbnail includes up-close genital shots, filmed from underneath the man's legs. A consequence of amateur-feel POV pornography -- the shots move closer to the genitals (Brodesco 367). The camera is not only from the perspective of the man's eyes, but also from perspectives centering the penis as to combine visual and kinesthetic immersion in sexual

patriarchal male gaze. The penis-centric identification of males, rather than faces that largely remain anonymous, combined with POV shots and amateur feel, allows male viewers to supplant their identity onto the male porn actor.

This identity building becomes especially worrisome as perverted, dehumanizing tropes are exhibited in porn behavior. Three of the videos allude to a step-sibling or step-dad character, highlighting the male authority in the gonzo audition/persuasion trope: Dadcrush “learn[s] how to touch herself” from her Step-dad, “The Devious Step Brother,” and “Secret Admirer Step Sisters Share Step Bros Cock.” These titles imply men are naturally ‘deviant,’ normalizing taboo and abusive relations like incest. These titles also imply that women can not sexually please themselves, and rely on men to learn about themselves and gain pleasure. In porn, groups of women regularly lust over one man.

Furthermore, the verbs used belittle women: her pussy gets “destroyed” and she “can’t stop” squirting -- the ideal sexy women has no control over her sexual pleasure. She likes to be hurt, literally made non-existent, besides as flesh for men to abuse. Between 37% and 88% of modern pornography depicts acts of physical aggression -- usually towards female actors and *suggesting* the recipient was consenting to abuse (Lim et al. 3). The ‘gonzo’ style of modern pornography is multiplicitous in this small sampling, from titles to thumbnails. Gonzo porn also tends to depict violence and humiliation, including vaginal or anal double penetration, urination, heavy bondage, sadism and masochism (S&M), choking, and rape (Brodesco 365). These depictions do not clearly depict or even suggest the occurrence of standard basic BDSM and kink procedures like informed consent, safe words, safe bondage practices, pre- and after- emotional

and physical care, and consensual non-consent (CNC), and contraception and STI prevention, as only 2-3% of heterosexual online pornography has any condom use (Lim et al. 3).

Thus, iterations of violence and humiliation in porn model a pervasive, insidious degree of abuse where people are not shown or taught how to implement the many simple yet crucial aspects of safe and mutually respectful, consensual, and enjoyable sex. Asking for verbal consent before doing something new, matching the other persons pace, checking in with comfort levels, not being over-dominating, and reciprocation are all seemingly common sense intuitive principles that are not a part of heterosexual norms.

Porn's lack of safe practice representation in favor of abuse, aggression, and objectification of women leaves men to believe that the aforementioned sexual behaviors are oppositional to their own masculine desires, negotiable, unnecessary, not even worth considering, a turn-off, impossible, or impossibly awkward. Maybe men feel like a fish out of water when it comes to the orgasm gap. Or, perhaps whether a conscious choice or not, men are ignorant to the fact that something is deeply awry with their treatment of women during sex, because porn is all they ever learned, and real life women who may have tried to educate them fell upon deaf ears. Widespread patriarchal notions of women as not worth listening to have existed long before gonzo pornography, making men intolerant of criticism. At the same time, the male sexual ego is hypersensitive to criticism since men derive sexual confidence from their ability to please women, as perceived by the male gaze.

Gonzo porn capitalizes on pre-existing straight male sexual response, the dominant perspective, thanks to, and deeply influenced by, patriarchy (Bordo 168). Gonzo also creates new, unique sexual priorities, that deeply shape the straight male heterosexual response.

Masculine sexuality comes to be defined by violence against women, women as less than (hu)man, and masculine power as the ability to please women through mediocrity and abuse. The gonzo style optimizes the male mind and actor to contribute to widespread misogyny and dehumanization of women as normal.

DEFINING SHOTS OF GONZO PORN

In gonzo porn, defining shots portray females as solely a pleasure-giver to men, which feeds the male ego, and his enjoyment, while contributing to the orgasm gap. The prevalence of amateur POV style in gonzo pornography has brought forth a set of defining shots that can be found in almost any mainstream porn video.

One of the most popular gonzo porn shots is a woman performing oral sex on a male -- rarely is the favor returned. Men and women both rate images of the opposite sex receiving oral sex to be the least arousing (Rupp and Wallen). Such scenes are incredibly common: a kneeling woman, gagging and choking, with eyes staring deep into the camera -- the eyes of the cameraman/director and audience member. Even in non-POV scenes, the woman can often be found looking into the camera, rather than the male actor's eyes. This sexy gaze has been a visual cue of subordination throughout the existence of the patriarchy. Berger noticed the connotation of eye contact in Renaissance portraits: "But the woman's attention is rarely directed towards him. Often she looks away from him or she looks out of the picture toward the one who considers himself her true lover -- the spectator-owner" (56). Berger's historical emphasis on this sultry gaze highlights gonzo porn's contribution to the orgasm gap: women are painted as subservient

objects of the audience member (or spectator-owner), rather than creatures with their own sexual agency and interests. The narcissistic male psyche upholds his comfort by this subservience, even though it denies female pleasure.

The female's eye contact with the cameraman/director/spectator/owner implies she is aware she is being placed on display -- and is eager to be a visual show. Berger writes "to be naked is to be seen as oneself... a naked body has to be seen as an object in order to become a nude... Nakedness reveals itself. Nudity is placed on display. To be naked is to be without disguise. To be on display is to have the surface of one's own skin, the hairs of One's Own body, turn into a disguise which, in that situation, can never be discarded" (54).

Women are not comfortable in the disguise gonzo porn puts them into. Discomfort and insecurity about visual and auditory appearance is a large contributor to many women's trouble orgasming with heterosexual male partners (Sloan 26). Thus, the gonzo-esque female eye contact with the POV camera intensifies the inequalities previously described. The gonzo pornstress nonverbally indicates she is knowingly subservient, providing male comfort and encouraging dominance. Women who watch porn tolerate this abuse because they internalize their 'nudity,' it is an implicit social norm: understanding men expect her to be the willingly-disguised female for the sake of his comfort.

Berger also claims that when a human female is condemned to visual objectification, she is also used as an object. Not only does this contribute to the orgasm gap, but also the uprise of increasingly graphic, violent, and unsafe content. Gonzo porn tends to depict violence and humiliation (Brodesco 365). Many contemporary heterosexual females dislike anal sex, and feel uncomfortable when their male counterpart asks to try something they saw in a porn video, like

spitting/cumming on their face, choking, etc. (Lim et al. 4). Men expect women to follow through because her pornographic gaze indicates she is knowingly-subservient, malleable, and owned, making her the ultimate giver of any of his desires.

Women are entitled to their own sexual preferences and bodily autonomy. Vehemently defending sexual boundaries and preferences in a world where women are deeply chastised and dehumanized for not complying with male visions of them as sexual objects to act cruelly upon comes with immense psychological and emotional toll. Men's perpetuation and complacency in upholding of the male gaze undoubtedly contributes to women's broader burdens of the soul, alongside the orgasm gap more specifically.

Male porn viewers then feel entitled to the title of the highly desired, irreplaceably skilled pleasure giver in their sexual relationships: Female sexual partners are expected to uphold this cultural masculinity self-image created by gonzo porn. Thus, normalization of women having to be afraid and highly disempowered to say no to men's sexual advances, from long-term partners to friends and strangers. Incels shows the extreme of this where women are violently attacked for not upholding a man's self image — denying women their humanity, agency, self-respect and personal interests — instead, men feel entitled to dominate women's purpose for being.

The visual factors of POV shots and amateur style contribute largely to the psychological appeal of gonzo pornography to the hegemonic patriarchal man, allowing him to embody the identity and status of the porn actors offscreen in life. Objectification of women comes to generate male sexual fulfillment, and women must grapple with their identities and agency in relationship to this. Fulfilling the male gaze by uplifting the male ego through objectification,

and thus neglecting personal needs, can be implicit, normalized, praised in society, advantageous in relationships, comfortable, relatively enjoyable, and necessary for safety.

The term ‘compulsory heterosexuality’ was popularized by Adrienne Rich in her 1980 essay “Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence.” The term is commonly used to describe how fulfilling male desire as a woman is so societally fundamental to femininity that a tendency toward heterosexual desire and behavior is assumed and enforced upon people due to patriarchal, heteronormative, and allonormative (assumed ubiquity of sexuality, erasing asexuality spectrums) societal expectations, influencing identity and agency. The term compulsive is generally, but not always, used in reference to disorders like OCD, addiction, eating disorders, and mobility disorders like Parkinson’s; its definition in these realms helps shed light to better understand compulsive heterosexuality in the context of the orgasm gap. Compulsive behaviors are habitually engaged in, despite their aversive and troubling nature. They are uncontrollable because people feel an internal inability to stop. Compulsions are often caused by a fear of something unpleasant, for example someone with OCD would over-check locks to prevent robberies. Yet the protective behavior, combined with an inability to stop, causes more harm than good due to unintended consequences and contributing to a lack of functioning (Porrey).

In compulsive heterosexuality, women find trouble in ending heterosexual behaviors because because identity formation in a patriarchal world can hinge on sexual validation from men. The adoption of heterosexual priorities is a survival tactic, especially with homosexuality and queerness often locally, nationally, and globally stigmatized. ‘Comp-het’ is an aversive and troubling behavior given patriarchal realities like the orgasm gap, and the alarming statistic that

one in six US women are survivors of rape, 82% of all juvenile victims are female, 90% of adult rape victims are female, and so on (RAINN). Here, compulsory heterosexuality does not serve as an explanation or solution to the orgasm gap. Rather, the term makes clear the realities of female pleasure in a patriarchal society. As a woman, fulfilling heterosexual dynamics by performing misogynistic expectations of women for male validation is deeply ingrained, normalized, and societally rewarded, no matter whether women find their underlying sexuality includes an attraction to men after all or not.

Fighting for equal sexual treatment in relationships by educating men requires time, effort, and emotional labor 'undo' unequal relationship hierarchies. These inequalities are often implicit, patriarchal society subconsciously acted out through ignorance, willful or not. but also at times simply functional hierarchies by educating men. Further, the effort does not guarantee success, requires sitting and contending with the overwhelming effects of countless encounters with pornographic media, men in real life, and societal systems, that build this patriarchal world and violate the female.

When dominant cultural narratives are shapes by gonzo pornography, women not only deal with normalized objectification, abuse, and male mediocrity and underperformance, but are also expected to simultaneously validate masculinity through fake orgasms and other visual, audio, and kinetic performances. Thus, what seems like an innocent POV amateur pornographic style is actually a symptom and perpetuator of deep psychological and societal damage, that upholds patriarchy and deeply shapes heterosexual relations through the male sexual ego. Gonzo pornography is inherently detrimental female pleasure, and even jeopardizes female safety. Women struggle with compulsory heterosexuality, and epidemics of misogyny and sexual

violence in everyday life. Gonzo pornography has contributed to these patriarchal sexual norms, at the same time, the misogynist backbone of gonzo pornography is immensely expansive.

Gonzo pornography caters to the male gaze, which is one of many factors that simultaneously preserves male power while also worsening the orgasm gap. Susan Bordo observed that “until recently only heterosexual men have continually been inundated by popular cultural images *designed* with their sexual responses... in mind” (Bordo 168). The historical dominance of the heterosexual male gaze began in a time of European Renaissance nudes, and catapulted into the pre-internet modern era. The naked female body has “been an object of mainstream consumption” first through elicit Playboy magazines, and then adult movies (Bordo 168). Gonzo porn is merely the next step in the cultural pattern of female commodification observed by Bordo.

Gonzo pornography’s onset began as a new method to please the heterosexual male pornoholic: the storyline aspect commonly found in adult movies in the 1990’s is removed and one is left with only sex -- making his masturbation to such films seemingly more efficient (Brodesco 364). Stripping the plot from a scene also strips it of the feigned emotional connection between actors. Perhaps the shift away from storyline and toward gonzo was an early herald of budding technological trends, such as the increased the role of technology in societal phenomena like online sex work, dating apps, internet relationships, discreteness, and anonymity. Perhaps the porn industry’s move away is an early cog in today’s machine of shorter attention spans and faster-paced media. It seems that gonzo pornography both creates, and recreates, anonymous hookup culture. Coincidentally, the orgasm gap is greatly exacerbated within hookup culture: “A 2013 study found that women are half as likely to have an orgasm during casual hookups as they

are in committed relationships, suggesting that comfort, trust and communication are important factors in women's sexual satisfaction” (Sloan 25).

This data also suggests that men’s lack of contribution to comfortable and trusting sexual relationships with open communication is more common in casual hookups, perhaps due to the simple facts of less accountability and more anonymity — which are also the identity traits made out to be the ‘ideal sexual male’ by gonzo pornography. In a way men become subconsciously possessed by the ubiquitous faceless male porn body, and grow accustomed to its entitlement to getting off on women who act as sexual-visual objects, performers, servants to male pleasure, and flesh to abuse. These abusive behaviors are propagandized to men, made out to be the ideal sexual treatment in a woman(-object)’s eyes. The man sees that the porn star he has supplanted his identity onto beholds the pinnacles of his desires. Thus, men feel entitled to women as sexual objects, expecting and forcing dynamics that are unfair and unsafe for women during sex.

The bottom line is that a gonzo porn scene is not a reliable source for depictions of sexual behaviors that are emotionally mature, mindful, or intimately connected. This porn teaches men from a young age that their own sex and pleasure are tied to female objectification. Gonzo also only demonstrates getting to know and providing for women’s needs through the patriarchal male gaze, which hinders the capacity for female satisfaction in heterosexual relationships, and thus contributes to the orgasm gap.

One of the many factors of gonzo porn contributing to the orgasm gap is its encompassing lack of attention towards the true constitutions of female pleasure, but this lack invisibility, ignorance, and systemic persecution of female sexuality is not unprecedented. The orgasm gap, the move away from narrative pornography, and toward gonzo pornography and

anonymous hookup culture, are all more than the sum of their parts. Women's experiences with compulsive heterosexuality and misogyny are subjective and complex. The patriarchy pervades non-sexual and overtly gendered experiences as well: Even men who work to overcome pornographic biases, or weren't ever exposed to them, still face an extensive onslaught of societally and subconsciously ingrained sexist paradigms.

For example, equal footing in debate and compromise, emotional awareness and maturity, and perceived gender roles and expectations, and so on, are all still common issues men carry with them into interactions with women in daily life. Some casual examples would be the competence-questioning communication known as mansplaining, and that men interrupt women 3x more than they interrupt other men, and men speak up to 75% of the time in mixed-gender groups (Chemaly).

As discussed in the book "Why Does He Do That? Inside the Minds of Abusive and Controlling Men" by Lundy Bancroft, researchers have also found that men often recognize the practical and functional benefits of maintaining control over women via abusive relationships and family dynamics, and maintain physical and emotional abuse not out of sexual desire or emotional inability but as a form of 'weaponized incompetence' enacted to avoid life's responsibilities like fatherhood, self-care, being a good partner, household work, etc. On the inside, men are often perfectly cognizant that they are make things easier for themselves through the exploitation and abuse of others, their families, the ones they may also claim to love.

RENAISSANCE NUDES: LEGACY OF HEGEMONIC FEMININITY

Gonzo pornography is merely another sequence in a long line of oppression of female pleasure. As stated earlier, men can spend a lifetime in patriarchal relations and contributing to the orgasm gap, male violence, and such without ever watching porn, let alone Gonzo porn. However, some things have changed in the present day, bringing unique challenges to modern experience. By recognizing how contemporary society differs from, and is build upon past patriarchies, one can become cognizant of the truly unprecedented intensity gonzo porn brings to male comfort and female objectification in our society.

Throughout history, “Women -- both straight and gay -- have always gazed covertly, of course, squeezing our illicit little titillations out of representations designed for -- or pretending to -- other purposes than to turn us on” (Bordo 168). Bordo speaks of the historical oppression of female pleasure, ever-present in gonzo pornography. Omnipresent societal images turn men on, condemning women to a world where no visual pleasure is made for them. **Perhaps, the man can freely gaze because of the patriarchal factor of comfort pornographic images provide to men:** Berger writes “Men of state, of business, discussed under paintings like this. When one of them felt he had been outwitted, he looked up for consolation. What he saw reminded him that he was a man” (Berger 57). Berger’s male comfort remains the same throughout history, and maintains society’s complacency in patriarchy. Bordo’s male-gaze-centered cultural images are slow to change because they are designed to uphold male comfort. However, what separates the modern day from the time of Renaissance nudes is the unprecedented intensity of a highly misogynistic way of viewing genders in a society that explicitly pretends to be egalitarian. If one were to jump into the present day and attempt to learn about the world through mainstream

pornography, a very different picture would be painted than the one a modern man would identify with. Thus, **gonzo pornography is the hiding place for modern society's misconceptions about female pleasure, a buried yet highly influential 'man-cave' that reinforces masculinity through patriarchal comfort.**

The intensity of gonzo pornography is a jarring contrast to the society modern people place themselves in -- in part, because of the ease of female 'ownership' brought by the POV pornography and gonzo porn plots -- and the lack of emotional connection holding the owner and object together. The most iconic gonzo trope involves the male protagonist (who is also the cameraman and director) persuading real 'normal' girls to have sex with him for money: professional videos with a *homemade*, or *authentic*, feel (Brodesco 367), allowing the audience utmost comfort and belonging. Most often shot in first person, or POV fashion: the director is often both the cameraman and the male body in the scene, interacting through both dialogue and sex (Brodesco 364). As the cameraman is also the director, he has the ultimate power and authority over the woman. The intensity of ownership makes it unprecedentedly clear who is supposed to give and receive pleasure in heterosexual relations.

The aforementioned 'idealized woman' Renaissance nude style gazed upon by men of status reflected gonzo porn in that in all of the woman's 'perfect beauty,' every stroke arose not to depict the woman but to please the men. In a patriarchal society this means that the most beautiful female depiction must also be the one that makes him feel most confident and superhumanly above the subhuman woman. The contrasts of 'flawless beauty,' combined with the need for women to be portrayed as docile and subordinate to men, result in highly normalized historical notions of beauty as (problematically) youthful, or un-powerful, unintelligent, innocent

and untarnished, ready for the special conquering, that have lasted to this day and are evident in gonzo pornography (amongst other modern places like celebrity media industries).

The ubiquitous male gaze, supplant onto by male audiences, allows men to reap the rewards of the patriarchy by perpetuating the oppression of women through male dominance, simply with his gaze. In the case of the Renaissance 'idealized woman,' her gaze back at the viewer confirms her display of insubordination is for him. Men's paintings of 'idealized women' permeate society and dictate behavior and appearance expectations of real-life women through social norms and status symbols, upheld by interactions with men. The ideal woman is made out to be a visual object, still and silent, in the flawless nude for all of history's elite men to see.

On the other hand, Renaissance nude portraits where the painter has a romantic relationship with the model differ in that instead of painting an idealized figure, the painter portrays her with all her imperfections, from his perspective. John Berger writes "It permits the body to become impossibly dynamic. Its coherence is no longer within itself but within the experience of the painter" (61). Whether she is depicted in an awkward position, or with imperfect skin, here the painter pits the 'imperfect woman' against the 'idealized woman.' The love of a man, especially the man who depicts her for other men to see, has the ability to render her imperfections societally irrelevant. She is beautiful because a man sees beauty in her ugliness, in her diversions from male-enforced beauty standards.

Gonzo pornography contains some remnants of the 'idealized woman' artistic depiction, The gaze at 'idealized women' paintings had an air of power and exclusivity, as does the supplanting of male porn viewers into the director/cameraman/porn actors position as the man in control of the 'casting couch.' The women are made to be as appealing to men as possible, going

beyond the mere visual idealization of the Renaissance paintings, and extending into behavior idealization like body postures, gestures, and facial expressions, ideal voice behaviors for women including voice pitch and sentence content. Women's success on the 'casting couch audition' is dependent on their ability to perform this hegemonic femininity, constructed entirely for the male gaze, which desires pure yet subordinate and controllable objects the most: from the 'tiny' and 'barely legal' to the 'dumb blonde' and 'destroyed.'

Another aspect of hegemonic femininity is captured by gonzo's relationship to the 'imperfect woman' artistic depictions by male lovers. The violence and humiliation inflicted upon women in gonzo pornography are also a part of the idealized woman, one who wants to be objectified, dehumanized, and her own sexual needs abandoned to prioritize men's pleasure, or never known about in the first place. Aggressive and uncaring physical actions and words against women in gonzo pornography contribute to this 'imperfect woman' — instead of double chins and messy hair, we see snot and tears amidst intense blowjobs, with giant palms pushing faces into their lap while 'holding the camera in the other hand. We hear women get berated with dehumanizing language, and use it against themselves, for male sexual enjoyment.

This analysis is not to say any of the gonzo abuses-turned-beauty-standards are explicitly modern, or to draw a 1:1 correlations between gonzo and the 'imperfect' or 'idealized' depictions of women. Rather, historical echoes provide insight into the unique social implications of gonzo pornography for women, through Renaissance history. In both cases, a patriarchal idealized 'ideal/imperfect' femininity emerges from the male gaze of multiple painters/cameramen/directors/actors. In both instances woman is paradoxically perfect in pure, virginal, docile, unknowing youthful beauty yet at the same time is highly corruptible and dominate-able.

However, the 'ideal/imperfect' woman grows overtly complicit in and enjoying of abuse in gonzo pornography. Violence and objectification by men is an honor as it validates the identity of women through their successful embodiment of the 'idealized woman.'

The extensively objectified and abused women in modern gonzo porn, is both due to and comes with the continually unfolding innovation of technologies which make gonzo porn so pervasive, and the innovation of patriarchal oppression systems and make the objectified woman so idealized. In cameraman/director pornography, sexual penetrations of women are extended to all male audience members, who identify with the cameraman/director, extending the privilege of 'ownership' through POV cinematography and dehumanizing power dynamics between women and the cameraman/director/actor. Neither the cameraman/director nor the audience member has any idea of what her pleasure entails, or how it is displayed. Luckily, it does not matter, since their ownership of her identity makes her unreal, or rather, like both the ideal and imperfect Renaissance paintings, she is only real through the gaze of the male spectator (the painter/cameraman/director/audience).

Bordo shares similar sentiments to Berger's, in that the perception of the female experience has remarkably little to do with the experience of the female. She also highlights how the narcissistic male psyche dictates the lens through which the female response is viewed -- which keeps men watching gonzo porn. When porn is made POV, the audience member is both visually and sensually superpositioned into the role of the cameraman/director. Their collective control erases the female identity, and thus the female's true pleasure, as a "stereotype [is put in its] place by another pair of eyes" (Bordo 172). As the cameraman dictates her every move, angle, and action done *to* her, so does the audience member. They collectively understand her

reactions of pleasure and other sensations through their lens of control. Subsequently, her reactions are ‘stereotyped’ according to what the male gaze and ego desires. Through gonzo porn, the de-realized female becomes a projection of the patriarchal male sexual ego.

THE ORGASM GAP: MALE MEDIOCRITY AND SENSUAL INEQUALITIES

The anonymity of the male as faceless penis owner, ‘behind’ the camera lens, perpetuates heterosexual male mediocrity and comfort, which provides men with a sense of security while also adding to the inequalities that perpetuate the orgasm gap. The gonzo porn industry is aware of the inherent emasculation of being owned and gazed upon. They also know of the privilege it gives men to normalize these desires, such as acts seen in pornography. Just as the presence of a woman’s face and eye contact play a crucial role in subserviance and objectification according to Berger, the *absence* of a man’s face allows, and even encourages, mediocrity, according to Bordo.

To simultaneously reinforce masculinity and heterosexuality, a culture of mediocrity has influenced the pop-culture male persona. In fashion advertisements, “non fashion-guy fashion” has catered to straight working class men, an advertisement reads: “I’m just a guy, and I don’t have time to think about what I wear, because I’ve got a lot of important guy things to do” (Bordo 189). Mediocrity and ignorance are the gateway to fitting the male into typically female spheres of life, such as fashion, arts, domestic care, or being a sexual pleaser. **This reinforces the male ego by rewarding failure to meet the standards of such spheres set by males for females.** Girly things are for “girls, and for the men who are pussy-whipped by them” (Bordo

189). As such, men are not expected to meet any standard set for women -- including the standard of pleasing men as set by gonzo porn. Even further, men who *do* meet these standards are considered humiliatingly repulsing. Bordo's rewarding of mediocrity applies to sex: men are not expected to work as hard, or be as good, at pleasing women.

The cameraman/director hides behind the camera to subvert his need to reciprocate the female's visual-sexual pleasure-giving in gonzo pornography. As such, mediocrity is also associated with comfort. Berger wrote of Renaissance men discussing business under nude paintings, because there is nothing more comfortable than being reminded of your masculinity in a patriarchal society. Similarly, rewarding lower standards for men brings comfort by reminding them that they are 'naturally privileged' men.

Amidst a world where women take on the roles men assign them, and men reap the rewards without reciprocation, a man knows that by neglecting to meet the standards placed on women by gonzo pornography (ie providing sexual pleasure), he is acknowledging just how harmful and ignorant said standards are (contributing to the orgasm gap).

Sensual and visual inequalities both contribute to the orgasm gap, and entice straight men to continue viewing gonzo pornography. These inequalities appear in the sexual realm through shameful feelings for both partners, and a culture of nonconsent for heterosexual women. When it comes to bringing women pleasure, a study published in *Archives of Sexual Behavior* found that three activities correlated with higher orgasm rates for cisgender women: deep kissing, manual genital stimulation, and oral sex. Two out of three of these are clitoral stimulation, and require a certain level of passivity (Sloan 25-26). If straight men were to remember these three steps, the answer to the orgasm gap might be simple, but it is easier said than done.

Bordo writes that the ‘passive’ nature of these pleasures neglects the recognition of the energy required to “offer himself or herself to another” (Bordo 186). For these tasks, men must do things *for* the woman, rather than *to* the woman, switching the gonzo roles. Making the switch to a receptive, rather than giving, role is difficult for many heterosexual women; constantly perceived as a visual object, a gonzo pornstress is always en garde for the male’s pleasure. Men use their stereotype radar to gauge what they do *to* the woman during sex. **The only way a man can actively give pleasure that feeds their “macho bias,” is to fulfill the pleasures of the object woman -- who is owned and objectified to such severity that her desires (and identity) are stereotyped onto her by the male owner (Bordo 186).** Her willing subservience acknowledges the unimportance of her pleasure, and his culture of mediocrity maintains his comfort in utmost pleasure-receiving through her objectification. In spite of the ease of which scientific studies, or communication with partners, could help solve the orgasm gap, the habits ingrained in men through gonzo porn have always prevented this change. Women are not allotted the space to define, express, or receive their sexual desires.

Author Susan Bordo offers an anecdote about the real-world effects of the ‘macho bias’ on women. After a hook-up with a man, she is asked if there is anything else she wants. She knows she would love for him to slowly strip in front of her, conscious of her gaze. As many women experience, the “long legacy of shame” both sexes face -- that is, the shame of switching visual and sensual roles, inhibits women from having sexual agency over their pleasure (175). The style of shots in gonzo pornography keeps women rooted in a world devoid of both pornographic and real-world visual pleasure. The impenetrable standard of mediocrity in the

visual and pleasure-giving realm is internalized by more than just men -- to men's benefit and women's demise.

Accordingly, the ways in which men are expected to please women differ to embody this double standard: the anonymity of males in POV porn allows the cameraman/director/audience to bypass the discomfort of nudity, allowing for sensual, rather than visual, emphasis to be placed upon the male body. Men are not expected to visually perform. If a man is worried about his performance (sensually pleasing the woman), he only sees female response through the lens of Bordo's identity 'stereotype,' controlled by himself and programmed to feed the male psyche (172). One such stereotype feeds the misconception that women enjoy sexual intercourse: about 75% of women never reach orgasm from intercourse alone (James). Most men would never consider ignoring their main sex organ in what is deemed the 'normal' way to have sex by gonzo porn. **Men relish in the comfort of knowing their main sex organ is the protagonist of their sensory sexual experience, while women are supplanted into the role of uncomfortable visual display.**

Similar to visual inequality, gonzo porn perpetuates a linguistic inequality in male and female pleasure. Dr. Laurie Mintz argues that patriarchal culture values the penis more than the clitoris, even though they serve the same pleasure functions (Sloan 25). The objectifying gonzo language and images transcend into everyday life in this way. The misconception of the word 'vagina' being used to describe the vulva, which encompasses the labia minora and majora, clitoris, clitoral hood, and vaginal opening -- is alarming and unparalleled in vocabulary describing male anatomy" (Sloan 25). Female anatomy is dramatically under-represented in the real world. The clitoris isn't seen as an important enough part of pleasure to be called by its own

name (similar to the nameless gonzo women), or be prioritized in pornography whatsoever. Male comfort and culture of mediocrity maintain complacency in this inequality.

Gonzo porn perpetuates inequalities surrounding pleasure, and it also perpetuates an unequal sharing of agency and consent. Depersonalization of women leads to lack of consent and communication depicted in pornography; gonzo porn portrays men as sexual aggressors who dictate the experience. A woman's consent is most often depicted as *suggested subservience*, a far cry from the sexual agency men are allotted. Abuse of women is normalized to fulfill the expected role of giving visual pleasure to the man. This not only disempowers women as sexual agents, but perpetuates rape culture.

The current model of a sexual encounter involves male initiation and 'pushing,' so real-world sexual encounters aren't looking for enthusiastic consent from women. Non-consent is normalized in everyday media too, in movies, advertisements, art, and pop-culture images. The 'culture of voyeurism' described by Bordo defines the heterosexual male gaze is the gaze of choice in *all* media, displaying sexualized gender inequalities *everywhere*. From Donald Trump's 'grab her by the pussy' without consent, to the 'get the girl' rom-com trope, the images forcibly surrounding the modern media-consumer strip women of their agency in all encounters involving men (Bordo 168; Sloan 26).

CONCLUSION

Gonzo pornography, through its stylistic elements caters to the heterosexual male gaze, simultaneously enticing men to keep watching pornography, and contributing to the orgasm gap. Pornography is paradoxically taboo and omnipresent in our society -- and its effects (selfishly positive for men, negative for women) are highly prevalent in the real-world. Luckily, steps to combat the orgasm gap are easily identifiable: comprehensive sexual education for adolescents, and disclaimers about the fantastical nature of pornography can bring awareness to the under-representation of accurate female pleasure. There is an upsurge of ‘ethical porn’ or ‘feminist porn’ sites that depict safe, openly consensual, and diverse sex. Some sites include Belleza, or the Orgasms Sound Library, where real people can listen to upload audio recordings of real orgasms (“Free Porn Videos for Her: Belleza - Porn for Women”; “Orgasms Library with Real Sounds”). Yet, gonzo pornography remains dominant in the pornographic world, for now. Gonzo POV and amateur shots assign the roles of heterosexual sex, while the pornstress’s appearance entices men to keep watching to fulfill patriarchal comfort, and the cameraman/director’s anonymity allows for total dominance and mediocrity.

Consequently, the visual and sensual inequalities portrayed in gonzo porn affect real-world pleasure: the exact same stylistic factors that entice men towards gonzo pornography, also contribute directly to the orgasm gap — and these systems perpetuate and contribute to each other. In sum, the gonzo pornographic male gaze upholds and morphs the long legacy of the male gaze siphoning patriarchal comfort from the depictions of ideal yet insubordinate women. The gonzo pornographic woman is a misogynistic stereotype of female pleasure depicted by the

painter/cameraman/director/male porn actor. Male mediocrity and comfort directly perpetuates both the misogynistic cultural influence of gonzo porn, and the orgasm gap.

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