

From Porno Chic to Porno Bleak

*Representing the Urban Crisis in 1970s
American Pornography*

WHITNEY STRUB

AN INEVITABLE SCENE FROM the hit 1974 vigilante film *Death Wish* perfectly crystallized pervasive media narratives of urban dread, as two sneering muggers swagger through a subway car, their menace accented by the flickering lights and grinding roar of the tracks. Passengers scurry away, leaving only the placid-looking Charles Bronson, on whom the creeps pull switchblades. The film solicits audience cheers when Bronson nonchalantly draws a gun, blowing them both away.

The scene's inevitability rests on the subway's role as mobile metonym for the much-bemoaned urban crisis of the 1970s. According to the reactionary narrative of *Death Wish* and companion films such as *Dirty Harry* (1971), the crisis stemmed from a breakdown in law and order, as petty bureaucrats and legally hamstrung police left men, women, and children unsafe on city streets, susceptible to the criminal intents of a wide array of muggers, rapists, and murderers. While liberals disputed the causes of the crisis, few in the mid-1970s questioned its existence, as urban public space took on dangerous hues in media representation. Nothing better symbolized the urban crisis than the New York City subway train, rickety, often graffiti-scarred, and—if movies like *Death Wish*; *The French Connection* (1971); *The Taking of Pelham One Two Three* (1974); and even Woody Allen's *Bananas* (1971) were to be believed—lawless.

Film scholars have certainly noted the role of 1970s American film in

propagating ominous visions of the city that “for the most part reproduced and validated the right’s discourse on the urban crisis while amplifying the suburban middle-class fears the discourse helped to generate,” as Steve Macek writes.¹ For the most part, however, these analyses hew close to the Hollywood mainstream, or the opposition it drew from marginal but reputable sources, such as the independent black films *Killer of Sheep* (1977) and *Bush Mama* (1979).² Less recognized are hardcore pornographic films such as Shaun Costello’s *Fiona on Fire* (1977), which virtually replicates the iconic *Death Wish* scene, this time on a New York commuter train. Everything from the mise-en-scène to the costuming matches the Bronson film, except this time when the creeps clear out the car, two women are left behind. Instead of a cathartic vigilante killing, what ensues is a brutal rape scene.

“Urban crisis” was a phrase that emanated out of macroeconomic trends such as deindustrialization that had begun as early as the 1950s but grew increasingly visible and even visceral in the wake of the urban unrest that had coursed across the nation in the late 1960s, most notoriously in Watts, Newark, and Detroit. In New York City, the primary base of early hardcore filmmaking, a heightened sense of economic and political crisis suffused the 1970s, as the city teetered on the brink of bankruptcy by 1975, while racial and ethnic tensions swelled. Meanwhile, Times Square, in midtown Manhattan, acted as a virtual open red-light district, besotted with lurid theater marquees promising to test the legal boundaries with ever-increasing explicitness. Indeed, the connection between the so-called urban crisis of the 1970s and the emergence of hardcore pornography is generally understood as a material or spatial one: as downtowns decayed in the face of white flight and disinvestment, the abandoned spaces provided ideal sites for the proliferation of small storefront adult movie theaters and the repurposing of older, now defunct cinemas, resulting in a smutty blight etched across the urban landscape.³

Fiona on Fire suggests another angle: that heterosexual smut frequently colluded in the reactionary narrativization of the urban crisis, joining the mass media in promoting images of a lawless urban jungle that reinforced middle-class white fear and hostility to the city. While theorizations of the genre emphasize its utopian formal qualities, in fact heterosexual porn of the era was often markedly *dystopian* diegetically, representationally, and also in its regularized depiction of sexual violence. Shooting guerilla-style and making vivid use of urban locations, 1970s heterosmut offered a vision of the urban crisis in which

the erosion of the social contract provided sexual opportunities—but also grave sexual danger for women. From alleys to subways to apartments, city space was presented as rife with threats. In this sense, straight porn reinforced the dominant cultural narrative of the urban crisis being peddled by such Hollywood scare films as *Dirty Harry* and *Death Wish*.

As imbricated as straight porn was with the city, gay male pornography of the decade made even *more* striking use of urban space, but to very different ends. For gay men, any breakdown in a social order partly defined by violent, state-sponsored homophobia was an advance, and indeed, gay porn documented the historical moment in which once-furtive cruising spaces took public shape as affirmations of pride and visibility. From its very inception, gay porn offered a powerful counternarrative of the city. While the straight world indulged its urban anxieties in *Death Wish* and *Fiona on Fire* (fig. 1.1), the early gay hardcore film *The Back Row* (1972) reclaimed the subway car as a site of pleasure and desire. Here, stars Casey Donovan and George Payne drift from the Port Authority bus station, where they cruised one another through sustained eye contact, to the Times Square subway stop. For them, the empty car they enter is no threat but rather opportunity; the two men build erotic tension as they fondle their respective crotches enticingly, before exiting at the Christopher Street stop, delivered to gay-friendly terrain where they continue their erotic flirtation (figs. 1.2, 1.3).

In this essay I analyze the still underexamined body of pornographic 1970s cinema, using both pioneering early films that set the template for the narrative hardcore feature and also representative works from across the decade to show how straight porn often proved complicit in a reactionary cultural narrative whereas gay porn called into question the very heteronormative underpinnings of the “urban crisis” framework. I also suggest that contestations over the periodization of “the seventies” or the “Golden Age of Pornography” might take into account the use of urban space as a useful historical marker; between the secretive smut of earlier years, generally shot inside for legal reasons, and the reprivatized porn of the 1980s that followed the brutal new enclosure movement of the rising carceral state, the documentation, and indeed constitution of, public sex acts as a central historicized marker of this era.

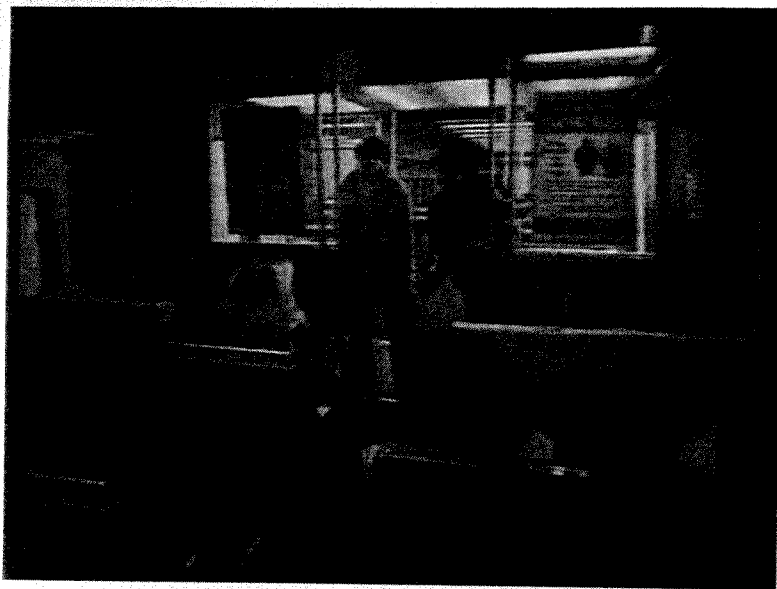
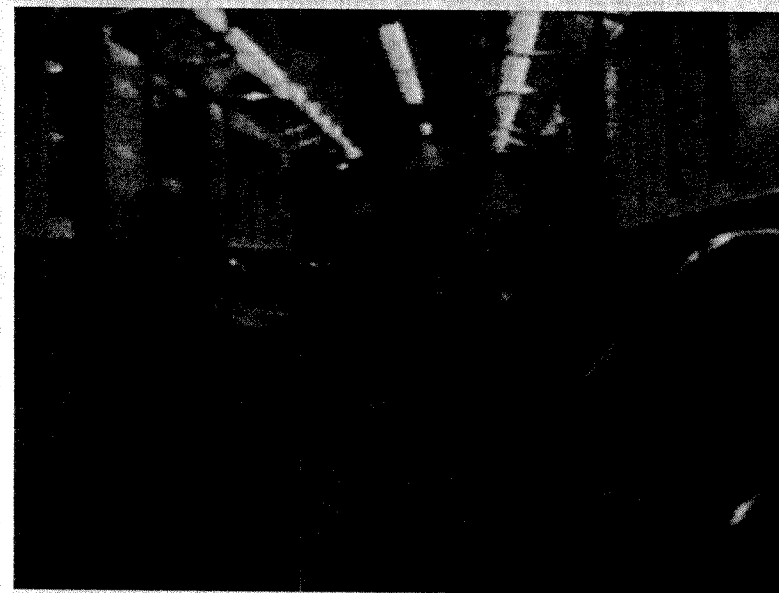
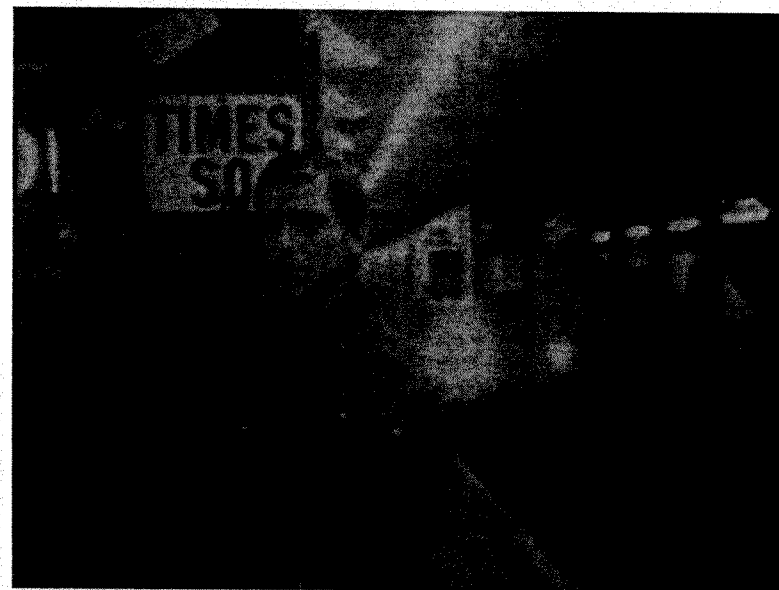


FIGURE 1.1. The commuter car as a site of sexual danger in *Fiona on Fire* (Shaun Costello, 1978).

The Urban Pornotrope

Thomas Jefferson failed to chart the future with his ideal of the agrarian yeoman farmer, but the dyspeptic founding father did set the tone for subsequent visions of urbanism, likening cities to degeneracy, cankers, and sores in *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1787) and calling them “pestilential to the morals, the health and the liberties of man” in an 1800 letter.⁴ As the industrial revolution helped spur urbanization, cultural representations played a key role in keeping Jefferson’s animosity alive. While cities were indeed sites of crime, poverty, squalor, inequality, and pollution, sensationalized sexual representations often served as one of the most visceral venues for antiurbanism. The penny press itself took shape largely around the 1836 murder of prostitute Helen Jewett; salacious pamphlets such as *Prostitution Exposed* (1839) doubled as exposés and guidebooks; the dime novels of George Thompson and George Lippard mixed class consciousness with lurid reveling in urban debauchery, leading one scholar to term their books, with such titles as *City Crimes* and *Venus in Boston*, “urban pornogothic”; and even reform-minded serious literature such as Stephen



FIGURES 1.2 AND 1.3. The subway system as gay erotic nexus in *The Back Row* (Jerry Douglas, 1972).

Crane's *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* (1893) used a young woman's descent into prostitution to chart the ravages of the city.⁵

By the time the cinema emerged at the dawn of the twentieth century, these urban pornotopes informed its very development. Early nickelodeon features built on a specifically urban mode of spectatorship. The "white slave" panic of the 1910s coincided with the birth of the modern narrative feature film, with *The Traffic in Souls* (1913) helping shape cinematic grammar even as it depicted New York City's streets as rife with nefarious sex traffickers who sought to abduct innocent white women and coerce them into a life of "iniquity," as the film has it.⁶ While graphic stag films also accompanied more socially acceptable movies from the birth of the medium on, their illegality pulled them away from actual city space; the exploitation films whose prurient charge drew audiences all the way into the 1960s, meanwhile, further perpetuated antiurbanism in their various narratives of sin, drugs, and death.⁷

Events of the late 1960s helped solidify what we might call the urban pornotope, a symbolic fusion of city space and sexual depravity. Liberalization of obscenity law coincided with urban unrest and disinvestment in American cities to open new space for pornography-oriented businesses to take root. Adult bookstores and storefront theaters proliferated as traditional shops moved out and downtowns became economic deserts. But the urban pornotope was inscribed *textually* as well, most visibly in the grindhouse exploitation films that often depicted a nightmarish Times Square even as they played it. Tawdry works such as *The Sex Killer* (1967) and *The Curse of Her Flesh* (1968) suggested urban chaos driven by dark desires, a sexual noir in which the depravity was linked visually to the stark location shooting that left "sexploitation" films "inextricably tied" to the concrete geography of Times Square.⁸

When hardcore porn moved aboveground in 1970, as liberalized obscenity laws and a relaxation in public sexual mores made even greater openness possible, its pioneering works proved insistently urban. *Mona: The Virgin Nymph*, often regarded as the first hardcore narrative feature film, begins in a city park and moves quickly to a Los Angeles sidewalk, where heroine Mona approaches a passing man with a brazen inquiry: "Do you want me to suck your cock?" The act itself is completed in an adjacent alley. *Tomatoes*, another hardcore front-runner, foregrounds its urbanism as well, opening with a man walking among sleek downtown San Francisco corporate towers

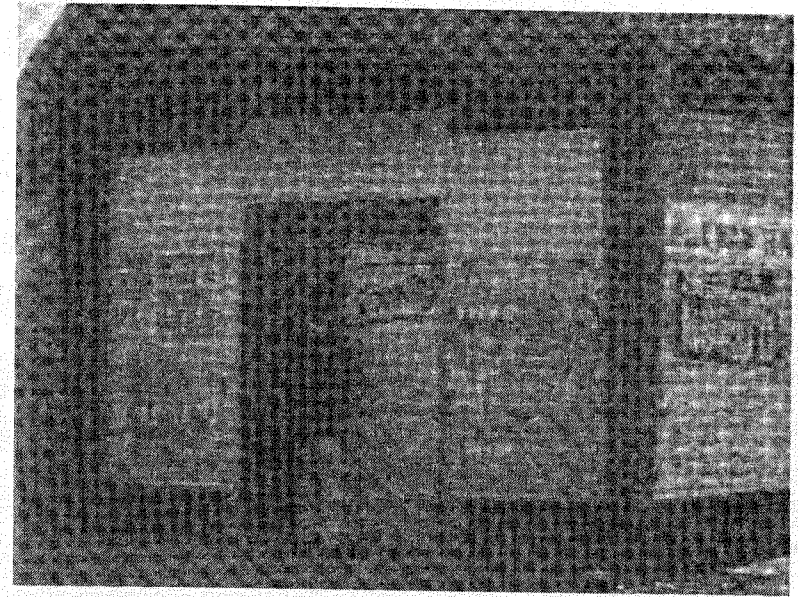


FIGURE 1.4. Urban decay literally enables hard core in *Tomatoes* (Joel Roberts, 1970).

(fig. 1.4). Even the film's opening credits were painted on the sides of buildings and tacked to public bulletin boards. Finally, the New York City-lensed *Bacchanale* featured an apparitional female lead drifting past tenement buildings, their intricate fire escape ladders a surreal geometry for the roving camera.

Not all heterosmut relied on the city; the genre also had its share of escapist fare, pastoral drama, and futuristic science fiction. But so embedded was the urban pornotope that all three of the definitive "porno chic" films of 1972–73 employed it. *Deep Throat*, the most famous porn film of all time, began with a protracted credit sequence of Linda Lovelace driving through Miami, set against the city skyline. *Behind the Green Door* exuded its San Francisco setting throughout. Despite being set primarily in Limbo en route to Hell, even the existentialist *The Devil in Miss Jones* nodded to New York in its opening suicide scene, where an open window reveals a busy street several floors below as Georgina Spelvin's title character prepares to take her own life. The view of the city street acts as a metaphor for the cold, impersonal world she is leaving behind. As New York exerted a gravitational force on the burgeoning hardcore industry over the course

of the decade, the helicopter (or, for the budget-strained, ferry) view of the city skyline practically acted as a geographic money shot over dozens upon dozens of opening credits, providing the “proof” of the urban setting.

This fetishistic insistence on the authenticity of the environs paralleled the location-shoot fixation of the concurrent New Hollywood cadre, in which directors William Friedkin, Martin Scorsese, Brian De Palma, and others relied on real urban space to distinguish their work from the classical Hollywood set-based shoots. Many of these films, mainstream and porn, responded to the perceived urban crisis, but few literalized its metaphors as jaggedly as Shaun Costello’s early *Forced Entry*, shot mostly in 1971 and released in 1973, which intercut footage from war-ravaged Vietnam with New York City streets to invoke the “asphalt jungle.” The militantly unerotic film features a deranged veteran stalking, raping, and killing the women who stop at his gas station, with startling scenes of sexual violence that suggest a disintegrating social order and ever-present danger, as the villain peeps and invades from alleys, fire escapes, and windows. If such Scorsese films as *Mean Streets* (1973) and *Taxi Driver* (1976) depict “a city where a stable heterosexual urban space has disappeared,” as one film scholar suggests, Costello’s film extends this theme, albeit escalated far beyond Hollywood’s limits of representation.⁹

Forced Entry was unique in its viciousness, but it nonetheless helped set the template for pornographic visions of the city even in milder fare. Certainly pleasure and danger intermingled, but were distributed in highly gendered fashion, with women bearing the overwhelming burden of risk. *Mona* itself led the way on this front; while *Forced Entry* is remembered specifically as violent rape porn, *Mona* presented itself as comedy. Mona’s desire drives much of the film, as she pursues men to fellate in her sexual explorations while intending to technically remain a virgin until her impending marriage. Yet the film fits a remarkable amount of sexual coercion into its seventy minutes, beginning with a disturbing flashback to the young Mona learning how to perform oral sex on her father, who snaps, “You know you like it, stop playing games” after she cries, “Daddy, please don’t make me do it again.”

Back in the diegetic present, Mona learns about the gendering of urban space through force. While deserted alleys seem like opportune spots for her to exercise her desires, attending a small storefront porn theater to “do her thing,” as she tells one willing man, results in disas-

ter when her fiancé suddenly storms in. “You cocksucker!” he shouts, pulling her away from her partner. “I’ll fix you, you little bitch.” From there, the film cuts to a shot of Mona tied spread-eagle to her bed, as her fiancé invites her various partners from earlier in the film to “fix” her. A rape orgy ensues as she whimpers, “Don’t fuck me, please,” and the film ends with Mona running out of the room to weep in her mother’s arms.

Certainly not every hardcore film featured depictions of rape or sexual assault. *School Girl* (1971), one of the best-regarded early porn films, was driven wholly by the desire and curiosity of its protagonist, a college student who decides to undertake research on sexual subcultures by answering classified sex ads in the *Berkeley Barb*, a weekly underground newspaper. The student signifies her enthused consent verbally and physically throughout the film’s several sex scenes. Yet even taking into consideration such important exceptions, *Mona* and *Forced Entry* in some ways set the poles for 1970s heterosmut—poles that, like sadists and sissies in 1950s cold war sexual politics, really collapsed into one regulatory model, this time of a city dominated by male aggression toward women.¹⁰ Rape might come in the form of grim, violent force, or it might be absorbed into a comedic structure that presented it as benign and laughable, but either way, it was far more present than most surveys of porn outside the feminist antiporn movement have acknowledged.¹¹ In both variants, sexual violence and coercion were central to the urban pornotrope.

For films that took the *Forced Entry* approach of brutal realism, various alibis strove to narratively justify the graphic representations. In that film, the rapist himself winds up committing suicide after two drugged-out hippie women respond to his assault not with fear but obliviousness, then mockery, undermining his male power. Thus the film is able to conclude on a deconstructive note in regard to masculinity—after wallowing in violence against women for its duration.¹² Director Costello took another approach to depicting rape in the aforementioned *Fiona on Fire* scene, which takes place as a flashback (the title character is seemingly shot to death in the shower after the film’s opening sex scene, though like the 1944 noir film *Laura*, she turns up unexpectedly alive later); the detective investigating Fiona’s death interviews his own brother, a pimp, in the back of a limousine driving through Times Square. Having linked Fiona to his brother, the detective assumes she hooked for him. “Worked for me? She paid me,” he exclaims, explaining that “she made me set up a scene—I

mean, it was weird! It was far-out!" When Costello then cuts back to the rape scene itself, the spectator is unburdened by any qualms that might have come from watching a protracted, violent rape in which Fiona first hides behind the train car's door as the two invading thugs attack another female passenger, before being pulled out and herself assaulted; it is, after all, a staged—and thus consensual—scene (for Fiona, at least—it remains unclear whether the other woman was part of the act or a random bystander dragged into it).

This alibi of the staged rape established as such diegetically or through voiceover found frequent recurrence, from the prostitute employed by police to submit to a violent home-invasion gang rape in *Expensive Tastes* (1978) to the actress Terri Hall "confessing" to her satanic cult leader in *Ecstasy in Blue* (1976) that "I go to the worst part of town" hoping to attract "the crudest, most violent sort of men . . . in alleyways, in cars, in dungeons," as the film's visuals show her walking a poorly lit street, being accosted, dragged into an apartment, and raped. Ex post facto justifications also widely prevailed. In *Sleepy Head* (1973), writer Georgina Spelvin contrives to have her uptight religious sister Tina Russell gang-raped. Russell asks Spelvin to pray for her afterward, not because she was raped but because "I loved it. I loved every moment." In another example, C. J. Laing begins a scene in *Anyone But My Husband* (1975) screaming "Please . . . let me go" to an art gallery owner who has tied her up. By the end of the ensuing sex scene, she has signified her pleasure and enjoyment, eliding the rape with a retroactive consent.

All of these scenes are presented with at least some degree of violence and force. Other contemporaneous heterosmut played similar circumstances for laughs. The San Francisco-based *Pretty Peaches* (1978) features multiple sexual assaults within its 1930s-screwball comedy guise. When the ditzy protagonist, Peaches, crashes her stolen jeep and passes out, one of the two male bystanders who witness the accident has sex with her while she is unconscious; later, when Peaches tries out at a strip club, a gang rape by a group of angry female strippers ensues. Though the scene ends with Peaches crying, its musical cues and director Alex de Renzy's jaunty rhythms encourage audience laughter. This recasting of sexual violence as humor reaches its zenith in another San Francisco film, *Hot and Saucy Pizza Girls* (1979), in which a sexually available pizza delivery woman on roller skates is accosted on a city sidewalk and dragged behind a fence, to the sound of clucking and the sight of feathers floating up. When she returns to

work and tells her boss she was raped, he shrugs, "So what's new?" It turns out to be the work of the San Francisco Night Chicken, whose prowling occupies the backstory of the ostensibly lighthearted farce.

Grim realist scenarios and farcical rape-for-comedy could coexist, as in *Joy* (1977), a seeming inversion of rape tropes. Sharon Mitchell's high school character begins the film by resisting her boyfriend's sexual entreaties, only to face a home-invasion rape in the second scene. The scene begins with brutality but evolves into another sexual awakening, as Joy calls out for more with an assertiveness that drives the second of the two men away. Director Harley Mansfield concretely situates the film in urban space, from the opening "New York City: The End of June" to a visually effective shot of Joy after the rape, leaning topless out of her high-rise apartment window to shout, "I want more!" as the camera pulls back from across the street to pan across a smoggy skyline. The narrative then swerves to the comedic as the insatiable Joy ravishes men across the city, from a married, frustrated businessman in a trash-strewn alley to a nerdy young man on a subway car reading a book on how to pick up women. As newspaper headlines scream "Female Rapist Strikes!" a television newscaster reveals that all other crime in the city has vanished: "No muggings, no murders, no violent crimes," he declares.

As a film directly engaged with the urban crisis, *Joy* plays urban anxieties over crime for laughs in its sexual solution. The humor is asymmetrically gendered, though, with all of the male rapes played for light humor, and then a sudden, jarring return to grim realism when a police officer assigned to the case stalks Joy, drags her forcefully off a sidewalk into an apartment building, cuffs her to a stairwell, and rapes her as she cries, "Please don't hurt me!" This scene is at decided odds with those preceding it, belying the film's (thin) veneer of inverted gender politics by reinforcing the continuity of male pleasure in all of the sexual episodes, independent of the women's enjoyment or consent.

That the rapist cop is the film's sole black male sexual participant further situates *Joy* in the contemporaneous urban crisis discourse, with its consistently racialized sense of urban dangers. While Jennifer Nash shows elsewhere in this volume how black women were able to carve out spaces of subjectification in pornography, black men faced an even greater struggle in some ways, bearing the semiotic weight of entrenched racist stereotypes that went largely unchallenged in the genre. The basic spectrum ran from the "exotic" awe of the magnetically hypersexual black man played by Johnnie Keyes in such

films as *Behind the Green Door* (1972), *The Resurrection of Eve* (1973), and *SexWorld* (1978), to such rapists as the one played by Jesse Wilson in *Joy*—curiously, called Barnes by his sergeant in the film but credited more generically as simply “Black Officer” in the credits at the end. In another instance, *Lustful Feelings* (1978) ends with white prostitute Leslie Bovee’s violent demise at the hands of two black clients. So thoroughly did racialized fear of urban space permeate the very construction of the urban crisis that *Hot Summer in the City* (1976), set almost entirely in a single, distinctly nonurban, cabin, was able to summon “the city” (Detroit, in this case) through the mere presence of the three black men who kidnap a young white woman and rape her repeatedly while holding her hostage. In its racial economy, “black” connoted “urban,” and vice versa.

Not every articulation of white urban anxiety was plotted on a black/white binary grid, though that was certainly the dominant organization of the “crisis.” *Oriental Blue* (1976), for example, returned all the way to Orientalist “white slave” fears of the 1910s (recycled in the 1960s for the grindhouse-based *White Slaves of Chinatown* series), opening with a young white woman abducted into Madame Blue’s limousine in Times Square and dragged to Chinatown for a life of sex slavery. One scene, with actor Jamie Gillis as a procurer tricking Bree Anthony (as a recent New York arrival straight from Nebraska) into coming with him, so directly echoed a similar scene from the pivotal white-slavery film *The Traffic in Souls* that it might be read as an homage by director Bill Milling. Even with the racial focus shifted, though, the theme of the city as dangerous terrain for white women remained consistent.

In this, heteroporn shared certain affinities not only with reactionary urban-crisis discourse that located danger in a racialized city, but also with feminist analyses of the 1970s. “Rape can be said to be a big-city crime,” Susan Brownmiller wrote in her landmark 1975 book *Against Our Will: Men, Women, and Rape*—and porn films seemed to agree.¹³ Along with Brownmiller, author and activist Andrea Dworkin helped launch the developing feminist antipornography movement and bring it to national prominence with her 1981 manifesto *Pornography: Men Possessing Women*. This book included painful, visceral, protracted descriptions of pornographic violence against women, and many of the heteroporn films of the 1970s did fit this bill, a reality lost in the subsequent feminist sex wars, during which many of Dworkin’s legal, metaphysical, and ideological conclusions about pornography were

rightly challenged, but without any substantive returns to the films or other textual landscapes she had traversed in her work.¹⁴

To be sure, the heterosexual pornography of the early hardcore feature era often had a complex textual richness that the antagonistic Dworkin reduced to simple power struggles, and as Laura Helen Marks points out in the next chapter, the developing scholarly field of porn studies has yet to fully delve into the complicated, often melancholy work of leading porn auteurs such as Anthony Spinelli, Roger Watkins, Roberta Findlay, or Shaun Costello (indeed, Marks moves beyond my comments on *Forced Entry* and situates it within Costello’s larger body of work). Still, when it came to depictions of the city in crisis, straight pornography was less radical or oppositional than in sheer congruence with dominant media narratives: the city was a frightful place.

Cruising the Crisis

So central has the city been to both LGBT history and historical methodology that a resultant critique of “metronormativity” emerged in the early twenty-first century to remind citycentric observers that queer rural life existed and persisted.¹⁵ Gay male smut acknowledged this, mostly prominently in director Joe Gage’s blue-collar “working man’s” trilogy of *Kansas City Trucking Co.* (1976), *El Paso Wrecking Corp.* (1977), and *L.A. Tool and Die* (1979), which canvassed the dusty highways, rest stops, and back alleys of America—but, like heteroporn, the gay hardcore films of the early 1970s hewed overwhelmingly to urban settings.

As a criminalized demimonde, the gay world had long subsisted on coded maps and signals, with cultural texts providing frequent pointers, all the way from the 1784 pamphlet *The Philadelphiad; or, New Pictures of the City*, with its chapter “Misfortunes of a Fop,” to the 1933 Hollywood musical *42nd Street*, which hinted at queer spaces even in the midst of conservative Depression-era gender politics.¹⁶ While lesbian pulp fiction played a pedagogical role for numerous female readers in urban geography and subcultural signals, gay men found glimpses of their desired social world scattered across an array of sources. As Martin Meeker notes, the geography-making impetus of these texts played a crucial role in gay community formation, and began to rise in visibility in the 1960s with such events as the publication of Guy Strait’s *Lavender Baedeker* in 1963, the first national gay guidebook to bars and safe spaces.¹⁷

This all transpired against a backdrop of violent, state-sponsored attacks on gay existence, from the psychiatrists who pathologized “deviants” to the police forces who beat, blackmailed, assaulted, and imprisoned them. To the extent that the urban crisis represented a breakdown in this social order, then, this fracture provided increased freedom for queer people, who were now less subject to such surveillance and control. Even liberal observers read the urban crisis through a heteronormative lens, linking gay visibility to the seemingly disintegrating structures of control, as Marc Stein shows in his reading of Jane Jacobs’s depiction of a “pervert” invasion of Philadelphia’s Washington Square in her classic *Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961).¹⁸ As the straight, white middle class fled for suburbs specifically designed for procreative heterosexual families, urban opportunities beckoned for gay communities, from San Francisco’s Castro to Atlantic City in New Jersey.¹⁹

Also buttressing the new gay assertiveness over public space was the liberationist bent to gay activism that followed the Stonewall rebellion of the summer of 1969. While the homophile movement had displayed courage and tenacity dating back to the early 1950s, including public protests for gay rights that began in the mid-sixties, gay activism was increasingly informed by both radical youth movements (black power, women’s liberation, the student Left, etc.) and countercultural sexual politics that chafed against the constraints of the homophile focus on respectability. The budding currents of the era could be seen in the pioneering softcore short films of Pat Rocco beginning in 1968. Shot across Los Angeles, from Hollywood Boulevard to Griffith Park, Rocco’s works demanded gay inclusion in the public sphere, with such daring cinematic feats as a nude man dancing on the normally traffic-clogged Hollywood Freeway in *A Breath of Love* (1969).²⁰ This stood in stark contrast to the earlier “physique” shorts of Bob Mizer shot largely in his own backyard as a means of evading the prying eyes of antigay police.²¹

Although Rocco rejected the label “pornography” for his erotic films and kept his name away from hardcore explicitness, subsequent filmmakers showed less hesitation. Wakefield Poole’s *Boys in the Sand* (1971) and Fred Halsted’s *LA Plays Itself* (1972) in some ways constituted the ur-texts of 1970s gay hardcore as much as *Mona* and *Forced Entry* did for straight smut, setting the parameters of the polar but conjoined trajectories of the genre. “Conjoined” because both adopted radical liberationist attitudes toward gay sex, from Poole’s relatively

uncomplicated celebration of male beauty and desire to Halsted’s more obtuse insistence that he was not even a homosexual but rather a “pervert” first, a declaration that shared affinities with the gay liberationist deconstruction of sexual identity itself in such writings as Carl Wittman’s “Gay Manifesto” (1970).²² “Polar,” though, because their settings differed wildly, with Halsted fixated on the grimy, smog-saturated streets of Los Angeles, and Poole preferring the pastoral idyll of Fire Island. Though that famous gay resort was, of course, linked to the New York City metropolitan area for which it formed a vacation outpost, on screen it appeared as a place detached from urban visuals from the very first scene, when star Casey Donovan emerges Adonis-like from the ocean waters.

Boys would set the stage for the gay pastoral fantasia; as one film that followed its steps, Jack Deveau’s *Fire Island Fever* (1979) declared in its opening voiceover, “It was the night before the night before Christmas in Manhattan. If you hadn’t already stuffed two Lacoste shirts into a Vuitton bag and lit out for Key West, chances are you’d wind up at Frank and George’s Fire Island Pines Christmas party.” As production companies such as Catalina and Falcon brought a factory-line approach to gay porn by the late seventies, pastoral nature settings would increasingly take center stage, a tradition brought into the next century by Bel Ami and others.²³

Yet it was Halsted’s *LA* that ushered in a wave of gay hardcore that engaged directly with the city. Unlike the heterosmut that saw danger in urban decay, Halsted showed a rigorous cinematic eye in his examination of Los Angeles urban space as an opportunity for unleashed perversity. The film, which opened with a shot of a Los Angeles city limits sign, consisted of two extended sex scenes, the first itself a pastoral idyll—in a Malibu canyon on the brink of extinction. As two young men make love gently, Halsted begins superimposing tractors destroying (or “developing”) the land over their entwined bodies. Soon he cuts to grittier settings, as a car-based camera pans and zooms across porn theaters, strip clubs, hustlers on corners, and more signs of urban sexuality. In this terrain, sex takes a rougher form, and the film’s second half features Halsted himself dominating a willing Joey Yale. As he flogs his young submissive, makes him lick his boots, and subjects him to a demanding disciplinary regime (culminating in an infamous fisting scene, cut from all later home video versions of the film—a rupture in the gay visual archive that Lucas Hilderbrand discusses later in the collection),²⁴ Halsted frequently cuts back to the

sordid cityscape, taking particular visual interest in such sights as the wreckage of a building at a redevelopment site. If *LA Plays Itself* linked urbanism to transgressive sexuality, it did so in a celebratory (if also ambivalent) manner.

Wakefield Poole moved into urban terrain with his second feature film, *Bijou* (1972), the original print now faithfully restored by Vinegar Syndrome founder Joe Rubin, as discussed in the final essay in this volume. From its very first shot, of a construction site adjacent to the Lincoln Center in New York City, *Bijou* too reflects awareness of a city in flux whose redevelopment plays out not just infrastructurally but also sexually in a dialectic with its unnamed protagonist, a worker at the site. Just as the worker constructs the city, it in turn constructs his sexuality with its web of possibilities. Though an early scene reveals him masturbating to a girlie magazine, he later participates in gay sex acts in a mysterious, surreal sex club located on a busy city street. Like Halsted, Poole grounds this ambiguous, fluid sexuality within a concrete urban setting whose constant reconfiguration and regeneration, the film implies, enables the very queerness of its sexual cosmos.

If not every gay porn film aspired to quite the thematic richness of Halsted's or Poole's studies in urban sexuality, many used location shooting every bit as vivid as that of the New Hollywood auteurs to map out a proud sexual geography. The aforementioned *Back Row*, for instance, opens with a montage of Times Square porn theater marquees. Though many of their offerings are heterosexual, the space itself is effectively queered with a pan down from a marquee for the pseudo-documentary *All About Sex of All Nations* to Casey Donovan, facing away from the camera—thus allowing director Jerry Douglas to zoom in on his backside, housed in tight jeans.²⁵ From there, Donovan goes on to cruise George Payne in the Port Authority. Next, they pursue one another through the subway, into Washington Square, and the Pleasure Chest sex shop before returning to the 42nd Street Cinema, where the ticket taker greets them with an exposed erection that they both casually decline. After Donovan joins two other men for a bathroom threesome in the theater while a forlorn Payne bides his time, the cruisers finally make contact, holding hands and kissing on the Hudson River piers and even making out inside a sidewalk phone booth (fig. 1.5).

Before Stonewall, much of this public affection would have been unthinkable, and even in the early 1970s it required courage in the face of a still-homophobic police force—not to mention the audacity to



FIGURE 1.5. Straight porn marks space that affords room for gay desire in *The Back Row* (Jerry Douglas, 1972).

shoot without the legal protection afforded by the filming permits held by more “legitimate” productions. For the subway scene, Douglas and his small cast and crew of a half dozen boarded a downtown train for Wall Street on a Sunday morning and simply looked for an empty car—another way the specific material conditions of the city in the early 1970s facilitated adult filmmaking.²⁶ As such, *The Back Row* laid claim to social space in a way reflective of liberationist ideals regarding assertive public gay sexuality. Indeed, for Peter Berlin (discussed later by Lucas Hilderbrand, and featured on the cover of this book), displaying his body in public space, dressed in “tight white pants, showing off that huge organ of pleasure of his,” as the narrator of *That Boy* (1974) describes, was in many ways the central visual pleasure of his two San Francisco-based hardcore features. *That Boy* situates him very specifically on Polk Street, and *Nights in Black Leather* (1973) airily drifts through fifteen minutes of local scenery before getting around to any sex. These are films about gay men enjoying themselves in public (fig 1.6).

Other films of the era followed suit. The gay porn films rarely



FIGURE 1.6. Gay desire embedded in the streets of San Francisco, in *That Boy* (Peter Berlin, 1974).

reflected naively utopian visions of the city but rather nuanced assessments that recognized the opportunities of urban life without blindly embracing every facet. Jack Deveau's *Left-Handed* (1972) cuts back and forth between metropole and rural periphery in its story of drug running. In striking New York City location shots, sex in the city occurs randomly, spontaneously, and urgently, as when one character walks into a restroom in a city park, long known to be welcoming venues for anonymous gay hookups. Deveau leads the camera in past sexual graffiti that acts as spatial marker to show a man masturbating in a stall and the sexual encounter that ensues. If this is contrasted to the film's more conventionally romantic sex scenes up in forest-ensconced, upstate Woodstock, Deveau refuses to draw hard lines. "It's so different from the people in the city," protagonist-dealer Bob tells a New York friend over the phone, to which the city friend shrugs, "Oh, I was going to have an orgy this weekend; I thought you might like to come." Yet even the earlier "tearoom" sex, as fellatio in public restrooms was called, ended with a kiss, so urban sex is not merely crass and jaded.

Arch Brown's *The Night Before* (1973), another of the first wave of ambitious gay hardcore, does romanticize urban sex, with a montage of breakfast, a couple running in a park, and other tropes straight out of the Hollywood romance playbook—except that in this case, the montage also includes naked cuddling in a cot between its interracial black/white couple. As with Halsted, Poole, Deveau, and others, Brown shows a keen eye for the semiotics of urban space, with a spray-painted "Power to the People" sign on a public wall in the opening scene invoking the radical activism of the 1960s that undergirds the film's social world. When the couple walks hand in hand down a New York street, a middle-aged white woman passes by, and Brown's camera stays on her as she turns, holding her ambiguous expression (confusion? dismay? surprise?) in brief freeze-frame; the effect is both to defamiliarize her, as if *she's* the one out of touch with the conventions of 1973, and also to pause and register the larger heteronormative backdrop through which the gay characters stroll. Though a place of possibility, the city is never a place of complete liberation.

Even as the ambitions of early hardcore seemed to recede into more rote sexual workouts by mid-decade (a narrative I would not want to overstate, yet one that corresponds in material terms to hardcore's evolution into an undeniable *industry*),²⁷ the spatial politics of gay hardcore remained defiant. Even a fairly run-of-the-mill film like Steve Scott's *12 at Noon* (1977), effectively a series of unconnected short loops strung together into a feature, takes on a documentary-like *vérité* quality when viewed through the lens of its use of space. The opening scene, a mini-orgy in a city park restroom, has no real sound but the ambient background noise of nearby cars passing—whether due to directorial laziness, ineptitude, or perhaps aesthetic precision, it is a remarkably effective aural invocation of the tearoom's exposed liminality between public and private space. When a fourth man steps inside to join the three already at work midscene, after asking, "How's the action?" he volunteers to guard the door—again, a reminder of the dangers that accompany such pleasures. While nothing else in *12 at Noon* matches the risky intensity of that literally criminal opening scene, its other scenes at city parks and bathhouses that became ubiquitous staples of the genre carried significance above and beyond the film's aesthetic limitations. Gay porn continued to chart the staggering erotic density of the gay urban nexus, from alleys (Scott's 1978 *Gemini*) to gas stations (the Glendale-shot *Grease Monkeys* in 1978) to the bars that served as social and sexual nodes in virtually every film,

such as *Inches* (1979), in which porn superstar Al Parker and his boyfriend argue over whether the bar scene is too superficial—though Parker finds himself drawn in by its seductive allure.²⁸

Porn theaters themselves provided another recurring motif, from *The Back Row* onward. Reflexive views of the theatrical experience ranged from Times Square (Jack Deveau's 1978 *Night at the Adonis*) to Los Angeles' Silver Lake (Tom DeSimone's *Dirty Picture Show*, 1979). In the latter film, one male hustler tells another, "The old Bijou Theater has some of the best action in town," leading him to investigate. When he questions the five-dollar ticket cost at the door, the masturbating clerk explains, "You're not paying for the movies." Indeed, sex ensues in the seats, aisles, and restroom of the theater. Given that audiences watched—and reenacted—these films in the very locations where they were shot, the porn-theater movies amounted to not only a proclamation of place claiming but also a radical breaking of the fourth wall rarely achieved by even experimental filmmakers of the era.

Even seemingly apolitical gay porn films carried sublimated political charge, as when John Amero—who, with the straight Michael Findlay, shot a series of gay films that evocatively captured the sights and sensations of Christopher Street, the nearby piers, and other markers of gay city life—included footage of a gay pride march, replete with an "Anita Sucks" sign to offer resistance to the burgeoning anti-gay movement spearheaded by Anita Bryant (and discussed later in this volume by Greg Youmans), in *Killing Me Softly* (1979). William Higgins's *The Boys of Venice* (1979) provides an exemplary model of this mode of tacit politics. Opening with a montage that encapsulates the various California sunshine mythologies, Higgins shows men, women, and children happily strolling the beach, with men walking casually arm in arm alongside straight couples. Eventually two roller-skating men crash into one another, leading them back to one's apartment to treat injuries and enjoy a quick sexual encounter. Later the film follows men hitchhiking and working out in the open gyms on the beach, in between various sex scenes. If it all seems blithely unconcerned with sexual politics, that's in part because Higgins's film reflects the aftermath of a gay victory. Hostile Los Angeles police had fought gay visibility at Venice Beach all the way through a 1974 city council effort to outlaw nude bathing. The battle for space was openly homophobic; one concerned citizen wrote to council member Pat Russell to complain of "homosexuals, prostitutes, and other dregs of humanity" on the beach that year.²⁹

By the time Higgins arrived to film *The Boys of Venice*, nude swimming may have been restricted, but the gay presence was undeniable. What appeared to the outraged letter writer as a sign of urban decline amounted, on the other side of the equation, to new visibility and freedom. Indeed, gay hardcore throughout the decade served as a record of these contests over space and legitimacy, as gay men claimed space and then documented and celebrated those claims through smut, and *The Boys of Venice* played sunshine to the Santa Monica noir of John Rechy's contemporaneous "documentary" book *The Sexual Outlaw*, which focused on darker sexual cultures at the beach and pier two miles north of Higgins's California paradise.³⁰ While these developments were obviously multicausal, resting on a backdrop of years of gay activism, as well as liberalizing obscenity laws and shifts in urban politics and governance, none of these brazen uses of public space would have been possible without the urban crisis and its accompanying "decline" of the city. What the straight, white middle class read as a narrative of threats from poor people of color also contained in its interstices a collapse of the heteronormative strictures that had mandated gay secrecy and privacy. "Come out!" was a battle cry in the sexual politics of the seventies, and gay hardcore shouted it proudly.

Reclothing the City

While debates over periodization remain perpetual in the historiography of the modern United States, the seventies seem easier to close, or at least bookend, than the sprawling sixties—whether it be the election of Ronald Reagan in 1980 or the first official reports in 1981 of a disease that would become the AIDS epidemic, the vast social changes of the early 1980s were undeniably swift, decisive, and devastating. Several historical transitions converged to reshape pornography, not least of which were the two just mentioned. The Reagan administration worked hard to win and keep the Christian Right, especially after the reactionary political movement realized that Reagan's substantive policy priorities lay with economic deregulation and the upward redistribution of wealth; one result was an obviously biased 1986 porn study by the Attorney General's Commission on Pornography and enhanced obscenity efforts by the Justice Department, after years of enforcement laxity under the Carter administration.³¹ Meanwhile, the monumentally tragic impact of AIDS—exacerbated immeasurably by Reagan's disregard for those most affected by it—proved shattering to

the performers in gay pornography, while infusing the straight porn world with anxiety and periodic casualties as well.

Other developments also helped reshape porn, especially technological advances in home-viewing formats that ushered consumption out of theaters and into living rooms, as Peter Alilunas discusses in his essay in this volume. The video store's replacing the porn theater in turn coincided with broader trends in urban land use, as neoliberal politics began a three-decade (and ongoing) dismantling of the public sphere, with sweeping efforts to privatize space for the sake of business-oriented downtown redevelopment. From the militarized police forces roaming the inner city in Reagan's "war on drugs" that spawned a racialized mass incarceration to even such detailed urban planning gestures as bus stop benches designed to preclude the homeless from resting on them, the 1980s marked a new regime in urban spatial politics.³² A new conservative "counterintelligentsia" funded by such well-endowed think-tanks as the Manhattan Institute rewrote the urban crisis as one not of economics but rather "values and culture," terms used to displace (while simultaneously reinscribing) race even as poor people of color bore the brunt of urban policy shifts of the 1980s.³³ Even gay activists often joined the calls for "safer streets" as former "gay ghettos" gentrified, invoking the very state powers that had so recently oppressed their own communities.³⁴

Pornography reflected these changes. Straight and gay porn both increasingly moved to interiors, as New York city streets began fading from centrality. The sparse Manhattan location shooting often obliquely hinted at the changes underway, as when Carter Stevens's *Bizarre Styles* (1980) opens along the fashion district on Seventh Avenue. In the film, actress Vanessa del Rio's lingerie shop, which supplies both models and prostitutes, faces challenges that hint at the broader business attack on local industry—indeed, Robert Fitch identified the fashion district as a key battleground in the "assassination of New York" by redevelopers eager to drive out economic diversity in the name of real-estate interests.³⁵ This directly affected porn production in the city; director and cinematographer Larry Revene lost his midtown Manhattan lease in 1982 and, like his frequent collaborator Chuck Vincent, relocated to Queens.³⁶ The early 1980s heterosmut of director Phil Prince also shifts to the outer boroughs; though *The Story of Prunella* (1982) opens with a typical NYC skyline shot, its action takes place on Staten Island, and *Dr. Bizarro* (1983) begins in front of Elmhurst Hospital in Queens. By mid-decade, Los Angeles'

suburban San Fernando Valley had superseded all else as the pornography industry's ground zero, with films shot predominantly indoors, in studios whose deliberately bland warehouse-like exteriors housed an almost wholly interior pornographic visual world.³⁷ These changes coincided with the "cleanup" of Times Square, as Disney and redevelopment drove out both smut and socioeconomic diversity in order to cater to suburban, international, and wealthy tourists.³⁸

Gay porn followed a similar arc, represented well by the films of Fred Halsted. After *LA Plays Itself*, his next major work, *Sextool* (1975), situated itself in a sex club by tracking the geography of Hollywood's Sunset Strip but then largely confined itself to the inside of the club. By the time of *A Night at Halsted's* and *Nighthawk in Leather* (both 1982), Halsted's mise-en-scène had grown even more claustrophobic, shot almost entirely within the interiors of his own short-lived sex club. By the time of the dispiriting *Fast Friends* (1987), brief opening-credit footage of Los Angeles traffic was all that prevented the film from transpiring entirely in bland domestic settings. The 1985 gay porn film *L.A. Boiling Point* perhaps best symbolized the changes in the genre: even its cursory opening shot of the city appeared to be a close-up of a postcard.

The privatization of the city, then, marks a transition away from the pornography of the 1970s, as much as do new modes of shooting on video, big hair and muscles on newly depilated bodies, and the appearance of condoms. With the urban pornography of the seventies went a particular assemblage of pleasure and danger.³⁹ Gay sex would thereafter lose the carefree political valences of its liberationist incarnation, and under pressure from both a prosecution-happy Justice Department and a well-mobilized feminist antipornography movement, heterosmut would distance itself from the pervasive rape of the first wave of hardcore. A tamer, more disciplined, if arguably not always less misogynist, straight sex would dominate the video era, and many of the seedier urban porn films would go unremembered or omitted from discussion as porn studies took shape as a field of scholarly inquiry. Recovering this rich and problematic cinematic landscape helps us better understand how pornography, far from being marginal cultural territory, operates in tandem with, and opposition to, the powerful discourses of urban crisis that have shaped American politics since the 1960s.

NOTES

1. Steve Macek, *Urban Nightmares: The Media, the Right, and the Moral Panic over the City* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), xvi.
2. On black urban counterdiscourse, see Paula Massood, *Black City Cinema: African American Urban Experiences in Film* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2003), esp. 107–16.
3. Thomas Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996); on New York City in the 1970s, see Vincent Cannato, *The Ungovernable City: John Lindsay and His Struggle to Save New York* (New York: Basic, 2001); and Jonathan Soffer, *Ed Koch and the Rebuilding of New York City* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010).
4. Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia, with Related Documents*, ed. David Waldstreicher (Boston: Bedford/St. Martins, 2002); Jefferson letter to Benjamin Rush, September 23, 1800, available at <http://founders.archives.gov>.
5. Patricia Cline Cohen, *The Murder of Helen Jewett: The Life and Death of a Prostitute in Nineteenth-Century New York City* (New York: Knopf, 1998); Joseph Ridgely, "George Lippard's *The Quaker City*: The World of the American Porno-Gothic," *Studies in the Literary Imagination* 7, no. 1 (1974): 77–94; Donna Dennis, *Licentious Gotham: Erotic Publishing and Its Prosecution in Nineteenth-Century New York* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), 22.
6. Tom Gunning, "From the Kaleidoscope to the X-Ray: Urban Spectatorship, Poe, Benjamin, and *Traffic in Souls* (1913)," *Wide Angle* 19, no. 4 (1997): 25–61.
7. Eric Schaefer, "Bold! Daring! Shocking! True!" *A History of Exploitation Films, 1919–1959* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999).
8. Elena Gorfinkel, "Tales of Times Square: Sexploitation's Secret History of Place," in *Taking Place: Location and the Moving Image*, ed. Gorfinkel and John David Rhodes (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), 55.
9. Sabine Haenni, "Geographies of Desire: Postsocial Urban Space and Historical Revision in the Films of Martin Scorsese," *Journal of Film and Video* 62, no. 1–2 (2010): 67–85, quoted at 70.
10. Andrea Friedman, "Sadists and Sissies: Anti-pornography Campaigns in Cold War America," *Gender & History* 15, no. 2 (2003): 201–27.
11. For exceptions to this, see Laura Helen Marks's essay in this volume, and also Natalie Purcell's important book, *Violence and the Pornographic Imaginary: The Politics of Sex, Gender, and Aggression in Hardcore Pornography* (New York: Routledge, 2012). My piece overlaps slightly with Purcell's chapter on the seventies, which I came to after writing it, but her entire book is a powerful intervention into a now-stale debate, and deserves attention.
12. Here I would note that the film, approached as a text in a vacuum, can and does yield fascinating, even feminist, themes. Within the material conditions of its theatrical exhibition, however, in a male-dominated space transparently hostile to women, certain hermeneutic strictures might reasonably be inferred. Even Samuel Delany, as he queered the masculinity of Times Square theaters in his personal history of them, acknowledged their hostility to women; Delany, *Times Square Red, Times Square Blue* (New York: New York University Press, 1999). Indeed, while my focus here is on the larger discursive congruences of porn and urban crisis imagery, there can be little doubt that—as any representative sample of hardcore previews will attest—the violence against women was in fact part of the very appeal of pornography to many male viewers in this era. Its reliance on urban crisis imagery did not, therefore, constitute a critique of violence against women.
13. Susan Brownmiller, *Against Our Will: Men, Women, and Rape* (New York: Bantam, 1975), 201.
14. Andrea Dworkin, *Pornography: Men Possessing Women* (New York: Perigee, 1981).
15. Judith Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (New York: New York University Press, 2005); Scott Herring, *Another Country: Queer Anti-Urbanism* (New York: New York University Press, 2010).
16. Clare Lyons, "Mapping an Atlantic Sexual Culture: Homoeroticism in Eighteenth-Century Philadelphia," *William & Mary Quarterly* 60, no. 1 (2003): 119–54; Leonard Leff, "Come on Home with Me: 42nd Street and the Gay Male World of the 1930s," *Cinema Journal* 39, no. 1 (1999): 3–22.
17. Martin Meeker, *Contacts Desired: Gay and Lesbian Communications and Community, 1940s to 1970s* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 208–17.
18. Marc Stein, *City of Sisterly and Brotherly Loves: Lesbian and Gay Philadelphia, 1945–1972* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2004), 85.
19. Clayton Howard, "Building a 'Family Friendly' Metropolis: Sexuality, the State, and Postwar Housing Policy," *Journal of Urban History* 39, no. 5 (2013): 933–55; Bryant Simon, "New York Avenue: The Life and Death of Gay Spaces in Atlantic City, New Jersey, 1920–1990," *Journal of Urban History* 28, no. 3 (2002): 300–327.
20. Whitney Strub, "Mondo Rocco: Mapping Gay Los Angeles Sexual Geography in the Late-1960s Films of Pat Rocco," *Radical History Review* 113 (2012): 13–34.
21. On Mizer's travails, see Whitney Strub, "The Clearly Obscene and the Queerly Obscene: Heteronormativity and Obscenity in Cold War Los Angeles," *American Quarterly* 60, no. 2 (2008): 373–98.
22. Carl Wittman, "A Gay Manifesto" (1970), available at <http://library.gayhomeland.org> and widely online.
23. Jeffrey Escoffier, *Bigger Than Life: The History of Gay Porn Cinema from Beefcake to Hardcore* (Philadelphia: Running Dog Press, 2009).
24. On the editing of the film—and for a remarkable examination of Halsted more broadly—see William Jones, *Halsted Plays Himself* (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2011), 39.
25. This moment also points to a tension that would later mount between anti-pornography feminists and gay men, as the former concentrated on the textual materials saturating places like Times Square while the latter emphasized the queer possibilities afforded by its unregulated spaces. For the classic articulation of this impasse, see John D'Emilio's 1980 essay "Women Against Pornography: Feminist Frontier or Social Purity Campaign?" in *Making Trouble: Essays on Gay History, Politics, and the University* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 202–15.
26. Escoffier, *Bigger Than Life*, 108. On the commentary track for the 2002 Mercury Releasing DVD of *Bijou*, Poole notes that he did obtain proper permits for the film. This would seem to be an exception rather than a norm, though recent work by April Hall and Ashley West at the *Rialto Report* suggests permits may have been more common than pornography's outlaw reputation would imply. See "Anna Obsessed (1978): Anatomy of an Enigma," September 2014, and "The Double Exposure of Holly (1976): Murphy's Law in Action," October 2014, both at www.rialtoreport.com, for two well-researched examples of straight porn films whose makers claim to have held proper shooting permits.

27. Kevin Heffernan, "Seen as a Business: Adult Film's Historical Framework and Foundations," in *New Views on Pornography: Sexuality, Politics, and the Law*, ed. Lynn Comella and Shira Tarrant (Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2015), 37–56.
28. Jeffrey Escoffier also notes Arch Brown's *Pier Groups* (1979) and Ian McGraw's *Subway* (1980) in his examination of "urban queer realism," "Sex in the Seventies: Gay Porn Cinema as an Archive for the History of Sexuality," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* (forthcoming).
29. J. Edward Gibbons to Pat Russell, July 26, 1974, Pat Russell Papers, box 606057, file: Nudity, Los Angeles City Archives.
30. John Rechy, *The Sexual Outlaw* (New York: Dell, 1977).
31. Whitney Strub, *Perversion for Profit: The Politics of Pornography and the Rise of the New Right* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 198–212.
32. For one brilliant recounting of these transformations, see Mike Davis, *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles* (New York: Verso, 1990).
33. Alice O'Connor, "The Privatized City: The Manhattan Institute, the Urban Crisis, and the Conservative Counterrevolution in New York," *Journal of Urban History* 34, no. 2 (2008): 333–53.
34. Christina Hanhardt, *Safe Space: Gay Neighborhood History and the Politics of Violence* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013).
35. Robert Fitch, *The Assassination of New York* (New York: Verso, 1993).
36. Larry Revene, *Life in a Film Can* (CreateSpace, 2015), 99.
37. Darrick Danta, "Ambiguous Landscapes of the San Fernando Valley," *Yearbook of the Association of Pacific Coast Geographers* 71 (2009): 15–30.
38. Alexander Reichl, *Reconstructing Times Square: Politics and Culture in Urban Development* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1999); Lynne Sagalyn, *Times Square Roulette: Remaking the City Icon* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2001).
39. It is worth noting that porn would return to the city again in later iterations of handheld, camcorder-based gonzo and other styles, from Rick Savage's *Streets of New York* series in the 1990s through several twenty-first-century internet series. These developments require their own further historicization. For a start, see Peter Alilunas, *Smutty Little Movies: The Creation and Regulation of Adult Home Video* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2016); and "Rick Savage: New York's Last Porn Star," *Rialto Report*, March 23, 2014, www.therialtoreport.com.

CHAPTER 2

Re-Sexualizing Scrooge

Gender, Spectatorship, and the Subversion of Genre in Shaun Costello's The Passions of Carol

LAURA HELEN MARKS

THE RICH FIELD OF porn studies has made significant strides since its formal inception in the late 1980s with the publication of film scholar Linda Williams's *Hard Core*. Prior to this, the most notable contribution to the field was Steven Marcus's 1964 *The Other Victorians: A Study of Sexuality and Pornography in Mid-Nineteenth Century England*. Between 1964 and 1989, the majority of scholarly treatments of pornography consisted of radical feminist critiques such as Andrea Dworkin's 1981 *Pornography: Men Possessing Women*. However, the field now known as "porn studies," characterized by balanced interrogation of pornographies in a manner detached from the politically fraught antiporn work of the 1980s, fully established itself in the wake of Williams's influential book. Following this groundbreaking book, several exciting works have emerged on genre-specific topics such as premodern histories,¹ feminist and queer analyses,² and class-based consideration of erotic appeal.³ Yet, even with recent expansion of the field signaled by the inaugural issue of the academic *Porn Studies* journal, there has been little in the way of a recovery of the full textual complexity of 1970s porn. In discussions of the 1970s, "porno chic" is typically the focus, and films such as *Deep Throat* (1972), *Behind the Green Door* (1972), and *The Devil in Miss Jones* (1973) tend to stand in as representative of a body of work that in reality is far more dynamic, complex, and unusual than most critics and audiences allow.

Porno Chic and the Sex Wars

American Sexual Representation in the 1970s

EDITED BY

**Carolyn Bronstein
and Whitney Strub**

University of Massachusetts Press
Amherst and Boston

Copyright © 2016 by University of Massachusetts Press
All rights reserved
Printed in the United States of America

ISBN 978-1-62534-226-3 (paper); 225-6 (cloth)

Designed by Sally Nichols
Set in Palatino Linotype
Printed and bound by Sheridan Books, Inc.

Cover design by Sally Nichols
Cover art: Copyright © Peter Berlin, *Self-Portrait in Black Leather*,
c. 1970s. Hand-painted vintage gelatin silver print. Courtesy ClampArt,
New York City.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
A catalog record for this book is available from the Library of Congress.

British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data
A catalog record for this book is available from the British Library.

Contents

Acknowledgments iv

Introduction 1
Whitney Strub and Carolyn Bronstein

PART I. FILMS

1. From Porno Chic to Porno Bleak
Representing the Urban Crisis in 1970s American Pornography 27
Whitney Strub
2. Re-Sexualizing Scrooge
Gender, Spectatorship, and the Subversion of Genre in
Shaun Costello's *The Passions of Carol* 53
Laura Helen Marks
3. Desiring Desiree 83
Jennifer C. Nash
4. Making Sense of Linda Lovelace 104
Nancy Semin Lingo

PART II. MAGAZINES / PRINT CULTURE

5. Mass-Market Pornography for Women
Bob Guccione's *Viva* Magazine and the New Woman of the 1970s 125
Carolyn Bronstein
6. The Economic and Racial Politics of Selling a Transfeminine Fantasy in
1970s Niche and Pornographic Print Publications 154
Nicholas Matte