

CONSTRUCTIONS OF FEMALE BISEXUALITY IN PORNOGRAPHIC FILM: THE  
1970S TO THE 2000S

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A Thesis submitted to the faculty of  
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In partial fulfillment of  
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Master of Arts

In

Human Sexuality Studies

by

Kaylee Margeret Dunckel

San Francisco, California

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CERTIFICATION OF APPROVAL

I certify that I have read *Constructions of Female Bisexuality in Pornographic Film: the 1970s to the 2000s* by Kaylee Margeret Dunckel, and that in my opinion this work meets the criteria for approving a thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree Master of Sexuality Studies at San Francisco State University.



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CONSTRUCTIONS OF FEMALE BISEXUALITY IN PORNOGRAPHIC FILM: THE  
1970S TO THE 2000S

Kaylee Margeret Dunckel  
San Francisco, California  
2019

This project seeks to investigate constructions of female bisexual identity through an exploration of female bisexual characters in pornographic film. This work will explore productions and representations in 13 pornographic films across several decades spanning from the 1970s to the early 2000s. In sum, this endeavor attempts to examine attributed behavior, qualities, and associated tropes that work to either affirm or negate female bisexual identity through character construction. Findings indicate a series of tropes and themes emerge across the decades including female bisexuality as something the girls do, the violent and/or manipulative female bisexual character, female bisexuality as a result of victimhood or trauma, and finally, the hypersexual female bisexual character.

I certify that the Abstract is a correct representation of the content of this thesis.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Chair, Thesis Committee

  
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Date

## PREFACE AND/OR ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Appendices .....	vii
Introduction.....	1
A Brief History .....	1
Literature Review .....	4
Methods.....	9
Content Analysis.....	12
The 1970s.....	12
The 1980s.....	19
The 1990s.....	25
The 2000s.....	32
Discussion .....	37
Something the Girls Do? .....	38
The Manipulative and/or Violent Female Bisexual Character .....	39
Female Bisexuality as a Result of Victimhood or Trauma .....	40
The Hypersexual Female Bisexual Character.....	41
Pockets of Resistance.....	42
Conclusion .....	43
References.....	44

## LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix	Page
1. Film details .....	46

## INTRODUCTION

Since its origin, pornography has served as a direct cultural product derivative of societal norms and values of the times in which it was created (Escoffier, 2017; Chang, 2015). Because of the stigma attached to pornography, many scholars turn a blind eye to its analytical value and a need arises to visit this material and to speculate what implications it may have. In this vein, this project seeks to examine how pornographic film has influenced the production of female bisexual identity, more specifically how pornographic film has constructed female bisexual characters. This effort is made through examining a series of pornographic films spanning from the 1970s to the 2000s. To do this, each selected film was viewed several times before being categorized into a collection of present tropes and themes. The following paragraphs seek to situate this work by providing a brief history of pornographic film up to the 1970s that helps to provide the context under which such films were produced.

### A Brief History

The 1960s are largely seen as responsible for cultivating a unique environment in which political activism was able to usher in a period of sexual liberation in America. Triggered by the political atmosphere, obscenity laws and cinematic regulations saw a series of changes during this time, eventually allowing for the realm of cinema to be penetrated by pornographic film (Gorfinkel, 2006). This was largely made possible by

the disintegration of cinematic polices that sought to uphold moral standards, such as the Motion Picture Production Code<sup>1</sup>.

The Code sought to monitor and instill a set of rules guided by religious values and morals that all film studios were required to follow, most often in an attempt to avoid the interference of censorship boards (Bryant, 1997, p. 24). As Bryant notes in his text, *Bisexual Characters in Film: From Anaïs to Zee*, “under The Code, homosexuality could be portrayed only as negative stereotypes, warped personalities, or silly comic characters used to underscore the macho qualities of the leading (always white) male” (Bryant, 1997, p. 4). In spite of this, however, a handful of filmmakers sought to challenge The Code throughout its enforcement, often employing clandestine efforts when constructing their characters in an attempt to display queer identity on screen. Following a strict reinforcement of The Code in the mid 1930s, however—urged on by the Catholic Church—many directors were forced to omit or to become increasingly furtive in their projects when it came to depictions of sexual minorities (Bryant, 1997, p. 24, 25). Attempts to challenge The Code, however, persisted and increased as gender barriers were negotiated during and following World War II (Bryant, 1997, p. 30).

By the 1960s, a series of legal challenges regarding censorship and obscenity had also surfaced. The Supreme Court decision in *Jacobellis v. Ohio* (1964), for instance, aided in launching pornography from the underground and into the public

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<sup>1</sup> The Motion Picture Production Code, instilled in the 1930s by William Hays, may also be referred to as The Code as well as The Hays Code (Bryant, 1997, p. 23)

sectors for the very first time (*Jacobellis v. Ohio*, 1964). Just four years later, and after a series of more blatant challenges to The Code, came its eventual dismissal in 1968 (Hunt, 2018). Shortly after the dismissal came another case that would help pornographers to produce pornographic films—the *Miller v. California* (1973) decision established a criterion of guidelines to determine if a work was considered obscene. These included "(a) whether the average person applying contemporary community standards' would find that the work, taken as a whole, appeals to the prurient interest... (b) whether the work depicts or describes, in a patently offensive way, sexual conduct specifically defined by the applicable state law; and (c) whether the work, taken as a whole, lacks serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value " (*Miller v. California*, 1973). This ruling helped to open the door for pornographic film as it could be classified as art.

The diminishment of The Code in addition to legal challenges to obscenity and censorship, as well as the political atmosphere of the 1960s all contributed to moving pornography into the public eye and by 1970, pornographic films began to screen in public theaters. As the religious Right launched campaigns to deter such material, pornography was eventually, and once again, driven into the private sectors of the home. Despite such efforts, pornographic film continues to thrive in modern society. While these materials have evolved with passing times, pornographic film continues to serve as informative source revealing intimate details about the sociocultural norms of the time from which they are produced (Escoffier, 2017; Chang, 2015).

## LITERATURE REVIEW

A handful of scholars have centered pornography as a field of inquiry in their own research. Studies focusing on porn have explored its etymological origins (Kendrick, 1987; Tang, 1999); how pornography runs as an industry and business (Voss, 2012); parallels between technological advancements and its viewers (Coopersmith, 1998; Schaefer, 2002); and law and policy regarding the nature of its content (Comella, 2015)—just to name a few. My work, however, aims to contribute to a specific collection of pornographic research concentrating on the production and display of sexual identity in pornographic media. In the remaining paragraphs for this section, I lay out available research regarding the construction of sexual identity in pornographic film. While these works are alluring, it becomes clear that bisexual bodies, specifically female bisexual bodies, are frequently left out of such academic enquiries.

One such available work is Jeffrey Escoffier's 2017 article "Sex in the Seventies: Gay Porn Cinema as an Archive for the History of American Sexuality." In this piece, Escoffier argues that gay pornographic works, specifically homorealist porn produced in the 1970s, should be considered as historical archives. Escoffier reasons pornographic film allows insight into the period from which it is produced, and he argues these films elucidate how the surrounding environment contributed to their production and thus serve as "evidence for how sex roles, age, style, class, and ethnicity played out in the public spaces" (Escoffier, 2017, p.110). Escoffier concludes his article again with the declaration that homorealist porn represents societal norms and values from the period in which the film is produced. Additionally, he contends pornographic film conveys

internalized beliefs surrounding sexual identity of those involved in the film's production, ultimately "[drawing] upon [performer's] unconscious assumptions of interpersonal scripts" (Escoffier, 2017, p.112-113).

As if in conversation with Escoffier, Jerry Yung-Ching Chang's "The Pornoethnography of 'Boys in the Sand': Fetishisms of Race and Class in the 1970s Gay Fire Island Pines," proposes Wakefield Poole's film as an example of what he calls a "pornoethnography," which he defines as being "an ethnographic record... embedded in the specific time-space in which it was produced" (Chang, 2015, p. 103). Chang analyzes several instances of Poole's 1970 film in an attempt to articulate how *Boys in the Sand* conveys sociocultural norms of the period—such as understandings of interclass and interracial intimacy. Unlike Escoffier, Chang achieves this by engaging in an in depth reading of the film. In summary, Chang reiterates *Boys in the Sand* as an ethnographic resource telling of the space and time in which it was created (Chang, 2015, p.111). By analyzing *Boys in the Sand* as a pornoethnography, Chang not only acknowledges the sociocultural productions of identity as well as representations and understandings of identity, race, and class specific to gay men—but he also recognizes the historical value of these representations of identity embedded in pornography as culturally-saturated and therefore reflective of time-specific scripts, images, norms, values, and traditions related to gay identity and gay life in the 1970s Pines.

Additional research examines lesbian identity production in lesbian pornographic film. Cherry Smyth's "The Pleasure Threshold: Looking at Lesbian Pornography on

Film” briefly discusses Laura Mulvey’s much-explored male gaze<sup>2</sup>—also referred to as the heterosexual gaze—of pornographic studies, instead posing the suggestion of a “lesbian gaze” (Smyth, 1990, p.153). She argues, “by watching [lesbian] porn, we can on some level recognize ourselves... it includes us in a subcultural system of coded sexual styles, gestures, and icons which affirms our sense of belonging” (Smyth, 1990, p. 154). Like Escoffier and Chang, Smyth understands the sociocultural, historical, and archival knowledge held within pornographic film. Smyth also acknowledges that one’s sense of belonging when watching lesbian porn may vary; a white woman, for example, is far more likely to recognize herself among the actors than an individual belonging to a racial minority (Smyth, 1990, p.154). However, Smyth declares her belief that no matter how many films may reiterate stereotypes about lesbian identity, there are always films that successfully portray lesbian sexuality.

Smyth offers Fatale Video’s 1988 lesbian porno *Clips, Part III* as such a film. Diving into the piece, she provides the example of the lesbian come shot and the use of dildos in lesbian porn as contributing to a lesbian gaze. She concludes her discussion about lesbian representations of identity in pornography by asserting that while lesbian pornography is often inspired by heterocentric norms, there are still films that resist these constructions. For instance, *Clips, Part III*, as she discusses, challenges typical

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<sup>2</sup> See Mulvey, L. (1975). Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema. *Screen*, 16(3), 6-18.

representations of lesbian sex and sexuality, and in doing so, rejects a heterosexual, male-dominant gaze (Smyth, 1990, p.159).

A small amount of research focuses on more recent pornographic representations of transgender identity specific to the Internet. For instance, the chapter “Walking on the Wild Side: Shemale Internet Pornography,” from John Phillip’s 2006 book, *Transgender on Screen*, concentrates on the pornographic media representation of transgender subjects. The chapter intends to demonstrate how society and culture influence and produce images and understandings of trans subjects in pornography; in its entirety, the book seeks to offer examples of cultural representations and constructions of transgender identity.

When discussing his chapter on pornographic media representation, Phillips argues his work is necessary; because transgender bodies have so often been disregarded in research that examines pornographic media, he proclaims productions of transgender identity in pornography deserve to be incorporated into more conversations surrounding pornographic media in academia (Phillips, 2006, p.150; 164). In a similar vein as Smyth, Phillips speaks to the targeted construction of a specific kind of viewer. While he understands women are probable viewers of transgender pornography, his apprehension lies with the male, heterosexual viewer who too often comes to view transgender bodies as products of reverie and fantasy (Phillips, 2006, p.153-154).

While it serves as evidence that research on trans-specific identity in pornography is in circulation (albeit scarcely), Phillip’s book is not without its controversies. For example, Jay Stewart, a transgender activist and author, reviews Phillip’s text as a whole,

considering it as an interesting look into the subject, yet suggesting the text overall “offers such negative representations [of trans identity], a lack of complexity of thinking and a poor understanding of trans subjectivities” (Stewart, 2008, p.114). Stewart only notes the chapter on pornography briefly, but claims it reads as out of place amongst the other chapters of the book. Stewart does agree, however, that Phillips most accurately illustrates the commodification of the she-male in pornographic media (Stewart, 2008, p.111).

When we look collectively to this body of work, we notice little to no research is available regarding the production of pornographic representations of bisexual identity. A seeming exception is found, however, in Wayne Bryant’s 1997 text, *Bisexual Characters: From Anaïs to Zee*. Bryant’s text examines trends in the production of bisexual identity in film across several decades as well as the historical context that led to the creation of such images on screen. In many ways, his writing on the construction of bisexuality evokes the work that will be done within this project. However, it is important to note my research will depart from Bryant’s in several ways.

In a review of Bryant’s text, Genny Beemyn, a notable transgender scholar who has written extensively on bisexuality, praises Bryant’s work for trailblazing research on bisexual characters while calling for other scholars to contribute their efforts to the subject (Beemyn, 1997, p.95). Despite this praise, they also criticize Bryant’s lack of detail in his analysis, claiming the work begs for more intricate examination (Beemyn, 1997, p.94). Contributing to this lack of depth, it appears, is Bryant’s examination of *over* 200 multinational films. With this critique in mind, my project insists on a closer reading

of a smaller selection of films. Moreover, while Bryant employs multinational, non-pornographic films regarding bisexuality, I have decided to analyze pornographic films produced in the U.S. that focus specifically on the construction of female bisexuality.

In another review from the same year, Anthony Adam also reiterates the need for further research on bisexual identity in film, pointing out that the materials Bryant has examined in his book have already been visited by several other scholars, and in greater detail (Adam, 1997). Once again, this reflects a need for a deeper analysis of bisexual identity representation in film. Further, and in light of Adam's comments about Bryant's film selection, I will be presenting a close-reading of 13 pornographic films that have *not* been discussed in Bryant's work. Despite both Beemyn and Adam's call for further research, what follows Bryant's work is few and far between, and it is evident the subject needs revisited; this research attempts to answer these calls.

## METHODS

This project conducts a historical content analysis to disentangle modern constructions of female bisexual characters in film, with a focus on pornographic media and female bisexuality, specifically. As I have noted above in my literature review, several scholars have centered pornography and pornographic media in their work and my research contributes to this field. I elected to observe materials across four consecutive decades spanning from the 1970s to the 2000s with three films per decade (though an exception was made to include a two-part film for the 1990s) for a total of 13 films. As I have also mentioned, this project aims to focus specifically on U.S. culture through pornographic analysis, and therefore only examines U.S. produced pornography

with particular efforts made to observe female bisexuality.

As I wanted to gather materials that were indicative of American mainstream, pornographic consumption, most of the films selected have been either nominated or awarded by Adult Video News (AVN), which has notably served as “the premiere trade publication for the adult industry” since its origination (Ramone & Connely, 2005, p.1). Indeed, the majority of films featured within this body of work have been directed by AVN Hall of Famers and the majority of the films have been included in *The AVN’s Guide to the Top 500 Greatest Adult Films of All Time* (Ramone & Connely, 2005). Few exceptions were made, however. *Mona: The Virgin Nymph* (1970), for example, was chosen as it is widely considered one of the first pornographic films to receive a theatrical release and has been noted by porn scholars, such as by Linda Williams, in her book *Screening Sex*, as a pioneering film for the decade (Williams, 2008, p. 127). In an interview with the Rialto Report, *Mona* has also been credited as “the blueprint for... 1970s porno chic hits” (West, 2015). Other exceptions include Radley Metzger’s film, *Score* (1974) as well as Paul Thomas’s *Things Change Part One: My First Time* (1993) and *Things Change Part Two: Letting Go* (1993). These pieces were chosen in light of Metzger and Thomas’s AVN Hall of Fame director status (Ramone & Connely, 2005, p. 337-342). In simpler terms, both Metzger and Thomas have been honored by AVN for their directing of pornographic films and each has been regarded as contributing greatly to pornographic film during their years in the industry, making their work ideal for the purposes of this project.

It became evident early on and through the process of selecting films, however,

that certain bodies were centered in pornographic film while others were consistently left out. While the films were selected from the AVN guide in an attempt to analyze material considered mainstream to each decade, it is important to acknowledge the lack of racial variation amongst the works selected for this project. Few of the films feature racial minority characters, and of those that do, they are often sidelined to a leading white actress. On this note, future research should especially seek to find evidence of more racially representative pornographic films.

To analyze the films, I viewed them multiple times. In the first round, I chose not to take any notes, but rather watched to gain an overall sense of the film. During this stage, I wanted to sense the overall trajectory of each film and gain a sense of plot. In the second round of viewing, I picked up my pen and took open notes on select scenes that I felt would be relevant to my research. During this second round, I again watched the films in full. The final round, however—unlike the previous viewings—was conducted several times throughout the process of writing and included revisiting the scenes selected in the second round and taking more intricate notes. From these notes I proceeded to analyze a decade of films at a time in an effort to identify potential themes and/or tropes to discern how these may have evolved or dissipated over time. At this point I began to categorize some of the behavior exhibited by female bisexual characters, ultimately suggesting several repeated tropes and themes.

I chose to focus on female bisexuality in light of my own positionality. In a 2003 article coauthored by Jill McCorkel and Kristen Myers entitled “What Difference Does Difference Make? Position and Privilege in the Field,” the authors make the case that a

scholar's positionality can have a multitude of effects on research, particularly if that scholar lies outside of the group being examined. For example, the authors discuss how each researcher has a master narrative derived from personal experience and facets of identity that can unknowingly influence one's perspective in their research (McCorkel & Myers, 2003, p. 200). For this reason, I decided to narrow my research to cisgender, bisexual women (rather than bisexuality more generally) to best reflect my position as a cisgender, bisexual woman.

I would like to end this section with a final note regarding language; as Bryant notes in the introductory chapter of his text, there is no consensus for defining features of bisexuality or bisexual identity, and current debates either work to narrow or broaden this term. For the purposes of this paper, I will employ bisexuality in its broadest sense, as "people who have had at least some sexual attraction to both males and females" (Bryant, 1997, p.1). My reasoning for defining bisexuality in such a broad context is based on a lack of discussion surrounding identity in pornographic film. In other words, it is not typical for a character to address their sexual orientation in film, rather this is often hinted at through one's sexual behavior. At best, this is an assumption of identity, yet for the purposes of this project, a broad definition of behavioral bisexuality becomes necessary to identify films that are not categorized as such.

## CONTENT ANALYSIS

### The 1970s

During the 1970s, pornographic films depicted bisexuality in relation to two dominant themes: hypersexuality and a response to trauma. Together, these themes

denied female bisexual identity as authentic and instead reduced it to pathology. Each of these themes was present in the films examined from this decade, though presented in different forms. A close reading of *Mona: The Virgin Nymph* (1970, Benveniste & Ziehm), *The Devil in Miss Jones* (1972, Damiano), and *Score* (1973, Metzger) helps to better illustrate these tropes and their enactment.

#### Mona: The Virgin Nymph (1970)

*Mona: The Virgin Nymph* (1970) is the resulting work of a shared project between Michael Benveniste and Howard Ziehm which explores the story of an enigmatic woman named Mona (portrayed by Fifi Watson). Youthful, soon-to-be-wed, and having sworn chastity to her mother until marriage, Mona is determined not to break her promise. Yet, it soon becomes clear that she is willing to read between the lines of their agreement. By Mona's own definitions, she is a virgin, but it appears her understanding of the term is compromised as the film follows her through a series of anonymous sexual encounters. The production of Mona's character, and more specifically, the manufacturing of her bisexual identity throughout the film, is problematic, however, as it relies on negative associations of bisexuality as a result of mental illness and trauma.

For instance, it is made known early on in the film that Mona's father sexually abused her as a child. In a flashback to her adolescence, we see Mona's father walking towards her, unzipping his pants as she is playing with her dolls. It is revealed that he repeatedly molested Mona as a child and often forced her to perform oral sex on him. While unsettling, this scene is important as it positions Mona's abuse as the root of her oral obsession and apparent nymphomania displayed in her anonymous sexual encounters. In other words, Mona's sexual behavior is presented as a direct result of the

trauma she experienced as a child. Consequently, this explanation of her behavior becomes particularly controversial when we consider Mona's later encounter with a woman.

After having watched Mona perform oral sex on an anonymous man in an alleyway, a prostitute invites Mona up to her apartment for a drink. Mona obliges, and once at the apartment, is offered a massage by the woman. This quickly turns sensual, however, and the women become active participants in a variety of sexual acts. Interestingly, Mona does not initiate her encounter with the woman unlike all other instances in the film. Because she determinately seeks out the other interactions, all of which notably occur with men, the scene between Mona and the woman is presented as something she succumbs to out of convenience and in light of her sexual pathology. Instead, this interaction is almost posed as "something the girls do." Mona appears to straddle the image of the desirable, yet *pure* virgin who is saving herself for her future husband (the only person who can *truly* take her virginity), and the more modern image of the bisexual deviant (in this case, the hypersexual, nymphomaniac).

The film's intentional depiction of Mona's sexual behavior as a result of her childhood trauma evokes fictional associations between childhood sexual abuse and sexual identity that ultimately pose her same-sex encounter as a symptom. Along with Mona's portrayal as a nymphomaniac, Mona's childhood trauma elicits negative parallels between sexuality and mental health—specifically, correlations between bisexuality in regard to childhood sexual trauma and nymphomania.

### The Devil in Miss Jones (1972)

Similarly displayed, *The Devil in Miss Jones* (1972), directed by Gerard Damiano and starring Georgina Spelvin, tells the tale of Justine Jones, a woman who wakes to find herself in limbo after committing suicide. There, she meets a figure named Mr. Abaca who informs her that she is not only dead, but because of her suicide, and despite her seemingly exceptional record, she is being sent to hell. After pleading with Mr. Abaca to change her fate, and after he admits to having no authority in the decision, a distraught Justine confides in him: "If only I'd done something, anything, then it wouldn't seem so bad." "Surely, you're not suggesting that I send you back to rob, steal, or commit a murder?" he asks her inquisitively. After assuring Mr. Abaca she would do nothing of the sort, Justine instead conveys to him that if she were given more time, she would embody lust, one of the seven deadly sins, in an attempt to justify her eternal fate. Out of apparent boredom and curiosity, Mr. Abaca decides to grant her wish and allows Miss Jones to spend some of her remaining time living out lust. Because lust is one of the seven deadly sins, however, the audience is set up immediately to interpret Justine's sexual behavior as sinful and this becomes problematic as Justine engages in two separate sexual encounters with women later in the film.

After having fallen asleep following a wild first encounter with a man dubbed the "Teacher," a nude Justine wakes to a woman massaging her with shiny, metallic oil. Without any spoken dialogue, the women proceed to engage in oral sex and digital penetration. After some time and without warning, the screen eventually fades into a new scene. Justine's second interaction with a woman is at a later point in the film, when she participates in a threesome. In stark contrast to the first same-sex encounter, it appears

Miss Jones and the woman spend most of their time fighting over who will provide oral pleasure to the man, with only brief interactions occurring between the women themselves. While these scenes are short and may only appear in an attempt to embellish the plot and recapture the attention of viewers, they are also essential to the construction of Justine's body as one that becomes increasingly sexually deviant with each encounter, ultimately leading to her possession by lust.

Because of Justine's commitment to earning her place in hell, her depicted bisexuality suggests female same-sex interactions can only be based in sin. With her intentions made clear in the beginning of the film to use the time provided by Mr. Abaca to warrant her fate by living a life "consumed by lust," the audience is instantly permitted to make certain implications about the types of people and acts considered deserving of hell. Through the production of an increasingly sinful, deviant, hypersexualized body, Justine's sexuality is posed as a consequence of her commitment to lust.

#### Score (1974)

The final selected film of the decade, Radley Metzger's film, *Score* (1974), focuses on the life of a married bisexual couple, Elvira and Jack, who have an open, but "successful and stable marriage" governed by loosely applied rules. The plot reveals itself as it is discovered that newlywed Betsy, who recently moved to town with her husband, Eddie, has caught Elvira's eye. As per the rules of her and Jack's open relationship, Elvira is allowed six months to pursue Betsy. Opening on the last day of her six-month chase, the film follows Elvira as she launches an elaborate, manipulative plan in a final attempt to bed Betsy. That night, when Betsy and Eddie come over for dinner,

Elvira resumes trying to lure Betsy to bed. Later into the night and after several failed attempts, Jack makes a bet with Elvira regarding the success of her endeavor: if his wife cannot bed Betsy before midnight, he can seduce Eddie. However, if Elvira is able to sleep with Betsy before then, Jack will forfeit Eddie. Once in agreement, the seasoned swingers finally manage to split up Betsy and Eddie. At this point, Elvira and Jack each begin to seduce their targets, and after a brief period of time both duos proceed to have sex. By the next morning, Elvira and Jack consider the score even. Though at first it is unclear how Betsy and Eddie will react to the memory of their wild dinner party, it looks as if they have been transformed by their encounters with Elvira and Jack and in the final scene, it is apparent they will continue to pursue the swinging lifestyle they have been introduced to. Despite providing one of the largest platforms for bisexual representation, the film fails to produce authentic sexual identity through an ostensibly minor detail—a story Elvira and Jack use to explain their same-sex encounters.

In an attempt to provide Betsy and Eddie with a justifiable means of giving in to their desires, Elvira and Jack enlist what I shall refer to here as “the porcupine story.” Elvira first offers the story to Betsy, expressing to her that just before she and Jack were married, she heard rumors about him sleeping with men. After confronting him, Jack responded to Elvira by saying he would “climb aboard a porcupine if it struck [his] fancy.” Elvira explains to Betsy that after some time, she grew used to her husband sleeping with members of the same sex, and eventually the habit rubbed off on her as well. Elvira’s explanation does not instantly prompt Betsy to jump into bed with her. However, it later becomes apparent that the porcupine story has affected Betsy profoundly and predominantly influences her decision to give into Elvira as it provides

her with a means to act on her desires towards Elvira without compromising her identity. Interestingly, Jack also recalls the porcupine story when seducing Eddie. However, Jack swaps roles with his wife when reciting the story. Given the plethora of hints aimed at Eddie's closeted homosexuality throughout the film, the porcupine story similarly provides him with a means of acting on his desires towards Jack without acknowledging his identity as a gay man, which Eddie is unwilling to face throughout the film.

The porcupine story, as it clearly intends, successfully works to blur the lines of sexual orientation, providing Betsy and Eddie with the necessary room to act on their desires. While the porcupine story liberates sexual identity and attitudes, it also works to *negate* the bisexual identities of Elvira and Jack through its blurring of sexual identity. Because Elvira poses her sexuality as direct result of getting accustomed to Jack's sexual behavior, she effectively renders her sexual identity as a bisexual woman invisible. Further, as she and her husband each declare they would have sex with anyone or anything—even a porcupine—if it “struck [their] fancy,” they conjure the trope of the overly promiscuous, hypersexual, bisexual figure, who will have sex with whoever and whatever to achieve satisfaction. Just as in *Mona* and *The Devil in Miss Jones*, *Score*, Elvira's bisexuality is cast into the same negative associations as Mona and Justine.

#### 1970s Film Summary

In the films analyzed from this decade, female bisexuality appears consistently as a repercussion, hallmarked by hypersexuality and promiscuity. For example, the supposed roots of Mona's sexual behavior can be traced back to the traumatic childhood sexual abuse she experienced at the hands of her father, while Miss Jones' sexuality is

positioned as a result of her commitment to living a life consumed by lust. Finally, Elvira's same-sex encounters are posed as a product of habituation—something she picked up from her husband as if it were simply a new hobby. In sum, each of these women displays similar behavior as the films construct their identities as bisexual women: all are promiscuous, manipulative, and overtly sexual.

#### The 1980s

In the 1980s there do not appear to be many large shifts in representation from the previous decade. Indeed, in *Insatiable* (1980, Daniels), *Sorority Sweethearts* (1983, Vattelli), and *Night Trips* (1989, Blake), hypersexuality still hallmarks the films and serves as the most dominant theme. Yet a second theme carried over from the 1970s emerges again in this decade. As we saw in *Mona: The Virgin Nymph* (1970), Mona's interaction with the female prostitute is presented as something she gives in to out of convenience and to fulfill her sexual urges rather than desires, and this trend of women having sex with women as a result of boredom and/or convenience seems to seep over and into the 1980s.

#### *Insatiable* (1980)

*Insatiable* (1980), starring Marilyn Chambers, inserts viewers into the life of model/actress Sandra Chase, a wealthy and beautiful heiress with—as you may have already guessed—an insatiable sexual appetite. The plot follows Sandra as her agent, Flo, sets up a movie deal with two other actors, Renee and Roger. Along the way, Sandra engages in a variety of sexual behavior, including hooking up with one of her future castmates, and each of these encounters is expected to document Sandra's ravenous sexual cravings.

For example, in a scene following Sandra having sex with her castmate Renee upon their first meeting, Sandra decides to go for a drive. During her drive she is flagged down by a car pulled off to the side of the road. After offering the owner of the car a ride, and after some innocent flirting, Sandra pulls off to a hidden area. She proposes the idea of ciphering gas from her tank and commences seducing the man through suggestive language. For example, as the man is using a hose to try and get gas out of the tank, Sandra asks him, “You want to suck on it? Suck on it.” After some back and forth, Sandra lowers herself, unzipping the ma’s pants, instructing him to suck on the hose while she “sucks on this.” It is noted that this scene occurs in the same day as her encounter with Renee, and thus, Sandra is presented as never being completely sexually satisfied. Likely the most suggestive scenes of her hypersexuality, however, are Sandra’s fantasy sequences. One of which occurs after hearing her agent having sex in her backyard. As she listens in, Sandra begins touching herself and imaging a series of partners– several men as well as a woman– providing pleasure to her. Yet again, however, she does not seem to find satisfaction, and after her lovers have left her, Sandra begs, “more, more.”

The film offers an attempted explanation of Sandra’s sexual urges when she tells the story of her “first time.” In the midst of a conversation with her agent, Flo, Sandra shares the story of losing her virginity to the family gardener, Nick, six years earlier. The flashback in which Sandra describes the story, first appears as sexual assault. Nick appears to force Sandra into performing sex acts, calling her a “rich bitch,” and making her beg for him throughout the encounter. Upon hearing this, Flo is initially concerned. But Sandra interjects, “Oh it was so exciting Flo... I wasn’t frightened at all... I was

young, but sexually I was ready for him.” While at first glance, it seems the encounter is forced, Sandra insists she was a willing participant. Further evidence of this exists throughout her encounter with Nick. Despite telling Nick “no,” Sandra simultaneously begs for him to continue, telling him not to “tease her.” Additionally, Sandra conveys to Nick that she has been watching (and wanting) him for a long time, pleasuring herself when she sees him working outside and purposely teasing him when she saw him around the house.

Rather than Sandra’s hypersexuality being posed as a result of her seeming victimhood, Sandra insists she was a ready and willing participant. Yet, Sandra is still posed as a woman controlled by her sexual appetite, leading to a problematic representation of female bisexuality as it insinuates Sandra’s female lovers are perhaps not true sexual partners, but simply tools through which she can achieve sexual satisfaction. This appears to be supported by Sandra when she reveals Renee as one of few people who could “really take care of [her] needs.” While Sandra appears to deviate from earlier portrayals of female bisexuality in the sense that her bisexuality is not posed as a result of negative events and her lovers are not manipulated into sex, the production of her character still manages to evoke societal underpinnings of female bisexuality as hypersexual and promiscuous.

#### Sorority Sweethearts (1983)

These themes continue in the film *Sorority Sweethearts* (1983), which focuses on a group of women living in a sorority house. Cindy, Sugar, and Bobby Jo, the film’s stars, are supposed to go out of town for the weekend, but their plans are cancelled when

Bobby Jo's father calls to let them know he will be using the vacation home instead. With this, Sugar and Bobby Jo decide to go out to a party, while Cindy stays home to read. As she is reading on the couch, Cindy falls sleep, dreaming of a knight in shining armor. She is awoken later that night by Sugar, and the two women proceed upstairs to hang out and drink wine. In a vulnerable moment, Cindy reveals to Sugar that she is a virgin who has "hardly even dated," but she wants to know what it feels like to have sex and asks Sugar to explain the feeling to her. Rather than provide a description, however, Sugar begins kissing Cindy's ear and initiates sex; guiding the sexually naïve Cindy throughout their encounter. The next morning, Sugar wakes and speaks with Bobby Jo about Cindy's confession, suggesting they throw a romantic dinner party in an attempt to help Cindy lose her virginity.

Considering the dinner party comes at Sugar's suggestion, the night she spent with Cindy appears to be framed as an attempted favor. However, in the moments preceding their sexual encounter, and just as Sugar begins to initiate sex between them, she asks Cindy how it feels when she kisses her neck. "Good. Too good. I know it's not supposed to feel like that," Cindy replies. Confused, and now nibbling on Cindy's ear, Sugar asks, "Why?" While Cindy's sexuality does not appear to be posed as authentic, Sugar's sexuality appears perhaps as more fluid. For example, the morning after the women have sex, Cindy thanks Sugar for their night together before insisting she return to her own room, but as she gets up to leave, Sugar asks Cindy for a kiss. As she sets up the dinner party later that morning, Sugar's favor reads as more complex when we consider her puzzled reaction to Cindy's response as well as her behavior towards Cindy the morning after they have sex. If Sugar really was having sex with Cindy as a simple

favor to help her lose her virginity, then why bother suggesting a dinner party to do the same? It appears that unlike Cindy, Sugar considered their encounter to be sexual, but when Sugar realizes Cindy likely does not think the same, she offers instead to fulfill her attempted favor to Cindy in another way.

If we consider Sugar as a bisexual character, it becomes essential to address references to her hypersexuality. In an opening scene, for instance, Cindy tells Bobby Jo that she doesn't need an alarm clock because she has "Sugar and whoever" to wake her up every morning. Cindy's comment implies Sugar is always bringing people home, and once again incites the all too familiar trope of promiscuity. If we were, on the other hand, to consider Cindy as a bisexual character, she would appear as Sugar's opposite. She is quiet, keeps mostly to herself, and has sex for the first time during the film, whereas Sugar appears confident, unashamedly sexual, and has several sex scenes throughout the film. Yet given Cindy's obsession with story book romances and, more particularly, knights in shining armor, her sexuality is posed as largely heterosexual. Sugar, however, reads as more complex, though her character is still subjected to the trope of hypersexuality.

#### Night Trips (1989)

In *Night Trips* (1980), Tori Welles enlists the help of two psychologists for her sleep troubles; she does not seem to be able to remember any of her dreams, despite their intense sexual nature and needs help connecting "to the sexually charged person within herself." After being hooked up to a machine called the mindscan imager, Tori's dreams and fantasies are materialized on a television screen for her psychologists to monitor.

While at first only observers, her doctors eventually find themselves (quite literally) inside of Tori's fantasies. Throughout the film Tori is consistently presented as hypersexual, vigorously masturbating throughout her dreams of sexual fantasy.

Tori's fantasies are plentiful when displayed through the mindscan imager and include both men and women, but an essential scene in the construction of Tori as bisexual woman lies a few fantasies in. Notably the only female/female interaction in the film, Tori's fantasy is in part prompted by one of her psychologists, Dr. Lisa Marie Jacobs (Porsche Lynn). After a monitor pad falls off, Dr. Jacobs places the patch back onto Tori's inner thigh. As she does this, however, Tori's dream begins to change. Prompted by Dr. Jacob's touch, Tori starts to fantasize about having sex with a woman. Soon after this change, a second woman enters Tori's fantasy and the trio of women proceed to engage in sex. At the same time, and in reality, Dr. Jacobs sits next to Tori on the couch touching herself as she watches Tori's fantasy play out on the screen.

While Tori is clearly the star of the film, it is also important to look at the construction of Dr. Lisa Marie Jacobs as bisexual. After prompting Tori's fantasy, she begins touching herself, apparently lost in Tori's dream (and clearly violating any oath of service she has taken). The next day, when they continue their research, Dr. Jacobs mentions to Tori's other psychologist that she and her husband had the best sex they'd had since their honeymoon after she had been a part of Tori's threesome fantasy as it sparked her own fantasies. In this sense, Dr. Jacobs is depicted as promiscuous and scheming, having violated Tori's trust, while Tori, on the other hand, is posed as a hypersexual figure throughout the film.

### 1980s Film Summary

No large jumps seem to have been made between the 1970s and 1980s in regard to the construction of female bisexual characters. Just as we found in the 1970s, bisexual women continued to be sold, often as accessories, to pornographic plot in light of their assumed hypersexuality and willingness to have sex with any partner. These collective images, just as the decade preceding them, rely on this image to construct female bisexuality. Yet, unlike previous representations, there appears to be some efforts to remove the stigmatizing association of bisexuality and mental illness. However, female bisexuality also appears to be posed as something women do out of boredom, convenience, or simply as a favor to a friend more so in this decade than the previous.

### The 1990s

Unlike previous decades, the 1990s appear to offer the beginnings of some attempted resistance to the tired tropes of the 1970s and 1980s hypersexual bisexual who has sex with any and everyone. Through an examination of *Two Women* (1992, De Renzy), *Things Change Part One: My First Time* (Thomas, 1993), *Things Change Part Two: Letting Go* (1993, Thomas), and *Conquest* (1996, Armstrong & Steel), we see that some of these attempts are better than others, though most ultimately fall short of providing an authentic depiction of female bisexuality.

### Two Women (1992)

*Two Women* (1992), a film by Alex De Renzy, explores the secret sex life of Lisa. Unbeknownst to her sister Jen, Lisa is having an on-going, tumultuous affair with Jen's husband (her brother-in-law) Richard. In contrast to his vanilla lifestyle with Jen, Richard

and Lisa appear to have a wild sex life, often engaging in threesomes, couple swapping, sex parties, etcetera, and they even appear to belong to a group of swingers. The film begins with Jen finding dirty magazines in the trunk of Richard's car and a key to an apartment complex inside his pant pocket. While she still has no inclination that her sister is involved with her husband, Jen is sure that Richard is having an affair and decides to stay with Lisa while she thinks things through. While staying at her sister's, however, Jen begins an affair of her own with Jen's roommate Voltaire, and at the end of the film, is revealed to have been seduced into the very lifestyle her sister and husband have hidden from her for so long, despite them thinking she was "not like [them]."

Lisa is constructed as a bisexual woman from the beginning of the film. While the very first scene opens with Lisa recording Richard having sex with another woman, the next morning shows Lisa waking to the woman, who asks for the tape from the night before. As she is leaving, however, she tells Lisa she "had a really great time... and [she] wanted [her] to know that it wasn't [Richard], it was [her]" that she was into. Lisa takes the woman's comments as a sexual invitation and throughout their resulting sexual encounter, Lisa is demanding and in charge, telling the woman exactly where she wants her and what she wants her to do. Yet problems with Lisa's construction as a bisexual woman appear later in the film, after it is revealed that Richard is Lisa's brother-in-law and that the two have been engaging in a secret sex life involving multiple partners and sexual practices.

Throughout the film Lisa continually lies to her sister in an attempt to cover her (as well as Richard's) tracks. She manipulates Jen into thinking she is helping her discover what is going on with her husband all while knowing she is the other woman.

For instance, when Jen first tells Lisa about the erotic magazines and letters she found in Richard's trunk, Lisa jumps to his defense. "I believe that they were in Richard's car and everything," Lisa tells her sister, "[but] I-I don't believe these could be Richards." She again lies to her sister when they visit Richard's secret apartment, "It can't be Richard's stuff. He's probably just renting it for a client," Lisa exclaims. Lisa continues to keep Jen in the dark under the guise of assistance and aid, even offering for Jen to stay at her place so she can think things through.

In a later conversation about Jen that Lisa has with Richard, he argues that Jen "is not like [them] and that's okay. We are who we are," he insists while Lisa fingers through her sister's lingerie drawer. As Lisa goes to try on a pair of Jen's underwear, however, Richard becomes irritated and shouts at her. "Enough!" he yells. With this, Lisa responds, "that's right Richard, we *never* get enough do we?" This scene best articulates Lisa as a hypersexual and manipulative character. She is consistently presented as deceptive and manipulative and is driven by her seemingly insatiable sexual desires with little thought to possible repercussions.

#### Things Change Part One: My First Time (1993) &

#### Things Change Part Two: Letting Go (1993)

In the first two-part films of the *Things Change* (1993) series, Lisa begins to question her identity as a gay woman. Having been only with women and despite being in a long-term relationship with her partner Denise, Lisa becomes confused when she finds herself turned on by a man for the first time. In light of her new attraction, she decides the best idea is to take some space from Denise and focus on exploring her sexuality; and with this, Lisa sets out to discover herself. Distraught that her lover is gone, however,

Denise hires a man to break Lisa's heart and convince her to return home, in an attempt to drive Lisa back into her arms.

After realizing her new sexual desires towards men, Lisa informs Denise that she needs space. When Denise questions this, Lisa tells her she just needs some answers—after all, she explains, she had never given men a chance because her father walked out on her family when she was young. “If I get through this,” she continues, “we’ll be together, and I won’t have any more questions.” Denise reluctantly understands. Before allowing her to leave however, Denise pushes Lisa onto their bed and kisses her. “I love you, and I don’t want you to forget how good it is,” she tells her. “I don’t want to forget,” Lisa responds, and the two women proceed to have sex before Lisa sets off on her own. Though Lisa’s reasoning for avoiding men most of her life echoes the 1970s trend of providing an explanation of one’s sexuality, Lisa does not swear off women when she is granted her space and continues to have encounters with both women and men.

Lisa’s first step after moving out is to furnish her new apartment. After telling a salesman it is her first time buying her own furniture, he offers Lisa a drink to celebrate. Lisa agrees and gulps down a glass of wine, revealing to the salesman that she is scared to live on her own and asking him to hold her. Their encounter quickly escalates into sex, with a surprising guest—the female office assistant—joining about halfway through. This scene clearly indicates Lisa is still sexually attracted to women though she is also exploring her newfound attractions to men.

In part two, we see a despairing Denise go to desperate measures. She hires a man named Nick to make Lisa fall in love with him so he can break her heart and convince

Lisa to return to Denise. Having fallen quickly for Nick, and after having sex with him, Nick offers Lisa money. He then proceeds to tell Lisa that he doesn't continue to see women after he "fucks them." With this, the newly heartbroken Lisa decides to return to Denise, asking if she can come home. While, at first, everything appears to have worked in favor of Denise, her plan soon crumbles apart when Nick reveals the truth to Lisa. He admits to Lisa that he needed the money Denise offered to break her heart, further, he claims that he isn't the guy Lisa thinks he is and that he has fallen in love with Lisa. Disgusted by their scheme, Lisa not only rejects Nick, but once again leaves Denise. The film ends shortly after with the implication that Lisa will begin a new relationship with the salesman from part one as he drops off a bed to her new apartment. While Lisa's former lesbian identity is negated through her refusal to date men after her father's abandonment of her family, her bisexuality appears as valid in the sense that she does not desert her attractions towards women as she begins to explore her newfound desires towards men.

#### Conquest (1996)

In the final film, *Conquest* (1996), we see a mix of authentic and negated bisexuality. The plot follows the story of Rachel, a young woman who stows away on board a pirate ship while taking along her friend and apparent lover Anna. The women, however, are soon discovered by the first mate, Dutch, who reluctantly agrees to hide them. Disguised as cabin boys, Rachel and Anna go undetected on the ship. Once docked, however, Rachel overhears two crewmates discussing a mutiny and blows her cover while challenging the men. She is confronted by the Captain, "Calico" Jack Ransom (most often referred to as Blackheart), and admits she followed him because she was drawn to him. Yet Blackheart tells Rachel she is silly for doing such a thing. After he

rejects Rachel's confession of love, the two return to shore where they are met by a group of pirates from another ship. The pirates inform Blackheart that they managed to escape an attack by William James, but their Captain—who is revealed as Rachel's father—is dead. Once Rachel learns of her father's murder, she discovers Blackheart's wife was killed by the same man. With this, Rachel again professes her love to the Captain, and united by their hatred and their need for vengeance, Blackheart finally gives in to Rachel. The next day they attack William James's ship only to find he is not on board. When they return to shore, they find William James waiting for them, and while Blackheart initiates a swordfight, Rachel deals the final blow in William James's death.

While the majority of the plot does not focus around Rachel's sexuality, she is painted as bisexual in her very first sex scene, which occurs after she and Anna have boarded the ship as stowaways. Hiding in the Captain's quarters, Anna asks Rachel what might happen if they are caught. Rachel teases Anna, saying that the pirates would "have their way with [her]", giggling as she pushes her down onto a nearby couch, kissing her. Ignoring any possible danger, the women engage in several sex acts while in the captain's room. Yet, Anna's role in the film diminishes from here, and she ultimately is written out of later scenes. However, Anna aids in the construction of Rachel as a bisexual woman. In light of Rachel's attractions to Blackheart as well as her and Anna's encounters, it would be naïve to say that Rachel is simply gay, instead her sexuality appears much more fluid.

Finally, and unlike many of films examined within this paper, Rachel's identity as a bisexual woman does not appear to be written as a character flaw. In fact, other than her early scenes with Anna and Dutch, Rachel's sexuality is little else explored—with the

exception of a later scene with she and Captain Blackheart. Instead, Rachel is illustrated as determined and confident; she is driven by anger and loss. However, given that Rachel has eyes for Blackheart before the women have sex and as the film effectively erases Anna from the plot after her and Rachel's encounter, Rachel and Anna's scene that appears to establish Rachel's bisexuality is downplayed and once again falls into a collection of passive films that assume female-female sex is simply "girls being girls."

### 1990s Film Summary

In the 1990s there appears to have been some forward development in the production of female bisexuality. While some progression is evident in the films produced in this decade, not all films disbanded negative tropes of bisexuality. Unlike *Things Change* (1993) and *Conquest* (1996), De Renzy's *Two Women* (1992) relies heavily on the trope of the hypersexual and manipulative bisexual as Lisa is willing to sleep with anyone who will satisfy her sexual desires, including her sister's husband. However, in *Things Change* (1993), Lisa's character embodies a much more representative bisexual character than previous decades in the sense that she addresses the fluidity of her sexual desires. *Conquest* (1996) also centers a strong female bisexual character, yet unlike Lisa, Rachel's bisexuality is not treated as a result of her negative past—rather, her sexuality exists apart from trauma. Yet, the erasure of Anna after her and Rachel's encounter displays once again a failure to acknowledge bisexuality as authentic and poses it—once again—as something the girls do.

### The 2000s

Following the trend of the 1990s, 2000s representation of female bisexual characters provides a mix of tired tropes as well as evidence of slow-moving progression. The image of the manipulative and violent bisexual, first seen in the 1970s films *Score* (1973, Metzger), reappears and is magnified in the film *Dark Angels* (2000, Andrews) while another recurring theme continues; the idea of female bisexuality as something the girls do. As previously noted, this theme has emerged across the examined decades, such as in *Mona: The Virgin Nymph* (1970, Benveniste & Ziehm), *Sorority Sweethearts* (1983, Vатели), and *Conquest* (1996, Armstrong). This theme is once again reiterated in *Rawhide* (2003, Steele). A third theme that has been woven throughout the films examined in this decade— and has most persistently continued on through the decades examined— is that of the hypersexual female bisexual character. This most notably occurs in *Dark Angels* (2000, Andrews), though it appears to be present in each of the 2000s films. However, resistance continues into the decade as well though the film *In the Garden of Shadows* (2003, Ninn).

### Dark Angels (2000)

In a film directed by Nic Andrews, *Dark Angels* (2000) follows star Jewel De Nyle as she fights her vampire transformation. While driving home from work one night, Jewel runs out of gas and is forced to pull over into a nearby parking lot. Unbeknownst to Jewel as she approaches the only other car in the lot to ask for help, a vampire mistress is inside with her most recent prey—terrified, she runs to a nearby police station to report what she has seen. After being taken home by Officer Cross, however, she finds herself plagued by nightmares of the attack. Jewel tosses and turns as she sleeps, eventually

waking from her night terrors only to find herself face to face with the vampire mistress. The mistress proceeds to seduce Jewel, and after they have sex, she bites the inside of Jewel's thigh before disappearing. Soon after Jewel is taken to the hospital from the mistress's bite, she is mistakenly pronounced dead only to found to be alive by a startled morgue assistant mere hours later. Jewel flees the hospital and returns home, but she continues to transform and finds herself seeing visions of nearby vampires, eventually leaving home to find where they are hiding. Unknowingly followed by Officer Cross, Jewel is drawn to the vampire's den, and her intentions become clear as she pulls a gun from her jacket. Though Jewel and Officer Cross are able to kill the mistress and her gang of vampires, Jewel becomes upset when she realizes she will never return to being human, and she begs Officer Cross to kill her, saying she cannot live her life in such a way. Reluctantly, Cross agrees to end Jewel's life, and as he leaves the vampire's den and the sun continues to rise, the final moments of the film reveal a single female vampire has survived the attack.

While Jewel is the focus of the plot, I will instead turn my attention to the construction of the female vampires throughout the film, particularly the mistress. Speaking generally, the female vampires in the film appear to have sexual appetites as big as (if not bigger than) their thirst for blood, and most of them engage in bisexual behavior during the film. The mistress vampire, for example, has several scenes that appear to situate—and often equate—her sexuality with her unquenchable thirst, impulsivity, and bisexuality. In her first scene, for instance, the mistress is mistakenly picked up by a man who believes she is a prostitute. Though she has sex with the man, the mistress does not hesitate to turn him into her prey when they have finished. When

the mistress realizes her kill has been witnessed by Jewel, she seduces Jewel having sex with her before biting her. The mistress, along with the other female vampires, is depicted as promiscuous, murderous, and hypersexual—all trends we have seen before in the creation of female bisexual characters.

### Rawhide (2003)

City girl Bianca returns home to the family ranch following her father's death in Nicholas Steele's *Rawhide* (2003). Bianca is accompanied by her lover Mae Lei as she returns to the ranch, and the plot thickens soon after their arrival when we learn Bianca has not only not returned to pay her respects to her late father, but to decide the fate of the ranch. Bianca is torn however—though she at first seems keen on selling the ranch, insisting she doesn't belong, she has a change of heart when she falls for a ranch hand named Lee, and ultimately decides not to sell. Throughout the film, Bianca has limited sexual encounters, yet the two scenes she does have serve an important purpose in the production of her perceived bisexuality.

In her first scene, as Bianca looks over family photographs, she and Mae Lei briefly discuss the fate of the ranch. “[My parents] were happy here. I just don't know what to do, I feel so lost,” Bianca confesses. “Destiny is not a matter of chance, it's a matter of choice,” Mae Lei replies as she leans in to kiss Bianca. Mae Lei's advice is followed by the women engaging in a series of sexual activities. Overall their encounter appears very loving; they make love by the fireplace and gently caress and kiss one another throughout. However, as both women ultimately fall for male workers of the ranch during their stay, Bianca and Mae Lei's relationship—as we have seen before—is posed as something the girls do that

ultimately does not affect dominate heterocentric values and norms. For instance, in a scene shortly after Bianca and Mae Lei have sex, Bianca watches Mae Lei as Sean teaches her to ride a horse. Lee approaches Bianca, telling her he thinks Sean is “sweet on” Mae Lei. Bianca, however, does not grow jealous when she sees her lover falling for another, suggesting her relationship with Mae Lei is absolved of such emotions and is grounded in sexual pleasure alone. At the same time, the refusal to provide an explanation of Bianca and Mae Lei’s relationship allows the audience to assume that women may have sex with women, but women do not end up in fulfilling, romantic relationships with other women. Finally, because both Bianca and Mae Lei end up falling for male ranch hands by the end of the film, it appears their relationship was never one based on commitment, and this seems to be confirmed by Mae Lei when she admits to Sean that she has never felt the way she feels about him before.

#### In the Garden of Shadows (2003)

Michael Ninn’s *In the Garden of Shadows* (2003) tells the tale of a fallen angel, Anais, who has long been cast from heaven for loving another of her kind. Anais is fated to wander the earth as an immortal among mortals, doomed to “indulge [her] earthly vices in search of true love, yet never capturing it.” Throughout the film we see Anais through a series of sexual encounters with both men and women in an attempt to find love, though she admits these encounters bring her only temporary relief from her inflicted torment. Interestingly, while the film is guided by Anais’s narration, it has no set plot outside of Anais’s words.

Anais begins her story by telling the audience how she was cast from heaven; having fallen in love with another angel, she was cast down in punishment by God. However, Anais reveals she has created her “own unheavenly garden,” which she refers to as “Eden Lost.” She portrays her antithetical garden as “an existence where no limits exist, and all indulgences are welcomed.” As Anais continues to describe her garden, she watches as a woman, notably dressed in all white, sits on a bench touching herself. From her carriage, Anais, who is covered in black attire from head to toe, observes the woman—eventually joining her. The stark color contrast in the women’s clothes provides a unique visual of uniting yet opposing forces. In color psychology the colors white and black are typically attributed to either moral (white) or immoral (black) meanings. The color white has most often been used to symbolize innocence and light; it has long stood to exemplify one’s purity. For example, the use of a white wedding gown is intended to demonstrate a bride’s chastity. The color black, on the other hand, is most often attributed with negative connotations (Sherman & Clore, 2009). By placing the women in juxtaposing clothing, the film appears to reject the idea that the encounter between the women is one of pure evil or innocence, ultimately blurring existing religious beliefs regarding same sex desire. While she is with the woman, further voiceover is provided, and Anais continues:

I have had ample opportunity to observe these hapless mortals. Driven by their basest desires, controlled by their feelings... They protect their secret lives fiercely, more afraid of the judgment of others of their kind rather than that of the Almighty. I wonder what they would say if they knew the truth. He doesn’t care. What they choose to do with their lives is on their hands until final judgement comes, and then, their desires count for little.

As Anais points out, mortals concern themselves more over the nature of their sexuality and sexual behavior than the Almighty (read as God). This too, in addition to the

symbolism provided during the women's encounter, looks to affirm the film's departure from religious beliefs of same sex desire as inherently sinful. Overall, it appears the film resists repetitive tropes and themes of female bisexuality often found within pornographic film.

### 2000s Film Summary

In the 2000s we find an interesting mix of representation. *Dark Angels* (2000), for example, plays on the image of the abhorrently dangerous and promiscuous bisexual, summoning the trope of the hypersexual and the deranged criminal. As we have seen in previous films, most recently *Conquest* (1996), *Rawhide* (2003) presents female bisexuality in a context that is not harmful towards heterocentric norms by once again displaying both female bisexual characters as ultimately ending up with men. Finally, *In the Garden of Shadows* (2003) manages to escape many of these tropes and moves in a much more progressive direction in Anais's depiction. Though she is a fallen angel cast from heaven after falling for another of her kind, Anais departs from negative religious beliefs surrounding bisexuality when she notes how "the Almighty" could care less about such interactions while humanity is more so concerned about them.

### DISCUSSION

This study is the first to explore constructions and representations of female bisexual characters in pornographic film across multiple decades. Through a close reading of 13 pornographic films I found several tropes and themes that dominated these works; these include female bisexuality as something the girls do, the manipulative and the violent bisexual, female bisexuality as a response to trauma and victimhood, and

finally, the hypersexual female bisexual. After completing an analysis of pornographic films that paid specific attention to the presentation of female bisexuality, it became clear many of these tropes have persisted and plagued pornographic films throughout the decades. Together, these themes work to negate female bisexuality by ultimately posing it as an accessory to pornographic plot rather than as a valid sexual identity. Alongside these dominant themes, however, my research has also revealed less prevalent themes of resistance which allowed for more complex representations of female bisexuality.

### Something the Girls Do?

While much of the findings presented in this work support previous research, I also found a new theme that appeared throughout the films which I propose as the theme “something the girls do.” I felt it necessary to generate this category as several films attempted to negate female characters bisexuality by posing their female-female interactions as fleeting while interactions between women and men appeared as lasting. This theme was present among several films, including *Mona: The Virgin Nymph* (1970), *Sorority Sweethearts* (1983), *Conquest* (1996), and *Rawhide* (2003). For instance, Mona’s only female-female sexual encounter in the film is negated as it is the only encounter she does not initiate despite her rampage of anonymous rendezvous. Similarly, Sugar and Cindy’s sex scene is presented as a favor in *Sorority Sweethearts* (1983). Though Sugar has sex with Cindy in an effort to help her lose her virginity, this encounter is rejected as it does not epitomize penile-vaginal sex, and Cindy ultimately loses her true virginity to a man. In *Conquest* (1996), Rachel’s same sex interaction with Anna vanishes into thin air as Anna is erased from the plot with no explanation. Finally, in *Rawhide* (2003), Bianca and Mae Lei’s encounter is downplayed—especially when we

consider that each of the women is paired off with a male partner by the end of the film. Presenting female bisexuality in such a way has harsh implications. This display of female bisexuality ultimately poses no threat to heterosexuality and heterocentric values of nuclear family models by erasing and negating the perceived authenticity of bisexual identity. Bisexual women, under this category, do *not* end up with women—however, they may sleep with women while they wait for a man to sweep them off their feet or to satisfy their sexual urges.

#### The Violent and/or Manipulative Female Bisexual Character

The bisexual killer is a recurring image throughout this analysis, and this was especially evident in Nic Andrews's *Dark Angels* (2000). In the film the vampire mistress and her minions are depicted as having sexual appetites as large as their thirst for blood and the women throughout are portrayed as inherently violent as they hunt down innocent prey, draining their blood and their lives. This trope reveals a correlation of female bisexuality to violence and criminality. The bisexual female character is assumed as violent because her sexuality is assumed as deviant. This appears to mirror the work of Bryant who reasons associations of violence are derived from “polic[ies] of guilt by orientation” and aid in the “perpetuat[ion] [of] hatred towards bisexuals and other sexual minorities” (Bryant, 1997, p. 66).

In a similar vein, bisexual women are often depicted as inherently manipulative—often saying and doing whatever they want in an attempt to feed their insatiable sexual deviancy. We see this trend in several of the analyzed films: *Mona: The Virgin Nymph* (1970), *Score* (1974), and finally, *Two Women* (1992). In *Mona* (1970), for instance,

Mona is a rather convincing liar. Throughout the film she constantly lies to her fiancé Jim about her rendezvous outside of their relationship, keeping them hidden until he discovers her in the act. In *Score* (1974), Elvira's scheme to lure Betsy into bed is undeniably calculating—taking course over the span of several months— as she takes advantage of Betsy's trust and uses it to her advantage. In a more dramatic example, *Two Women* (1992) shows Lisa as a pathological liar, convincing her sister that her husband has no other woman all the while *being* the other woman.

Overall these themes support the work of Bryant, who found that images of the bisexual killer were abundant in addition to “examples of bisexual psychos, murderers, and misfits.” As Bryant explains in his research, this is likely because “in many countries, government or film industry policy dictate[d] that bisexual characters [could] not be represented in a positive light.” Providing the example of the Motion Picture Production Code, Bryant asserts openly bisexual characters were not allowed for almost thirty years; further, when this policy did change, such depictions were only permitted under negative stereotypes to discourage viewers from supposedly deviant lifestyles (Bryant, 1997, p. 59-60).

#### Female Bisexuality as a Result of Victimhood and Trauma

A reliance on female bisexuality as a result of negative circumstance also appears in the 1970s, most often in the form of the mentally ill bisexual character whose pathology has been prompted by trauma. This seems to be the case in *Mona: The Virgin Nymph* (1970) as well as *The Devil in Miss Jones* (1972). When we consider the image of the trauma induced, mentally ill bisexual, our minds likely first wander to *Mona: The*

*Virgin Nymph* (1970) and the sexual abuse she suffered as a child that drove her oral fixation and nymphomania. Perhaps, however, we reflect on the ill fate of an increasingly maddened Justine in *The Devil in Miss Jones* (1972). In either case, Mona and Justine both follow suit in their depictions of mental health and victimhood as Mona is illustrated a victim of her father's sexual abuse and Justine falls victim to lust.

This trope again reiterates and further supports Bryant's work. In his text, Bryant makes the claim that "bisexual women in film have been cast in the role of victims for decades," and both Mona and Justine appear to confirm the early existence of this association in pornographic film as well (Bryant, 1997, p. 71). Bryant also suggests mental instability serves as "one of the many traits endemic to bisexuals in film" and he further claims "the production of films with bisexual killers and miscreants has abated somewhat since the mid-1980s" (Bryant, 1997, p. 61, 66). I too found a similar trend in my research. It is possible to speculate that this disassociation with the mentally ill bisexual may have resulted from the removal of homosexuality from the DSM-II in 1973. However, given the addition of Sexual Orientation Disturbance (SOD) in its place, it is clear sociocultural ideologies and societal norms surrounding bisexuality did not dissipate with this removal (Drescher, 2015, p.571). As Bryant notes: "Hollywood is still not above using bisexuality to underscore the unsavory nature of its murderous characters" (Bryant, 1997, p. 66).

### The Hypersexual Female Bisexual Character

Perhaps the most redundant trope, and likely the most well-known, is that of the hypersexual bisexual. An image that has been created over and over again, the overly

promiscuous bisexual is rampant in pornographic film and many of the films analyzed within this paper were found to construct such characters. This first evident example of this can be found in *Mona: The Virgin Nymph* (1970), as Mona epitomizes the hypersexual bisexual character through her anonymous sexual encounters. Also from the 1970s, *The Devil in Miss Jones* (1972) similarly abides by this trend through Justine's descent into madness as she delves deeper into lust. Following suit from the same decade is *Score* (1974), as Elvira is depicted as a hypersexual, bisexual swinger. This pattern continues on into the following decade with *Insatiable* (1980), which relies on the hypersexuality of Sandra to drive the plot. The 1989 film *Night Trips* further perpetuates the overtly sexual bisexual through Tori's inability to prevent her sexual urges from bubbling over into her dreams. By the 1990s, this trend seems to dissipate slightly, however, it can be found in *Two Women* (1992), which depicts Lisa as hypersexual through her encounters with multiple partners. This again supports the work of Bryant, who declares "one of the most persistently clichéd film characters is the oversexed bisexual who will have sex with anyone and anything" and this rings true as we see the trope of the hypersexual bisexual persist throughout the decades (Bryant, 1997, p. 83).

#### Pockets of Resistance

Though many of the films examined in this work mirror the tropes Bryant has identified in his text, it also became clear that there were pockets of resistance—though few—that fought to display female bisexuality in an authentic light rather than simply as an accessory to pornographic plot. In my research I found that the two-part series *Things Change* (1993) and *In the Garden of Shadows* (2003) both appeared to deviate from and provide resistance to dominant tropes. In *Things Change* (1993), for example, Lisa's

bisexuality is presented as fluid as she does not abandon her attractions to women after expressing her desire to explore her sexuality after her newfound attractions towards men. *In the Garden of Shadows* (2003) also appears to work against dominant tropes of bisexuality and deviance; despite a plot centered around religion, Anais is not punished as result of her sexual identity but is cast from heaven for falling in love as angels are not permitted to indulge mortal feelings. Further, Anais directly confronts sexuality as sin, arguing that it is a creation of mortals and that the Almighty “cares little.”

## CONCLUSION

This analysis set out to analyze presentations and constructions of female bisexual identity in pornographic film from the 1970s to the early 2000s. The research identified several dominant themes and tropes derived from pornographic films featuring female bisexual characters. Themes identified included bisexuality as something the girls do, the manipulative and violent female bisexual character, female bisexuality as a result of victimhood and trauma, and the hypersexual female bisexual character. While present in later decades, resistance to these tropes was limited in the films examined. Overall, this work supports and contributes to previous findings, elaborating in particular on the tropes proposed in Wayne Bryant’s 1997 text, *Bisexual Characters in Film: From Anais to Zee*. As the first in-depth analysis of female bisexual character construction specifically in pornographic film, this thesis contributes to the field of pornography research, and it invites future scholars to turn their attention to this topic and expand existing works.

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## Appendix 1: Film Details

## 1970s films

1. Mona (1970)  
Director(s): Michael Benveniste & Howard Ziehm  
Starring: Fifi Watson as Mona
2. The Devil in Miss Jones (1973) (AVN Top 500 film)  
Director(s): Gerard Damiano (AVN Hall of Fame)  
Starring: Georgina Spelvin as Justine Jones
3. Score (1974)  
Director(s): Radley Metzger (AVN Hall of Fame)  
Starring: Claire Wilbur as Elvira  
Lynn Lowry as Betsy  
Gerald Grant as Jack  
Casey Donovan as Eddie

## 1980s films

1. Insatiable (1980) (AVN Top 500 film)  
Director(s): Stu Segal (as Godfrey Daniels)  
Starring: Marilyn Chambers as Sandra Chase
2. Sorority Sweethearts (1983) (AVN Top 500 film)  
Director(s): Paul Vatelli  
Starring: Bridgette Monet as Cindy  
Linda Shaw as Sugar
3. Night Trips (1989) (AVN Top 500 film)  
Director(s): Andrew Blake (AVN Hall of Fame)

Starring: Tori Welles as herself

Porsche Lynn as Dr. Lisa Marie Jacobs

Randy Spears as unnamed Doctor

#### 1990s films

1. Two Women (1992) (AVN Top 500 film)

Director(s): Alex De Renzy (AVN Hall of Fame)

Starring: Ashlynn Gere as Lisa

Victoria Paris as Jen

Randy Spears as Richard

2. Things Change Part 1: My First Time (1993) & Things Change Part 2: Letting Go (1993)

Director(s): Paul Thomas (AVN Hall of Fame)

Starring: Nikki Dial as Lisa

Deidre Holland as Denise

3. Conquest (1996) (AVN Top 500 film)

Director(s): Brad Armstrong (AVN Hall of Fame) & Greg Steel

Starring: Jenna Jameson as Rachel

Shayla LaVeaux as Anna

Vince Vouyer as Captain 'Calico' Jack Ransom (also referred to as Blackheart)

#### 2000s films

1. Dark Angels (2000) (AVN Top 500 film)

Director(s): Nic Andrews

**Starring:** Jewel De Nyle as Bitch

Sydney Steele as the Mistress vampire

Dillon Day as Officer Jack Cross

2. **Rawhide (2003) (AVN Top 500 film)**

**Director(s):** Nicholas Steele

**Starring:** Carmen Luvana as Bianca

Kaylani Lei as Mae Lei

3. **In the Garden of Shadows (2003) (ANN top 500 film)**

**Director(s):** Michael Ninn (AVN Hall of Fame)

**Starring:** Anais Alexander as Anais the angel