Pornography remains one of the most controversial topics in our culture. Politicians, religious groups, and special interest organizations tend to focus on the ‘effects’ pornography has on those who consume it, and fear that pornography is a threat to public health. The general discourse surrounding pornography is that men produce violent pornography for other men and at the expense of women. Because of this, feminist pornography—or pornography that is produced and targeted towards women—has not received the scholarly attention it merits. The following thesis aims to study the rhetorical messages found in a feminist pornography film, with the goal of providing an alternative discourse that challenges conventional assumptions about pornography. Specifically, this study analyses Jacky St. James’ full-length film, *Torn*. Jacky St. James, a self-proclaimed feminist, is a writer and director of pornography who targets women as her primary audience. In order to analyze the rhetorical messages in Jacky St. James’ film, this thesis will use Kenneth Burke’s cluster-agon criticism as methodological lens. Cluster-agon criticism allows for the critic to discover a rhetor’s worldview and attitudes. This discovers that Jacky St. James holds a worldview of moral subjectivity, where the needs and wants of the self...
are acclaimed over constructed societal norms. The overall message in the film is that open and honest communication about wants and needs are the key to a successful and happy relationship.
Torn: A Cluster Analysis

by
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I understand that my thesis will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University libraries. My signature below authorizes release of my thesis to any reader upon request.

Oriana Mulatero Ferrando, Author
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Chapter 1
Introduction

Production and consumption of pornography has changed dramatically in the past two to three decades; the Internet has made adult material more accessible, more varied, and easier to create than ever before (Attwood, 2010; Smith, 2007). It is fair to say that the means of production before and after the Internet greatly affects the material and subject matter in pornographies. For example, much like film and television, adult entertainment in the United States requires a significant amount of money for production and distribution, therefore only a few individuals have access and control over content creation and development (Williams, 1999). Now, anyone with a camera phone and a computer can create and manage their own content, run their own website, and be a part of the larger discourse in the pornographic genre. The Internet makes it so that “there are many producers of ‘porn’ outside of commercial studies and many domains for ‘distribution’ outside of purchase and rental formats” (Mowlabocus & Wood, 2015, p. 119).

Pornography is a multi-billion dollar global industry, transcending cultures, laws, and societies. Some estimate that porn makes $97 billion globally with $10 to $13 billion stemming from the United States (Morris, 2015). More recently, pornography has been a controversial topic of conversation in a large proportion of mainstream popular culture, often citing the seemingly harmful effects of the genre (Ybarra & Mitchell, 2005). Mainstream newscasts and online blogs repeatedly refer to the access of pornographic material as an epidemic (Featherstone, 2005; Luscombe, 2016; McKitrick, 2016; Oprah, 2005; Plante, 2015), and conservative politicians also show concern over the abundance
and availability of pornography. For example, the GOP committee has drafted their 2016 platform to classify pornography as a “public health crisis” (Goodwin, 2016).

**Pornography in Mainstream Media and Politics**

Although sexual depictions have appeared in paintings, photographs, sculptures, and writings throughout time, the notion of contemporary governing bodies controlling the distribution and access of sexually explicit material or pornography is relatively new. As Peter Wilkins (2004) states, “governments have sought to regulate and control the sale of pornography in modern capitalist democracies since the concept first emerged in mid-19th-century Victorian Britain” (p. 340). In turn, politics and governments have a tendency to fear the “social harms” of pornography (Wilkins, 2004, p. 341), and this is no different in the United States.

Pornography is not currently illegal in the United States, yet several attempts have been made to control and police the sale of pornographic material (Abbinnett, 1998). Four Supreme Court cases relate to the topic of legality of sale, advertisement, and distribution of obscene material: *Roth v. United States* (1957), *Jacobellis v. Ohio* (1964), *Memoirs v. Massachusetts* (1966), and lastly, *Miller v. California* (1973). The decisions of these cases resulted in what is now referred to as the Miller test, where obscenity is defined as,

(a) the dominant theme of the material taken as a whole appeals to a prurient interest in sex; (b) the material is patently offensive because it affronts contemporary community standards relating to the description or representation of sexual matters, and (c) the material is utterly without redeeming social value.

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1 The First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution protects the right to free speech; however, the majority of Supreme Court judges have agreed that not all types of speech are protected. One type is ‘obscene’ speech, and this tends to include pornography.
In order for material to be unprotected by the First Amendment, all three clauses must be met.

Today, individual states have jurisdiction on the distribution of obscene material, but there is no national statute. The Supreme Court, however, is not the only branch of the government that is involved in the control and regulation of pornographic material. Congress has also taken steps towards addressing society’s relationship with pornographic material in the United States.

In the 1970s, new federal laws allowed for pornographic theatres to become more widespread and hence, there was a spike in pornographic content production and consumption (Clark, 1991). However, by the 1980s, conservative politicians—united by the Reagan administration—moved to examine the rise in pornographic content and determined that porn is a legitimate cause for concern detailed in a government commissioned report on the negative effects of pornography consumption called the ‘Meese Commission Report’ (Clark, 1991; Juffer, 2004; Murray, 1986). The report deemed pornography as corrosive to our moral values and too obscene for our society because it promotes sexual violence against women.

The Meese Report gained a lot of traction in conservative political circles, and was in conjunction with some rhetorical movements aiming to ban all pornography in the United States—such as Morality in Media based out of New York, and the National Coalition Against Pornography from Ohio (Clark, 1991, Morality in Media, 2015). In the years following the Meese Report, social groups campaigned against the immorality of sexually explicit content. For example, billboards with the words “Real Men Don’t Use Porn” were seen in 23 States during the fall 1991 (Clark, 1991). While the movements
did not succeed in banning all pornographic content, the 1980s served as a cornerstone to our current socio/political climate towards pornography.

Congressional hearings on the subject of pornography have again surfaced. In August 2004, the Commerce Committee put together a congressional hearing on the dangers of Internet pornography addiction called, “The Science of Pornography Addiction.” Unlike previous congressional hearings, the committee members focused on physiological responses to pornographic content and placed emphasis on public health. According to Clarkson and Kopaczewski (2013), “for these mostly conservative advocates, proving that pornography has negative physiological effects on the body effectively neutralizes any argument about censorship or free speech and provides an opportunity to gain ground in the moralist battle against pornography” (p. 128).

Additionally, Utah Governor, Gary Herbert, signed a nonbinding resolution on March 29, 2016, which declared pornography a “public health crisis” to society, families, and individuals (UT Con. Res. S.C.R. 9, 2016). The concurrent resolution cites many claims including links between pornography and sexual harm toward children and women, between pornography and disinterest in marriage, and between pornography and deviant sexual arousal and problematic sexual behavior. The idea that pornography is harmful is pervasive enough to be considered objectively true (Pearson, 2016).

On the other hand, some contemporary scholars have begun to reexamine the connection between pornography and feminism. A recent anthology includes Taormino’s *The Feminist Porn Book* (2013), in which both sex workers and academic scholars write on the issue of feminist pornography. As Harrison (2013) stated, the work of feminist research “assumes that both the author and the viewer of feminist pornography are
women and that feminist pornography empowers them” (p. 100). Moreover, the genre has been solidified by non-academic organization, such as Toronto’s *Feminist Porn Awards* (2016), and Europe’s *PorYes Awards* (2016).

The takeaway here is that discussions about pornography are not solely found in academic journals, but they are also a controversial topic of conversation in political circles—both in individual states and nationally, and across branches of U.S. government. Moreover, current political groups, religious organizations, and private companies often rely on academic research to support their claims (see “Covenant Eyes”, “Fight the New Drug”, UT Con. Res. S.C.R. 9, 2016, “Utah Coalition Against Pornography”).

Notably, the majority of scholars who study pornography are concerned with the effects porn has on audiences. Such effects can be conceptualized as rhetorical messages capable of persuading viewers to—anti-pornographers might argue—violate and disenfranchise women. Therefore, an interest in the effects of pornography is also an interest in the rhetorical nature of pornography.

However, rhetorical scholars have yet to weigh in on the pornography conversation. To date, no rhetorical method has been applied to studying pornography. In other words, no one has stopped to ask the question, *What rhetorical messages can be found in pornography?* Moreover, feminist pornography is overlooked outside of Women’s Studies departments and therefore merits scholarly consideration from other disciplines. The goal of this thesis is to fill this gap in knowledge and present a comprehensive and interdisciplinary understanding of rhetorical messages found in a feminist pornographic film.
An application of Kenneth Burke’s cluster analysis functions to reveal the worldview of the rhetor. To this end, I argue that a pornographic film is capable of meaning more than just “violence against women”. In this paper, Torn (2012) will serve as the rhetorical text for analysis using Burke’s cluster criticism in order to uncover the rhetorical strategies used by the rhetor. This film is written and directed by Jacky St. James, an award-winning writer and director of pornographic films for the production company, New Sensations. According to her website (2016b), St. James is a self-proclaimed feminist who writes pornography targeted towards women and couples. In a panel discussion about women in pornography, Jacky St. James discussed working for a production company that ensures that women and minorities hold higher level positions within the production company, such as editing, designing, and book keeping (Sorensen, 2013). According to a personal conversation, Torn is the film that Jacky St. James is most proud of and considers her best work. Therefore, Jacky St. James’ films merit scholarly attention because she specifically attempts to create pornography that caters to a feminist audience (St. James, 2016b).

To achieve this goal, a review of the relevant literature will be provided, including an overview of how other disciplines have studied pornography as well as a description of the feminist pornography criteria used in this analysis. Second, Kenneth Burke’s cluster criticism is outlined along with a modification to best fit a visual medium such as film. This is followed by the analysis of the pornographic film, Torn, and a subsequent discussion on the rhetor’s worldview. Lastly, I will conclude with the implications and limitations of this thesis, along with suggestions for future scholars who wish to study the rhetoric of the pornographic genre.
Chapter 2
Literature Review

The following review of relevant literature will cover the different ways pornography has been studied in the fields of rhetoric, interpersonal communication, and women, gender and sexuality studies, as well as highlight the gaps in knowledge. To this end, this chapter serves to justify and contextualize a rhetorical analysis of a feminist pornographic film by first describing what interpersonal communication, social sciences, and feminist scholars have to say about the topic, then concluding with an explanation of the relationship between pornography and rhetoric.

Interpersonal Communication Focus

Within the social sciences, including the field of communication, most studies concerning pornography are quantitative. They include studies from Laurel Jansma and Daniel Linz (1997; 2002), Niel Malamuth (2010; 2012), and Paul Wright (2012; 2013; 2015), whom are notable communication scholars who publish heavily on the subject of pornography. Their studies often correlate pornography use and interpersonal effects on individuals (Hald & Malamuth, 2008; Hald, Malamuth & Yuen, 2010; Malamuth, Hald & Koss, 2012; Wright, 2012; Wright & Randall, 2012; Wright, 2013; 2015). For example, Wright (2013) found that men who consume pornography are more likely to have more sexual partners, more likely to engage in paid sex, and have more instances of premarital and extramarital sex than those who do not report watching pornography.

Regardless of the positive or negative individual effects of pornography consumption, researchers have suggested that the relationship between pornography use and outcomes at the couple level may also be both positive and negative. Like individual-level results, some research on couples has shown pornography use to have positive
correlates. Grov et al. (2011) found that when viewed together as partners, pornography use was associated with increases in sexual frequency, a willingness to try new sexual behaviors, and less boredom with sex. Couples who utilized pornography together also found it easier to discuss sexual wants and fantasies with their partners (Daneback, Traeen, & Månsson, 2009).

In the interdisciplinary anthology titled, Everyday Pornography (Boyle, 2010), scholars from varying disciplines, including English, Film Theory, Journalism, and Sociology, write about the pornographic genre. As reviewer Ronald Weitzer (2010) stated, “much of the book reads like a call-to-action” (p. 667). Meaning that the anthology incites readers to see pornography as a terrible harm to humanity. For example, the chapter by Robert Jensen (2010) titled, “Pornography is What the End of the World Looks Like,” paints an ominous picture where “pornography demands that men abandon empathy” (Boyle, p. 112). Yet, as Weitzer points out in his review, no evidence is provided that supports the claim that male viewers of pornography lose empathy for others, and the author, Jensen relies primarily on his own feelings and intuition. The main criticism of the book by Weitzer is that the majority of chapters use anecdotes as evidence, rather than original data.

**Pornography and Feminism**

While many disciplines have invested interest in studying pornography, feminist writers and women’s studies researchers have arguably contributed the most to the growing body of pornography scholarship. In the anthology, Feminism & Pornography (2000), editor Drucilla Cornell assembles diverse feminist voices, all speaking on the intersection of pornography, gender, race, and globalization. The collection includes
opposing ideologies about the role of pornography in society, in interpersonal relationships, and in individuals’ lives. *Feminism & Pornography*, although published in 2000, remains relevant because it reflects the ideologies currently debated in academia.

To clarify, those who study pornography tend to fall onto two opposing camps of thought: those who see pornography as harmful to society, and those who do not. This debate is often referred to as the ‘porn wars’ (Wilkin, 2004; Taormino, 2013). Here, the relationship between pornography and gender becomes clear; “since the very beginnings of the modern ‘porn wars’, women have been central to the discussion of pornography” (Mowlabocus and Wood, 2015, p. 120).

Those who oppose pornography, referred to as anti-pornography feminists, or feminist against pornography (FAP) (Wilkin, 2004), are arguably the louder of the two groups because their opposition is well documented and cited outside of academia. Most prominently, Andrea Dworkin and Catharine MacKinnon (among others) focus their attention on pornography’s negative affects on society by defining it as sexual discrimination and, more explicitly, as violence against women (MacKinnon, 1985). The importance of addressing the notions of these two scholars specifically is difficult to understate. No two voices have extolled the harms of pornography as loudly and fervently as those of Andrea Dworkin and Catharine MacKinnon. MacKinnon (2013) stated in an interview with the Harvard University Press that our current society is “substantially more saturated with pornography than it was before, as Andrea Dworkin and I predicted in 1983 would happen if nothing was done to stop it” (par. 15).

Dworkin and MacKinnon are both influential anti-pornography feminists who actively worked to disrupt what they viewed as male’s oppression of women. In 1983,
Dworkin and MacKinnon coauthored a city ordinance that identified pornography as “civil inequality” and made statements such as,

The [Minneapolis city] council finds that pornography is central in creating and maintaining the civil inequality of the sexes. Pornography is a systematic practice of exploitation and subordination based on sex which differentially harms women. The bigotry and contempt [pornography] promotes, with the acts of aggression it fosters, harm women’s opportunities for equality of rights in employment, education, property rights, public accommodations and public services. (in Ferguson, 1995, p. 677)

When reading anti-pornography texts from Dworkin and MacKinnon, it is immediately obvious that they hold a modern epistemology. For them, identity and social constructions are innate and static. In other words, from the perspective of MacKinnon and Dworkin, concepts like feminism, sex, and pornography hold the same meaning for everyone, all of the time. When MacKinnon (2000) says, “empirically, all pornography is made under conditions of inequality based on sex, overwhelmingly by poor, desperate, homeless, pimped women who were sexually abused as children” (p. 103), she means to say that all of pornography functions to perpetuate violence against women (Showden, 2012; Smith, 2007). When Dworkin states that pornography is “a discrete, identifiable system of sexual exploitation that hurts women as a class by creating inequality and abuse” (2000, p. 26), she is making it clear that pornography is always a form of oppression from men against women (Showden, 2012, Smith, 2007).

In fact, for Dworkin and MacKinnon there is no room for different ways of conceptualizing pornography, women, and sexual desire; there is simply a mechanism that is used by (heterosexual) men to subordinate (heterosexual) women (Smith, 2007). When MacKinnon and Dworkin talk about pornography they are making several
assumptions, one of them being that no woman can be sexually aroused by pornography because, according to them, it is exclusively made for men (Hardy, 1998; Smith, 2007).

From their writings, it is clear to readers that those who are against pornography hold a specific point of view: pornography is for men at the expense of women. Although their writings were published in the late-80s to early-2000s, their perspective still influences public and political perceptions of today. Clarissa Smith (2007) states, “during the past twenty years, Dworkin’s analysis has provided a blueprint for neatly packaging pornography as a transhistorical and instantly knowable category of cultural production and consumption” (p. 35).

Critics of anti-pornography writings argue that essentializing pornography, and those who use it, places sweeping generalizations on the genre and blinds readers from noticing the vast differences in types, modes, and categories of pornographic content. In other words, “the framing of pornography as a representational regime which harms women through its documentation of ‘actual’ harms, its pernicious lying about women’s sexuality and its active creation of more ‘whores’, has led to a retreat from individual texts” (Smith, 2007, p. 35). It is still evident that Western scholarship studies pornography as “the effect of men’s porn consumption on women” (Mowlabocus & Wood, 2015, p. 120)

If pornography really is, as Dworking and MacKinnon would claim, violence and discrimination against women, then why would—or should—any woman willingly take part in the creation, dissemination, and consumption of such material? Smith (2010) said,

For those of us who would seek to examine sexually explicit materials in all their forms and contexts, who would wish to explore the ways in which sex has
become the big story, we will need to challenge the terminology which characterizes much of public discourse. (p. 108)

In this case, the terminologies in question are the essentialized pornographer—the complacent, receptive male who only watches violent pornography—and the victimized female, who is subjected to that violence. Correspondingly, the mainstream media and academia has “historically privileged the male gaze” (Liberman, 2015, p. 175), while female, or even feminists, audiences have been virtually ignored.

The notion that pornography has nothing to offer except for messages of violence, objectification, and submission prevails (Kipnis, 1998); however, there are some scholars who challenge this position. According to Smith (2007), there cannot be a discussion on pornography without a discussion about sex and gender. Smith states,

In many accounts to talk of the meaning of ‘pornography’ is to immediately move to a level of response based on gender relations. This is then solidified around the ‘realities’ of gendered identity such that the male reader must have a ‘male’ response predicated upon the worst forms of social relations between men and women. (my emphasis; p. 19)

Specifically, Smith criticizes the anti-pornography rhetoric for disallowing the possibility for women to engage—and take pleasure—in pornographic content.

Smith challenges the notion that pornography is only made by men, for men, by studying For Women, a United Kingdom porn magazine that targets women as their main audience. To achieve this, Smith merges rhetorical analysis with qualitative surveys of women who read the magazine. Her conclusions reflect that of writer Linda Williams (1999), who stated in her famous book, Hard core: Power, Pleasure, and the “Frenzy of the Visible”, “in all forms of pornography the vast majority of this speaking has been by men…for now women, too, have begun to speak of pleasure in pornography, and not through a ventriloquist” (p. 230).
Feminist Pornographies

Despite having few publications, feminist pornographies have emerged as a subject of study, wherein the content is not necessarily targeted towards women, but the production and creation of porn is at the hands of women (Potter, 2016). Although not explicitly defined, feminist pornography is generally concerned with the appropriate, fair, and non-discriminatory treatment of women and marginalized groups (Taormino, 2013). According to Taormino, editor of *The Feminist Porn Book* anthology, feminist pornographers are “concerned with safer sex, with consent and with making sure that people are working reasonable hours. Setting basic standards and being held accountable for them is really important” (In Potter, 2016, p. 112).

What qualifies certain pornographies as feminist also involves the means of production; more specifically, how crew and actors are hired and treated on set (Taormino, 2013). The Feminist Porn Awards accept nominations based on who is involved in the films, and the overall messages found in the films. According to their official website, nominations are accepted based on three criteria:

(1) Women and/or traditionally marginalized people were involved in the direction, production and/or conception of the work, (2) the work depicts genuine pleasure, agency and desire for all performers, especially women and traditionally marginalized people, and (3) the work expands the boundaries of sexual representation on film, challenges stereotypes and presents a vision that sets the content apart from most mainstream pornography. This may include depicting a diversity of desires, types of people, bodies, sexual practices, and/or an anti-racist or anti-oppression framework throughout the production. (Feminist Porn Awards, 2016)

Moreover, the relationship of individuals working behind the scenes plays an important role in determining if a pornography is feminist. As Claire Potter states, “Making explicit agreements with performers about what will, and will not, happen in
each scene is a major change that characterizes a feminist set” (Potter, 2016, p. 111). Therefore, feminist pornography does not simply imply that it is pornography aimed at women, or that a woman created the pornography, but rather introduces a set of practices that are aligned with feminist ideologies. In the end, however, it is up to the reader—or consumer—to decide for themselves if a pornography is feminist; according to the Feminist Porn Conference review paper, “the viewer may decide that a pornographic text is feminist according to her own principles, rather than the intentions of the creator or performers” (Naughty, 2014, p. 293).

With so much of the scholarly literature focused on ‘men’s’ pornographies, it is important to consider feminist pornographies as a serious and legitimate locus of study; or as Liberman puts it, “feminist pornography offers a unique opportunity for researchers to investigate questions that have not been explored enough in the past” (2015, p. 175). Reflecting on Foucault’s position on discourse and power, any contribution of knowledge from a marginalized group—in this case, feminist pornographies—expands the possibility of multiple truths.

The relationship between pornography and rhetoric

From a rhetorical perspective, scholars have focused their attention to studying the legal language surrounding pornography (Clarkson & Kopaczewski, 2013; Smith, 2010), while others pay attention to rhetorical strategies used in anti-pornography writings (Wilkins, 2004). Smith offers a rhetorical analysis of the use of the word ‘pornographication’ in media as well as a qualitative study on the perspective of women who purchased the aforementioned women’s pornographic U.K. magazine, For Women.

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2 As described in Mann’s Doing Feminist Theory (2012), “multiple truths” refers to the subjective nature of reality where individual ‘truths’ exist simultaneously.
Yet, no scholar has yet to apply rhetorical methods to the study of pornographic films. There is clearly much to be explored in the subject of pornography, and for the first time, this thesis will attempt to uncover the rhetorical messages of a feminist porn film.

People give meaning to the world around them through language, and the rhetorical perspective interprets the creation, transaction, and persuasive power of that language. Reality is shaped by experiences, and those experiences are created and interpreted through language and discourse. Since language and symbols construct reality (Burke, 1945), it corresponds that those who wish to study the relationship between pornography and an audience as well as the audience’s interpretations of that pornography, a close examination of the rhetorical messages in pornography is necessary.

Pornography is a genre deserving of academic attention on par with any other genre. In her book, Williams (1999) considers the pornographic genre as legitimate foci for study, drawing on cultural, Marxist, psychoanalytic, and feminist theories. Williams (1992) acknowledges the misogynistic nature of pornography while still recognizing its educational potential. She compares porn films to musicals and states, “to a great extent, in fact, the hard-core feature film is a kind of musical, with sexual numbers taking the place of musical numbers” (original emphasis, 1999, p. 124). For example, such numbers can include, “masturbation”, “straight sex”, “ménage a trois”, or “anal sex” (p. 127). These numbers are what constitute the iconography, or the “pattern of visual imagery one expects to see in a given genre” (p. 128). Like musicals, the numbers and the narrative both work together to highlight conflicts and resolutions within a film. Meaning that pornography, according to Williams, has the same rhetorical power that allows audiences to address and adjust their attitudes toward conflicts.
In order to have a nuanced understanding of pornography, simply quantifying audience effects or theorizing on the morality of pornography is insufficient. Through the literature review, it is apparent that questions regarding pornography revolve around morality (whether it is good or bad), health effects (whether it is good or bad for someone), and most prominently, whether it hurts women. What is missing is a more specific type of inquiry: one that examines the perspective of creators of pornographies. Therefore, the relationship between rhetoric and pornography is that of meaning making and meaning deriving; the meaning that is constructed in pornographies through language and symbols inherently shapes the reality of those who witness it.

**Summary and the Call of an Interdisciplinary Approach**

It is clear from the review of the literature that thoughts on pornography are varied and contradicting. Most scholars contend that pornography is a primary source for violence against women and efforts should be made to stop, control, or regulate its impact. Others argue that pornography can be a source for sexual exploration and liberation. While efforts to study pornography have been predominantly quantitative, some scholars take up the challenge to analyze a pornographic text. Moreover, such efforts have mainly been directed towards the study of men’s pornographies.

However, no efforts have yet been made to understand the rhetorical intent of a pornography, particularly a feminist pornographic film. In understanding the integral relationship between symbolic meaning and attitudes towards pornography, rhetorical critics have the responsibility to fill in this gap in knowledge. It is insufficient to reduce attitudes and motives to a quantifiable number, and it is also insufficient to analyze
pornography in essentializing terms; to speak of pornography as only being made by men, for men, and at the expense of women excludes the possibilities of multiple truths.

A rhetorical analysis that considers the interdisciplinary intersection of rhetoric, interpersonal communication, and women, gender, and sexuality studies, is more effective in studying pornography than any discipline on its own. An interdisciplinary approach is vital to a comprehensive understanding of how feminist pornography merits scholarly attention. The results of this analysis may prove helpful in future scholars identify feminist themes in the preconceived male-oriented genre of porn, as well as providing supplementary evidence that supports the idea that pornography is more than just ‘violence against women.’ The hope of this thesis is to further the conceptualization of pornography as a genre capable of enhancing, rather than reducing, women’s sexuality.
Chapter 3
Methodology

The purpose of this chapter is to detail the methods employed in this study. As previously stated, there has yet to be a rhetorical examination of a pornographic film; meaning that no one has yet considered the rhetorical messages in porn, specifically a feminist porn film. So far, scholars have made claims about the effects of pornography, or analyzed the content of violent pornography—but no one has stopped to ask the question, ‘what rhetorical messages can be found in pornography?’ I propose that a rhetorical analysis of a pornographic film fills a gap in knowledge previously unexplored. That is to say, a Burkean cluster analysis of Jacky St. James’ film, Torn (2012), may reveal, “how a rhetorical motive is often present where it is not usually recognized, or thought to belong” (Burke, 1955, p. 521). This chapter is organized by first (1) positioning the study in a postmodern, Foucauldian epistemology, (2) introducing Burke’s concept of identification, (3) detailing the cluster-agon criticism, (4) describing the artifact, and lastly (5), outlining the procedure for the study.

Epistemological Approach

Prior to describing the methodology of this study, it is important to situate the epistemological frame in which this thesis is positioned. Epistemology is concerned with how knowledge is produced, who is justified in producing knowledge, and which knowledge is worth knowing. It is through the study of epistemologies that scholars uncover the means of knowledge production and power. For the purposes of this study, a postmodern, Foucauldian epistemology is adopted.

Michel Foucault, the renowned French philosopher, wrote extensively on the unprecedented relationship between knowledge and power. For Foucault, institutions—
such as academia or a government—construct knowledge and therefore construct what is considered “Truth.” In other words, Foucault was “concerned with the power of discourse to influence the affairs of human beings by altering the terms of their…understanding” (Cooper, 1981, p. 33).

In *History of Sexuality* ([1976] 1980), Foucault not only deconstructs discourse and power, but he also deconstructs concepts that are considered “natural” in the Western world: notions of sex and sexuality. By historicizing the medicalization of sexuality, Foucault revealed that institutions of power, rather than innate nature, constructs what is considered to be ‘the truth’ of sexuality. Cooper stated,

> What Foucault discovered was that these transparent relations, strategies and techniques of power, which traverse us and help make us what we are, were accompanied by specific formations and configurations of knowledge that permitted and procured evident, necessary, and ‘natural’ truth, and did so in such a way that the power involved disappeared into invisibility. (1981, p. 133)

Here, invisibility refers to the way in which this power goes unnoticed by the majority of a population, manifesting in what Foucault calls, “taken-for-granted assumptions” ([1976] 1980); which includes assumptions about what constitutes as ‘normal’ sexual behavior.

Any claims of objective or *real* truths about men and women—what is natural or normal human behavior—represents the dominant discourse and normalize taken-for-granted assumptions about sexuality, gender, race, sex, and other identity categories (Flax, 1992). Moreover, Foucault asserts that the dominant discourse silences those in marginalized groups. When established and accredited institutions of power ignore,
disqualify, or deem “sets of knowledge” as naïve, *subjugated knowledges*\(^3\) are created (Foucault, [1976] 1980, pp. 81-82).

Foucault states that sex and human sexuality, like gender, are socially constructed and reaffirmed through institutional powers and producers of knowledge, such as science and medicine. That is to say, social norms regarding sexuality, sexual orientation, and the erotic are not rooted in nature and should not be discussed in “scientific or reproductive terms—but more as forms of eroticism or bodily acts that give rise to pleasures” (Mann, 2012, p. 227). Therefore, the idea that men and women’s sex is dictated by their genitalia, and that dictation denotes which sex they are attracted to, is false. For instance, Foucault would argue that societal institutions, such as the family, dictate and create the conditions for which heterosexuality is the norm, rather than nature itself. In other words, being attracted to the opposite sex may be considered ‘unnatural’ only because society has deemed it so.

In the case of pornography, the reason to use a Foucauldian approach is two-fold. For one, it considers the origins and creation of the discourses about pornography and two, a Foucauldian approach allows room for skepticism and calls for the scholar to self-reflect the ways their own claims both constrain and liberate knowledges and truths. Using Foucault as an epistemological lens is appropriate for this thesis because it enables the critic to keep an open mind throughout their analysis. Meaning that the search for multiple truths is constantly at the forefront of their research.

**Kenneth Burke and Identification**

\(^3\) Subjugated knowledges, according to Foucault, refers to sets of truths that are cast aside, even silenced, because they do not conform to the prescribed societal norms.
Kenneth Burke stated in *A Grammar of Motives* (1945) that language constitutes reality-making, and that language always functions to “reflect reality,” while simultaneously “deflecting” it (p. 59). Meaning that symbols stand for what they are and what they are not. These symbols are always situated in ideology—there are no realities that live outside of an ideology. This is true also in pornographies; the symbols and language in a pornographic film are not without an ideological perspective created by the producers of that film. Without studying the intended meanings of those who produce pornographic material, little can be understood about the meanings and symbols conceded by an audience member. Since language constitutes reality—what is true and untrue, what is right or wrong—meanings ascribed to symbols determine attitudes and behaviors towards those symbols. To put it simply, “Knowing about something necessarily includes knowing how to behave toward it” (Brock, Scott & Chesebro, 1989, p. 14).

A Burkean approach to rhetorical criticism asks the critic to conceptualize the rhetorical process as more than just employing the ‘available means of persuasion’, and define it in terms of identification (Brock, Scott, & Chesebro, 1989). Burke’s central thesis in *A Rhetoric of Motives* (1950) is his theory of identification, wherein the classical Aristotelian approach to rhetoric is expanded upon; “instead of persuading people over to your ‘side,’ you meet them in the middle—emphasize how you are already alike” (Belk, 2014, p. 363).

Burke is arguing that each of us has an essence that would separate us from other people; each person is uniquely him or herself and see the world differently from one another. In *A Rhetoric of Motives* (1950), Burke explores the tension within the concept
of identification: on one hand we are all the same in that we are all human beings, however, on the other hand, we often divide ourselves into separate groups or communities. Burke’s concept of identification works as an attempt to close this divide; meaning that a communicator will attempt to get others to see how they are similar, knowing full well that they are different from one another. Burke (1950) states, “A is not identical with his colleague, B. But insofar as their interests are joined, A is identified with B. Or he may identify himself with B even when their interests are not joined, if he assumes that they are, or is persuaded to believe so” (p. 20). If the attempt to identify with another human is achieved, Burke states that the two individuals now share a common substance; or rather, there is consubstantiality between the two individuals.

As Stevenson (1999) puts it, “Rhetoric, then, is the manipulation of situation-appropriate, symbolic purification devices whereby we follow the route of demand as we attempt to achieve consubstantiality, to overcome the gap in our humanness—the gap, which we many never truly cross—to unity” (p. 205). In this case, a pornographic film has the same rhetorical influence as any other dramatic art; those who consume pornographic materials have the potential to identify with the symbols and characters of the piece and thus become participants in the rhetorical process.

Identification, according to Burke, is the basis for human motive—humans speak and act in the symbolic realm for the purposes of creating consubstantiality with other humans. As Ciesielski (1999) states,

The social inquiry in our search for meaning (here synonymous with Burke’s ‘identification’) implies a twofold rhetorical condition: in the act of ‘reading’ a situation, we must identify it; in the act of identifying ‘other,’ we identify (or reidentify) self as well. (p. 243)
When the locus of inquiry is of a pornographic film, the role of the critic is to uncover the modes of persuasion, or identification, of the rhetor (in this case, the creator of the pornographic film). Since identification is located in the symbolic, the critic must therefore analyze the symbols used by the rhetor, whether they are textual or not. Within the myriad of Burkean critical methods, his cluster-agon analysis serves as a powerful tool for uncovering the motives of a rhetor. Burke suggests that a close examination of important symbols (or key terms) “cues [the critic] as to the important ingredients subsumed in ‘symbolic merges’” (1961, p. 232). In other words, Burke developed cluster criticism specifically to uncover a rhetor’s worldview or as Berthold (1976) puts it, “Burke’s [cluster] method offers an objective way of determining relationships between a speaker’s main concerns” (p. 302).

This type of analysis works differently than other methods because it focuses on the relationship between the rhetor and the cluster of terms they themselves employ, rather than examining, for example, the relationship between the rhetor and the audience or the rhetor and the scene. Burke argues that while a rhetor may be completely conscious of their intentions and word choice, they may not be conscious of the interrelationship among the word choices they select. Burke asserts that unconscious motivations exist that propel speakers to choose certain words—or terms—over others. Consequently, Burke’s cluster-agon analysis assists the critic in uncovering what lies beneath the surface, and illuminates a speaker’s attitudes, worldview, and motives.

**Cluster - Agon**

A cluster criticism involves three stages: 1) identify key terms, 2) plot terms that cluster around key terms, and 3) explain the motives of the rhetor to create this artifact.
The first steps entail a close reading of an artifact, followed by an identification of the key terms based on frequency of appearance or intensity. Terms that appear repeatedly in an artifact suggest that the terms are significant in the rhetor’s mind. Additionally, significant terms may not appear often in the text, but may carry significant meaning or weight. Terms that are critical to the artifact are also considered to be key terms on the basis of intensity but may be more difficult to identify than frequently used terms. Yet, “it may be critical because it is central to the argument being made, represents an ultimate commitment, or conveys great depth of feeling” (Foss, 2009, p. 66). In other words, a term may be intense insofar as were it to be removed, the text would change meaning significantly. Once key terms have been identified, the critic then separates these terms into ‘god’ and ‘devil’ terms (Berthold, 1976). The god-term is the most significant term found in the text; the term that all other terms work to support. While there may be multiple key terms, they would all fall secondary to the god-term. In turn, devil-term opposes the god-term within a text. Once the god-term is located, it is easier to find the devil-term as it counters the god-term directly (Berthold, 1976). It is important to note that although not specifically stated by Burke, key terms may of the symbolic realm rather than exclusively discursive.

After identifying the key terms, the critic plots ‘what [terms] goes with what,’ or as Berthold (1976) states, “the verbal combinations and equations in which the speaker tends to associate a key term with other terms” (p. 303). Cluster terms can be determined based on close contact with key terms (used in the same sentence), or they can be joined to key terms using connective terms (e.g. like or and). Another way of determining which terms cluster around key terms is by looking for cause-and-effect relationship between
terms in the text; this implies that certain terms are dependent on the other for meaning. In either case, there are no specific constraints to how certain terms can be identified in association with key terms. In other words, “no apparent limitation exists on the number of ways in which terms may be combined” (Berthold, 1976, p. 303). Ultimately, it is up to the critic to decide which clusters ‘weigh’ more than other in terms of importance or frequency.

Just as the critic needs to chart cluster of words based in conjunction to other terms, likewise an agon analysis charts opposing terms. Hence, instead of searching for ‘what goes with what,’ the critic searches for “what versus what” (Burke, 1957, p. 58). The agon analysis is essential because without it there is no conflict, no drama. Berthold argues, “when opposing terms are located, the critic has found a symbol of conflict which occurs within the speaker himself” (1976, p. 304). Therefore the critic needs both the clusters and agons in order to, according to Berthold (1976), “gain an objective picture of the rhetoric of a given speaker,” as well as coming up with “conclusions about the speaker’s character and motivations” (p. 309).

Lastly, the critic attempts to highlight patterns in the links charted around clusters as a way of identifying the rhetor’s motive. This analysis involves interpretation and speculation, because a rhetor’s motivation may not be obvious or immediately apparent. The critic will develop several likely motives and decides which one best fits the analysis. In the end, a cluster analysis reveals “a survey of the hills and valleys of the [rhetor’s] mind” (Burke, 1984, pp. 232-233).

**Key terms and Key Images**
Kenneth Burke was by and large concerned with language and terms as a tool for identification—rhetoric—and most rhetorical scholars continue the tradition of focusing on language in their analyses. A growing trend in scholarship, however, is the study of visual rhetoric and the power of persuasion from images (Goodnow, 2009). Visual rhetoricians affirm that images have the same rhetorical function as terms. Much like how the god-term in a cluster analysis holds the most significance in a text, images are capable of being just as significant. Goodnow (2009) asserts, “A god image has power because it compels the audience to confirm and affirm that for which the symbol stands” (p. 43).

It is crucial for scholars to include images from their rhetorical scholarship because images hold as much symbolic meaning as verbal language. Therefore, this analysis expands on Burke’s cluster analysis to include images as symbolic language, equally capable of persuasion as its verbal counterparts. Indeed, “if language as symbol has power to motivate, then certainly image as symbol must have also the power to motivate” (Goodnow, 2009, p. 40). Accordingly, this thesis will modify Burke’s cluster analysis to include images as not only Key Images, but also as cluster images. To do this, the transcribed script will include annotations of images that are either frequently used or intensely used. Key and cluster images could include, but are not limited to, colors, clothing, lighting, camera angles, and objects. The purpose is to show how cluster analyses can extend beyond the verbal and be applied to the visual.

**Description of the Artifact**

Jacky St. James is an award-winning writer and director of adult films, winning Adult Video News (AVN) Award’s Best BDSM (bondage, dominant/submissive, sadism, and masochism) Release in 2014 for *The Submission of Emma Marx*, Best Couple’s
Release in 2014 for The Temptation of Eve, and Best Couple’s Release in 2013 for Torn (2012). She has been featured in the Huffington Post, Salon, Slate, and Jezebel as a rising star in writing and directing within the adult film business (Gloudeman, 2015; Kutner, 2015). Jacky St. James is best known for her romantic couple’s film, The Submission of Emma Marx (2013), which is inspired by and is a response to the mainstream, popular book-turned-movie, Fifty Shades of Grey (2012). However, from a personal conversation, Jacky St. James finds that her 2012 film Torn is her “best work” to date. Torn explores the morality of infidelity and challenges the notion that cheating on your wife is always a bad thing.

According to her official website, Jacky St. James describes herself as a “passionate feminist” and as an “advocate of sex-positive, scripted pornography with a focus on strong female protagonists and dynamic sexual encounters” (2016a, par. 2), and the majority of her films are in the ‘romance genre’, typically aimed at women and heterosexual couples. During a panel on women working in pornography, Jacky states that the company she primarily works for, New Sensations, sets out to hire women in high-status positions that does not include the actors (Soren Sorensen, 2013). Further, Jacky is mainly interested in writing toward “smart women” and attempts to explore relationships that do not fit the “status quo” (Gloudeman, 2015; Soren Sorensen, 2013).

Jacky St. James has a unique position in the adult entertainment industry. Her standpoint as a white woman and her position as creator of pornographic content provides her the ability to add to the conversations that have historically been constructed by men (Smith, 2007; Williams, 1999). Jacky St. James’ position as a speaker of pornography by and for women merits scholarly consideration, and her film Torn (2012) is a useful
artifact of study. The film is an hour and fifty minutes long, of which sixty minutes is comprised of sex scenes. This means that less than fifty percent of the film is sexually explicit, while the rest is a scripted story. It is important to point out that the film is hardcore pornography because it clearly shows male and female orgasm; this film is too explicit to earn an NC-17 rating.

Based on a true story, the film centers on Drew, a married, middle-aged, white man, who finds the routines of every day life mundane and repetitive. His wife of seventeen years, Christine, is a successful and independent woman, who is oblivious to her husband’s ennui. Drew admires his friend and coworker, Vicky, who has a very passionate and sexually open relationship with her husband, Roy. During Roy and Vicky’s 20th anniversary party, Drew meets Mimi, Vicky’s niece, and aspiring photographer. Drew finds himself being able to speak his mind and share all of his feelings with Mimi in a way that he has never been able to with his wife, Christine. After a yearlong affair, Drew is not capable of balancing his relationship with Mimi while still committing to his duties as a husband. Mimi breaks off her relationship with Drew, and Drew confesses the affair to his wife.

Drew is willing to put effort into fixing his marriage by attending counseling, which lasts for a year. But, despite their efforts, Drew and Christine come to accept that their relationship is over. Once divorced, Drew returns to Mimi’s photography studio where he asks her to be his girlfriend. Mimi still has feelings for Drew and accepts his proposal. The closing credits happily informs the audience that Drew and Mimi have been married for twenty years now and Christine, who has found the love of her life, also remarried.
The film’s take-away is that infidelity in marriage can sometimes be the turning point towards a better, more fulfilling life. Jacky St. James asks her viewers to sympathize with Drew, and ultimately forgive him for his faults (cheating on his wife). The rhetor, Jacky St. James, attempts to persuade her audience that an affair is not immediately the worst thing that could happen to a marriage (Soren Sorensen, 2013). In the film, the morality of infidelity is questioned; Drew comes to the conclusion that the affair actually “saved” him from spending the rest of his life in a terrible marriage. To this end, a cluster analysis will be used to examine the rhetor’s strategies for resolving the conflict of infidelity.

**Application of method**

In praxis, Burke’s cluster analysis is difficult to apply, specifically to an audio-visual artifact such as a film. In order to accurately chart key words and clusters, the film’s script was transcribed and annotated with important visual cues. A copy of the script with annotations is available in the appendix. Once the film had been fully transcribed, the entire script was copied to a word counting website titled, wordcounter.com. This website allows the user to include or exclude articles such as ‘the’ and ‘it’. This resource identified key terms based on frequency, yet it does not account for key terms based on intensity. For this, repeated close readings of the script were necessary.

Once the key terms and images were identified, the clusters and agons were charted, paying close attention to the interconnectedness of the clusters. Only clusters and agons with stronger relationship to the interrelated key terms are included in the analysis,
as per the critic’s discretion (Foss, 2009). Not all clusters are pertinent to the final analysis and are therefore excluded.
Chapter 4
Analysis

Attitudes determine what we say, which in turn determines what we do and how we act. Burke teaches that examining the language used and the order and arrangement of their terms uncovers a rhetor’s attitudes, motives, and worldviews. Cluster criticism asserts that terms used frequently or intensely are significant to the rhetor, and thus qualify as key terms; identifying key terms and charting their cluster terms, are the first steps in this analysis.

For this analysis, the key terms selected are: freedom, trapped, know, think, time, life, and marriage. While the film had an additional co-director, the screenplay was written and co-directed by Jacky St. James. Therefore, the analysis will attempt to reveal the motivation for Jacky St. James to write this particular adult story dealing with the morality of infidelity.

Key Terms

Freedom

The key term freedom or free is selected based on intensity; though the term does not appear often, it is a crucial term in the plot of the film and all other key terms work to support it. Freedom is the ultimate god term in the film, Torn, and all of the other key terms work to shape, inform, and support freedom. An example of this can be found during the last sequence, when Drew narrates, “[the affair] taught [Christine and I] to live more honestly, to not deny who we were and what we needed. And for the first time in our lives, it gave us the chance to know true and lasting freedom within the routine of marriage”. Free is first heard when we are introduced to Vicky McDaniels, Drew’s co-worker and best friend. Vicky is central to understanding the term freedom as the rhetor
expresses it; though the term free/freedom appears only seven times, three of the seven are directly about or related with the character of Vicky. The first time the term is introduced is used to describe Vicky directly. Thus, Vicky serves as a role model for what being free looks like. For example, the first time we hear the term is when Drew is describing Vicky in the second scene of the film, “Vicky had been my friend and coworker for nearly six years. She was as free as they come; refreshingly unapologetic in who she was and blissfully married to the love of her life.” For Drew, Vicky and her husband have an ideal relationship and desires to model his relationship after hers. Meaning that when the reader hears the word, free, they are being asked to associate it with the character of Vicky.

Terms that cluster around freedom are, know, think, time, life, marriage, unapologetic, open, direct, truth, honesty, refreshing, love, hope, dreams, feel, no denying, not censor, sharing (other key terms in bold). Here, freedom is given a different meaning than the conventional patriotic freedom that is prevalent in U.S. culture. Rather than referring to freedom in terms of democracy and civil rights, the rhetor evokes two concurrent meanings: one of open and honest dialogue, and gratification of needs. By plotting the clusters around the god term freedom, the critic can interpret the intended meanings for the key term. Open, unapologetic, direct, sharing, and not censor suggest that freedom involves being able to say or speak what is on your mind without fear of criticism and ultimately, acceptance of those wants and needs from both parties. In order for someone to be open and truthful about their wants and needs, they need to feel like they will not be ostracized by those listening; and thus freedom is understood by the reader as a term that conveys open and unrestricted communication of wants and needs.
Concurringly, *freedom* is also clustered by terms that suggest a gratification of those wants and needs. The terms, *refreshing, love, hope, dreams, feel,* and *no denying needs,* indicates that being open with communication about your wants and needs leads to physical and mental gratification; when you are honest with your desires and feelings with a partner, you will experience your desires and feelings. The character of Vicky exemplifies this fulfillment. As previously mentioned, Vicky is linked to *freedom,* and therefore contextualizes the term. The reader understands that needs and desires are fulfilled when one is *free* because they see it manifested in Vicky’s relationship with her spouse. Following a description of the devil term, *trapped,* the relationship between the other key terms and *freedom* is explained further.

*Trapped*

The second key term—*trapped*—is the devil term, or the term that is in direct opposition to the god term, *freedom.* The term appears only twice in the film, but it is a very crucial moment in the film, where Drew and Christine discuss Drew’s affair. Here, Christine asks Drew directly why he cheated on her, to which Drew responds,

“Because I felt trapped.”
“Trapped? I never held you back. I never put any demands on you.”
“I know that, and I didn’t mean it that way. I just didn’t feel free.”

From this, the reader understands that being *trapped* is the same as not being *free,* and consequently the terms contrast. The cluster terms for *trapped* are: *tiptoeing, marriage, held back, demands, never, never opened up, never shared,* and *autonomous.* Clearly, the terms *tiptoeing, never open* and *never share* describe the opposite of *freedom,* which is established as open communication. In this case, *free* and *trapped* is the first agon analysis in this piece. Through the cluster of terms, the rhetor places the meaning of the
two terms against one another, and therefore fits Burke’s description of “what versus what” (Burke, 1957, p. 58). *Marriage* and *autonomous* are cluster terms that are themselves agons; to be in a marriage means to be in a close relationship with someone, yet autonomous is understood as self-sufficient and without the need or aid of another person. This conflict of terms describes the relationship between Drew and Christine well. Drew was unhappy in his marriage because he felt *trapped*; he felt like he could not have open and honest communication with his wife, Christine, who is described as a very autonomous person. Drew states, “Christine, we spent fifteen years tip-toeing around our *marriage*; we never opened up, we never shared anything. We just functioned; we functioned like two *autonomous* creatures who never shared anything with each other.” What the rhetor is implying with the agon of the god and devil terms, *free* and *trapped*, as well as with the agon, *marriage* and *autonomous*, is that two people must be open and share their wants and needs with one another in order to have a successful, happy marriage.

*Know*

The term *know*, and other variations such as, *knowing, knew, knows, and known*, appears 66 times in the film—more frequently than any other term. For instance, after Drew and Mimi got to know each other a little better, he said to her, “You *know*, I haven’t been this *open* in my entire *life*.” The words that cluster around *know* are, *truth, unequivocally, innately, inevitability, predictability, gut, open, feel, hearing, listening, seeing, talking, need, want, understand, not censor, comfortable, pleasure, okay, better, best, happy, greatest*, and *love*. The clusters can be divided into three categories: certainty as truth, open communication, and desire for pleasure.
The terms that are associated with certainty are, truth, unequivocally, innately, inevitability, predictability, and gut. They all suggest that knowing something means that truth is certain—there is no question to knowing something. If your gut tells you that something is true, then there is no need to question your gut. The terms that are associated with open communication are: open, feel, hearing, listening, seeing, talking, understand, and not censor. Feel, hear, listen, see, and talk refers to the senses; the ways in which the body receives and sends information with the outside world; while open, understand, and not censor suggests that the rhetor expects the communication with the world to be accessible and comprehensible. The last category, desire for pleasure, is evident with the terms need, want, comfortable, pleasure, okay, better, best, happy, greatest, and love.

**Think**

If the term know is surrounded by positive connotations, then the term think (thinking, thinks, thought) is the opposite. This key term and its variations appear 35 times—third most frequent term—during the film, and is clustered by the terms, barbaric, despicable, wrong, freaked, scarred, afraid, problem, overwhelming, failed, not better, not seeing, not hearing, and unable to speak. The term think and the terms that cluster around it, are placed in opposition with terms that cluster around know. For example, Drew’s voice narrates to the audience saying, “It was overwhelming thinking that I had somehow failed my wife; that I had wronged her.” Not seeing, not hearing, unable to speak are all cluster terms that function to counter the open communication part of the term know. The terms, freaked, scarred, afraid, and overwhelmed suggest a bodily state of confusion and uncertainty; when someone does know what going to happen next,
it can make that person uncomfortable and in distress. The cluster terms, barbaric, despicable, wrong, problem, and failed all supply meaning to the key term, think, suggesting that being in the state of thought—or to not be certain about something—is undesirable.

**Time**

*Time*, represented by time, weeks, and years, is the second most frequently used term, appearing in the film 46 times. The clusters are influenced by the key terms, know and think. Cluster terms for time that are near the term know are positive. For example, love, free, honestly, wise, friend, hopes, dreams; this positive relationship affirms know as a god-term. On the other hand, clusters around time that are associated with think have a negative relationship: repeated actions, assembly line, routine, and trapped. The remaining terms, first, now, few, seventeen, three, six, ten, fifteen, twenty, thirty, day-in, and day-out, suggest that the rhetor sees time as finite; days are numbered and, as humans, we have limited time to live out our lives.

**Life**

The group of key terms, life, lives, and live, are also moderated by know and think, and often appears in conjunction with the previous key term, time. When coupled with the key term, think, cluster terms around life are, routine, straight and narrow, moving blindly, assembly line, motions, predictable, repeated, and zombie. Again, these cluster bring about a sense of life as monotonous; terms like, routine, motions, predictable, assembly line, and moving blindly imply a negative connotation the every-day societal expectations of life.
In contrast, the god term, *know*, mediates the term *life* in positive ways. Clustering terms include, *not inevitable, glad, happy, fulfilling, love, beautiful, true freedom, honestly, saved, share, loosen, and unapologetic*. These clusters provide context for what *life* is like when you follow your instinct, or are in the *know; life* is beautiful, happy and fulfilling when people *know* what they want and need and are able to share their wants and needs. Most importantly, *life is free* when you are certain (*know*) about your feelings.

*Marriage*

*Marriage* is the last key term deemed significant for this analysis. The term appears throughout the film and is central to the plot because the rhetor is addressing the consequences of an affair within a marriage. The term appears in conjunction with all of the other key terms so far. It is also influenced by the *know* and *think* key terms. So that when *marriage* is in proximity to the term *know*, the clustering terms are, *life, time, happy, honest, vibrant, authentic, and better*. These terms are objectively positive and support the god term, *freedom*. For the rhetor, when a person follows their gut, or *knows* something to be true, they are oriented towards freedom, and this orientation seems to promise a happy, authentic, and vibrant union between partners.

On the other hand, when *marriage* is near the term *think*, the reader gets the connotation that marriage is *wrong, boredom, stupid, cliché, and mad*, based on the terms that cluster around *think*. The negative connotation of *thinking*—or being uncertain and silent about wants and needs—permeates throughout the other key terms, and ultimately points the viewer to see the marriage as a *trap*.

*Key Images*
A rhetorical analysis of pornography would be incomplete without the presence of visual rhetoric. Images hold the same rhetorical power as words do, and in pornography, the erotic aesthetic is one of the most important characteristics of the genre. Therefore, any images that are used frequently or with intensity are included in this analysis. Three key images were found during the analysis: the color pink, the photograph, and the orgasm.

**Pink Color**

There are twenty objects in the film that stand out because of their pink coloring, which ranges between light pink and dark pink. Objects and items of clothing that have a shade of pink coloring are instantly noticeable and catch the viewer’s attention when they appear in frame because they rest of the color palate of the frame tends to be comprised of neutral tones. Thus, the color pink is chosen as a key image on the basis of intensity. The most visibly obvious examples of the appearance of pink are in different items of clothing. The three protagonists, Drew, Mimi, and Vicky wear different shades of pink at different points throughout the film. In the same way that a cluster analysis of terms attempts to chart terms that surround—or are in association with—other terms, the critic can chart other images (and terms) that cluster around the key image. Therefore, the characters themselves are considered cluster images to the color pink. The first time Drew meets Mimi, at Vicky and Ron’s anniversary party, Mimi is wearing a light pink top. The day that Drew and Mimi decide to start an affair, Mimi is wearing a pink tank top, and Drew is wearing a pink tie. Additionally, during the same anniversary party where Drew and Mimi meet, Vicky is seen wearing a hot pink dress.
Aside from image clusters, terms spoken synchronously with the key images can be considered as cluster terms. An example of this is when Vicky sees Drew wearing a pink button-down shirt at work and says to Drew, “You’re happy today!” This creates an association between the term happy and the key image, pink color. Other terms that cluster around the color pink, in all its variations, include, freedom, know, time, life, marriage, better, truth, honesty, and unguarded. It is then clear from previous clusters that the color pink is strongly associated with what the rhetor determines to be ‘good’ things.

This association is exemplified most notably in two ways, the first being between the color and the term free. Freedom, a key term based on intensity, is spoken seven times in the film, of which, five are in the presence of the color pink. Here, the term freedom visible, the audience is asked to assume that those who wear the color pink embody the meaning of freedom as presented by the rhetor. The second connection between the color and the term is found inside of the pink objects that stand out in the film, the pink folder. The pink manila folder contains a photograph of Drew that Mimi shot in her photography studio. The photograph is explained further, when the second key image is examined.

The Photograph

The photograph itself appears during four pivotal moments in the film: (1) the photo-shoot scene with the first kiss between Drew and Mimi, (2) the scene of when the affair began, (3) the scene where Mimi breaks up with Drew, (4) and the scene where Drew decides to divorce Christine to be with Mimi. Nevertheless, this image is considered significant based on the characteristics of intense key terms outlined by Foss,
“[key terms] may be critical because [they are] central to the argument being made, represent an ultimate commitment, or convey great depth of feeling” (Foss, 2009, p. 66). To illustrate, the photograph depicts a medium close up shot of Drew’s face, head cocked to the side and slightly backwards, smiling wide enough for his eyes to squint.

The photograph is taken during a photo-shoot that Mimi needs to complete for a class where the assignment is to “expose emotion,” as Mimi states. Although the tangible object of the photograph is not present in this scene, the key image originates here and therefore provides contextual meaning to the photograph when it appears later on. The photo-shoot scene is essential in understanding the relationship between Mimi and Drew; Drew simply talked about his feelings while Mimi attempted to capture those feelings with her camera. The following lines narrated by Drew best sum up the scene,

To achieve a variety of emotional shots involved me telling stories about my life—everything from my wildest dreams, to my biggest fears, to my greatest accomplishments, to my worst regrets. I don’t know what it was about Mimi, I never felt more comfortable in my own skin than I did when I was with her.

The terms that clustered around the moment in which the photograph was taken are know, life, dating, parents, neighbor, open, emotional, wildest, biggest, greatest, worst, comfortable, and skin.

The terms wildest, biggest, greatest, worst, and skin illustrate a sense of heightened emotions, and effect of Drew opening up to Mimi. Coupled with the cluster terms, life, dating, parents, and neighbor—which illustrate relationships one can have through life—the photo-shoot scene leads the audience to interpret Drew’s ability to speak openly to Mimi as a pathway to more connected relationships and living a more emotionally fulfilling life. In other words, this scene is the first time Drew realizes that
relationships are capable of providing a full range of heightened emotions; something he has never felt with his currently relationship to Christine.

The second scene in which the photograph appears marks the beginning of Drew’s affair with Mimi. After the photo-shoot, Drew feels guilty for having feelings towards Mimi that he has never felt for Christine. Drew attempts to make a more emotional connection with Christine, but Christine denies his request. After some time, Mimi approaches Drew outside of his work and hands him the pink envelope. Drew opens the envelope to see the photographs that Mimi printed out for him, but the only one the audience sees, is the photograph. Mimi is wearing a pink dress and Drew is also wearing a pink tie. Soon after commenting on how much he liked the photo, Drew and Mimi kissed. Other verbal terms that cluster around the photograph in this scene are: hope, know, happy, and living.

In the photograph, Drew is able to see himself as his best self, as he was during the happiest, most comfortable moment of his life (during the photo-shoot). The Drew smiling in the photograph is in a different emotional state than the Drew staring at the photograph, and when he sees the photos in the pink folder, Drew is immediately reminded of what he knows, that he hopes to live a happy life. It is during this exact moment that Drew decides to start having a relationship with Mimi, made obvious when he narrates, “for the first time in what felt like forever, I was actually living.”

The third scene that features the photograph is during another crucial moment in the film, when Mimi breaks up with Drew. Drew had been attempting to balance both his marriage and his relationship with Mimi, but he was unable to do so and, in turn, Mimi endured inconsideration; forgotten birthdays, cancelled dates, Drew even misses Mimi’s
photography gallery opening. In this scene, Drew comes to the gallery early while Mimi is still setting up and tells her that he cannot attend because of his commitments to Christine. Mimi decides that she no longer wants to be just a mistress and tells Drew, “I’m just a distraction from a life that got too boring.”

The terms that cluster around the scene with the photograph present are, think, life, marriage, wife, time, distraction, huge, walk away, monumental event, ruin, cheated, devastated, hurt, not true, unhappy, boring, birthdays, and holidays. The term, think, greatly impacts the mood of the scene, because of its previously mentioned clustered meanings; the scene is clouded by uncertainty and gloom. Yet, it is a powerfully positive scene in the film because it demonstrates Mimi taking charge of her own feelings and her own freedom. Mimi recognizes that her relationship with Drew is problematic not just because she is having an affair with a married man, but because her capacity to be happy is hindered. From the terms, marriage, birthdays, holidays, monumental events, and huge, the rhetor is calling on important yearly events that happen in a person’s life. In a way, it is if these monumental moments are what constitute, or compose, a lifetime. In conjunction with the terms distraction, ruin, cheated, devastated, boring, unhappy, and hurt, the rhetor is implying that the moments that make-up a lifetime are worthless, broken, and cause pain when one is in an illicit relationship with a married man.

The photograph is no longer inside the pink envelope and, therefore, no longer clustered around the term, freedom. Instead, the photograph hangs on the wall, in between Mimi and Drew during their break up conversation. The photograph symbolizes the connection between Mimi and Drew not just by its positionality between them, but also through its production. In other words, the fact that the photograph of Drew was shot
by Mimi connects the two characters, as if to say that it is Mimi’s actions that bring about Drew’s smiling face. The rhetor intended to illustrate Drew’s happiness (as depicted in the photo), and Mimi’s happiness (as the producer of the photograph) metaphorically hanging in the balance. The purpose of the photograph during this moment in the plotline is to empower Mimi to take her happiness into her own hands. She can now openly and honestly tell Drew that she cannot be in a relationship with a married man and breaks up with him.

The last scene that shows the photograph comes towards the end, after Drew and Christine spend a year in therapy trying to save their marriage. Drew is looking through the photographs in the pink folder, yet the viewer only catches a glimpse of the photograph when the camera shows a close-up of the pink folder. In this moment, the cluster images are pink color and smiling, while cluster terms are, love, time, favorite, recover, and desperately. The pink color of the folder and Drew’s smile (in person and in the photograph) remind the audience that Drew was most free and most happy when he was with Mimi. Desperately, love, and favorite convey strong and urgent emotions, while time and recover convey that Drew is now ready to leave Christine and pursue Mimi.

Orgasm

The final key image is the orgasms presented throughout the four sex scenes in the film. The orgasm is chosen on the basis of intensity because the orgasm is essential, both on and off screen, to the production and classification of the pornographic genre (Williams, 1992). In her book, Hard Core: Power, Pleasure and the “Frenzy of the Visible,” Williams compares pornographic films to musicals; she states, “to a great extent, in fact, the hard-core feature film is a kind of musical, with sexual numbers taking the
place of musical numbers” (original emphasis, 1999, p. 124). For example, such numbers can include, “masturbation”, “straight sex”, “ménage a trois”, or “anal sex” (p. 127). These numbers are what constitute the iconography, or the “pattern of visual imagery one expects to see in a given genre,” of the pornographic genre (p. 128).

Further, the orgasm can be considered the pinnacle of the sexual number—a necessary standard generated by the pornography industry. This standard is not only constructed by the pornography industry at large, but the production companies creating the films also mediate the rules and standards that constitute the iconography of the genre (Schaschek, 2013). By the time the rhetor, Jacky St. James, decided to write a pornographic film, the rules of what was to be included in a sex scene had already been established. In other words, no matter what content Jacky St. James wants to include in her film, certain aesthetics—like the orgasm—must be included.

It is challenging to study the orgasm because of the complicated aesthetics of the female orgasm. Unlike male ejaculation, females do not necessarily produce physical evidence of their orgasms, and therefore must make their climax visible through their performance. While the performance can take many forms, certain acts clue in the viewer to determine that a woman on screen is experiencing an orgasm. These acts include, increasingly heavy breathing, an abrupt stop to their breathing, closed eyes and clenched face, audible moaning, and affirmative exclamations (e.g. “yes!” “yeah!” and “oh god!”). Although challenging, I was able to discern when the characters of the film were experiencing an orgasm on screen and thus was able to treat the orgasm as a key image for my analysis.
Throughout the four sex numbers, which lasted approximately fifteen minutes each, there were a total of eighteen orgasms counted. And throughout the numbers, several cluster terms and images were identified: (images) kissing, hugging, bright lighting, low lighting, smiling. (terms) passion, spontaneity, yes, please, thank you. In the first sex scene, a three-way between Vicky, her husband Roy, and their friend Samantha, I counted six orgasms: Samantha experienced three, Vicky two, and Roy one. Kissing, smiling, hugging, and bright lighting were the more notable clusters, clearly marking that the sex is pleasurable and satisfying. The ratio of female to male orgasm is reproduced throughout all of the sex scenes, where the women are experiencing more orgasms than the men. These image cluster around the orgasms to paint a picture of mutual pleasure; the rhetor wants the audience to see a woman’s orgasm (and pleasure), not just the man’s. The rhetor also wants to convey a sense of mutual affection between all three characters through the use of oral sex and the cluster images: kissing, hugging, and bright lighting.

All other scenes display similar characteristics to the first one: women experience multiple orgasms, oral sex, and kissing are all presents. However, the scene between Mimi and her roommate is the one that stands out in its agon analysis. Unlike the other three scenes, Mimi and her roommate are not in love, and this is conveyed by the rhetor through her use of low lighting and lack of kissing. All of the other scenes have exceptionally bright lighting, and when juxtaposed with Mimi and her Roommates’ scene, it is evident that their sexual act is read as lacking true affection. The sex occurs in a kitchen, at night, without any lights turned on—the only lighting seems to be coming from the living room, beyond the kitchen and behind Mimi and her roommate. This produces a silhouette effect where the outline of their bodies is in lighting, while the rest
is in shadow. This opposition of shadow versus light symbolizes the relationship between Mimi and her roommate. Mimi has just broken up with Drew, and is feeling heartbroken and lonely and calls on her roommate for solace. Mimi and her roommate are not dating, and do not plan to do so, and therefore are not in a relationship.

A lack of kissing also provides insight into the relationship between Mimi and her roommate. All of the other scenes had extensive kissing between all characters, especially before and after the sex acts. In this case, however, Mimi and her roommate only kiss briefly before starting to have sex. After her roommate orgasms, they simply lay next to one another on the Kitchen floor, in shadow. The lack of kissing is meant to show the viewer that Mimi and her roommate do not love one another and have sex for “just fuck[ing],” as Mimi said. Coupled with the agon of low lighting, the rhetor is revealing how she feels towards having casual sex outside of relationships. The silhouettes and lack of kissing expose Jacky St. James’ position on sex; although she may be an open-minded, sex-positive feminist, she still holds the opinion that it is better to have sex with someone you love than to have casual sex with friends.

Therefore, in the eyes of Jacky St. James, not all orgasms are created equal. Based on the ratio of male to female orgasms, it is insinuated that a woman has a higher status than a man because she is not only capable, but also expected to experience multiple orgasms. Further, an orgasm experienced with whom you are in a relationship holds more merit for the rhetor than an orgasm with a casual friend.

**Discussion**

The final step in Burke’s cluster analysis is to decipher the patterns found in the clusters as a way to support a critic’s interpretation of the artifact. Though *Torn* is a
mainstream pornographic film meant to be used for the purpose of masturbation and visual arousal, it contains messages that move beyond the assumed “violence against women” discourse. Jacky St. James wrote and directed a story that tackles one of the most devastating events that can happen to a person’s marriage—an affair—and successfully persuades the viewer to sympathize with the person who participated in the affair and to accept cheating as something potentially positive. In order to understand how Jacky St. James was able to achieve this, the cluster interpretations are detailed.

This interpretation places the god term freedom as the ultimate goal. Jacky St. James claims that a ‘happy’ marriage that is open in communication, honest about partner’s wants and needs, as well as satisfaction of those needs. However, her reasoning for justifying an affair can be found in the interpretation of the key terms, know and think. These opposing terms regulate the other key terms, life, time, and marriage throughout the film. A few examples include,

I knew that life didn’t have to be that way. I knew it wasn’t some giant inevitability that marriage somehow equated to boredom and complacency.

(Key terms in bold and italics; cluster terms in italics)

And,

I began to think the root of our problems had more to do with my inability to vocalize those problems than did with her inability to unwind. Why couldn’t I just tell her how I felt? So there I was, going through the motions of life like a zombie, craving change, unsure of where to find it—waiting for it to somehow find me.

And lastly,

How could I not be happy? For the first time in my life, I had a relationship that was both emotionally and physically fulfilling. I was totally unguarded. I could share absolutely anything with Mimi without fear of being criticized or judged. Aside from Vicky, she was the most open person I knew; wise beyond her years. A friend to me; not just a lover. We laughed often, encouraged one another’s hopes and dreams, enjoyed a sense of freedom that I’d never known with Christine.
Symbolically, *freedom* is also understood through the non-verbal use of the *pink color*. Since the reader is asked to understand Vicky as ideal in the eyes of Drew, then it is not surprising that Vicky is first introduced wearing the color *pink*. Vicky represents true *freedom*, and Drew strives to be more like her—more open and honest—and when Vicky wears *pink*, the audience makes a connection between the representation of *freedom* in the character of Vicky and the *color pink*. This notion reinforces Drew’s goal to be more like Vicky. Throughout the film, Drew starts out wearing grays and blacks, and as his relationship with Mimi blossoms, he beings to wear the *color pink*. Wearing of this color, and its connection to *freedom* is a way for the rhetor to make Drew’s transition towards *freedom* visible.

An important question to consider is, why the color pink? Why would the rhetor choose this color over any other color? In U.S. popular culture, there is a clear association between the color *pink* and gender—more specifically, women, girls, and femininity. Attend a gender reveal party for a pregnant woman and expect to see pink as a representation for girls and blue for boys. Hospitals often provide blankets or beanies for newborns with the same color assignment (Morton, 2016). Similarly, a walk down the toy isle at a store displays a visible divide between the toys marketed for boys and the ones for girls. Cassell and Jenkins (1998) argue that pink toys often shape the way girls perceive what a girl looks like, how a girl behaves, and what it means to be a girl. They stated, “[Girl] games allow girls to feel comfortable in their girlhood. Those games fit comfortably into what a girl believes (consciously or unconsciously) is expected of her in order to merit the label ‘girl’” (Cassell & Jenkins, 1998, p. 28). The result, according to
Cassell and Jenkins (1998), is that the color pink functions to feminize products and
deem them feminine.

Accordingly, Jacky St. James is doing exactly that with the term *freedom*. Using
the *color pink* in close approximation with characters that are *free*, by way of wearing
pink in the case of Vicky, the rhetor is visually feminizing *freedom*. Therefore, Jacky St.
James’ worldview is rooted in *freedom*—open communication, being honest about your
wants and needs, as well as being granted satisfaction for those needs—as a intrinsically
feminine trait. Since *freedom* is the ultimate god term in this analysis, the *color pink*
informs the audience that femininity also part of the god term. The film itself is
considered feminist because it meets the industry standards as outlined in the Feminist
Porn Awards (2016), and Jacky St. James is a self-proclaimed feminist, and after
analyzing the film, it is clear that the rhetorical message is feminist as well.

Although Jacky St. James’ justifies infidelity within the film, there are still limits
to what she considers appropriate within sexual relationships. The meanings
contextualizing the *orgasm* reveals that Jacky St. James struggles with the idea of having
causal sex outside of a committed relationship. This struggle is apparent when we
consider the three-way scene and the scene where Mimi and her roommate have sex.
Both scenes involve relationships that are noncommittal. For instance, Samantha is not
represented as a dedicated member of Vicky and Roy’s marriage, yet her *orgasms* are
deemed ‘good’ by the rhetor through the use of *bright lighting* and *kissing*. Yet, Mimi
and the roommate are not afforded the same *lighting*, and consequently, their sex scene
demonstrates that their intercourse was ‘not okay’ with the rhetor.
The difference is that Roy and Vicky, a married, *free* couple, invited Samantha into their relationship. While Mimi, who had just broken up with Drew, was heartbroken and unhappy, and certainly not *free*. Therefore, Jacky St. James does not believe that they engaged in mutually loving sex, and therefore does not meet her standards of what constitutes a *free* relationship.

All together, the association of the clusters reveals a clearer picture of how Jacky St. James justifies an affair within a marriage. By examining the given meanings of the terms *know* and *think*, there is a general orientation towards knowledge that comes from within. Meaning that internal forces, rather than external, determine what is true and untrue, right and wrong, real and unreal. For example, many of institutions attempt to define marriage, whether it is religions or governments, and it is usually considered one of the most important commitments an adult can make in their life (especially in U.S. Western culture). Although divorce is a viable option for couples in the United States, by and large it is perceived as a sign of failure in one or more of the spouses involved and highly discouraged. Altogether, divorcing or ending a marriage is not an event that is typically celebrated.

Jacky St. James, however, does think that it is a cause for celebration because her worldview places internal wants and needs ahead of societal norms. According to the film, being open and honest in a relationship and following gut instinct is more important—and ultimately better—than any religious or legal commitment. An example of this is found during the scene where Drew confronts Christine about his affair. Christine states, “Well, marriage isn’t about *freedom*, Drew; it’s about *commitment*.” Christine is the antagonist in the story; she is someone we are persuaded to not be like. Christine, then
becomes a representation of society as Jacky St. James sees it: marriage is meant to be a commitment that is upheld, even if the individuals are unhappy in that marriage.

Through the analysis of the clusters surrounding the term *know*, it is clear that Jacky St. James invites the viewer to dismiss societal expectations, and instead follow their instincts. If something *feels* right, even if culture dictates that it is wrong, then it is ultimately right. This claim is best illustrated by Mimi’s roommate’s reaction to Mimi confessing that she feels bad for having sex (and falling in love with) a married man, “Well, if you *know* it’s *innately* wrong then your *gut* wouldn’t be telling you to do it in the *first* place, would it?” Here, Jacky St. James is highlighting the subjectivity of morality. The term, *gut* is literally an internal body part, and while the rhetor is not suggest that a literal digestive system is where Mimi is drawing knowledge from, the metaphor applies to the internal body. Rather than accepting external moral values, the rhetor suggests that we listen to our feelings and our intuition.

A transition from objective knowledge to subject knowledge reflects the works of Michel Foucault and Judith Butler (among others), who are considered cornerstone writers of postmodern feminist theories. From *A History of Sexuality* ([1976] 1980), Foucault states that any claims of objective or *real* truths about men and women—what is natural or acceptable human behavior—represents the dominant discourse and normalizes taken-for-granted assumptions. In this case, the assumption is that of the importance of upholding the commitment of marriage and the injury of infidelity. Rather than accepting that cheating is always wrong, the rhetor invites the viewer to see knowledge as subjective, where truths are different for different people and different situations.
More specifically, infidelity—which would generally be accepted as a dishonest action—is the most honest thing that Drew could have done in his situation. Jacky St. James’ worldview is one where subjective knowledge is more valuable than objective knowledge. It is through this point of view that she is able to persuade her viewers to see an affair as a positive event in someone’s life. For the rhetor, an ideal marriage involves being able to communicate openly about desires and needs while being accepting of those desires and needs. Ultimately, if there is no open communication, then the individuals are not free—and this is interpreted as more unacceptable than cheating.

Overall, the key terms, freedom, know, think, time, life, and marriage, and the key images, pink color, the photograph, and the orgasm illustrate a picture of how Jacky St. James sees the world. Jacky St. James expresses her feminist worldview by transposing feminist ideals to both the script and the frame. The unconscious arrangement of frequent and intense terms and images communicates meaning that moves beyond a superficial reading of the artifact. Through this analysis, it is clear that pornographic films have the capability to contain and represent messages that are complex and multifaceted.
Chapter 5
Conclusion

Everyday, millions of people access and consume pornography and scholastic research has only scratched the surface of academic inquiry. While most scholars focus on the effects pornography has on audiences, this thesis is the first to analyze a specific pornographic film through a Burkean rhetorical lens. The purpose of this thesis was to apply Burke’s cluster criticism to Jacky St. James’ Torn in order to discover the hidden worldviews and rhetorical strategies of the rhetor. My goal was to answer the question, what are the rhetorical messages found in this pornographic film? In the following chapter I will summarize my findings, state my implications, identify my limitations, and finally, provide guidance for future research in pornography.

Summary of findings

In the film Torn, Drew is conflicted between his commitment to his wife and his love for Mimi. Marital infidelity is an unfortunate, but common, event in most people’s lives. Moreover, according to a “Behind the Scenes” interview found in the DVD of Torn, Jacky St. James chose to write a pornographic film about infidelity because it happened in her own marriage as well. However, Jacky St. James successfully persuades the audience to not only sympathize with Drew’s character, but also encourage his affair with Mimi.

The purpose of Burke’s cluster criticism is to uncover the motives, attitudes, and worldviews of a rhetor. In this case, the analysis reveals that Jacky St. James holds a subjective worldview that allows for context-based morality. Meaning that right and wrong are not objective and individuals are ultimately happier—and more free—if they follow their instinct and do not ascribe to predetermined societal rules. Additionally, the
analysis reveals the rhetor’s worldview as feminist. Jacky St. James makes a direct correlation between freedom—or the ability to have open and honest communication in your relationships—as an inherently feminist trait. The rhetor also maintains a feminist perspective in the film by elevating women’s pleasure, in the form of the orgasm, equal to and even above men’s.

This analysis also works as a practical example of how Burke’s cluster criticism can be applied to visual rhetoric. Traditionally, rhetorical students and scholars study the written or spoken word. Yet, images convey just as much meaning as words; “images also have the power to persuade” (Goodnow, 2009, p. 53). Culturally, the color pink is associated with baby girls, girl toys, and femininity in general. In the film, *Torn*, the color pink conveys a meaning of power, open communication, and freedom. The image of the color pink functions as a metonym for a larger concept, one that is more easily and effectively conveyed by an image rather than words.

The relationship between images and words is recognizable: images do not convey meaning automatically. Images must instead be interpreted through words in order to understand the symbolic meaning of the images. Further, the meaning of images is constructed through language. Ergo, language and images are mutually dependent. In other words, “Because images condense meaning into one picture that could be conveyed only with a multiplicity of words, images are often more powerful. On the other hand, the complexity of certain situations can only be explained and understood through words” (Goodnow, 2009, p. 53).

Overall, messages found in the film, *Torn*, are about moral subjectivity and building stronger relationships through honest and open communication. The film
prioritizes internal motivations above societal norms by demonstrating that people are ultimately happier and freer when they follow their instincts. *Torn* also prioritizes femininity through the relationship between the rhetor’s concept of freedom and the repetitive use of the color pink, suggesting that open and honest communication—often considered a feminine characteristic—should be valued above all else.

**Implications**

It is important to point out that Jacky St. James excludes any notion of violence or sexual coercion in *Torn*, and instead, messages of love, understanding, and honest communication are at the forefront of this pornographic film. I believe this is important because it is in direct opposition of MacKinnon and Dworkin’s attitudes toward pornography. This analysis adds a different perspective to the conversation that traditionally presents pornography as a product targeted towards, and instead presents an example where pornography is created by a woman and for women. Feminist pornography as a whole serve as evidence against the over-generalized definition of pornography as being only violence against women, a definition that is perpetuated not only in academia but also in our culture as a whole. As Liberman (2015) puts it, “Feminist pornography grows out of a third-wave, sex-positive feminist ideology that seeks to revision sexual subjectivity. However unorthodox, this enactment of praxis positions directors to produce mediated spaces that attempt to challenge the mythologies of mainstream pornography industry” (p. 174).

Women’s role in pornography is mainly thought of being in front of the camera, yet Jacky St. James proves that women have a place behind the camera as well. From writers, directors, and editors, women have the opportunity to shape the pornographic
landscape. Women should no longer be perceived solely as victims of pornography and instead as active members of the industry. This analysis shows that the role of women in pornography varies and as the writer and director, Jacky St. James created a pornographic film that contradicts the definitions of pornography provided by Dworkin and MacKinnon.

Pornography is not going anywhere and it will continue to be a part of our private lives, in negative or positive ways. Some relationships suffer from and others are enriched by the use of pornography. It is clear that in order to combat discourse that insists on demonizing all of pornography there needs to be a new discourse that praises and approves of feminist pornography. Simply put, not all of pornography is created equal, and rather than discouraging all of pornography, feminist pornography merits positive and open discourse.

Limitations

To start, this interpretation is only one of many that can be made about this particular film. My own worldview, in turn, affects how I interpret this artifact, and someone else with a different point of view may interpret the film differently. This limitation, however, is not unique to my analysis. All rhetorical analyses are subject to the critic’s interpretation of the world. As Burke stated, “all living things are critics” (1935, p. 5), yet a critic does not live outside of an ideology; and therefore any conclusions that I make are informed by past experiences and interpretations of past experiences.

Although this thesis takes a postmodern and feminist epistemology, it lacks an examination of the intersection between gender, sex, race, class, and ethnicity. The cast
of *Torn* is predominately white, and the characters portray middle to upper-middle class, heterosexual couples. In the three-way scene, the audience sees two women orally pleasuring one another, which can be interpreted as a representation of non-heteronormative sex. On the other hand, it can also be argued that the three-way is a staple in mainstream pornography because the three-way is stereotypically considered a sexual fantasy of heterosexual males.

This thesis is also limited in scope. Jacky St. James’ *Torn* is just one film from the millions of other films and clips available online. The sheer massiveness of online pornographic content is difficult to track, label, and study. Feminist, full-length films make up a small fraction of the wide range of porn available and no data is available on how many times the film has been purchased, downloaded, or shared. Therefore, it is impossible to state how many people watched *Torn* and how many people were exposed to these messages.

**Future research**

There are countless categories and subgenres in pornography, and the Internet provides an endless source for erotic content. For this reason, it is very difficult for any scholar to make conclusions about pornography as a whole. Instead, those who study pornography have a responsibility to confine their findings to their narrow category. Scholars need to distinguish between pornography and pornographies; the former refers to the industry as a whole and the latter allows for subgenres and sub-subgenres (e.g. online, published book, feminist, queer, etc.). If scholars make conclusions about specific pornographies rather than pornography as a whole then research studies would reflect the vast variety and diversity that exists in pornography.
For quantitative scholars in particular, research on pornography must stop operationalizing pornography consumption solely as whether or not an individual watched an X-rated movie in the past year (Wright, 2012; 2013; Wright, Bae, & Funk, 2013; Wright & Funk, 2014; Wright & Randall, 2013). This operationalization fails to record the types of pornography people are watching. Other ways to operationalize pornography consumption include the question, *list the most recent search terms you used when browsing the Internet for pornography*, or, *did the last pornographic video you watched have scripted dialogue?* The two survey items provide a more inclusive understanding into the potential rhetorical messages received by audiences of pornography.

Further, this thesis prioritizes both language and images in order to provide a more comprehensive analysis of a visual artifact. The modified cluster analysis can and should be applied to artifacts that may not have obvious visual components. For example, presidential speeches are often a rich source for rhetorical analysis, what new conclusions will scholars find should they include visual rhetoric? Similarly, visual rhetoric should be considered in any critical rhetorical method, not just Burke’s cluster criticism. The rhetorical power of images and other non-verbal symbols are ubiquitous; dismissing or ignoring them restricts the possibility of a comprehensive analysis. In other words, “It is important to recognize the symbolic power of images because they often provide a motivating force that is crucial for mobilizing individuals” (Goodnow, 2009, p. 43).

My thesis contributes to a growing body of knowledge not only in rhetorical communication, but also in porn studies. There is a growing need to understand what messages people are exposed to when they watch pornography—not just men, but all
people. Without proper scholarly consideration, negative assumptions about pornography will remain prevalent in dominant discourse. While the resolution in Utah did not create any laws, it paves the way construct legislature restricting and criminalizing pornography production and use. If more attention is oriented towards studying pornography, scholars and politicians alike can stop using pornography as a scapegoat for societal failures, such as violence against women, and can look at the larger picture of how sex, gender, and violence are interconnected throughout all of culture.
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Appendix
"TORN"

WRITTEN BY:
JACKIE ST. JAMES

CHRISTINE: (voiced over) So is that what attracted you to her, the fact that she needed you?

DREW: (voiced over) (sigh) The fact that I could be with her. I knew this hurts, but the only truth I knew was when I was with her. I need you to know and understand where I'm coming from...

C: ...If there's any hope in saving our marriage.

TITLE APPEARS ON SCREEN

"Based on a true story"

D: (Narrating over scene) Routine; that is what my life had become; a giant assembly line. Just a series of same actions repeated day-in and day-out for years.

C: Hey you better get up, you're going to be late for work.

D: (Narrating) I never questioned what I was doing or where I was going. I just moved blindly through life from point A to Point B. A salve to monotony and predictability. I knew that life didn't have to be that way. I knew it wasn't some giant inevitability that marriage somehow equated to boredom and complacency because I saw how vibrant, honest, authentic, and happy other married people seemed to be.

VICKY: I'm really curious about double penetration with Roy.

D: (Narrating) Vicky had been my friend and coworker for nearly six years. She was as free as they come; refreshingly unapologetic in who she was and blissfully married to the love of her life.

PARTY SCENE

ROY: Excuse me everyone; I'd like to say a few words before I lose everyone to the effects of booze, weed, whatever other drug you might have smuggled in here. Seventeen years ago, I met Vicky McDaniel. One of the most incredibly beautiful, insanely honest, and emotionally crave-y women I ever met in my life. Three weeks later, we were married. [kiss] Everyone said we were too young, that we'd be divorced within a year. My mother even suggested we have the marriage annulled. But I knew better, I knew she was the girl for me. Vicky, I want to thank you for seventeen of the best years of my life. You loved me for who I am, accepted me for who I am not.
without any judgment or criticism. I love you sweetheart. Here's to seventeen more years of proving everyone wrong.

(Awe's and cheers)

D: Congratulations. Cheers, guys.

C: I don't know why he thinks his relationship is so much better than everyone else's, just because they knew each other for three weeks before they got married?

D: That wasn't his point, Christine.

C: That was exactly his point. (Mocking) 'Oh look at us, we only dated for three weeks and we're still together seventeen years later. We're better than everyone.'

D: Why do you dislike them so much?

C: Because it's so phony, Drew. I mean, they're always trying to show everyone how happy they are together. If you're happy together, you don't need to prove it to anyone; kind of like us.

D: They are happy.

C: You know them better than I do.

(Vicky interjects. Vicky and Christine hug.)

V: Thank you so much for coming tonight; it means so much to the both of us to have you here.

C: We wouldn't have missed it for the world. Congratulations. You two look so happy together.

V: We are happy.

D: I'm going to have another cigarette outside.

C: (As Drew walks away) I thought you were trying to quit.

SCENE WHERE DREW AND MIMI MEET

MIMI: Hey, can I bum a cigarette?

D: Yeah.

M: Cool. Thanks.

D: Here you go.

M: God. Three weeks turned into seventeen years real quick.
D: Yeah, it's quite the storybook romance.
M: I think it's incredible they're just defying all the odds and proving the naysayers wrong. It's very Romeo and Juliet without all that mutual suicide.
D: How do you know them?
M: Vicky is my aunt, actually.
D: Really?
M: Yeah, yeah.
D: Oh shit. I've actually worked with her for six years. She's a great lady.
M: She's really great. Love her.
D: Wait; are you the niece that does amazing photography?
M: Oh my god, did she say amazing? She's really exaggerating. But yea, I'm her niece.
D: Nah, I've actually seen it. It's really amazing stuff.
M: Wow, thank you for saying that. I've been going to school now for a couple of years trying to perfect my technique and it's getting there.
D: Did you get any interesting shots today?
M: I did yea. I got a lot. Here, take a look at this one.
D: Why do you say that?
M: There's just so much going on with you than what you're projecting in that moment. There's just a lot in your eyes right there.
D: I was just zoning out.
M: No. No, the camera doesn't lie. I've been photographing people for years now.
D: What are you, like 80? C'mon, you haven't been doing anything for years yet.
M: Well, I've been shooting since I was 16, so that's ten years now.
M: I'm Mimi, by the way.
D: Drew. I'll see you around. (Walks up and leaves).
THREE-WAY SCENE
C: I feel horrible about the party.
D: Stop beating yourself up about it. I mean, listen, I know you’re not a fan of Vicky and her husband, but I don’t need you to like them; it’s okay.

C: No, I don’t feel horrible for hating Vicky and Roy. I feel horrible because I’ve been right all along about their relationship.

D: (Sigh) What are you talking about?

C: I saw them with another woman in their bathroom.

D: You what?

C: Yes. A three-way, right in front of me. It was like a circus act or something.

D: During the party?

C: Yes! At the party! (Narrating over scene) I was in the master bathroom peeing; waiting for you to finish your cigarette and all of a sudden I heard a noise. So I went to the door to peek out and I saw Roy with another woman, which I thought he was having an affair. Which would be hilarious given the fact that he is so ‘in love’ with Vicky. And they’re touching each other and groping, kissing. So then they start heading toward the bathroom that I’m in. So I freaked out. I jumped in the shower, shut the curtain and just hoped they wouldn’t hear me. And then, Vicky walked in. And I’m thinking she’s going to yell at Roy for cheating on her, but she joined in! I mean, this is clearly a threesome they had planned.

[THREE WAY HAPPENS]

D: That’s hilarious.

C: No. It was horrifying. Now do you see what I mean when I say phony? They are sexual deviants, Drew.

D: Honey, sexual deviants can be happily married people.

C: I just hope that they sanitise the bathroom. I mean they had people at their house. Couldn’t they have waited ‘till everyone left?

D: It’s called passion, Christine. Spontaneity? And I’ll tell you what, after seventeen years of marriage, that’s pretty impressive.

C: Well, I think it’s barbaric.

V: Oh my god! Is she okay?

D: No, she’s completely scarred.

V: She should have just said something.
D: I think because she's too afraid.

V: Of what? That we were going to ask her to join in? I mean, it wouldn't have been completely out of the question. It might have loosened her up a bit.

D: There's no loosening Christine up. She's pretty tightly wound.

V: Well, as long as she's happy being that way.

D: (Narrating over sequence) The truth was, I didn't know if Christine was happy being that way. For as long as I had known her, she had been straight and narrow in every aspect of her life. And no amount of loosening her up seemed to work. I bought her new lingerie.

[Shows red lingerie]

C: I hate that color.

D: (Narrating) Sex toys

C: Are you kidding me?

D: (Narrating) Even attempted spontaneous foreplay

C: Woah, no Drew.

D: (Narrating) And I began to think the root of our problems had more to do with my inability to vocalize those problems than did with her inability to unwind. Why couldn't I just tell her how I felt? So there I was, going through the motions of life like a zombie, craving change, unsure of where to find it—waiting for it to somehow find me. And then it did.

MIMI ENTERS VICKY AND DREW'S WORK

M: Hi.

V: Hi. (Holds up short shorts) I just bought these for your uncle Roy, what do you think?

M: I mean, they're fun.

V: They say 'hard at work'.

M: Yeah, that's not anything I need to see.

V: Well, do you like these better?

M: No, I don't.

V: Aww.
M: (laughs) You’re crazy. (Towards Drew) Hi. Actually came by to ask you a favor if that’s all right. I got a project for my art class and they want us to have a subject portray like a certain set of emotions, like anger. And, you know, kind of expose that a little bit. If you would feel comfortable doing that, would you want to come over to my studio and let me shoot you?

D: Yeah.

M: And I guess we can just sit down and talk and maybe you can open up a little bit and I’ll catch your moments, you know?

D: Sure

M: Is that cool?

D: Yeah

M: Okay, so maybe we will just like talk a little bit and...

D: Thanks for thinking of me.

M: Yeah, I mean, I liked that picture that I took of you at the party, so, I mean, I just like the way you photograph.

D: Oh thank you.

M: I can work with that. Cool, thank you. I’ll give you a call. Bye.

D: Bye.

V: Bye.

PHOTO SESSION

D: Ok wow. This is, this is the real deal, huh?

M: It is, yeah.

D: All this equipment, you own?

M: I do.

D: Wow, it’s a pretty big investment, being a photographer, huh?

M: Yup. Do you wanna just sit up?

[Montage of Drew speaking about his life while Mimi takes pictures]

D: You had asked me earlier what I wanted to be, when I was younger? I had huge aspirations for being a pilot. My dad would take me on planes and we would fly and meet the pilots and look inside the cockpits...But we’re standing out there for like six hours and we’re almost named. I have a pacifier in my
mouth, and I'm wearing this hand-made diaper around my stuff... And it dawned on me, I do not want to be in a fraternity if this is what it means to be in a fraternity...

[Narrating]

D: The techniques she used to achieve a variety of emotional shots involved me telling stories about my life—everything from my wildest dreams, to my biggest fears, to my greatest accomplishments, to my worst regrets. I don't know what it was about Mimi, I never felt more comfortable in my own skin than I did when I was with her.

[Montage monologue continues]

D: Nowadays nobody wants to step up and do anything; everybody is afraid. It was really despicable what these guys did to that person, you know? .... And the broken ribs, the night in jail, well worth it... So I come home one day [shot of wedding ring] and on my apartment door there's this big handwritten letter and it says 'please close your windows while having sex' exclamation point, exclamation point...

M: [laughs]

D: ...and we just started dating, making love all the time... And I'm like 'ugh, god, so embarrassing' but you know, I felt good because you know you're having really good sex when your neighbors are begging you to close your windows, you know...

M: I guess that's a good sigh.

D: ...you lose a piece of yourself when your parents die. My parents were the one constant thing that I had in my life. When my mom passed away, I realized that there was nothing, I mean absolutely nothing in life that's permanent....

MONTAGE ENDS—EXITING STUDIO

M: Thank you again for letting me shoot you, today.

D: No, no. Thank you for letting me be a part of your project. It was a pleasure.

M: Mmm.

D: You know, I haven't been this open in my, ugh, entire life!

M: I'm really glad you were. We got great shots today. So, I'll bring some by when I'm done?

D: Oh yeah, I'd like that.
M: Good, thanks.

DREW BEGINS TO WALK OUT OF THE DOOR. AS SOON AS HE STEPS OUTSIDE COMPLETELY, HE COMES BACK IN AND SAYS

D: You know, I was thinking inside there, I've been married 15 years to my wife and I don't think she knows any of the stories that I told you today.

DREW LEANS DOWN TO KISS MIMI PASSIONATELY, AND THEN WALKS OUT.

END SCENE

C: Hey, those ankle weights I ordered ever come in the mail?

D: I don't think so.

C: Gah, I hate ordering stuff off of the Internet. Remind me never to do that again.

Narrating

D: Christine had always been fiercely independent; always did her own thing. It was what had drew me to her initially; her independence. She wasn't needy or demanding like all of my previous girlfriends had been. She did her own thing, held her own ground.

C: Got a 10-mile run today. I'll probably grab dinner with the team afterwards, so you're on your own.

D: okie-dokie.

Narrating

D: But over time, I realized I wanted to be leaned on. I wanted to be needed. And Christine didn't really need anyone.

DREW IS READING ON BED IN A DREAM

C: Guess who called me during marathon training today.

D: Who?

C: Vicky.

D: What did she have to say?

C: Oh, she thought it was important for me to know that you were seducing her niece today. She's 25-years old, Drew. Did you know that? You could be her father, for Christ's sake. You're despicable.

DREW WAKES UP

Narrating
D: The next week I was consumed with guilt over what I had done. I kept replaying the kiss in my mind over and over again. How wrong it was, but how right it felt? How reckless I had been. Did Vicky know? It was overwhelming thinking that I had somehow failed my wife; that I had wronged her in our marriage. So I did what I had to do to try and right the wrong. To try and convince myself that what we had wasn't worth losing, for anything.

CHRISTINE AND DREW SEX SCENE

DREW KISSES AND HOLDS CHRISTINE FROM BEHIND AS SHE'S GETTING READY TO LAY IN BED

C: What are you doing?

D: What do you think I'm doing? I am trying to please and excite my wife.

C: Oh, c'mon Drew. You know I have an 18-mile run tomorrow.

D: Please? Please?

THEY KISS AND HAVE SEX

AFTER DREW EJACULATES ON CHRISTINE'S BELLY HE SAYS "THANK YOU"

Narrating

D: But my feelings for Mimi lingered. For whatever reason, I just couldn't shake her.

END SCENE

IN A HOT TUB, MIMI IS TALKING TO HER MALE ROOMMATE.

M: So I have a question, and I can't give you all the details but I need brutal honesty.

Roommate: Oh yeah?

M: Yeah.

Roommate: Well, why can't you give me all of the details?

M: I just can't.

Roommate: Well, how am I supposed to give you advice if I don't know what the hell you're talking about?

M: Because we've been friends forever, and you know the person that I am. Like, you know what I would do so, base it off of that.

Roommate: OK. Well, I'll try the best I can.
M: Ok, so if you know something is like really **wrong**, like unequivocally, innately **wrong**, but your gut is telling you to do it, then which one do you listen to?

Roommate: Well, if you know it's innately **wrong** then your gut wouldn't be telling you to do it in the first place, would it?

**BACK AT THE OFFICE, VICKY OPENS A DILDO OUT OF A PACKAGE**

D: What is that?

V: It's a dildo.

D: Yeah, I realize that...you're not going to use that on yourself, are you?

V: No, I'm gonna stick it up my husband's ass.

**DREW LOOKS DOWN/AWAY**

V: YES, I'm going to use it on myself. Why wouldn't I?

D: I don't **know**... doesn't that intimidate Roy?

V: Roy is the one who ordered it for me.

D: Why does that not surprise me?

V: We're trying double penetration this weekend. I figured I would start with a dildo and then work my way into the real penis.

D: Ok, you're weekend is blocked out, I get it.

**VICKY'S PHONE RINGS AND SHE ANSWERS, DREW NARRATES**

D: (Narrating) Vicky was so direct, so open, so free with every single thing she did or thought. I really wanted to **know** what that felt like; to really say what I felt, do what I felt. Not censor myself for fear of being judged. The only time I had ever felt that way was with Mimi.

**MIMI APPROACHES DREW AS HE GETS READY TO LEAVE FOR WORK**

M: Hi Drew.

D: Oh Mimi, Vicky is gone for the day.

M: Oh yea, sorry to swing by unannounced but I'm actually here to see you. They're copies of the pictures that we shot.

D: Oh, thank you.

M: They came out really good so I thought, I hope you'll be proud.

D: You happy with them?
M: Yeah.
D: Can I look at them?
M: Please do.

DREWS OPENS THE PINK FOLDER.
D: Oh wow.
M: Know, right?
D: Yeah, [laughs] I remember that.

MIMI KISSES DREW, INTERMITTENLY SAYS AND DREW, AFTER A BRIEF HESITATION, KISSES MIMI BACK.

D: (narrating) Like any affair, things started off intensely; having sex wherever and whenever possible. And for whatever reason, the guilt I had felt before was suddenly gone. Looking back, it seemed odd that I feel less guilty the more things progressed. Maybe, I just wanted this too badly to let the guilt ruin it. Every prevailing thought was about my relationship with Mimi, and the next moment I’d get to spend with her. I finally had something to look forward to.

THE SCENE/MONTAGE ENDS WITH DREW AND CHRISTINE’S ALARM CLOCKS. DREW DOES NOT PRESS THE SNOOZE BUTTON AND IS READY BEFORE CHRISTINE.

C: You’re up early...?
D: Yeah. (enthusiastically)

D: (Narrating) And for the first time in what felt like forever, I was actually living, not just getting by.

AT DREW AND VICKY’S OFFICE
V: You’re happy today (wearing a pink shirt)
D: How do you know I’m happy?
V: It’s permeating through the air
(Drew sniffs at the air)
V: It’s nice. Embrace it, it suits you
D: (narrating) How could I not be happy? For the first time in my life, I had a relationship that was both emotionally and physically fulfilling. I was totally unguarded. I could share absolutely anything with Mimi without fear of being criticized or judged. Aside from Vicky, she was the most open
person I knew, wise beyond her years. A friend to me, not just a lover. We laughed often, encourage one another’s hopes and dreams, enjoyed a sense of freedom that I’d never known with Christine. But as with every affair, reality rears its ugly head out at one point or another.

MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT. DREW IS ON THE PHONE WITH MIMI WHILE CHRISTINE EAVESDROPS

D: No, I’ll figure out a way to make that happen.

M: I know I just really want to know what it’s like to wake up next to you. I hate that I can’t.

D: Does your roommate mind, I mean, does he even know about us?

M: Yeah, he knows, and he thinks it’s wrong. He just doesn’t get it. I just don’t think I want to subject ourselves to that negativity right now.

D: Yeah, well, I’ll get us a hotel room in the next week or so.

M: Would you really do that?

D: Of course. I’m a bit frustrated myself so... Listen, I gotta go, so I will call you in the morning.

M: Okay, sweet dreams.

D: All right, bye.

DREW HEADS UPSTAIRS.

C: Who were you talking to just now?

D: What?

C: It’s almost midnight, who were you talking to?

D: Vicky. I didn’t want to keep you up taking a call in here.

C: Why were to talking to Vicky about getting a hotel room?

D: Because we’re taking a business trip and she’s talking about like saving the company money and she can stay with her sister, and I’m like, we’ll get a hotel.

C: Hm. When’s the trip?

D: Not for a few of weeks if we take the trip at all.

DREW GETS UNDER THE COVERS TO READ
D: (Narrating) And suddenly, all the guilt that I thought I was somehow immune to had returned full-force. Lying to Christine felt wrong. I was sick about it, but I was terrified to come clean. Terrified to admit that a relationship I had spent nearly 20 years of my life in, had somehow failed. Living more honestly was ironically what had propelled me into having an affair to begin with. Now here I was, lying again, deleting text messages, voicemails, emails; afraid to admit what I really needed in an effort to protect what I no longer wanted.

MIMI AND HER ROOMMATE ARE SITTING IN THEIR LIVING ROOM

Roommate: How could you do something so selfish?

M: I know. I know that it's wrong, but I can't help how I feel.

Roommate: Don't get mad at me for saying this, but married men never leave their wives, Mimi. You actually think that he's in love with you, don't you?

M: Yeah, I do.

Roommate: Mimi, seriously?

M: I know I sound like every stupid girl that falls in love with a married man, but this is different.

Roommate: Every woman that falls in love with a married man thinks that she's somehow different. But you're not any different; you're a walking cliche. You're half his age, for Christ's sake.

M: It's not what you think.

Roommate: It's never what anyone thinks; just don't wrapped up thinking you have some future with him or something, because you don't. He's never going to leave his wife. Trust me.

D: (Narrating) Mimi shared her concerns with me. Her fear is that I wasn't in this for the long haul. And as much as I tried to convince her that my intentions were sincere, my actions began to fall short.

MIMI IS ON THE PHONE WITH DREW IN HER APARTMENT

D: I'm so sorry Mimi, I'm going to have to take a rain check tonight.

M: What happened?

D: Christine's car battery is dead and triple A isn't showing up.

M: Oh. Okay, don't worry about it.

D: It's your birthday. Oh god, I feel so terrible about this.
M: Don’t worry about it, we can celebrate it next week.

D: I promise I’m going to make this up to you ten-fold.

M: I know you will.

D: (narrating) The problem is, you can’t sustain two independent relationships without one of them getting the brunt of the sacrifice. I couldn’t be in two places at once, and no matter how badly I wanted to be with her, I still had an obligation to Christine and our marriage. Missing Mimi’s birthday was one of many events I couldn’t be there for, but none more important than her gallery opening.

MIMI IS TALKING TO DREW BY A CAR:

M: I know my teachers are coming; my one photography teacher, and then my other journalism teacher, and then a couple of friends. But you’ll be there, right?

D: Absolutely. I promise I’ll be there, wouldn’t miss it for the world.

M: Good, ‘cause I know we can’t hold hands or be affectionate or whatever, but it would mean so much to me if you were really there for my first big thing.

D: I’ll be there.

THEY KISS

D: And what are we eating after?

M: Sushi.

D: Hm sushi.

DREW SITS IN HIS LIVING ROOM WATCHING TV (WEARING PINK), WHEN CHRISTINE WALKS IN, LOOKING VERY UPSET

D: What’s wrong?

C: Dad had a heart attack, he’s in the hospital.

DREW TURNS OFF THE TV

D: Is he okay?

C: Yeah, I think he’s going to be fine, but I think I’m going to head up there this weekend to see him.

D: Yeah, of course. Of course.

C: Drew, I’d really like it if you come with me. I’m afraid I’ll fall apart on this one if I do it alone.
DREW NODS YES AS NARRATING BEGINS

D: (Narrating) It was the first time in a long time that Christine had admitted to needing me emotionally, and even though the timing couldn't have been worse, how could I say no?

AT THE PHOTO GALLERY, DREW APPROACHES MIMI

M: Hey
D: Hey
M: I was just hanging this one up, right in the middle.

MIMI HANGS A BLACK AND WHITE PHOTOGRAPH OF DREW SMILING WIDE

M: It's my favorite one here. What's wrong?

MUSIC STOPS

M: You okay?
D: Christine's father had a heart attack.
M: My god. I'm sorry, is he okay is he alive?
D: Yeah. He's okay. We're going to drive up there tomorrow afternoon. Which means....

DREW WAVES HIS HAND POINTEDLY AROUND THE GALLERY. MIMI NODS IN UNDERSTANDING

M: Yeah, I understand.

MIMI FINISHES TO HANG THE PICTURE FRAME

D: You know, if I could be here on your big night to support you, I would be here.
M: I know you would.
D: It's really amazing work, though. I think everybody is going to be so impressed with you.
M: You know what's funny? It's this entire year I've never asked you about your wife. I thought that I could be your escape that if I pretended that she didn't exist then I wasn't just your mistress.

D: You're not just my mistress.

M: By anyone else's definition, that is exactly what I am. My dad cheated on my mom, and I never told you that because it devastated her. I saw what that
did to somebody; I saw how much that hurt, and I swore that I would never
do that to somebody ever. But now look at me, I’m just a hypocrite.

D: This is different, Mimi.

M: How is it different? I mean, really?

D: Because I’m in love with you. And I feel down in my gut that I can’t feel for
anyone the way I feel about you.

M: Maybe I’m just a distraction from a life that got too boring.

D: Ugh, that’s not true.

M: But it is. If you were truly unhappy with her, and what we really had meant
something, then why would you stay married?

D: I’ve been married to Christine for close to 20 years. That’s almost as long as
you’ve been alive. That’s a huge amount to walk away from.

M: It’s also a hell-of-a lot to compete with.

D: I’m not asking you to compete.

M: I can’t.... I can’t do this anymore.

D: What?

M: I can’t be your fallback relationship. I can’t be the person waiting around for
your marriage to fall apart. I don’t want to be with you if it means sneaking
around on borrowed time; Spending birthdays, and holidays, and
monumental events in my life without you because you should be at home
with your wife. I know that anybody listening to me right now would say that I’m a selfish brat, just trying to ruin a marriage, but that was never
my intention. I didn’t mean to fall in love with a married man, but I did.
And I love him, with all of my heart and my soul. But I can’t do this
anymore.

D: What are you saying?

M: I’m saying I can’t share you. (Crying) I’m sorry.

MIMI KISSES DREW AND WALKS AWAY

D: (Narrating) And just like that, it was over.

AT MIMI’S APARTMENT, HER ROOMMATE IS GETTING SOMETHING OUT OF
THE REFRIGERATOR, WHEN MIMI WALKS IN LOOKING UPSET.

Roommate: Jesus Christ, you’re home late. Where were you?

M: Out.
Roommate: Are you okay?

M: It's over. And I know that you’re going to want to say ‘I told you so,’ but don’t, please. Even though it's over, it's just, it wasn't what you think it was. It was real, and he was really incredible.

WHILE HUGGING

Roommate: I would never say ‘I told you so.’

M: I just wish it didn’t have to hurt so bad, and I could just wake up tomorrow and for him and the life we'll never have together.

THE ROOMMATE KISSES MIMI

M: What are you doing?

D: Helping you forget.

MIMI AND HER ROOMMATE HAVE SEX IN THE KITCHEN. ALWAYS IN SHADOW. HE EJACULATES ON HER STOMACH. AFTER, THEY BOTH LAY DOWN ON THE KITCHEN FLOOR. THEY DON'T KISS. AFTERSHAM.

Roommate: You can sleep in my room tonight if you want.

M: No, I can't. I can't sleep with you tonight. I just, I don't even know where my head is. I don't know if I should be angry, or devastated, or sad. It's just a lot to take in so I just need to sleep in my room.

BACK AT DREW AND VICKY'S OFFICE. DREW IS WEARING A BLACK SHIRT.

V: Want to talk about it?

D: About what?

V: What’s troubling you?

D: No.

V: Is it Mimi?

DREW STARES AT VICKY IN SURPRISE

V: I know, Drew. I’ve known.

D: You know about what?

V: Everything, since the beginning. And I'm not judging you, don't worry.

D: Why didn’t you say anything, then?
V: Because she asked me not to, and my loyalty is to her.
D: How is she?
V: I want to know how you are.
D: Torn up conflicted, confused, unhappy, broken hearted, you want me to go on?
V: If you'd like.
D: I never intended to fall in love with her; I'm not the stereotypical guy that cheats on his wife with a younger woman.
V: So what are you going to do?
D: I've spent most of my entire life with Christine. I walk away-- I throw all that time away like it's meaningless.
V: Spending time with someone is never meaningless.
D: Yeah, I know.
V: But you need to ask yourself, do you want to spend the rest of your life in a marriage with someone who isn't your ideal companion in hopes that one day she'll change?
D: I just think Christine deserves a chance.
V: Then work it out with her. But be honest. Be honest about everything. What you did, what you want, what was missing. The worse thing you could ever do is lie to yourself. Better to spend 15 years in a bad marriage than 30.
Drew.

END SCENE

D: (Narrating) I didn't know where to begin with Christine, but I decided to start with the truth.

DREW AND CHRISTINE ARE SITTING OUTSIDE ON A LEDGE, FACING AWAY FROM THE CAMERA. THEIR CONVERSATION IS INAUDIBLE UNTIL CHRISTINE TURNS AROUND, STILL SITTING, AND SAYS

C: I... I don't even know what to say to that.
CHRISTINE STANDS UP AND WALKS AWAY

MONTAGE OF THEM IN DIFFERENT SITUATIONS

D: (Narrating) At first, she was disgusted by me.

C: (In montage) how could you? How could you do this!? 
D: (Narrating) And when the anger subsided, she felt into a deep depression that I couldn’t pull her out of for weeks. But eventually, over time, she came around and decided it was time that we actually talked.

END OF MONTAGE

C: Why did you do it?

D: Because I felt trapped.

C: Trapped? I never held you back. I never put any demands on you.

D: I know that, and I didn’t mean it that way. I just didn’t feel free.

C: Well marriage isn’t about freedom, Drew; it’s about commitment.

D: I’m not talking about freedom to go sleep with other people.

C: Oh, even though that’s exactly what you did.

D: Christine, we spent 15 years tip-toeing around our marriage; we never opened up, we never shared anything. We just functioned; we functioned like two autonomous creatures who never shared anything with each other.

C: Well, if that’s how you felt how come you married me in the first place?

D: Because that’s what I loved about you in the first place. I loved your strength; I loved your independence, your emotional hardness. I loved the fact that I didn’t have to be grounding force in your life all the time.

C: Then what changed?

D: I got tired; I got tired of living on the surface. Never sharing how I felt, never honoring who I was. I saw how strong you were, I saw that you didn’t need me. And that scared me, to need you, to try to feel comfortable sharing something with you.

C: So is that what attracted you to her, the fact that she needed you?

D: The fact that I could be with her. I know this hurts, but the only truth I knew was when I was with her. I need you to hear that; I need you to know and understand where I’m coming from if...

C: If there’s any hope in saving our marriage.

MONTAGE

D: (narrating) Christine and I spent the next year trying to recover from my affair. But no matter how much work we put into things, they always felt short to the way I felt when I was with Mimi.
DREW IS LOOKING THROUGH THE FOLDER MIMI GAVE HIM WITH ALL OF THE PHOTOS SHE TOOK DURING THE SHOOT, AND HE PICKS OUT THE ONE WHERE HE’S SMILING; THE ONE FROM THE GALLERY.

DREW AND CHRISTINE ARE OUTSIDE; DREW IS SMOKING A CIGARETTE.

C: Are you still in love with her?
D: Desperately.

NEW SCENE AT MIMI’S PHOTOGRAPHY STUDIO; MIMI IS SETTING UP A SHOOT WITH FLOWERS ON A VASE.

D: Hey.
M: Hi.

D: I see you’re shooting daisies now.
M: Uh, yeah. They’ve always been my favorite.
D: Yeah, I remember.
M: What are you doing here?
D: Mimi, I just came to tell you I’m really sorry about the way things went down between you and I.

M: Me too.
D: You know, sometimes it feels like, one has to go down this convoluted, fucked up road to get to where they need to be.

M: Well, as long as you end up there eventually, right?
D: Yeah... well, I have.
M: And where’s that?

D: Right here with you. I don’t know if you’re in a relationship or what you situation is, but, um, I’m single now. And if you’re single too, I’d like another shot; another chance to start things over again with you the right way. Fully committed, fully ready to give this relationship what it deserves. I know what this situation must have looked like to the outside world. Fuck the outside world, ok? I cheated, you were the woman that I cheated with, and I did everything all the wrong way. But I’ll be damned if I’m going to be vilified by the outside world for falling in love with you. Mimi, we’re not the cliché. What we have is real. All the naysayers can say our relationship was doomed from the beginning, but I’m ready to prove them wrong.

M: I’m, um, I’m not seeing anyone.
Drew kisses Mimi. They have sex. He ejaculates on her stomach.

D: (Narrating) The best things in life don’t always fall into place perfectly. But if they’re meant to be, they’ll fall into place somehow. There are a lot of people who would say that betrayal is the worst thing in the world. That it can never amount to anything but pain, and suffering, and hurt, and most of the time, these people are right. But in my situation, the betrayal saved me, and it saved Christine. It taught us to live more honestly to not deny who we were and what we needed. And for the first time in our lives, it gave us the chance to know true and lasting freedom within the routine of life.

The last scene is being narrated over Mimi and Drew brushing their teeth together in one mirror. They go to bed together and are sleeping close to each other in the middle of the bed (opposite to Christine and Drew) and the bed frame is see-through.

Written on the screen: The real “Mimi” and “Drew” just celebrated their 20-year anniversary. “Drew” remains close friends with “Christine” who is happily remarried to the man she considers, “The love of her life.”

Marriage is about not about